



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0749

Dr. Michael Armstrong Named 2024 Captain David H. Hart Award Recipient

Arlington, VA – At its 2024 Spring Meeting in Arlington, Virginia, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented Dr. Michael P. Armstrong, Deputy Director of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF), the Captain David H. Hart Award for 2024 for his many notable scientific and management contributions to the betterment of the fisheries of the Atlantic coast. The Commission instituted the Hart Award in 1991 to recognize individuals who have made outstanding efforts to improve Atlantic coast marine fisheries. The Hart Award is named for one of the Commission’s longest serving members, who dedicated himself to the advancement and protection of marine fishery resources, Captain David H. Hart, from the State of New Jersey.

As Deputy Director at MA DMF, Mike is responsible for overseeing the Division’s programs in fish biology, recreational and diadromous fisheries, and stock assessment and surveys, as well as supervising the Cat Cove Marine Laboratory. Over three decades at the Division, he has contributed to numerous Commission technical and stock



From Left: ASMFC Chair Joe Cimino, Executive Director Bob Beal, AAE Recipient Mike Armstrong and ASMFC Vice Chair Dan McKiernan

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.

assessment committees and later began serving on many management boards, including more than a few times as chair.

Mike is well-known for his commitment to scientifically justified management decisions, both at home in Massachusetts and around the Commission table. He draws upon his background in fish biology, marine ecology, data analysis, and stock assessments as a foundation for sound management. He's willing to make the hard, sometimes unpopular decisions to safeguard the health of the resource. Examples for northern shrimp, striped bass, and river herring come to mind. To support this philosophy of science-based decision making, he recently reorganized the Division's fisheries managers and stock assessment scientists to be under the same roof to ensure a constant flow of information.

Mike's passion for applied research to address fisheries management questions is evident in a long list of publications in fisheries science and his endless initiatives to tackle knowledge gaps. In recent years, he has set into motion plans to investigate cod stock structure and site fidelity, understand and assess striped bass release mortality, examine black sea bass spawning behavior, and research winter flounder maturity and habitat use, among others. Mike was personally responsible for the creation of the Division's Age & Growth Lab that provides state staff as well as state and federal partners fish ageing data that are critical to stock assessments. This lab has been a major contributor to standardizing and advancing ageing techniques to improve regional stock assessments.

By way of his leadership and encouraging other state staff to engage in research and publish, Mike has grown the Division's contribution to the scientific literature dramatically. He has helped attract and develop some of the best talent in fisheries science at the Division and created partnerships with numerous institutions to increase the Division's productivity and reach. He serves as mentor to fellow researchers, committee members, and Commission staff, and continues to lecture to university classes to produce the next wave of fact-driven fisheries scientists and managers.

His mark on the management of recreational fisheries in Massachusetts is of particular note. He has elevated the Division's focus on recreational fisheries to equal that of commercial fisheries. Mike has focused attention on improving the quality of recreational data collection and catch estimation, and shaped the Division's use of recreational permit fees to address critical recreational fisheries needs and give back to anglers with public access improvements.

Mike has grown to be a leading voice around the management table in supporting scientific advice for sound, defensible decision-making. He's able to build consensus on actions with this as his beacon. In accepting the award, Mike humbly stated, "I just show up everyday and do what I think is right."

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