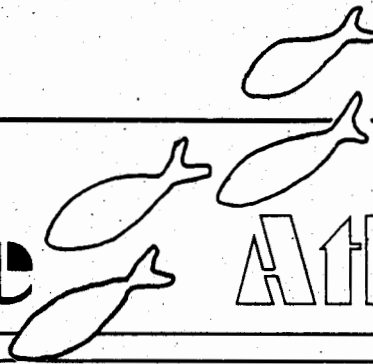

Habitat Hotline



Atlantic

Issues of Concern For Atlantic Marine Fish Habitat

March 1994, Issue No. 1

Welcome!

Welcome to *Habitat Hotline - Atlantic*, the newsletter for fishermen and other individuals concerned about protecting marine fish habitat of the Atlantic coast. Our goal is to provide a forum for habitat issues of importance to east coast fisheries, alert individuals to the need for habitat protection, and highlight opportunities for participation in the protection of fisheries habitat.

Hotline will be published monthly for the next six months, and then switch to a bimonthly schedule. We are still refining our setup, so don't be surprised if our looks change a little during the next few issues. If you have ideas about ways we can be more effective, please call us at (202) 452-8700; we've already incorporated a few great suggestions. *Habitat Hotline - Atlantic* is a product of the Fishermen Involved in Saving Habitat (F.I.S.H.) Education Program which is sponsored by the ASMFC Habitat Program and supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sportfish Restoration Funds.

ASMFC Who?.....Why Habitat?

The directive of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC or Commission) is clearly stated in the compacting agreement which was approved by Congress when the Commission was formed in 1940. As outlined in this document, the Commission exists to promote the better utilization of marine, anadromous and shell fisheries of the Atlantic seaboard by development of a joint program for the promotion and protection of these fisheries. So for the last 50 years, the Commission has provided a forum for state marine fishery management agencies to work towards a united approach in marine fisheries management.

Fisheries Management - The ASMFC's fishery management program has focused on interjurisdictional species, or those which migrate from state to state. Each individual state agency is responsible for managing the marine fish species which reside in their state's waters, including embayments and the area from shore out to three miles offshore. A seasonally migratory species like bluefish is subject to varying size and catch regulations as it crosses state boundaries, and the harvest of one state can have a profound effect on the amount or size of fish available to other states along its migration route.

The ASMFC has had varying success in the management of

these migratory species. In certain instances and for a variety of reasons some states have had difficulty implementing all the harvest restrictions set forth in the jointly developed fishery management plans. During December 1993 federal legislation was passed which mandates that each state implement all plan requirements. It is anticipated that required implementation of fishery management plans by every state will significantly enhance the ability of the ASMFC to fulfill its directive, but another snag in the process has been identified, with which the Commission is still grappling.

Habitat Destruction in Critical Proportions - The chronic destruction and degradation of coastal fish habitat has become a major concern among fishery managers. For example, coastal wetlands are the primary spawning and nursery areas for 75% of economically important fish species, yet tens of thousands of acres of this valuable habitat are lost annually. In the ASMFC's fishery management plan for winter flounder, analyses showed that habitat degradation can impact winter flounder stocks as severely as excessive fishing pressure.

A Habitat Committee for the ASMFC was created in 1991 to address these concerns and determine the most effective role for the Commission to play in protection of fisheries habitat.



Since ASMFC and its member marine fishery management agencies have little or no regulatory power when it comes to habitat protection, the Committee focused its efforts on implementation of an educational program in 1993, and participation in the development of marine habitat protection policies and legislation. Some of the issues addressed during 1993 include ocean dumping of contaminated sediments, reauthorization of the Clean Water Act, and incorporation of habitat protection issues in Commission fishery management plans.

The ASMFC's Habitat Program is separated fiscally from the Commission's fishery management activities, although the programs are otherwise closely linked, complementary, and designed to fulfill the Commission's directive. The development of an effective Habitat Program together with a stronger fishery management program leads the Commission with a hopeful outlook for healthier interjurisdictional marine fish stocks into 1994.

Success!

New York Fishermen Help Improve Shellfish Habitat in Peconic Bay

Based on recommendations developed by a task force which included local fishermen, New York State Governor Mario Cuomo directed the Department of Transportation to investigate options for reducing stormwater runoff from state roads into Peconic Bay.

"Stormwater runoff has been determined to be the most significant source of coliform contamination in Peconic Bay," stated Larry Cantwell, task force member and ASMFC Commissioner.

After several local studies fingered stormwater runoff as the key culprit in coliform pollution contaminating shellfish beds and bathing beaches, Long Island's five easternmost communities developed runoff containment plans in order to improve water quality in Peconic Bay and adjacent areas. The leaching basins constructed by

Southampton Township for a cost of approximately \$50k improved water quality in Fish Cove so dramatically that an area previously closed to shellfish harvest allowed a harvest of one million shellfish in 1993.

Because of the dramatic results in the Town of Southampton, the governor appointed East End Environmental and Economic Task Force recommended that state roads also be improved to include leaching basins or other runoff reducing technology. This was one of 44 recommended ways to improve the economy and preserve the environment of Eastern Long Island included in a report produced by the task force in November 1993. Roland Clark, President of the Long Island Inshore Trawlerman's Association was one of a number of fishermen represented on the Task Force. Governor Cuomo's directive to the New York State D.O.T. was issued in February of this year.

F.I.S.H. Habitat Education Program - Protecting Your Fishing Future

by Fran Recht, PSMFC

At the 1991 Baltimore symposium on coastal fish habitat, "Stemming the Tide," the loss of fish habitat to development and pollution was called the "single greatest long-term threat to the future of the marine fisheries of the United States." Education was named its greatest remedy: "Education may be the single most important consideration in halting the loss of fishery-supporting habitat..." The nation's citizenry is in need of high quality, factual information about the values of wetlands, clean and abundant water, and habitat capable of supporting marine wildlife and related industries.

The F.I.S.H. Habitat Education Program was initiated in 1991 to provide just such information. The program encourages those involved in teaching and recreational and commercial fishing to educate the public about fish habitat problems and remedies. The Pacific and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commissions conduct the program under the guidance of the Fishermen Involved In Saving Habitat (F.I.S.H.) aquatic education steering committee chaired by Bruce Cole, publisher of *National Fisherman* magazine. The program is funded by grants and donations from public and private sources.

The F.I.S.H. Habitat Education Program provides written materials, videotapes posters and displays that promote understanding of the values of estuaries, wetlands, riparian areas, and other habitats; the threats to these resources, and the actions needed to protect or restore them. The program

produces new materials but also promotes awareness of the many excellent programs and resources already available.

The Program has produced materials that have national applicability, and others that are regionally focused. Examples of nationally relevant materials include the "Save Our Schools!" poster, which features U.S. wetland-dependent marine fish species; a flyer promoting the prevention of small oil spills and other vessel-based pollution, and a 19 minute coastal habitat video, "No Safe Harbor." The video covers issues ranging from sewage in Boston Harbor to nonpoint source pollution in Chesapeake Bay to impacts of dams, logging and sediment contamination in the Northwest. With the initiation of the F.I.S.H. Habitat Education Program by the ASMFC, materials with an East Coast focus are becoming available. In 1995, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission will joint these educational outreach programs.

For more information on the program in the Atlantic area, contact the ASMFC at (202) 452-8700. For information on the Pacific Region, contact the PSMFC (503) 650-5400 or (503) 765-2229. For a copy of "No Safe Harbor", send a check for \$8 made out to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission to the F.I.S.H. Habitat Education Program, 45 SE 82nd Drive, Gladstone, OR 97027-2522.



Along the Coast

Maine

Fifty scientists and managers will be participating in a Habitat Workshop April 12-13, 1994 in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, sponsored by the Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine. The purpose of the workshop is to identify and prioritize the habitat related research needs for the Gulf of Maine. Areas of focus include water and sediment quality, biodiversity, fisheries resources, and coastal zone development. For further information, contact Dave Stevenson at the Maine Department of Marine Resources (207) 633-9500.

Georgia

A number of Georgia fishermen participated in a public meeting on harbor dredging issues held by the Maritime Administration in Savannah, Georgia earlier this year. The meeting or 'listening session' was held to obtain public and industry input over harbor dredging concerns. Primary among these concerns to fishermen are the contaminants present in the dredged sediments, which are most often slated for disposal at sea. Dioxin, PCBs and heavy metals are frequently found in the sediments, and are partially resuspended when dredged from the harbor or dumped at sea. These contaminants are then available for uptake into fish and other marine organisms. The Georgia fishermen, along with local conservationists, expressed their concerns about contaminated sediments and the possible fish, wildlife, and human health effects. Representatives of the local ports discussed the importance of open ports to commerce, and the need for consistency in permitting.

The Maritime Administration is preparing a report for President Clinton on these issues and others raised in the ten nationwide public meetings held this winter. Preliminary ideas will be prepared by April, and the report is expected to be finalized July. It is important that the report adequately portray fishermen's concerns. For further information, contact Dianne Stephan, ASMFC, (202) 452-8700 or Beth Milleman, Coast Alliance, (202) 546-9554.

What You Can Do - Write to Deputy Administrator Joan B. Yim, Maritime Administration, Department of Transportation, Room #7208, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, DC, 20590.

Action Items

☛ The Maritime Administration is preparing a report concerning harbor dredging operations (see p. 3 'Along the Coast - Georgia'). Write to Deputy Maritime Administrator Joan B. Yim to inform the administration of your concerns about contaminated sediments.

Deputy Administrator Joan B. Yim
Maritime Administration
Department of Transportation
400 Seventh St. SW
Washington, DC 20590

☛ Get on the mailing list for Habitat Hotline! Contact Habitat Coordinator, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 600, NW, Washington, DC, 20036.
PHONE: (202) 452-8700 FAX (202) 452-9110

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