



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Cooperative and Sustainable Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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Spud Woodward Elected ASMFC Chair

Arlington, VA – Today, member states of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) thanked Patrick C. Keliher of Maine for an effective two-year term as Chair and elected Commissioner Spud Woodward of Georgia to succeed him.

“I’m honored to be chosen by my fellow Commissioners to lead our efforts for the next two years, during which I hope we’ll once again be meeting in person. I look forward to concluding our introspective examination of *de minimis* status and conservation equivalency so we’re confident that we have the proper balance between flexibility and accountability.

Allocation will remain one of our most contentious and potentially divisive tasks. However, I know the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect that’s the legacy of the Commission will lead us to decisions that are as fair and equitable as possible,” said Mr. Woodward.

Mr. Woodward continued, “I want to thank outgoing Chair, Pat Keliher for his steady hand on the tiller during a tumultuous two years, when he faced challenges unlike those of any of his predecessors. Newly elected Vice-chair Joseph Cimino and I will strive to emulate his success working with our stakeholders, state, federal, and academic partners, Congress, and especially Bob Beal and the outstanding staff to ensure *Cooperative and Sustainable Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries* is not just a vision statement but a reality.”

Under Mr. Keliher’s chairmanship, the Commission made important strides in furthering its strategic goals. Management accomplishments over the past two years include quick action by the states to end overfishing of Atlantic striped bass; implementation of ecological reference points to manage Atlantic menhaden; positive stock status for all four tautog populations after years of effort to rebuild the stocks; a new rebuilding amendment for bluefish; and the completion of benchmark stock assessments



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.

for American lobster, American shad, Atlantic cobia, and tautog. Further, advances in habitat conservation were made by the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) through its funding of seven on-the-ground projects, which will open over 40 river miles and conserve over 300 acres of fish habitat. ACFHP also partnered with the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and The Nature Conservancy to spatially prioritize fish habitat conservation sites through GIS mapping and analyses for the Atlantic region of the U.S. from Maine to Florida.

From a data collection and management perspective, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program also made progress under Mr. Keliher's leadership. The Program redesigned SAFIS eTRIPS, the first and currently only fisherman trip reporting application that meets One Stop Reporting initiative; and implemented state conduct of the Marine Recreational Information Program's (MRIP) For-Hire Survey and electronic data collection for MRIP's Access Point Angler Intercept Survey.

The majority of Mr. Keliher's chairmanship occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time in which his leadership truly shined. He maintained active communication with staff and fellow Commissioners, oversaw a seamless transition to virtual meetings, and consistently made decisions with the safety of Commissioners and staff in mind.

A native Georgian, Mr. Woodward has dedicated his life to marine fisheries management at the state and interstate levels. Now retired and serving as Georgia's Governor Appointee to the Commission, Mr. Woodward worked for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) for over 34 years, including serving as the Director of the Coastal Resources Division and Assistant Director for Marine Fisheries. In addition to his work with GA DNR and the Commission, Mr. Woodward has served on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council since 2018. In the Commission's 80-year history, Mr. Woodward holds the distinction of being the second Governor's Appointee to serve as Commission Chair and Vice-chair. The first being Captain David H. Hart.

The Commission also elected Joseph Cimino, Marine Fisheries Administrator for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, as its Vice-Chair.

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