

Proceedings of the Business Session November 2015

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
BUSINESS SESSION**

**World Golf Village Renaissance
St. Augustine, Florida
November 4, 2015
November 5, 2015**

Approved February 4, 2016

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1. **Approval of Agenda** by consent (Page 3).
2. **Move to accept the 2016 Action Plan** (Page 14). Motion by Douglas Grout; second by Malcolm Rhodes. Motion carried (Page 14)
3. **Move to Adjourn** by consent (Page 15).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Terry Stockwell, ME, proxy for P. Keliher (AA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)
Doug Grout, NH (AA)	Ed O'Brien, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA)
Ritchie White, NH (GA)	David Blazer, MD (AA)
Bill Adler, MA (GA)	Bill Goldsborough, MD (GA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	John Bull, VA (AA)
Jason McNamee, RI, proxy for J. Coit (AA)	Rep. Bob Steinburg, NC (LA)
David Borden, RI (GA)	Louis Daniel, NC (AA)
Pat Augustine, NY, proxy for Sen. Boyle (LA)	Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Jim Gilmore, NY (AA)	Pat Geer, GA, proxy for Rep. Burns (LA)
Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)	Spud Woodward, GA (AA)
Brandon Muffley, NJ, proxy for D. Chanda (AA)	Nancy Addison, GA (GA)
Tom Fote, NJ (GA)	Jim Estes, FL, proxy for J. McCawley, (AA)
Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Asm. Andrzejczak (LA)	Martin Gary, PRFC
Tom Moore, PA, proxy for Rep. Vereb (LA)	Wilson Laney, USFWS
Leroy Young, PA, proxy for J. Arway (AA)	Kelly Denit, NMFS
John Clark, DE, proxy for D. Saveikis (AA)	

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Staff

Bob Beal
Toni Kerns

Mark Robson
Mike Waive

The Business Session of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the St. Augustine Ballroom of the World Golf Village Renaissance, St. Augustine, Florida, November 4, 2015, and was called to order at 1:55 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Louis B. Daniel.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIRMAN DR. LOUIS B. DANIEL: Welcome to the Business Session. First off, before we get into the agenda, we've had quite a few changes in commissioners since our last annual meeting.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMISSIONERS

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: What I would like to do is introduce those new commissioners, if they would please raise your hand so that we can put a face to the name; everybody can.

I am not sure everybody is present this week, but we've got a new Administrative Commissioner from Maryland, Mr. David Blazer; welcome, David. Hopefully, some of you have had a chance to meet Mr. Doug Brady; he's not here right now, but he's been with us this week, the new governor's appointee; commissioner from North Carolina.

We've got Representative William Carson and Craig Pugh is serving as his ongoing proxy. Ms. Janet Coit is the new Administrative Commissioner from Rhode Island. Senator Brian Langley returns as the Legislative Commissioner from Maine. Dr. David Pierce is the new Administrative Commissioner from Massachusetts; congratulations, David.

Delegate Dana Stein is the new Legislative Commissioner from Maryland, and Representative Bob Steinburg is our new legislative commissioner from North Carolina - very glad to have Representative Steinburg here. Join me in recognizing these new commissioners. Take a chance to introduce yourself and meet those folks. Because of our

joint meeting with the Gulf and the venue for our dinner last night, we decided to wait, and I would do my concluding remarks as chairman at this meeting.

COMMISSION CHAIR CONCLUDING REMARKS

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: As my last report as chair of the commission, I wanted to thank you all, my fellow commissioners for the support you've given me and Doug Grout over the past two years in carrying out our collective goals of ending overfishing and rebuilding depleted fishery resources, seeking outcomes that support the economic success of coastal communities working toward long term ecological sustainability and being transparent and accountable in all our actions.

Over the past year alone, we've made significant strides in furthering these goals, 2015 was a banner year in advancing the science behind our management decisions. We successfully completed benchmark stock assessments for Atlantic menhaden, black drum, Tautaug, American lobster, scup and bluefish; with the last two assessments being conducted in close coordination with our federal partners from NOAA Fisheries and the Mid-Atlantic Council.

We continue to make progress on benchmark stock assessments for red drum, weakfish, spot and Atlantic croaker, and maybe even on the cusp of a declaration of recovery on red drum; all of which will have been peer reviewed by the end of 2016. We have continued to invest in long term fisheries independent data collection activities through our support of both NEAMAP and the South Atlantic component of SEAMAP.

We were able to secure funding to conduct the Virginia Tech Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey, a critical input to our specification setting process for horseshoe crabs. This important long term survey has been unfunded for the last two year; however, we are hopeful that long term funding

will be secured to allow the survey to be conducted for many years to come.

On the recreational data collection front, the Commission and the ACCSP have worked hard this year to prepare for a significant change in the way recreational catch data will be collected along the Atlantic coast. Beginning in 2016 all coastal states from Maine through Georgia will transition to conducting the catch estimate portion of MRIP, also known as APIS. To prepare for this transition new staff has been hired by the states and ACCSP.

The commission offices are being reconfigured to accommodate the new ACCSP hires and the commissions Finance and Administration Department has readied itself to address the administration and HR challenges of an increased work force. While NOAA Fisheries will retain primary accountability for APIS and we will be responsible for survey design, catch and effort estimation and public dissemination.

The commission and the ACCSP will act as the central coordinators of the state conducted APIS; and will be responsible for data entry compilation, quality control, quality assurance as well as formatting and delivering intercept data to NOAA Fisheries. States will oversee and manage field collection, which will be conducted by state or commission employees in accordance with the APIS standard data collection protocols.

From a fisheries management perspective, commissioners adopted a new interstate FMP for Jonah Crab to manage growth in this expanding fishery, with the intent of ensuring the sustainability of that resource. It is becoming more and more important to New England. Given the linkages between the Jonah Crab and American lobster fisheries and the predominance of the Jonah Crab fishery in federal waters, we will continue to work with the New England Council and NOAA Fisheries on managing this shared resource.

Based on the findings of the benchmark stock assessments for American lobster, Tautaug, and

Atlantic menhaden, commissioners have begun to discuss possible changes to management programs for these species. For American lobster commissioners have begun to discuss possible changes to management programs.

But American lobster commissioners will wrestle with what is the best approach to manage the severely depleted southern New England stock unit, given the environmental constraints placed on this resource that limit rebuilding efforts. Responding to the positive findings of the Atlantic menhaden assessment, commissioners have begun to move forward on the next stage of menhaden management.

This new management regime will not only seek to fairly allocate the resource among the states and between fishery sectors, but to also establish ecological based reference points that reflect Atlantic menhaden's role as a forage species. While working groups of commissioners, scientists and stakeholders have met throughout this year to lay the groundwork for future board discussions; substantial work is still ahead of us.

Luckily, we are not alone as we navigate the complex terrain of ecosystems management, as our counterparts with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils explore ecosystems and forage species management as well; 2015 was the first year we implemented new management measures to reduce the coast wide harvest of Atlantic striped bass in order to assure a more rapid increase in the abundance of spawning fish, which has been declining in recent years.

Based on the projections we received this morning, the implemented management measures appear to meet, if not exceed, the required harvest reductions with the resource not overfished and overfishing not occurring. This coupled with the news of Maryland's above average juvenile index and Virginia's average juvenile index offer promising news for the future of the striped bass resource.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recent decision to not list American eel under the Endangered Species Act is also welcome news to all of us. The decision affirms the significant work and resource invested by the Commission, its member states and federal partners over the past several years to conduct the first coast wide benchmark stock assessment for American eel and implement a management program in response to the assessment findings.

However, given the current depleted status of the resource, there is still considerable work to be done to rebuild American eel. The Commission will continue to closely monitor American eel fisheries and the status of the resource; and make adjustments to the management program as necessary to ensure stock rebuilding.

The commissioners and staff continue to work to secure the necessary resources to support important scientific management and enforcement activities. A critical component of this work is strengthening our partnerships with NMFS and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The three interstate commissions continue to meet jointly with NMFS leadership to communicate the state's budget priorities.

This effort was successful in getting nearly one million dollars to support unfunded data collection programs. As the 2016 budget is finalized by Congress, the staff and our government relations firm will continue to communicate the importance of supporting the interstate fishery management process.

In closing, I want to thank you for the trust you have placed in me and in Doug, serving as your Vice-Chair and Chair. We are grateful for your support and sustained commitment to the Commission and its programs. I am also deeply appreciative of the support and dedication of the Commission's talented staff.

We have seen a lot of transitions over the past several years, with some well-respected veteran staff moving on. I'm pleased to say that our

new hires, who include three FMP coordinators, one stock assessment scientist and an accounting manager and HR manager, have admirably stepped into their new positions without missing a beat. This seamless transition is in large part due to the outstanding leadership of the senior staff, and the remarkable teamwork exhibited by the remaining staff, who have stepped in to mentor and contribute to the increased workload.

It has been an honor to serve as your Chair. I look forward to continuing to work with you all over the coming years to sustainably manage our coastal fisheries resources. Thank you all very much. It really is an honor, and I will tell you just some ad lib here that our staff is amazing. I'm so proud of the accomplishments that Paul Diodati and I were able to make in the leadership of the Commission.

Anybody that's thinking about stepping into this role, it's easy working with these folks. It is not a job, it is a pleasure; and it is all due to the quality of our staff. Thank you all for everything. It couldn't have been done better from my perspective. I appreciate it.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: With all that said, we do have an agenda that we have to follow and we have our agenda and the proceedings from our August meeting in your packet.

If there are no items of other business or any corrections to the agenda, I'll accept those by consensus and move forward.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I don't have anyone signed up to speak for public comment, and don't really see anyone in the audience. Well, there are a few people in the audience. I don't think Carol wants to talk so we're good.

**ELECTION OF COMMISSION
CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: With that it is with pleasure that I turn it over to Bob Beal for election of Commission Chair and Vice-Chair.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT E. BEAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It may be the last time I can say that. Depending on the results, you never know Louis, crazier things have happened. It is the time where we do the elections each year. Tina and Laura are passing out ballots. We have one ballot per state, one vote per state. We'll fill those in and to present the nominations I will call on Roy Miller, who is the Chair of the Nominating Committee.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: Let me be the first to personally congratulate Louis for his outstanding, dedicated and loyal service to the Commission. Thank you, Louis. The Nominating Committee consisted of Robert Boyles and David Borden and I. We took it upon ourselves to do an informal e-mail poll of the commissioners, in order to seek capable nominations for these very important positions. I'm happy to announce our nominations for your consideration.

For the position of Chairman of the Commission, it is our unanimous choice that Doug Grout be considered moving over from the Vice-Chair position, which he so capably occupied for the past couple of years. It is our recommendation that Doug be nominated for Chairman of the Commission.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Based on that nomination, please complete the ballots and the ASMFC election process does give the option of a write-in vote or a write-in nominee; should any of the states want to do that. If you can fill those out quickly, we will come around and collect them right now, and then Roy Miller will be asked to count up the votes as Chair of the Nominating Committee. You will also be handed your ballot for Vice-Chair, once you pick those up.

MR. MILLER: It is my pleasure to announce that the unanimous choice for Chairman of the Commission is Douglas Grout of New Hampshire.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Congratulations, Doug. Roy, want to continue with the nominations for Vice-Chair, please?

MR. MILLER: All right, it is my pleasure to announce that the choice of the Nominating Committee for Vice-Chair of the Commission is Jim Gilmore of New York.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: All right, we'll go through the ballot process one more time, hopefully quickly and painlessly. You all should have completed or have in front of you a ballot for Vice-Chair, so fill it out; Laura and Tina will grab those and we'll count them up again.

MR. MILLER: It's official, Ladies and Gentlemen, Jim Gilmore is our choice. Congratulations, Jim.

REVIEW 2015 ACTION PLAN UPDATE

CHAIRMAN DR. DANIEL: All right, congratulations Doug and Jim. Thank you for your willingness to take on that role. Like I said, you won't have any problem. All right next up, we will review our 2015 Action Plan. Bob, you've got a bunch of folks that are going to help you with that right?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Yes, Laura, Pat, Tina, Toni and I are going to walk through that very quickly. There are a couple changes to the document that is in your briefing material based on activities this week; so I'll highlight those as well. Then we'll go section by section through the seven sections, and if you have questions let us know. At the end, we'll consider the action plan for approval.

Toni will do Section 1 whenever she is ready. I'm sorry, the one other thing on the agenda before that is the Action Plan update. This is where we give a brief summary of what's been

done or what has not been done under this year's Action Plan; and generally, we're on track for all the tasks that are in the Action Plan.

There are a couple worth noting in the ISFMP in science parts of the action plan. For American eel, we did not complete the MOU with the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission and DFO; it is a work in progress trying to develop an MOU with them to share data to support region wide assessment. There was an AFS symposium on American eel about a year ago, and we're still working to incorporate those findings in our assessment management process.

Under Atlantic herring, the task in the document was to finalize Amendment 3. That was delayed for various reasons throughout the year and updated. That is going to be completed in 2016. We did do a couple additional items. Northern shrimp, we conducted some test tows, since that fishery unfortunately is closed due to the moratorium and poor stock conditions, so we administered test tows to get some biological information.

Black sea bass we initiated an amendment that we had not planned. Under the habitat portion of this year's tasks, we did not finish the next installment of the Habitat Management series, which is aquaculture. That is being worked on and should be completed this year, or it should be completed in 2016.

Under the science program we had a couple delays in stock assessments. Red drum will be presented, results of the assessment and peer review will be presented in February. Weakfish peer-review results and assessment results will be presented in May. The Commission did not complete the policy on risk management and uncertainty, and that is something that is carried over into this year's action plan. Based on a discussion that the Executive Committee, which we'll hear more about later, we are going to push forward and develop a risk and uncertainty plan for a policy for the Commission in 2016.

We did a few extra things in the Science Department that were not planned. We have a number of new projects that are funded through SK; they are taking a fair amount of staff work. It is good to get that funding, but it did require some staff work to move those projects forward. We also coordinated and facilitated a tilefish sampling program in the Mid-Atlantic.

Obviously, we don't manage tilefish, but we were able to coordinate some money and develop a contract with a number of fishermen to go out and collect samples. We have a new commission policy on the use of fishery independent data that was developed, and those were not included in the Action Plan. Generally, all the other tasks, and there are dozens of them in there on track and should be completed by the end of the year. Happy to answer any questions if you have any, before we jump into next year's draft.

CHAIRMAN DR. DANIEL: Thank you, Bob. Questions for Bob? Seeing none; we'll move along. All right Toni, ready to go?

REVIEW AND CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE 2016 ASMFC ACTION PLAN

MS. TONI KERNS: I'm going to first go through Goal 1. There will be a couple slides that I'm going to throw up on the screen, which will reflect some language changes in what was presented in the Action Plan on your meeting materials; based on some activities that have happened this week.

Otherwise, I'm just going to go through some of the bigger action items that will be happening next year in Goal 1. Most of the strategies or the tasks to achieve the strategies are relatively new, but we'll go through the highlights. For American eel, in addition to working on the MOU, we're going to also explore collaboration with DFO for our next benchmark assessment, to see if we can combine data sources.

For American lobster we're going to develop an addendum for the southern New England stock to respond to the results of the 2015 benchmark stock assessment. Those are Management Areas 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. We also will work with the New England Fishery Management Council actions on habitat closures for impacts on the lobster fishery, and respond if necessary to any actions that they take.

Looking at addressing lobster trap design, focusing on improvements to the escapement of lobster from derelict traps. For Jonah Crab we are going to implement the FMP and work with NOAA Fisheries to ensure consistent regulations between states and federal waters. We will also monitor the actions of the habitat area closures from the council and respond if necessary.

We will also monitor additional management actions that the council may take for a federal Jonah Crab FMP. We will develop a Jonah Crab addendum to address crab only-pot only fishermen. In addition to that, we will also look at an addendum for non-trap bycatch trip limits as well as changes to the claw-only fishery if it is determined necessary by the board, based on some Technical Committee work. Then for the Atlantic herring fishery, we will finalize Amendment 3. For Atlantic menhaden we'll continue to draft Amendment 3 that revisits the quota allocation and addresses ecosystem-based reference points. For Atlantic striped bass we will consider management responses to the 2015 stock assessment update and respond if necessary, and that action changed a little bit today.

Potentially, the striped bass board asked for a stock assessment update in 2016, incorporating the 2015 data; which would reflect the changes from the Addendum 4 measures. But this would be pending policy board approval, which we will look at tomorrow. For coastal sharks we'll establish specifications for 2017.

We will also determine the appropriate Commission management response to HMSs Amendment 6, and we will monitor and engage in the development of Amendment 9, which is the smooth hound management and Amendment 5B, which is the dusky shark management. We will also review and consider the dusky shark benchmark stock assessment for management and consider a response to the assessment findings if necessary.

For horseshoe crab we will review and modify the ARM framework methodology as necessary, and establish the 2017 specifications using the ARM framework and quota allocation methodology. To note here, reviewing the ARM, the addendum that established the ARM requires a review in five years.

If the Horseshoe Crab Board does decide to make significant changes to the ARM, there may be a large budget that would be associated with that. It could be up to \$100,000.00. We did not incorporate that \$100,000.00 into the budget for this, so if that is something that needs to happen we will need to make some changes to the ISFMP budget.

Then also for horseshoe crab, we will initiate the development of the 2017 benchmark stock assessment. For northern shrimp, included in the Action Plan this year, we will work with the states and industry to conduct test tows and collecting biological data if there is another fishery moratorium.

For shad and river herring, we'll initiate the development of the 2017 river herring benchmark stock assessment, which is a change. The policy board will still have to consider this in February. It has been a recommendation to switch a shad update to a river herring. For the summer flounder, scup and black sea bass, we are going to – this happened at the meeting yesterday – develop an addenda to consider regional management in the recreational fisheries for both summer flounder and black sea bass.

We changed the priority of amendments. We previously had an amendment for scup and we changed the priority to black sea bass to follow what the council is also considering. For Tautaug, we will review the Long Island Sound stock assessment as well as develop a New York and New Jersey coastal stock assessment, and consider that information and then continue to move forward with the amendment.

For weakfish, we will consider the results of the stock assessment for 2016 and respond to that if necessary. I skipped two other ones for spot and croaker we will also review the results of the 2016 benchmark stock assessment and consider management responses if necessary. For winter flounder, we will continue to monitor and work with the New England Fishery Management Council on the winter flounder stocks. We just received the stock assessment and we will see how to move forward with management, especially for southern New England and the Mid-Atlantic stocks, which are in critical condition and how to move forward to try to rebuild those stocks.

The rest of Goal 1, there were not many changes there. It is looking at strengthening our partnerships, adapting to emerging issues, making sure we still have transparent practices, evaluating our progress towards rebuilding fisheries and that's all.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Any questions?

MR. ADAM NOWALSKY: One of the topics that I had actually brought up last year under summer flounder was the sex specific modeling approach, as Toni and Dr. Pierce can attest to. We've been hoping to get Dr. Sullivan from Cornell who has been working on that model in front of the Summer Flounder Board for quite some time, did get him in front of the Mid-Atlantic Council at their last meeting. That modeling work is well underway. I would think that based on that, it would be prudent to change determine the viability of to support the development of, given where that work is. If you need that in the form of a motion I would

be happy to. I'm happy to see it here after our discussion about it last year, and based on where it is at this point I think that would be more appropriate.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Does anyone have concern with making that wording change over to, support the development of a sex specific model for summer flounder?

MS. KERNS: Adam, would that be for peer review next year or just to work on it?

MR. NOWALSKY: Well, again, there is a number of moving parts with it. There is the development of the mathematical elements of modeling to begin with. There are a number of projects that are underway or currently being scoped to continue to collect data in support of the model, and then just all of the administrative and logistics of getting that model into the next stock assessment, getting it through peer review.

I don't expect it to be peer reviewed in 2016, but there are certainly going to be a lot of moving pieces that I don't think is going to require a tremendous amount of staff time, money or anything to that regard. But I think that we would want to be in a position to support that; given that that was the recommendation from the last peer review that everybody is moving in the direction of the sex specific modeling.

MS. KERNS: One more question just so I know what type of support we're looking for. Do we need the state biologists to engage then with Dr. Sullivan, or no?

MR. NOWALSKY: I can't answer that question right now. I think that just what I'm looking for is an understanding that we are not just determining the viability, this is coming. It has been a collaborative process with NMFS, with industry, with recreational people, with management, with the council. The SSC has been involved in the process. I'm not looking for a specific ask right now, not a specific

commitment. I'm just looking for the Action Plan to reflect what's actually taking place, so that we're in a position to do so; and I just don't think it does at the present time.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Adam, is this more of a monitor, progress and engage as appropriate type ask?

MR. NOWALSKY: Those words are wonderful.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Then we'll go with the wonderful words, unless anyone has a problem with it. Everyone is good with that? All right, we'll do that; any other questions for Toni on all the tasks under Section 1?

MR. BRANDON MUFFLEY: Toni, maybe I missed it but can you go into why you think the cost may be \$100,000.00 for any redevelopment of the ARM model?

MS. KERNS: I can do my best. We just had initial conversations with Conor McGowan; Dr. McGowan put together the ARM model for us originally. Dr. McGowan continues to run the ARM model for us. He's a professor out of Auburn or Clemson, and I know I shouldn't mix those up because that's not quite right. I believe it's Auburn.

When we asked him, depending on the amount of change that would occur to the model, and the Horseshoe Crab Board will talk about this further this week. His estimates were up that high for him to do that work. To my understanding, none of the Horseshoe Crab TC members really get their hands into that model itself, so I don't know if we would have another person that would be able to do that work or not. That would be a question back to the Technical Committee.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Brandon, this year's work is going to be reviewing the arm through our Technical Committee's and see if they feel it needs to be reworked, and if it does need to be reworked then we have to start thinking about this relatively large sum of

money or finding another option that's less expensive.

I think it is a two-step process and we'll complete Step 1 and then update the board on where things are and come back to the full Commission or Policy Board with an update or request for money should we get to that point; other questions on Section 1? All right seeing none; Pat Campfield will walk us through Section 2, the science activities.

MR. PATRICK A. CAMPFIELD: Thank you, Bob. The first new activities are a couple of studies to address data priorities or deficiencies in stock assessments, including conducting a Jonah crab tagging study to evaluate migration stock connectivity and growth. Also, we've identified a need to do a better job in collecting recreational discard size composition data for red drum through the development of that assessment this year.

We've touched on the benchmark stock assessments that are due for completion next year; they include red drum, weakfish, black sea bass, spot and croaker. We also plan assessment updates for bluefish, and northern shrimp; and will continue development of the sturgeon stock assessment due in 2017. The Commission also has a primary role in peer reviews. Those on the schedule for 2016 include organizing reviews for weakfish, spot and croaker; and to coordinate with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center on the review of black sea bass. Another new activity planned for 2016 is on southern flounder, to conduct a workshop where we get the South Atlantic states together to do a couple of things, one, review the North Carolina state specific assessment of southern flounder and also compile available data among the South Atlantic states to determine the feasibility of a regional stock assessment.

Task 2.17 describes a new product that we're developing – a fishery independent survey database to promote efficient assessment report compilation to develop write ups that we

can recycle between assessments and save some time. Bob mentioned this earlier, through the Management and Science Committee, to have them develop a Commission policy on management risk and uncertainty; and provide to the Policy Board for consideration in 2016.

Another new task for the Management and Science Committee is to review and update the Conservation Equivalency Policy to reflect current practices. Under research set aside activities, the Commission plans to monitor and participate in the Mid-Atlantic Council's redesign of their RSA program to ensure state interests are incorporated.

Moving down to NEAMAP, the northeast area monitoring and assessment program, the only new activity there is to conduct an NEAMAP Summit, where we get all of their working groups and technical committees together with the NEAMAP Board to assess the need for changes in the program structure and committee functions.

Under SEAMAP in the South Atlantic, again continue the activities that we've done for a number of years; but also implement the new priorities and surveys outlined in their new five-year plan spanning 2016 to 2020. Also Bob mentioned SK funding that has been given to the Commission through NOAA.

One of the smaller projects is to purchase and deploy new electronic measuring boards for a couple of the SEAMAP surveys. Under fish tagging research, a couple of new tasks or activities, including trying to do a better job in securing telemetry tagging data for use in assessments, including the sturgeon assessment; and also to initiate a multi-estuary striped bass telemetry tagging study to evaluate migration rates and contributions of each estuary to the coast-wide stock. That is also supported by NOAA SK funds.

Under fish aging activities, each year the Commission has a workshop focusing on improving the aging practices and consistency

among states and university labs on a given species. This year it will focus on American eel. We will also initiate a coast wide black drum age sampling plan to address a deficiency in age data for older black drum. That is also being supported by NOAA Fisheries funds.

Task 22.11 is follow-up work on an observer program that has been funded through ACCSP for the last five years. We will stop that sort of add-on observer sampling that focused on the small mesh otter trawl fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic, and take the time in 2016 to do an evaluation of the impacts of those additional observer data on a number of different target species and their assessments.

Under the Commission's Socioeconomic Committee, we've talked a little bit about that earlier this week. A couple of tasks to highlight, develop, and provide basic socio-economic information for inclusion in fishery management plans; and also implement the Socio-economic Committee's new role as a Steering Committee in guiding socioeconomic studies, including the one for menhaden that we have put forward.

Under fish passage, just one new activity for that workgroup to assist in developing targets for the FERC relicensing on the Santee Cooper River System. Moving down to Strategy 2.4, which describes multispecies work and ecosystem-based management to continue work on development of ecological reference points and align with the board approved management objectives for menhaden through the development of Amendment 3.

Under the Fishing Year Technology Workgroup, Toni touched on this but that workgroup will do an evaluation of the efficacy of lobster trap design to insure escapement from derelict gear. Finally, we intend to hold a commissioner workshop on management risk and uncertainty; likely at the summer meeting in 2016.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Any questions for Pat on the science activities for next year? All

right seeing none; we're moving along. Goal 3 is a Law Enforcement Committee activities, and Toni will take that one.

MS. KERNS: Under Strategy 3.1 we will continue to evaluate and report on compliance issues for all commission species, but focusing in on newly implemented regulatory measures; including the striped bass, American eel, and Jonah crab fisheries. We'll also continue to assist with the Mid-Atlantic Council in identifying strategies to address violations and the legal harvest involved in RSA programs.

Under Task 3.2, we'll be incorporating the newly approved this year guidelines for resource managers into board meetings and management documents. We'll also be evaluating the effectiveness of current case tracking systems for monitoring and responding to evolving enforcement needs.

The committee will also exchange information and best practices related to the enforcement of protected and endangered species regulations. They will develop an enforcement strategy to ensure compliance efforts in the offshore lobster conservation management areas. That is all for Law Enforcement.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Any questions on Goal 3? Seeing none; you're on a roll, Toni, so take Goal 4, habitat.

MS. KERNS: Excellent. Habitat, there are some more significant changes. I have a couple additional slides. The Habitat Committee, the Chairs reviewed the action plan but the full committee did not until yesterday, and they made a couple of changes along the way. Under Strategy 4.2, well actually this should be under Strategy 4.1; I apologize.

Previously, they had prioritized and publicized important habitat types for the commission managed species. That activity had actually already been completed, so they're updating it to say review existing reference documents for ASMFC managed species to identify gaps or

updates needed to describe important habitat types.

Under Task 4.3, as Bob indicated before the Habitat Management Series was not completed this year, so back to aquaculture and then they will be identifying for next year. It may not end up being climate change. They also added a couple others, either updating the living shorelines document or doing innovative wetland restoration techniques; so they'll make that decision next year, though. Then under Strategy 4.4, previously, it said maintain habitat and managers network for dissemination of information; instead they're going to make improvements as necessary to the habitat web pages, and then continue using social media to connect with regional and local decision makers and otherwise more effectively disseminate the work of the Habitat Committee.

For Task 4.6, previously they were going to make recommendations to mitigate climate change impacts on habitat; and instead they are going to make recommendations on FMPs that address the changes in fisheries habitat as a result of climate change. The last two changes are instead of identifying the inconsistencies in state coastal regulatory planning programs and develop recommendations for improvements, they are going to identify ongoing practices in the state coastal regulatory planning that address climate change impacts for this year.

Then next year they will follow up with recommendations on improvements. That will be for 2017 that they'll follow up. Then the last one is just to increase communication on ecosystem-based management with ASMFC committees to find overlap with fish habitat related issues, and that was not listed at all before. That's it.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Any questions?

MR. WILLIAM A. ADLER: Toni, back on 4.6, what is meant by those two tasks there? What do you envision is going to happen? Change response strategies and including habitat, and

then it goes about climate change and stuff like that. What could we possibly do? I mean, do we have something in mind?

MS. KERNS: I am assuming - I was not at the Habitat meeting yesterday and I only got ten minutes to talk to Lisa Havel, who was our habitat coordinator last night about this issue. My assumption is that they will be looking at different planning bodies that the states have, whether that be with their fisheries group or their coastal zone management groups and looking at anything that they have in place that could possibly impact fisheries habitat and those regulatory issues related to climate change.

Providing that information is just a piece of information, and then following up in the next year they may have improvements or recommendations for improvements on regulations that impact fisheries habitat and climate change for that first one. For the second one, as ecosystem-based management issues come up within different FMPs and species boards, I think that they are trying to engage more with either the Plan Development Teams the TCs the PRTs with information on habitat related issues for ecosystem-based planning.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Sound good, Bill? You give? All right he gives, we win.

MR. ADLER: Uncle.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Any other questions on habitat activities for Toni? At the end of this process when you consider approval, it will be with the new wording that Toni had up on the screen rather than what was distributed prior to the meeting. Seeing none; Goal 5 is outreach, and Tina will handle that one for us, please.

MS. TINA L. BERGER: I will only identify the new issues, and we will continue to do all the work that we have been doing this year and prior years. Under Goal 5.1, we started work this

year on developing some information to include in aquaria up and down the coast. We are actually going to try and get into those aquaria with a focal point of New England, Baltimore, and North Carolina aquaria.

Under that same goal we are going to continue to promote and communicate about our stock assessment processes and the outcome of those processes with increased web page online availability of board presentations on benchmark stock assessments, with an emphasis next year on weakfish, black sea bass, croaker, red drum, and spot.

Under 5.2 we will publish and distribute the 2015 annual report. We will continue to prepare stock assessment overviews for stakeholder and media use, with an emphasis again on weakfish, black sea bass, croaker, red drum and spot. Under 5.3 we will further enhance our media training through a formal media training workshop for science and ISFMP staff to improve communication skills and strengthen promotion of Commission's key messages.

Lastly, under 5.4 we have instituted this year a tracking and performance benchmarks for the website, and we will monitor those actively next year in terms of how well we're doing in reaching a broader constituency and effectively communicating ASMFC's missions, programs and activities.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Questions for Tina on Goal 5 Outreach? John Bull, please.

MR. JOHN M. R. BULL: It is not so much of a question, but it is more of, I guess an ask here. Tina, when you're reaching out to aquaria, would you consider the Virginia aquarium, which is in Virginia Beach here. It might be a good venue for you as well.

MS. BERGER: That is a great idea and I will include it in the list of aquaria that we outreach to.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: We'll make that change; anything else on Goal 5? Seeing none; I'll run through Goal 6 fairly quickly. This is the Outreach and Capitol Hill activities and the Legislative Agenda for the Commission that Deke and I work on with our lobbyists - I'm sorry, government relations firm Blank Rome, they are not lobbyists, and they tell me that a lot.

A lot of these activities are ongoing, so I'm not going to go through them in great detail; it is just continuing to make contacts on Capitol Hill and communicate our budget priorities and communicate the legislative interest of the states. The folks in the Executive Committee know this. But we formed what is called a Funding Working Group. That is a group that is putting together a survey and evaluating the state budgets, characterizing those budgets, characterizing the shortfalls in state budgets.

We're using that as a foundation for communicating with Capitol Hill on the issues that the states are facing right now with budget issues and trying to convey the importance of investments in fisheries science and fishery management. We're going to continue to work with the Great Lakes Commission, Gulf Commission and Pacific Commission on working as a group of states going up to the Hill, speaking for the four coasts; hopefully with one voice, and it's a pretty effective way of meeting with the legislative and appropriations staff on the Hill, so we'll continue that. We'll continue to update all the commissioners on pending activity on the Hill. If there are hearings or bills that are moving along we'll continue to update you all on those. We'll continue to work on serving on MAFAC and all the other committees that I sit on, MARFIN and others to promote the perspective of ASMFC to the coast.

I think that's it other than the last item there is, as I mentioned earlier, return on investment is one of our big selling points on Capitol Hill. We try to let the folks on the Hill know that better fisheries management, there is an economic return. If you invest a little bit hopefully we get more out the other end of the process.

We'll continue to do that and Deke and I will be on the Hill as much as possible and as much as appropriate. Anytime anyone wants to go on the Hill, let us know we'll gladly take you up there on a field trip. That's it for Goal 6, any questions? All right, seeing none; Laura will handle Goal 7 for us please.

MS. LAURA C. LEACH: Again, I'm going to run through Goal 7, which is; the Fiscal Stability and Efficient Administration of the Commission. Most of the tasks are ongoing; however, we do have some new things that we're going to do next year; one is respond to the recommendations from our recent audit regarding improvements to commission travel documentation, management of staff late balances and linking staff salaries to source grants.

My CPA is definitely cracking down on travel, looking at everything. If I'm bugging you guys that is because he's bugging me. Sorry, it's just the way it goes. He may have done our last audit this year, because he does not like to an OMB-133 Audit. We're his only OMB-133 client and that requires extra certification for him. I don't know for sure, but I may be looking for a new auditor for next year.

A lot of the rest of the things we're going to be doing have to do with finalizing the whole APAIS process with new staff, both in the states and in the Commission office, as well as updating state agreements as vetting becomes available, which we'll be doing in the next couple of months.

If necessary, we will be incorporating the new ACCSP governance structure into existing Commission structure and updating guidance documents and procedures. We're going to be exploring the cost of the Commission providing health insurance benefit to retired Commission staff and provide options to the Executive Committee for consideration.

We are intending to insure adequate administrative staff support, including new

hires if necessary to manage the additional significant workload that is associated with increased contracts and cooperative agreements. Our budget is going to be over 15 million dollars next year. We intend to conduct a commissioner workshop on both management risk and uncertainty, as well as meeting management skills.

We're going to conduct a meeting, management training for committee chairs and we have started doing this but we will continue it well into 2016; and that is consulting a human resources attorney to insure our liability is addressed for Commission employees working in our members states. It is much more complicated than just having employees in the D.C. area. That is the end of my Goal.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Any questions on Goal 7 for Laura? Seeing none; that is the presentation of the Action Plan, Louis. We also distributed a budget associated with this action plan. All the activities in here we were able to fit into our current budget level.

We should be able to complete all these activities without having to make any significant tradeoffs from the activities that we already had planned. The biggest unknown with the budget is what would happen if we need to do something with the ARM model, but as I said earlier, we'll bring that back to this group, should the technical folks say the ARM model needs to be reworked.

MR. MILLER: Bob, if I could, he's in conference with Laura right at the moment. If I could direct your attention back to Page 23, the Task 5.3.2; Conduct Media Training Workshop for Science and ISFMP Staff to Improve Communication Skills, just a suggestion, some of us are getting a little older.

Commissioners would also benefit perhaps from an updating of our skills in the use of media; Twitter, Facebook that kind of thing. You might want to consider offering that to commissioners as well, if there are any that

would want to avail themselves of a little training in that regard.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Thanks Roy, we can look into that and maybe make something available during one of our quarterly meetings, sort of attendance is optional and if you want to learn some more about it, you can.

MR. ADLER: On the proposed action plan budget list, you have Atlantic sturgeon and there is \$24,800.00 and I was just wondering; that is one of the big dollar items here of projects we're into. What would be \$24,000.00 on sturgeon?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: That's a good question. When there is a full moratorium, why do you need to spend money, right? It's to support the stock assessment work. There is a benchmark stock assessment going on right now with the goal of a peer review in 2017. Atlantic sturgeon is a coast wide board, and the Technical Committee is large, very large, because there are some inland folks, some saltwater folks. It is an expensive group to get together, so we'll bring them together a few times to further the stock assessment.

MR. ADLER: Okay, so that is just on sturgeon. Okay.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any other general questions, specific questions on the Action Plan? If not, I would like a motion to approve the 2016 Action Plan.

MR. DOUGLAS E. GROUT: I would make a motion to approve the 2016 Action Plan and budget.

CHAIRMAN DR. DANIEL: Motion by Doug Grout, second by Malcolm Rhodes. Is there a discussion on the motion? Is there any objection to the motion? **Seeing none; the motion carries.** Thank you. I should have made that so I could win a motion this week. Dang, I didn't even think about that.

OTHER BUSINESS

Is there any other business to come before the Business Session? Doug.

MR. GROUT: Yes, Mr. Chairman or ex-Chairman. I have one other issue and it is on the leadership.

CHAIRMAN DR. DANIEL: Ouch!

MR. GROUT: I would like to turn that over to our Executive Director, Robert Beal.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've got to get adjusted and start calling him that instead of you. I just want to, on behalf of everyone here, recognize Louis, and thank him for the last four years of service; two years as Vice Chair, two years as Chair. Louis is one of the folks that gave me my job, so I've got to be really nice to him and I appreciate that.

I'm a relatively new Executive Director, but the bulk of my time as Executive Director has been working for Louis. If you want to do something fun, work for Louis as an Executive Director, it's a wild ride. It's good. It's a lot of fun. You never know what he's going to call you with, but it is going to be entertaining and it's going to be good to work with.

It has been great working with Louis, and I appreciate all the patience he's given me, and everything he has taught me over the last four years. I appreciate everything that he's done for the Commission. He's done a lot of great things. We bought you a crystal clock that is engraved, Dr. Louis B. Daniel III, with appreciation the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Chairman, 2013 through '15; Vice-Chair, 2011 through 2013. We'll give you this as a bit of a thank you for your last four years, so thank you.

CHAIRMAN DR. DANIEL: Thank you very much. (Applause)

ADJOURNMENT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: The next board is Coastal Sharks and that will start around ten after three.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 o'clock p.m., November 4, 2015.)