

# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## *Fishery-Independent Data Use Policy*

Adopted by the ISFMP Policy Board as part of the revised ASMFC Technical Support Group Guidance and Benchmark Assessment Process

May 6, 2015

### **Introduction**

Data collected by fishery-independent sampling programs are commonly used in Commission stock assessments and provided to species stock assessment subcommittee and/or technical committee members. Providing raw data for Commission stock assessments is one purpose for which sampling information is used for the benefit of the public and Atlantic coast fisheries. Fishery-independent data also often support analyses outside of stock assessments, including analyses described in journal manuscripts with the intent of enhancing the scientific understanding of a species or ecosystem. Data used for both purposes may be collected by state agencies, federal agencies, or academic institutions. Because the Commission does not own fishery-independent datasets, the Data Use Policy defines how fishery-independent data are to be treated within and outside of Commission stock assessments. The objective of the Commission's Data Use Policy is to achieve the fullest potential for application of data to stock assessments in order to inform fisheries management decisions, while protecting the rights of data providers.

### **In Stock Assessments**

In many cases, public dollars in the form of federal or state agency funding are used to support fishery-independent data collection. Therefore, raw data are to be made available to the Commission staff and SAS committee members for stock assessment purposes by any agency or institution whose sampling programs are publicly funded. For stock assessments and other technical analyses used to provide scientific advice to fisheries managers, Principal Investigators (PIs) are asked to provide raw catch, biological, tagging and other data to the lead assessment analyst for a given species, along with metadata detailing current and past sampling methodology. Expert assessment scientists on committees will consider methods and account for changes when developing new indices or other inputs to assessment models, a procedure required and regularly conducted in all stock assessments. Analysts will also communicate with the sampling program leads to ensure data are being applied, or excluded, appropriately. Fishery-independent summary data, metadata, and resulting analyses will be included in Commission Stock Assessment Reports. Principal Investigators and their institutions will be acknowledged in Reports and other presentations of assessment results for Commission purposes. The Reports are considered grey literature and do not violate duplicative publishing rules of scientific journals.

### **Outside of Stock Assessments**

Committee members who have received copies of fishery-independent data as part of a Commission assessment may also be interested in using the data for non-assessment purposes. In such cases, authors of journal manuscripts or other analyses must communicate directly with all Principal Investigators/data collectors to obtain permission to use their data in journal publications or other non-assessment uses. Data requests from non-committee members to the Commission will be handled in the same manner; the requestor will be directed to the PIs to obtain raw data. The Commission is obligated to and will provide summary level data that are already included in assessment reports (e.g., index values, but not raw data). The Commission

Stock Assessment Scientist or Fishery Management Plan Coordinator involved in the stock assessment at hand should be contacted to obtain lists of data collectors and their contact information, or if there are questions about the Data Use Policy in general. Responsibility for contacting PIs will be with the authors of manuscripts or non-assessment analyses.

**Policy Relevance**

Failure to adhere to the Commission’s Data Use Policy jeopardizes the quality of stock assessments, in the event that PIs discontinue data sharing when their permission or rights in publishing have been violated. The Commission encourages open communication among committee members and scientists collecting fishery-independent data in order to both use data for fisheries assessment and management applications, and to promote the quality of research being conducted at fisheries science institutions.