



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Upcoming Meetings
page 2

From the Executive Director's Desk
Setting the Record Straight on Horseshoe Crab
page 3

Species Profile
Bluefish
page 4

ACCSP Staff Member Receives AFS Distinguished Service Award
page 6

Fishery Management Actions
American Eel
Atlantic Cobia
Atlantic Striped Bass
Mid-Atlantic Species
page 7

East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative Update
page 12

Employee of the Quarter
page 13

ASMFC Seeks Proposals for the Redesign of SEAMAP-SA Website
page 13

Comings & Goings
page 14



October 16-19

Beaufort Hotel
2440 Lennoxville Road
Beaufort, North Carolina

Preliminary Agenda

The agenda is subject to change. Bulleted items represent the anticipated major issues to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. The final agenda will include additional items and may revise the bulleted items provided below. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16

9 – 9:30 a.m. Atlantic Herring Management Board

- Set Quota Periods for the 2024 Area 1A Fishery
- Update from New England Fishery Management Council
- Elect Vice-Chair

9:45 – 11:45 a.m. American Lobster Management Board

- Consider 2023 Jonah Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment
 - Presentation of Stock Assessment Report
 - Presentation of Peer Review Panel Report

Upcoming Meetings

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 the deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

A.G. "Spud" Woodward (GA), Chair
Joseph Cimino (NJ), Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal,
Executive Director

Patrick A. Campfield,
Science Director

Toni Kerns,
Fisheries Policy Director

Laura C. Leach,
Director of Finance & Administration

Geoff White,
ACCSP Director

Tina L. Berger, Editor
Director of Communications
tberger@asmfc.org

703.842.0740 Phone
703.842.0741 Fax
www.asmfc.org
info@asmfc.org

October 6 (9 - 11 a.m.)

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Monitoring Committee and Technical Committee; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/10/2023/Summer-Flounder,-Scup,-and-Black-Sea-Bass-Monitoring-Committee-and-Technical-Committee/2218> for more information

October 2 (begins at 1 p.m.) - 5 (ends at Noon)

Atlantic Menhaden Ecological Reference Point Benchmark Stock Assessment Data and Methods Workshop; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/10/2023/Atlantic-Menhaden-ERP-Benchmark-Stock-Assessment-Data-and-Methods-Workshop-/2146> for more information

October 3 (begins at 9 a.m.) - 5 (ends at 1 p.m.)

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Yotel NYC, 570 10th Avenue, New York, NY; visit <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2023/october-council-meeting> for more information

October 16 - 19

ASMFC 81st Annual Meeting, Beaufort Hotel, 2440 Lennoxville Road, Beaufort, NC; visit <https://www.asmfc.org/home/2023-annual-meeting> for more information

October 19 (9 - 10 a.m.)

Recreational Demand Model Decision Support Tool Working Group; visit <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/recreational-demand-model-decision-support-tool-working-group-summer-flounder-black-sea-bass> for more information

October 23 - 26

Black Sea Bass 2023 Research Track Peer Review; visit <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/black-sea-bass-2023-research-track-peer-review> for more information

November 6 - 9

Red Drum Stock Assessment Workshop, Charleston Marriott, 170 Lockwood Boulevard, Charleston, SC

November 14 (begins at 9 a.m.) - 15 (ends at 1 p.m.)

Atlantic Menhaden Ageing Workshop, Beaufort, NC; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/11/2023/Atlantic-Menhaden-Ageing-Workshop/2124> for more information

November 16 (9 - 10 a.m.)

Recreational Demand Model Decision Support Tool Working Group; visit <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/recreational-demand-model-decision-support-tool-working-group-summer-flounder-black-sea-bass> for more information

November 30 (1 - 4 p.m.)

Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel, Portland, ME; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/11/2023/Northern-Shrimp-Advisory-Panel/2221> for more information

December 1 (9 a.m. - Noon)

Northern Shrimp Section, Portland, ME; visit <https://asmfc.org/calendar/12/2023/Northern-Shrimp-Section/2220> for more information

December 4 - 8

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Beaufort Hotel, 2440 Lennoxville Road, Beaufort NC; visit <https://safmc.net/events/december-2023-council-meeting/> for more information



Setting the Record Straight on Horseshoe Crab

For well over a year and increasingly over the past couple of months, horseshoe crabs – their stock status, management, and biomedical use – have been gaining greater media attention. Unfortunately, much of the coverage has propagated inaccurate and misleading information. In this article, I hope to clarify the misinformation being circulated by the media regarding data confidentiality, stock status, management of Delaware Bay horseshoe crabs through the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework, and biomedical use.

Data Confidentiality – What Does it Mean?

In a series of stories by National Public Radio (NPR), it reported that the Commission, state governments, harvesters, and biomedical companies are willfully withholding information about how many crabs are collected, bled, and released by the biomedical facilities. This information is not shared publicly because data from all fisheries (including biomedical data) is protected by state and federal laws which prohibit the sharing of data if any one entity (e.g., biomedical facility, harvester, dealer) can be identified. As a result of these laws, if there are fewer than three biomedical facilities or harvesters in a state, the state-level data cannot be shared publicly by the management body or state employees. Therefore, this information legally must be redacted or withheld unless confidentiality laws are changed. While each state does report these confidential data to the Commission, we are required to aggregate it to protect confidentiality. This is not ideal from a transparency or public trust perspective, but it is not uncommon in fisheries and the Commission handles confidential data routinely. In the case of horseshoe crab, biomedical data are aggregated across all the facilities on the US Atlantic coast and are publicly available as a coastwide total. Stock assessment scientists involved in the model development for horseshoe crab do have access to the confidential data and model runs are completed using both the confidential and nonconfidential data. Visit <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-216-100-protection-of-confidential-fisheries-statistics> for more information about data confidentiality.

Regional Stock Status

While articles often cite the findings of the International Union for Conservation of Nature as its primary source regarding the stock status of horseshoe crabs in the US, they rarely cite the results of Commission's peer-reviewed 2019 stock assessment and 2021 ARM Framework. The assessment finds populations within the Southeast region to be in good condition. Improvements in the Northeast region have shifted population condition from poor to neutral, while the status of the New York region population has trended downward from good, to neutral, and now to poor.

The 2021 ARM Framework found that the Delaware Bay population has been increasing. While no overfishing or overfished definitions have been adopted for management use, the ARM Framework estimated low fishing mortality and relatively high abundance, so therefore overfishing and an overfished status are unlikely for horseshoe crabs in the Delaware Bay region. Further, the results show abundance of both female and male horseshoe crabs in the Delaware region are at an all-time high during the assessment period. These findings are significant given this population provides important forage to migratory shorebirds. Notably, these findings are in sharp contrast to what is being reported by the media.

Management through the ARM Framework

Since 2013, the horseshoe crab bait fishery in the Delaware Bay region (New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia) has been managed under the ARM Framework to set harvest levels with consideration of the needs of migratory shorebirds. The ARM Framework was developed jointly by horseshoe crab and shorebird representatives from the Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and US Geological Survey in recognition of the importance of horseshoe crab eggs to migratory shorebirds stopping over in the Delaware Bay region. In particular, horseshoe crab eggs are an important food source for the red knot, which is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. A primary objective of the ARM Framework is to ensure that horseshoe crab abundance does not become a limiting factor for the population growth of red knots.

In 2021, further revisions to the ARM Framework were endorsed by an independent peer review panel as the best scientific information for the management of horseshoe crabs in the Delaware Bay Region that accounts for the forage needs of migratory shorebirds. These revisions included improvements to the Framework's population models for horseshoe crabs and red knots, and the incorporation of more sources of horseshoe crab removal data, including mortality due to the biomedical industry and commercial discards from other fisheries. Despite these advances and the positive status of male and female horseshoe crabs in the Delaware Bay region, the public, largely driven by concern about the status of the red knot population in the Delaware Bay, has advocated for zero female horseshoe crab harvest. Acknowledging this public concern, the Horseshoe Crab Management Board implemented a zero female horseshoe crab harvest limit in the Delaware Bay region for the 2023 season as a conservative measure. The Board will meet in October to consider the harvest recommendations recommended by the ARM Framework and set specifications for the 2024 season.

see FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK, continued on page 14

Species Profile: Bluefish

Bluefish Stock Recovery Continues with 7-Year Rebuilding Plan

Introduction

Bluefish are a migratory oceanic fish found throughout most of the world's oceans in tropical to subtropical conditions. A popular sports fish along the Atlantic coast, bluefish are voracious predators, known to kill prey in excess of what is needed for food. They school by size class with larger older fish commonly referred to as alligators by anglers for their impressive size, razor sharp teeth, and aggression when caught. Smaller younger bluefish, often called snappers, can be caught closer to shore making them accessible to a wide variety of anglers.

Bluefish are managed jointly by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) in state waters (0-3 miles from shore) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) in federal waters (3-200 miles from shore). The Bluefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), passed in 1989, represented the first joint FMP between a fishery management council and interstate commission.

In response to the 2019 stock assessment, which found the stock to be overfished, the Council and Commission developed the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment (Amendment 2) with the goal of rebuilding the stock to the target level by 2028. In addition to a rebuilding plan, Amendment 2 established new allocations between the commercial and recreational sectors, implemented new commercial allocations to the states, revised the process for quota transfers between sectors, and revised how the management plan accounts for management uncertainty. The 2023 stock assessment indicated the stock is not overfished nor is overfishing occurring. While the stock is no longer overfished, it will remain under a rebuilding plan until it reaches the target level of spawning stock biomass.

Life History

Bluefish are a migratory, pelagic species found throughout the world in most temperate coastal regions, except the eastern Pacific. Evidence from tagging studies suggests that bluefish form three distinct seasonal migratory groups. The first travels north to New England in the spring and summer as water temperatures rise and move south in autumn and winter to the South Atlantic Bight. A second group make the same north/south seasonal migration, but the migration is contained within the Mid-Atlantic Bight. The third group has an inshore-offshore migration along Florida's Atlantic coast. Interestingly, migration patterns appear to be size-related because bluefish generally school by size, with schools covering up to tens of square miles.

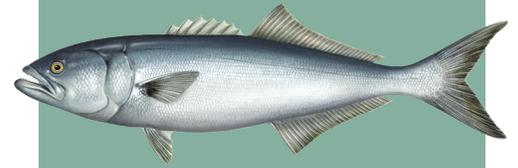
Bluefish are fast growers and opportunistic predators, feeding aggressively on almost any prey they can capture. Over 70 species of fish have been found in their stomach contents, including butterfish, mackerel, and lobster. Razor sharp teeth and a shearing jaw movement allow bluefish to ingest large portions, which increases the maximum prey size bluefish can catch. Bluefish live up to 12 years and may exceed 39 inches and 31 pounds.

Bluefish reach sexual maturity at age two and spawn offshore from Massachusetts through Florida. Discrete groups spawn at different times and are referred to by the season in which they spawn: the spring-spawned cohort and the summer-spawned cohort¹. Research has also identified a fall-spawned cohort, demonstrating an expanded and prolonged spawning season. The cohorts mix extensively on the fishing grounds and probably comprise a single genetic stock.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Bluefish are predominantly a recreational fishery, with recreational landings accounting for approximately 86% of total harvest in recent years. As bluefish migrate seasonally along the Atlantic coast, anglers from Maine to Florida target these predators near inlets, shoals, and

Species Snapshot



Bluefish

Pomatomus saltatrix

Species Range: Widely distributed around the world in tropical and subtropical water

Management Unit: Maine through Florida

Common Names: Snappers, baby blues, choppers, elf, tailors

Interesting Facts

- Voracious predators, known to be cannibalistic
- Fish exhibit a feeding behavior known as the bluefish blitz, where large schools of big fish attack bait fish at the surface, churning the water like a washing machine.
- As in all extremely active fish predators, the digestive enzymes in bluefish are powerful and their meat can spoil quickly, so they need to be cooked soon after capture.

Largest and Oldest Recorded

- 31 lbs., 12 oz., 12 years old

Average Age/Length at Maturity

- 2 years/18.6 inches

Average Age/Length at Recruitment

- 0 years/8.98 inches

Stock Status

- Not overfished and not experiencing overfishing; remains under a rebuilding plan until it reaches the target level of spawning stock biomass

¹ A cohort is defined as a group of fish spawned during a given period, usually within a year; also known as a year-class or age-class.

continued on next page

rips, where they come to feed on large schools of bait. The species' aggressive feeding behavior and the fight they put up on the line make it a very popular sportfish. Recreational harvest peaked at 166 million pounds in 1986, but quickly declined in the 80s and 90s to its current 10-year average recreational harvest of 21 million pounds. Recreational harvest between 2018 and 2022 are the lowest 5 years in the time series, a result of low availability and a reduced bag limit. Instead of landing bluefish for consumption, many anglers target bluefish for sport, although recent reports from the for-hire industry suggest anglers are becoming more interested in landing bluefish for consumption. Catching and releasing bluefish contributes to fishing mortality because an estimated 9.4% of released bluefish don't survive. As a result, recreational dead discards comprise on average 17% of total recreational removals by weight within the last 10 years.

Commercial harvesters target bluefish using a variety of gears including trawls, gillnets, haul seines, and pound nets. Commercial landings decreased from 13.5 million pounds in 1985 to 7.4 million pounds in 1999. Since a state-specific quota system was implemented in 2000, commercial landings have averaged around 5.5 million pounds annually. As a result of reduced quotas in response to the overfished status, commercial landings reached a time series low of 2.3 million pounds in 2022. North Carolina, New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island's commercial fisheries landed the most bluefish in 2022.

Stock Status

In 2022, a research track stock assessment² for bluefish was conducted making a number of notable data and model changes designed to improve the assessment and reduce uncertainty. These changes were incorporated into the 2023 management track stock assessment³ which found the stock was not overfished nor experiencing overfishing in 2022. Although the stock is no longer overfished, bluefish will remain in the rebuilding plan outlined in Amendment 2 until the stock rebuilds to the target level of spawning stock biomass (SSB). SSB in 2022 was estimated to be 116 million pounds, which is 60% of the SSB target of 194 million pounds. Fishing mortality in 2022 was estimated to be 0.152, below the fishing mortality threshold of 0.239. Although fishing mortality was below its threshold between 2018-2022, fishing mortality exceeded its threshold, meaning overfishing had occurred, throughout the majority of the time series. The largest recruitment event occurred in 1985, and recruitment was lowest in 2016. Excluding 2022, recruitment has been below the time series average over the past 10 years. Recruitment has increased each year since 2019 and was above average in 2022. A management track stock assessment is scheduled for 2025.

Atlantic Coastal Management

In August 2021, the Commission and Council approved Amendment 2, the Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment to the Interstate FMP for Bluefish. Amendment 2 establishes a 7-year rebuilding plan to be achieved through a constant fishing mortality approach. The intent of this approach is to gradually increase the acceptable biological catch (ABC) over time to allow ample time for the stock to rebuild. Ideally, this gradual approach will provide stability for the recreational and commercial fisheries. Rebuilding progress will be evaluated through management track stock assessments every two years. The Amendment allocates 86% of the resource to the recreational fishery and 14%

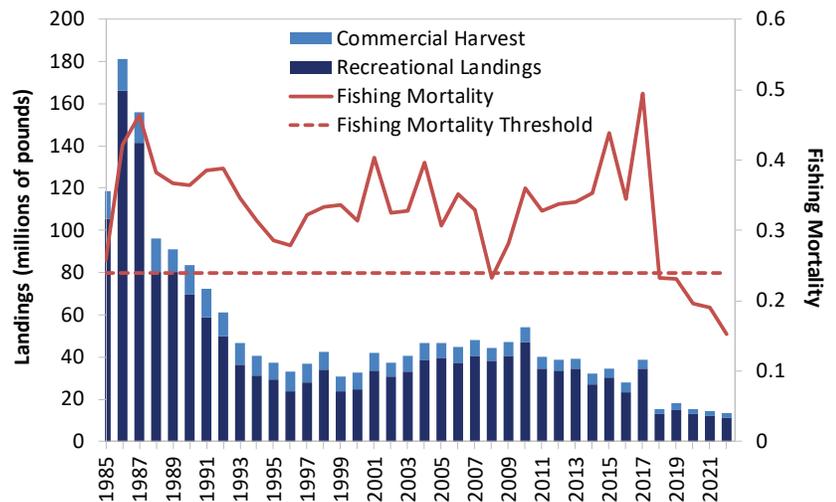
² Research track stock assessments are not used for management, but are designed to incorporate larger revisions to management track stock assessment models

³ Management track assessments provide routine, scheduled, and updated advice to directly inform management

continued on next page

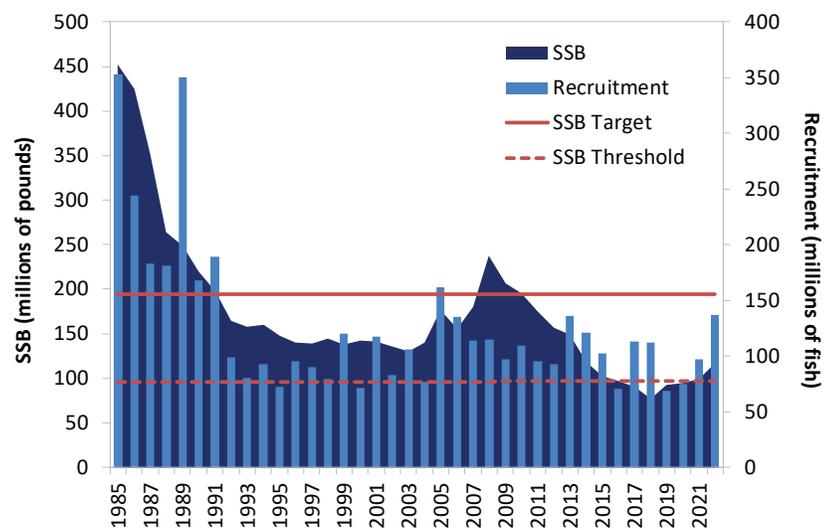
Bluefish Commercial and Recreational Landings

Source: Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2023



Bluefish Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) and Recruitment

Source: Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2023



to the commercial fishery. The Amendment also revises state-by-state commercial allocations to better reflect the current distribution of the stock and the needs of the states' commercial fisheries. The Amendment allocates a baseline quota of 0.1% to each state, and then assigns the rest of the commercial quota based on landings data from 2009 to 2018. Recognizing that several states will be losing quota during a time when the coastwide commercial quota is already at an historic low, the Amendment phases-in the allocation changes over 7 years in order to reduce short-term economic impacts to the affected commercial fishing industries. State allocations will be reviewed by the Commission and Council within 5 years.

Upcoming Actions

Once rebuilt, bluefish will be subject to the Harvest Control Rule in Addendum II to the Bluefish FMP. The Harvest Control Rule includes changes to the process for setting recreational measures (bag, size, and season limits) and modifications to the recreational accountability measures. These changes have also been approved for and applied to summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass regulations through Addendum XXXIV to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP. When taking action on the Harvest Control Rule, the Council and Policy Board agreed that the chosen approach, the Percent Change Approach, should have a sunset period of 2025 with a new action ready for implementation by 2026. The Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Recreational Measures Setting Process (RMS) is currently being developed to replace the Harvest Control Rule. In late 2023/early 2024, the Council and Commission will begin work on the Recreational Sector Separation and Catch Accounting Amendment for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. This Amendment was initiated to consider options for managing for-hire fisheries separately from other fishing modes, and options related to enhanced recreational catch accounting. For more information, please contact Chelsea Tuohy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at ctuohy@asmfc.org.



Photo (c) Captain John McMurray, www.nycflyfishing.com



Julie DeFilippi Simpson (left) receives 2023 Distinguished Service Award from AFS President, April Croxton.
Photo (c) P. Turcik

ACCSP Staff Member Receives AFS Distinguished Service Award

ACCSP Deputy Director, Julie DeFilippi Simpson was the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from the American Fisheries Society (AFS) at its annual business meeting on August 23, 2023, in Grand Rapids, MI. AFS is the world's oldest and largest organization dedicated to strengthening the fisheries profession, advancing fisheries science, and conserving fisheries resources. AFS offers awards to its members and partners for unique contributions that directly or indirectly impact fisheries science. The Distinguished Service Award was established in 1980 and recognizes outstanding contributions of time and energy for special projects or activities by AFS members.

The award was announced by AFS President Elect, Dr. Cecil Jennings. "Julie has provided remarkable service to AFS leading to outstanding results on multiple special projects and activities in recent years. She literally saved the AFS 2021 annual meeting from utter chaos, served on a team of three to develop the new AFS logo, which was presented to the Governing Board in 2021, and played major roles in developing the 150th anniversary logo and the Baltimore 2021 meeting logo. Julie manages all of her AFS projects on top of her professional position as the Deputy Director of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. Her other accomplishments are many and she richly deserves the Distinguished Service Award!"

Julie stated that she "was humbled to be honored and grateful to be among such amazing colleagues and previous award recipients. I am also thankful for the support that I have received from the ACCSP and ASMFC."

"Julie's contributions to AFS have furthered its mission, highlighted marine fisheries, and simultaneously expanded a national focus on fisheries data standards and data management," noted Geoff White, ACCSP Director.

American Eel

In August, the American Eel Management Board accepted the American Eel Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use. The Report indicates the stock is at or near historically low levels due to a combination of overfishing, habitat loss, food web alterations, predation, turbine mortality, environmental changes, and toxins, contaminants, and disease. Since completion of the first Commission American eel stock assessment in 2005, available data have not allowed overfishing or overfished determinations to be made. Based on several trend analyses, the stock is considered depleted, consistent with the findings of the 2012 and 2017 assessments.

In response to the assessment findings, the Board initiated an addendum to consider changes to the coastwide yellow eel harvest cap. Historically, the coastwide cap of 916,473 pounds was set based on the average landings from 1998 to 2010. The benchmark assessment proposes a new tool for setting the coastwide cap based on abundance indices and catch. The addendum will consider using this tool to recommend a range of coastwide caps and management options.

The Board also initiated an addendum to address the quota for Maine's glass eel fishery. Maine's glass eel quota has been set at 9,688 pounds since 2015. However, a new addendum is needed to establish a quota for the 2025 fishing year and beyond.

The Plan Development Team will begin work on both documents, with a progress update provided to the Board in October and Draft Addenda presented for Board consideration in February 2024. The Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report can be found at https://asmfc.org/uploads/file/64da82f5AmEelBenchmarkStockAssessment_PeerReviewReport_Aug2023.pdf. An overview of the assessment will be found at https://asmfc.org/uploads/file/64caa25eAmericanEelStockAssessmentOverview_August2023.pdf. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Atlantic Cobia

In August, the Coastal Pelagics Management Board approved a total harvest quota for the Atlantic migratory group of cobia of 80,112 fish for the 2024-2026 fishing seasons. This total quota results in a coastwide recreational quota of 76,908 fish and commercial quota of 73,116 pounds.

The total quota level was first approved in February 2020 for the 2020-2022 fishing seasons. In 2021, the Board changed the cobia quota timeframe from 2020-2022 to 2021-2023. Based on the recommendation from the Technical Committee and in the absence of a new stock assessment, the Board has set the 2024-2026 total harvest quota equal to the 2023 total harvest quota of 80,112 fish.

A new stock assessment for the Atlantic migratory group of cobia is scheduled for 2025, with the potential to inform 2026 or later total harvest quotas. The Board will meet in October 2023 to consider



Photo (c) Brian Gratwicke

new recreational management measures for some states. For more information, please contact Chelsea Tuohy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at ctuohy@asmfc.org.

Atlantic Striped Bass

The Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board extended the current emergency action through October 28, 2024, or until the implementation of Addendum II to Amendment 7 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan. In May, the Board approved a 31-inch maximum size limit for the 2023 recreational fishery to reduce harvest of the strong 2015-year class. The 31-inch maximum size limit applies to all existing recreational fishery regulations where a higher (or no) maximum size applies, excluding the May Chesapeake Bay trophy fisheries which already prohibit harvest of fish less than 35 inches. All bag limits, seasons, and gear restrictions remain the same. All states and jurisdictions implemented the required measure by July 2, 2023.

The emergency action responds to the unprecedented magnitude of 2022 recreational harvest, which is nearly double that of 2021, and new stock rebuilding projections, which estimate the probability of the spawning stock rebuilding to its biomass target by 2029 drops from 97% under the lower 2021 fishing mortality rate to 15% if the higher 2022 fishing mortality rate continues each year.

The extension of the emergency action provides the Board time to develop and finalize Draft Addendum II, which will consider 2024 management measures designed to reduce fishing mortality to the target. Specifically, the Draft Addendum will propose options for the ocean recreational fishery, including modifications to the slot limit with harvest season closures as a secondary non-preferred option. It will also propose options for the Chesapeake Bay recreational fisheries, as well all commercial fisheries, including maximum size limits.

The Board made changes to the Draft Addendum's options and sought additional analyses on the impacts of those revised options to the rebuilding of the resource. The Board will review a revised Draft Addendum and consider its approval for public comment in October at the Commission's Annual Meeting. If approved, the document will be made available for public comment and the

continued on next page

Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Specifications for 2023-2025

	Commercial Quota <i>millions of pounds</i>			Recreational Harvest Limit <i>millions of pounds</i>		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
Summer Flounder	15.27	8.79	8.79	10.62	6.35	6.35
Scup	14.01	21.15	18.80	9.27	13.18	11.84
Black Sea Bass	4.80	6.00	N/A	6.57	6.27	N/A
Bluefish	4.29	2.42	3.03	14.11	11.96	15.70

states/jurisdictions will conduct public hearings to solicit public comment throughout the fall/early winter. It's anticipated that the Board will consider public comment and take final action in January at the Commission's Winter Meeting. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org.

Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Specifications

In August, the Commission's Bluefish, Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Boards met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to adopt specifications and commercial measures.

The accompanying table summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL) for all four species (2023 values are provided for comparison purposes). The Council will forward its recommendations to NOAA Fisheries for final approval, while the Commission's actions for state waters are final. Following are additional details about each species.

Summer Flounder 2024-2025 Specifications

The 2023 management track assessment indicates that the summer flounder stock was not overfished but overfishing was occurring in 2022. While the overfishing limit has not been exceeded in recent years, it appears the projections associated with the previous assessment were overly optimistic. The assessment has been slightly underestimating fishing mortality and overestimating stock biomass, the effect of which was compounded by adding three years of data to the assessment model (2020-2022). In addition, stock recruitment has been below average since 2011 and the high estimate of 2018 recruitment in the last assessment was revised downward to recent below-average levels with the new assessment results.

The Board and Council considered two approaches for setting the acceptable biological catch (ABC) for summer flounder – one with varying ABCs for each year, and one with a constant ABC across 2024-2025. The Council and Board reviewed Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations using both approaches and ultimately selected the constant approach, resulting in an ABC of 19.32 million pounds for both years. This represents a 42% decrease compared to the 2023 ABC. Under the recently revised commercial/recreational allocations, 55% of the ABC is allocated to the commercial sector, and 45% is allocated to the recreational sector. After accounting for each sector's expected discards, the Council and Board adopted a commercial quota of 8.79 million pounds and a RHL of 6.35 million pounds for 2024 and 2025.

The Board and Council recommended no changes to the commercial measures for 2024. These include a 14" minimum fish size, minimum mesh size (5.5" diamond or 6" square mesh), and mesh exemption programs. Work is currently underway to evaluate the commercial minimum mesh size exemption programs and the commercial minimum mesh size regulations. A final report is expected in December 2023. Any potential changes adopted as a result of these evaluations would likely be effective in 2025 or later. Recreational bag, size, and season limits for upcoming years will be discussed during the December 2023 Council and Board meeting.

Scup 2024-2025 Specifications

The 2023 management track assessment found that scup was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2022. For 2024, the Board and Council approved

an ABC of 43.82 million pounds. This represents a 48% increase compared to the 2023 ABC. Under the recently revised commercial/recreational allocations, 65% of the ABC is allocated to the commercial sector and 35% is allocated to the recreational sector. After accounting for each sector's expected discards, this ABC results in a commercial quota of 21.15 million pounds and an RHL of 13.18 million pounds. For 2025, the Board and Council approved an ABC of 39.74 million pounds, resulting in a commercial quota of 18.80 million pounds and an RHL of 11.84 million pounds. The Board and Council agreed that no changes are needed to the commercial management measures, which can be modified through the specifications process. Recreational bag, size, and season limits for upcoming years will be discussed during the December 2023 Council and Board meeting. For more information, please contact Chelsea Tuohy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at ctuohy@asmfc.org.

Black Sea Bass 2024 Specifications

No updated stock assessment information is available for black sea bass this year; therefore, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) agreed to set the 2024 ABC equal to the 2023 ABC. The Board and Council made no changes to the annual catch limits or annual catch targets compared to 2023. They approved a 2024 commercial quota of 6 million pounds, a 25% increase from 2023, and a 2024 RHL of 6.27 million pounds, a 5% decrease from 2023. While these values are based on the same methodology used to set the 2023 measures, updated dead discard projections for each sector led to a change in the quota and RHL. An updated management track stock assessment is

continued on next page

anticipated to be available in late 2024 for setting future specifications.

The Board and Council also set a black sea bass commercial in-season closure buffer for the first time. Previously, the commercial black sea bass fishery has been required to close in-season once the coastwide quota is projected to be landed. Under changes to the regulations made through Amendment 23, which are expected to be effective on January 1, 2024, the entire commercial fishery would close in-season once landings are projected to exceed the coastwide quota plus an additional buffer of up to 5%. The intent of this buffer is to minimize negative economic impacts when coastwide quota is reached before all states have fully harvested their allocations. While the Board and Council agreed to use a 5% commercial in-season closure buffer for 2024, it is not anticipated it will be needed given the coastwide quota has not been exceeded for well over a decade and given recent landings patterns. However, the Board and Council agreed that in the unlikely event that it is needed, a 5% buffer could have some socioeconomic benefits with little risk to stock status.

The Board and Council agreed that no changes are needed to the other commercial measures which can be modified through the specifications process. Recreational bag, size, and season limits for 2024 will be discussed during the December 2023 Council and Board meeting. For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org.

Bluefish 2024-2025 Specifications

The 2023 management track assessment found that bluefish was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2022. However, the stock was not fully rebuilt to the biomass target. Based on the results of this assessment, bluefish remains under the Commission's and Council's approved 7-year rebuilding plan, which began in 2022, due to the stock's previously overfished status.

Based on the SSC's recommendation, the Bluefish Board and Council approved

an ABC of 17.48 million pounds for 2024 and 21.83 million pounds for 2025. These ABCs are 43% and 29% lower than the 2023 ABC, respectively. Members of the Bluefish Board and Council supported the Monitoring Committee's progress on the development of a tool to convert qualitative and quantitative sources of management uncertainty into a quantitative value. This tool is intended to help the Monitoring Committee determine whether uncertainty buffers are needed each year between the annual catch limits and the annual catch targets for each sector. For 2024-2025, the Bluefish Board and Council agreed with the Monitoring Committee's recommendation that no buffer for management uncertainty is needed. After accounting for each sector's expected discards, the Bluefish Board and Council adopted a commercial quota of 2.42 million pounds in 2024 and 3.03 million pounds in 2025 and an RHL of 11.96 million pounds for 2024 and 15.70 million pounds for 2025.

The Bluefish Board and Council also reviewed recent recreational harvest trends and recommended status quo 2024 recreational management measures given that recent recreational harvest has been very close to the 2024 RHL. The status quo measures include a 5 fish bag limit for the for-hire sector and a 3 fish bag limit for private anglers. Because bluefish is still under a rebuilding plan, the percent change approach under the recreational harvest control rule was not applied. For more information, please contact Chelsea Tuohy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at ctuohy@asmfc.org.

Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda

The Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) and Council met to review progress and discuss next steps for a framework/addenda to consider revisions to the process for setting recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. This is a follow-on action to the Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda, which implemented the Percent

Change Approach for setting recreational measures. The Percent Change Approach was used for the first time to set 2023 bag, size, and season limits for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. It may be used for bluefish once that stock is no longer under a rebuilding plan. In taking final action on the previous framework/addenda, the Policy Board and Council agreed the Percent Change Approach should sunset by the end of 2025 with the goal of implementing a longer-term process for setting recreational measures starting with the 2026 measures.

During this meeting, the Policy Board and Council agreed to change the name of this new management action from "Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda 2.0" to "Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda" to better describe the scope of the action. They also provided staff with guidance on further development of alternatives within this action, including further development of options to refine the Percent Change Approach, consideration of the appropriate starting point for measures under all alternatives, and greater consideration of the fishing mortality rate resulting from the recreational fishery when setting measures. They agreed that further consideration should be given to the implications of the alternatives for management uncertainty buffers, as currently defined in the Fishery Management Plan. The Policy Board and Council supported the plans to use the Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation model to assist with development of this action. They also agreed that the SSC should assist with development of this action. The Council will develop specific terms of reference for SSC involvement at a later date with input from the Policy Board.

For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer or Chelsea Tuohy at tbauer@asmfc.org or ctuohy@asmfc.org, respectively.

9:45 – 11:45 a.m. American Lobster Management Board (continued)

- Consider Acceptance of Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for Management Use
- Consider Annual Data Update of American Lobster Indices
 - Update on Addendum XXVII Trigger Index
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Reviews and State Compliance Reports for American Lobster and Jonah Crab for the 2022 Fishing Year
- Consider Terms of Reference and Timeline for the American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Consider Pursuing a Management Strategy Evaluation for American Lobster

1 – 1:45 p.m. Tautog Management Board

- Consider Technical Committee Report on Commercial Tagging Program

1 – 5 p.m. Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) Steering Committee

2 – 4 p.m. Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Consider Results of Stakeholder Survey on Delaware Bay Management Objectives
- Set 2024 Delaware Bay Harvest Specifications
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports for the 2022 Fishing Year

4:15 – 5 p.m. Shad and River Herring Management Board

- Consider Update to New Hampshire River Herring Sustainable Fishery Management Plan and Proposal to Reopen Fishery
- Progress Update on River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports for the 2022 Fishing Year

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17

8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Coordinating Council

- Consider FY2023 ACCSP Project and Administrative Proposals for Funding
- Consider SciFish Policies for ACCSP's Citizen Science Mobile Application
- Program and Committee Updates

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. ACFHP Steering Committee (continued)

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Presentation on NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey Design and Estimates

1 – 5 p.m. Law Enforcement Committee

- Update on Tautog Tagging Program
- Update on Atlantic Striped Bass Draft Addendum II
- Update on Guidelines for Resource Managers on the Enforceability of Fishery Management Measures
- Discuss New England Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Efforts to Reduce Sturgeon Bycatch in the Spiny Dogfish Fishery
- Review Wildlife Officer Exchange Program
- Update on Species Management Boards

1:30 – 3 p.m. Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Progress Update on Ecological Reference Point Benchmark Assessment
- Review Virginia Chesapeake Bay Menhaden Study Design Report
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports for the 2022 Fishing Year Review

3:15 – 4:45 p.m. Coastal Pelagics Management Board

- Set 2024-2026 Cobia Recreational Measures
- Update on Cobia Benchmark Stock Assessment Timeline
- Elect Vice-Chair

5 – 5:45 p.m. Coastal Sharks Management Board

- Set Specifications for 2024 Fishing Year

continued on next page

- Update on NOAA Fisheries Ongoing Management Actions
- Elect Vice-Chair

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18

8 – 10 a.m. Executive Committee

- Review and Consider Approval of FY23 Audit
- Discuss Per Diem Rate for Meals and Incidentals
- Legislative Update
- Future Annual Meeting Update

8:30 – 11:45 a.m. Law Enforcement Committee (continued)

10:15 – 11:45 a.m. Business Session of the Commission

- Consider 2024 Action Plan
- Review Draft 2024-2028 Strategic Plan
- Elect Commission Chair and Vice-Chair

11:45 a.m. – 1 p.m. Captain David H. Hart Award Luncheon

1 – 1:45 p.m. Spiny Dogfish Management Board

- Review Atlantic Sturgeon Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team Alternatives
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports for the 2022-2023 Fishing Year

1 – 5 p.m. Habitat Committee

- Status Updates: Habitat Management Series, *Habitat Hotline Atlantic*, and Habitat Fact Sheets
- Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Update

2 – 5 p.m. Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Consider Approval of Draft Addendum II for Public Comment

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19

8:30 a.m. – Noon Habitat Committee (continued)

8:30 – 9:30 a.m. American Eel Management Board

- Progress Update on Development of Draft Addenda VI and VII
- Advisory Panel Report
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports for the 2022 Fishing Year

9:45 – 11:45 a.m. Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board

- Consider Revised Conservation Equivalency Policy and Technical Guidance Document
- Stock Assessment Progress Reports
- Committee Updates
 - Law Enforcement Committee
 - Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership
 - Habitat Committee
- Review Compliance Findings, if necessary

12:15- 1:30 p.m. Sciaenids Management Board

- Review Annual Update to Black Drum Indicators
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Reviews and State Compliance Reports for the 2022 Fishing Year
- Progress Update on Red Drum, Spot, and Atlantic Croaker Benchmark Stock Assessments

Public Comment Guidelines

For issues that are not on the agenda, management boards will continue to provide opportunity to the public to bring matters of concern to the board's attention at the start of each board meeting. Board chairs will ask members of the public to raise their hands to let the chair know they would like to speak. Depending upon the number of commenters, the board chair will decide how to allocate the available time on the agenda (typically 10 minutes) to the number of people who want to speak.

For topics that are on the agenda, but have not gone out for public comment, board chairs will provide limited opportunity for comment, taking into account the time allotted on the agenda for the topic. Chairs will have flexibility in deciding how to allocate comment opportunities; this could include hearing one comment in favor and one in opposition until the chair is satisfied further comment will not provide additional insight to the board.

For agenda action items that have already gone out for public comment, it is the Policy Board's intent to end the occasional practice of allowing extensive and lengthy public comments. Currently, board chairs have the discretion to decide what public comment to allow in these circumstances.

In addition, the following timeline has been established for the submission of written comment for issues for which the Commission has NOT established a specific public comment period (i.e., in response to proposed management action).

1. Comments received 3 weeks prior to the start of the webinar (**September 25**) will be included in the briefing materials.

2. Comments received by 5 PM on Tuesday, **October 10** will be included in the supplemental materials.

3. Comments received by 10 AM on Friday, **October 13** will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting.

The submitted comments must clearly indicate the commenter's expectation from the ASMFC staff regarding distribution. As with other public comment, it will be accepted via mail and email.

East Coast Fishery Management Organizations Release Suite of Potential Actions to Help Managers Respond to the Effects of Climate Change on Marine Fisheries

Over the past two years, marine fishery management organizations along the U.S. East Coast have been exploring governance and management issues related to climate change and fishery stock distributions. This effort recognizes the profound impact that climate change is having on our ocean ecosystems and coastlines and the need to plan for how fishery management organizations and coastal communities can best adapt to these changes in a thoughtful and deliberate way.

Throughout the multi-stage scenario planning process, hundreds of stakeholders helped generate four distinct “scenarios,” each describing a possible future for East Coast fisheries, coastal communities, and fisheries management. The capstone to this initiative was a Scenario Planning Summit, held in February 2023, which brought together representatives from the three East Coast Regional Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and NOAA Fisheries. During the Summit, participants used the scenarios as a platform from which to develop a set of potential governance and management actions that could help prepare fishery management organizations for future challenges related to climate change.

Scenario Planning Outcomes

The main themes and potential actions that emerged during this process are summarized in two documents: the Summit Report and a Potential Action Menu. The Summit Report summarizes the discussions that occurred at the Summit, while the Potential Action Menu builds upon the Summit Report by suggesting possible next steps for the management organizations to consider as they plan for the future. The Potential Action Menu is organized around three overarching themes: (1) cross-jurisdictional governance; (2) managing under increased uncertainty; and (3) data sources and partnerships. Each theme’s potential actions are prioritized, with high priority given to those that could be quickly or easily implemented or that the fishery management organizations viewed as important issues to address in the near-term. The accompanying table provides a summary of high priority potential actions under each theme.

The Potential Action Menu is intended to be an evolving document, used as a planning tool to guide development of priorities and a place to capture future issues and ideas. Over the next several months, fishery management organizations will meet individually and collectively to discuss how best to integrate the high priority items into actions.

Next Steps

Two new groups are being formed to help support the implementation of scenario planning outcomes.

- The East Coast Climate Coordination Group will be responsible for tracking progress toward implementation of potential actions, promoting prioritization of actions (jointly or by individual management organizations), estimating resources needed, and supporting coordinated implementation.
- The Climate Innovation Group will track information and changes relevant to East Coast fisheries, identify ideas that are worthy of consideration by the Coordination Group, and identify possible actions to undertake.

Overarching Themes and High Priority Potential Actions

Theme	High Priority Potential Actions
Cross-Jurisdictional Governance Refers to ways in which governance structures and processes may need to be modified to address changes in species distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate Council committee structure, use, and decision-making • Evaluate Advisory Panel representation • Develop joint management agreements to clarify roles and increase efficiency • Improve coordination across NOAA offices and regions
Managing Under Increased Uncertainty Environmental changes may mean that historical conditions can no longer be used to predict the future, increasing uncertainty in management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ecosystem-level contextual information that can be considered in management to incorporate climate information into decisions • Streamline fishery management plan documentation and rulemaking
Data Sources and Partnerships Coordination of accurate and timely data between all stakeholders and partners will play a large role as we adapt to changing conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand study fleet, include recreational fisheries, and ensure data are used • Use survey mitigation around offshore wind to transition to industry-based surveys or other survey platforms • Improve the use of existing data

Scenario Planning Toolkit and More Information

A Scenario Planning Toolkit has been created to support ongoing conversations about how climate change is affecting fisheries. The toolkit consists of materials to provide guidance to other stakeholders who may wish to undertake their own scenario work, with resources including a set of overview slides, worksheet templates, draft agendas for various types of sessions, guidance on different scenario approaches, and guidelines for facilitators.

Additional information about the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative, including contact information for current core team members, is available at <https://www.mafmc.org/climate-change-scenario-planning>.



New England
Fishery Management
Council



NOAA
FISHERIES





In a well-deserved recognition of her dedication and exceptional contributions, Heather Power, ACCSP Senior Data Coordinator, was presented with the Employee of the Quarter Award for her pivotal role in various essential projects for ACCSP. Since joining the Commission in July 2015, Heather has consistently fostered an environment of teamwork and collaboration, with continuous commitment to the projects she undertakes.

During Heather's tenure at the Commission, she has been an indispensable member of the ACCSP Data Team, spearheading critical data loads, while also taking on additional projects such as leading an intricate Fisheries Information System data validation initiative, which involved orchestrating an extensive week-long workshop. Her adept project management skills and facilitation abilities shone throughout the process. Heather's leadership and strong collaboration skills have been a tremendous asset in maintaining engagement and accountability among ACCSP's partners for their bi-yearly landings data submissions. Her meticulous approach has ensured that ACCSP has consistently met its project timelines several years in a row, significantly enhancing the decision-making processes for fishery managers, scientists, and stakeholders alike.

Another one of Heather's recent commendable achievements was her pivotal role in the successful deployment of real application security protocols within the Data Warehouse. Thanks to Heather's diligence and collaboration with colleagues, the team was able to seamlessly overhaul row-level security measures for confidential data access, benefiting both internal and external users. Similarly, as a senior member of the Data Team, Heather's mentorship has set an exemplary standard. She fosters an environment of cohesion, teamwork, and openness, not only within the team but also in her relationships with partner agencies. Heather's experience and attention to detail have significantly enriched the quality of data available through ACCSP systems and, in turn, the stock assessment and management processes that depend on the data.

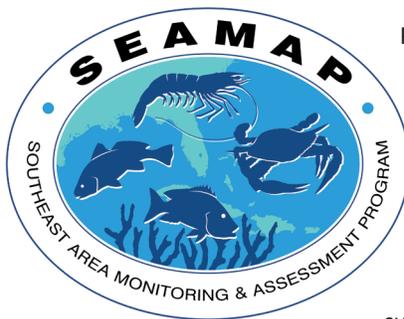
Heather's recognition as the Employee of the Quarter stands as a testament to her exceptional commitment, technical proficiency, and collaborative spirit. As EOQ recipient, Heather received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in her personal record. In addition, her name is on the EOQ plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Heather!

ASMFC Seeks Proposals for the Redesign of SEAMAP-South Atlantic Website: Proposals Due October 13, 2023

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking a web developer to design and host a new website for the South Atlantic portion of the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP). SEAMAP aids in the collection, management, and dissemination of fishery-independent data throughout coastal waters in the southeastern US. The primary goal of this website is to serve as an information hub for the public and state agency members to access resources pertaining to southeastern coastal surveys. The website should heighten the understanding and use of SEAMAP surveys and the importance of fishery-independent data, while also being a repository for information.

The Commission requires a developer who has demonstrated experience in managing website projects and expertise with best practices regarding successful website design, development, and deployment. The ideal developer for this project should be able to design and execute a dynamic and modern website that helps showcase the purpose of SEAMAP to the public while acting as an

active resource for SEAMAP survey managers. The ideal developer will also be willing to work closely with the Commission to create a website that is easy to update by the web manager.



Proposals should provide a cost estimate that takes into account all design and functionality elements from the RFP, including security measures and hosting. The chosen developer may have an opportunity to work on similar future projects for the Commission.

Applicants seeking to apply to the RFP must submit, as a single file, an electronic proposal by email no later than midnight EST on October 13, 2023 to Jainita Patel at jpatel@asmfc.org. Please see the RFP for complete proposal details, qualifying requirements, and submission instructions. The RFP is available at https://asmfc.org/files/RFPs/SEAMAP_Website_RFP.pdf.

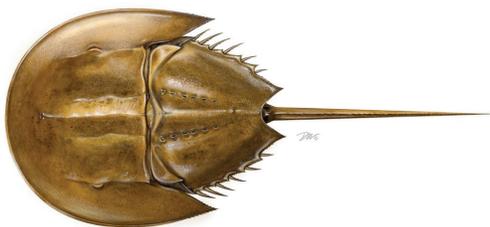
For more information, please contact Jainita Patel, Fisheries Science Coordinator, at jpatel@asmfc.org or 703.842.0720.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK, continued from page 3

Biomedical Use

In its management process, the Commission often must take into account the needs of multiple user groups. For horseshoe crabs, this includes the biomedical industry. The media has reported the number of horseshoe crabs collected by the biomedical industry is increasing and the actual number may be misreported or unknown. Some of the articles suggest these two factors could put horseshoe crab and red knot populations in jeopardy. It is true the number of horseshoe crabs collected by the biomedical industry has increased in recent years, but these data are monitored by the states and Commission and included in the stock assessment. The Commission has an important responsibility to ensure that any harvest of horseshoe crabs allows for sustainable populations. This is why several biomedical mortality rates from 0-100% are tested as sensitivity runs in the model. The results indicate the mortality rate applied to the biomedical removals has a minimal effect on the overall population estimates of horseshoe crabs, the recommended harvest from the ARM Framework, or the status of the population.

We very much understand the public's interest and concern about the long-term sustainability of horseshoe crabs and migratory shorebirds. These issues are important to us too. That is why most of the Commission staff and those within the state marine fishery management agencies came into this field – because we are dedicated to managing marine resources for their sustainable use. I don't expect to change everyone's views about how best to manage horseshoe crabs. However, I hope, that by correcting the misinformation in the press, that people will be able to base their perspectives on the best available science and not be influenced by reporters who try to sway public opinion through incomplete reporting and misinformation. Fisheries are a shared resource and successful fisheries management involves the public, scientists, and state and federal agencies to collaborate and cooperate toward a common goal of sustainability.



COMMISSIONERS

TOM FOTE

This summer, after nearly four decades of service to the Commission, Tom Fote stepped down as New Jersey's Governor Appointee. Given his longstanding role, Tom became known as the on-site "functional historian" for the Commission. His long-range perspective put difficult decisions into context. Understanding the importance of bringing new members up to speed so they can quickly and constructively engage in the Commission process, Tom went out of his way to help new Commissioners understand the complexities of the organization and how to work through the sometimes-confusing maze of options. In the process, he became a knowledgeable and staunch fishery advocate, acting locally on behalf of his fellow New Jersey anglers, while also considering the needs of other states.

Throughout his tenure with the Commission, Tom was a staunch supporter of the Commission and its programs. We wish Tom fair winds and following seas as he and his wife Linda enjoy their well-deserved retirement.



JEFF KALIN

In July, Jeff Kaelin was appointed New Jersey's Governor Appointee to the Commission. Jeff has a long history of working on the water and being involved in the commercial fishing industry. He started his career with the US Coast Guard and moved onto commercial fishing on northern shrimp, scallops, groundfish, and lobster. He later served as Executive Director of the Maine Sardine Council, Maine State Representative from 2002-2006, and as a member of the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. In 2011, Jeff relocated to Cape May, NJ, to work full time for Lund's Fisheries where he has responsibilities in the area of Government Relations for the Cape May facility and the East Coast fisheries used by the company. Currently, he is the chair of the Industry Advisory Board for the Science Center for Marine Fisheries (www.scemfis.org), a National Science Foundation Industry/University Cooperative Research Center that uses academic, recreational, and commercial fisheries resources to address urgent scientific problems limiting sustainable fisheries. Welcome aboard, Jeff!



STAFF

SKYE THOMAS

In mid-July, Skye Thomas joined the ACCSP staff as Fisheries Data Analyst. Initially, she will be working with the ACCSP Biological Committee and coordinating several data projects to load biological data from ACCSP partners. A native Virginian, Skye has a Bachelor of Science from Virginia Tech with a major in Fisheries Conservation with a Marine Focus. She recently completed her Master of Science in Marine Biology from the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Her field of study was on the effects of desiccation on Eastern oyster condition index, growth, and parasite load. Her experience in shellfish, aquaculture, and GIS will be valuable additions to the Data Team. Please join us in welcoming Skye.

