



**ASMFC**

# **FISHERIES** *focus*

Volume 17, Issue 6

August 2008

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1444 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C.

*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015*

## **ASMFC Summer Meeting August 19 - 21, 2008**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel Old Town  
901 North Fairfax Street  
Alexandria, Virginia  
(703) 683-6000**

### **Final Schedule**

**Please note:** The final agenda is subject to change. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of meetings. Interested parties should anticipate meetings starting earlier or later than indicated herein. If you intend to bring any meeting materials for use by a board or committee not included in the Commission's Summer Meeting Briefing Materials/CD-ROM, please bring 50 copies.

#### Tuesday, August 19, 2008

**8:00 AM - 10:00 AM** American Lobster Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *B. Culhane*
- Public Comment
- Review and Consider Approval of Draft Addendum XII, *T. Kerns* - FINAL ACTION
  - Update from Transfer Committee
  - Update on Database Funding
- Discuss Future Management for LCMA 3, *T. Kerns* – POSSIBLE ACTION
- LCMT Report for LCMA 1 Update, *T. Stockwell*
- Update on LCMA 6 V-Notch Program, *D. Simpson*
- Other Business/Adjourn

**10:15 AM - 11:30 AM** Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *J. Travelstead*
- Public Comment
- Technical Committee Report, *R. Wong*
- Review of Feasibility of Slot Limit
  - Review of Scup Data
- Draft Amendment 15 Discussion, *T. Kerns*
  - Update on Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Process
- Other Business/Adjourn

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**T**he 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 anadromous 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*

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Robert H. Boyles, Jr., (SC), Vice-Chair

John V. O'Shea, Executive Director  
Robert E. Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries  
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Laura C. Leach, Director of Finance & Administration

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## Upcoming Meetings

**9/8 - 12:**

ASMFC Technical Meeting Week, location to be determined.

**10/7 (9 AM - 4 PM):**

ASMFC Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, 217 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, South Carolina.

**10/8 (8 AM - 5 PM):**

ASMFC Atlantic Croaker and Red Drum Aging Workshop, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, 217 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, South Carolina.

**10/9 (9 AM - 5 PM):**

ASMFC Red Drum Technical Committee, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, 217 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, South Carolina.

**10/7 - 9:**

New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Hotel, Mystic, Connecticut.

**10/11 - 15:**

4th Annual National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration: Creating Solutions Through Collaborative Partnerships, Rhode Island Convention center, Providence, Rhode Island.

**10/14 - 16:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Ramada Inn, 1701 South Virginia Dare Trail, Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina; 252-441-2151.

**10/17 (9 AM - 5 PM):**

2008 Northeast Regional Tagging Symposium, University of New Hampshire campus in Durham.

**10/19 - 23:**

ASMFC 66th Annual Meeting, Rehoboth, Delaware.

**11/8 - 20:**

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Ferncroft, Danvers, Massachusetts.

**12/9 - 11:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Gurney's Inn, 290 Old Montauk Highway, Montauk, New York; 631-668-2345.

**2009**

**2/2 - 5:**

ASMFC Winter Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

*In Memoriam*  
**Philip R. Ruhle, Sr.**  
*August 1, 1957 - July 23, 2008*

*Husband*

*Father*

*Brother*

*Son*

*Grandfather*

*Uncle*

*Captain, F/V Sea Breeze*

*Council Member*

*Industry Advocate*

*NOAA Environmental Hero*

*Fisherman*

*Lost at sea when the F/V Sea Breeze  
capsized and sank 45 miles east of  
Atlantic City, New Jersey on July 23, 2008*



Philip R. Ruhle, Sr. (far right) with son and grandson

*From the Executive Director's Desk*



# Species Profile: Spot

## Short-Lived Fish Supports South Atlantic Fisheries & Serves as Important Prey Species

### Introduction

Spot directly support recreational and commercial fisheries in the South Atlantic and function as an important forage species in the region. The range of this short-lived species includes brackish and saltwater habitats predominately between the Chesapeake Bay and South Carolina. Annual variation in landings, typically composed of fish belonging to a single year class, is due in part to the prevailing environmental conditions at spawning and nursery sites. To date, a formal coastwide stock assessment of spot has not been conducted. The 1987 Management Plan identified data requirements to conduct a stock assessment to manage the resource more effectively. Small-sized spot remain a major component of the bycatch associated with seine, trawl, and pound net fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay and North Carolina, as well as that of the South Atlantic shrimp trawl fishery. However, substantial reductions in the magnitude of bycatch have occurred in the latter fishery. Upon the future completion of an assessment, additional management measures may be designed to protect the stock if necessary.

### Life History

Spot occur along the U.S. Atlantic coast in estuarine and coastal waters from the Gulf of Maine to Florida, although they are most abundant from Chesapeake Bay south to South Carolina. Spot migrate seasonally, entering bays and estuaries in the spring, where they remain until late summer or fall when they move offshore to spawn. Spot mature between the ages of two and three, at lengths of seven to eight inches. Their maximum life span is about six years, although fish older than four years are uncommon. Spawning takes place in the ocean from fall to early spring, and the post-larvae move into estuaries, utilizing low salinity tidal creeks where they develop into juveniles. As spot grow, they move toward higher salinity areas during the summer and early fall and offshore in the fall as water temperatures decrease. Those that summered in the northern portion of their range also move south in the autumn. Spot are opportunistic bottom feeders, eating mainly worms, small crustaceans and mollusks, as well as organic material. The post-larvae prey on plankton, but become bottom feeders as juveniles or adults. Predators such as striped bass, weakfish, summer flounder, bluefish, and sharks eat them in turn.

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Spot support commercial fisheries along the Atlantic coast, particularly from the Chesapeake Bay southward. They are harvested by a variety of commercial gears including haul seines, pound nets, gillnets, and trawls. Commercial catches fluctuated widely between 1950 and the early 1980s, ranging from 3.9 to 14.5 million pounds. Such variability is expected, because spot are a short-lived species and catch in most years consists of a single year class, the strength of which appears to be determined by environmental conditions that prevail on the spawning and nursery grounds in any particular year. Landings show less year-to-year variability from 1984 to 2005, ranging from 5.5 to 8.8 million pounds.



Photo courtesy of Virginia Marine Resources Commission

**Spot**  
***Leiostomus xanthurus***

**Common Name:** Norfolk spot, flat croaker, golden croaker, silver gudgeon, goody, chub, roach, jimmy, spot croaker

**Family:** Sciaenidae

**Management Unit:** Delaware - Florida

**Interesting Fact:**  
\* Only member of the drum family, which includes weakfish, red and black drum, and croaker, with a forked tail.  
\* Spot live to be older and attain a greater size in the northern part of its range.

**Largest Recorded:** 13.5 inches, 1 pound, 7 ounces (2004)

**Life Span:** 6 years

**Stock Status:** Unknown

Spot is a popular recreational species that is sought by anglers from Delaware Bay to northern Florida. Most of the Atlantic recreational harvest is taken within three miles of the coast, from shore or by private or rental boats rather than by party or charter boats. Recreational harvest of spot has fluctuated from a high of 6.9 million pounds in 1981 to a low of 1.6 million pounds in 1999. Over the last five years, recreational harvest has averaged 3.7 million pounds, and for the first time in 2006, recreational landings surpassed commercial landings.

### Stock Status

No coastwide assessment has been performed for spot; however, spot are a target or component of several state surveys using trawl, gillnet, or seine net to sample. Juvenile abundance indices (JAIs) have been highly variable. Juvenile abundance was below average in 2006 in the Delaware Estuary and the state's inland bays. With the exception of a few spikes in abundance, JAIs have generally declined in Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay and showed a slight downward trend in abundance in other Maryland Bays. Nearly consistent declines in juvenile abundance has occurred in Virginia's portion of the Chesapeake Bay since 1992, while abundance has fluctuated without trend in North Carolina's Pamlico Sound and other estuaries. An adult abundance index in North Carolina shows little fluctuation for the five years that the survey has been conducted.

In addition to these surveys, commercial and recreational catch-per-unit effort (CPUE) data provide indices of relative spot abundance. Since 1994, commercial CPUE has generally increased over time in Maryland, varied without trend in Virginia, and been relatively stable in North Carolina. Maryland recreational CPUE has generally decreased with a few spikes and a small amount of potential recovery in 2003-2005, while Virginia recreational CPUE has been variable around the time series average, exceeding it in 2005 and 2006, and North Carolina recreational CPUE has shown a general increase over time.

### Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

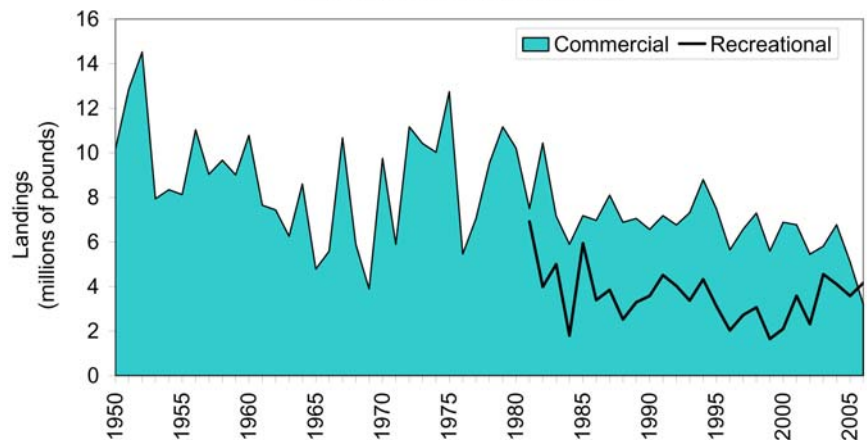
The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission adopted the Spot Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1987. The major problem addressed in the FMP is the lack of stock assessment data for effective management of the resource. Basic data requirements include information on recruitment, age, size, and sex composition, and variations in these characteristics over time and space. In addition, accurate catch and effort statistics are needed from the recreational and commercial fisheries to assess the effect of fishing activities on the population. Progress has been made on collecting these data elements, but more work remains to make an assessment possible.



Another problem addressed by the FMP is the bycatch (or inadvertent catch of undersized or unwanted fish) of spot in the southern shrimp trawl, pound net, long haul seine, and trawl fisheries. The magnitude of the problem was underestimated at the time of FMP development, although it was cited as having potentially significant effect on spot stocks. Since plan adoption, major progress has been made in the development of bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) for shrimp trawlers. In some tests, bycatch has been reduced by 50 to 75 percent, while retaining shrimp, through the use of a BRD. Although commercial fishermen did not readily accept use of them initially because of their expense and handling problems, the devices are now used by shrimpers throughout the South Atlantic states.

Unlike the majority of the Commission's FMPs, the Spot FMP does not contain mandatory management measures, but rather provides recommendations for states to follow in reaching the FMP's goals. Each year, the South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board is provided with a review of the Spot FMP, the current year's landings, and data from fishery independent surveys to determine whether revised management action is required. Upon the future completion of an assessment, additional management measures may be designed to protect the stock if necessary. For more information, please contact Nichola Meserve, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or nmeserve@asmfc.org.

**Annual Coastal Spot Landings**  
Source: Personal communication from NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, Silver Spring, MD, 2008



# ASMFC Summer Meeting Final Agenda (continued from page 1)

## 12:45 PM - 1:45 PM Weakfish Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *P. Augustine*
- Public Comment
- Weakfish Biological Sampling Plans for 2008, *N. Meserve* - ACTION
- Weakfish Stock Assessment Update, *J. Brust*
- Other Business/Adjourn

## 2:00 PM - 4:30 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *M. Gibson*
- Public Comment
- Technical Committee Report on Updated Biological Reference Points
- Consider Approval of an Updated Control Rule – POSSIBLE ACTION
- Discussion on Initiating an Addendum, *M. Gibson*
- Proposal for Alternative Management in the Delaware Estuary
  - Review Proposal
  - Review Technical Committee, Advisory Panel, and Plan Review Team Advice, *N. Meserve*
  - Consider Approval of the Proposal - ACTION
- Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance, *N. Meserve* - ACTION
- Other Business/Adjourn

## 4:45 PM – 5:45 PM Atlantic Herring Section

- Welcome/Call to Order, *T. Stockwell*
- Public Comment
- Atlantic Herring FMP Review, *C. Vonderweidt*
- Technical Committee Analysis of Spawning Closures, *M. Cieri*
- Landings Update, *M. Cieri*
- Update of NEFMC Amendment IV, *M. Cieri*
- River Herring Bycatch Workshop Summary, *M. Cieri*
- Other Business/Adjourn



## Wednesday, August 20, 2008

### 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM American Eel Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *A.C. Carpenter*
- Public Comment
- Draft Addendum II
  - Review Draft Addendum II, *B. Beal*
  - Presentation of SLYME Model Results, *L. Lee*
  - Technical Committee Comment, *J. Clark*
  - Advisory Panel Comment
  - Review and Consider Approval of Draft Addendum II for Public Comment - ACTION
- Update on MOU with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, *B. Beal*
- Other Business/Adjourn

### 9:45 AM - 11:15 AM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *P. White*
- Public Comment
- Nomination and Election of Vice Chair, *P. White* – ACTION
- Plan Review Team Report, *B. Spear* – ACTION
  - State Compliance
  - FMP Review
- Update on 2007 and 2008 Fishery, *J. Smith*
- Update on Menhaden Collaborative Research Program

- Technical Committee Report, *A. Sharov*
- Other Business/Adjourn

**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM ISFMP Policy Board**

**& 1:45 PM - 6:00 PM**

- Welcome/Call to Order, *G. Lapointe*
- Public Comment
- Update on Non-Native Oyster Activities
- Interstate Tagging Committee Report
- Review and Consider Approval of Recommendations from Fish Passage Workshop - **ACTION**
- NEAMAP Update
- Habitat Committee Report
- Consider Changes to ISFMP Charter Regarding FMP Habitat Sections - **ACTION**
- Consider Approval of Habitat Operations Procedure Manual - **ACTION**
  - Consider Approval of Revised Project Comment Protocol
- Discussion of Annual Catch Limit (ACL) and Accountability Measures (AM) Proposed Rule
- 2009-2013 ASMFC Strategic Plan
  - Review Public Comment
  - Review Updated Draft Strategic Plan
  - Provide Guidance to Staff for Developing Final Draft
- Other Business/Recess

**Thursday, August 21, 2008**

**8:00 AM- 9:30 AM Shad and River Herring Management Board**

- Welcome/Call to Order, *P. Diodati*
- Public Comment
- Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 3 (American Shad)
  - Review of PID for Amendment 3, *T. Kerns*
  - Review of Public Comment, *T. Kerns*
  - Technical Committee Comment, *B. Sadzinski*
  - Advisory Panel Comment
- Draft Amendment 2 (River Herring)
  - Presentation of Draft Amendment 2, *T. Kerns*
  - Review and Consider Approval of Draft Amendment 2 for Public Comment - **ACTION**
- Other Business/Adjourn

**9:45 AM - 12:45 PM Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Sharks Management Board**

- Welcome/Call to Order, *L. Daniel*
- Public Comment
- Consider Approval of Interstate FMP for Atlantic Coastal Sharks, *C. Vonderweidt* - **FINAL ACTION**
- Set Initial Specifications for Coastal Sharks – **ACTION**
  - Coastal Sharks Technical Committee Recommendations, *J. Musick*
- Spiny Dogfish FMP Review, *C. Vonderweidt*
- Review and Consider Approval of Spiny Dogfish Addendum II for Public Comment, *C. Vonderweidt* - **ACTION**
- Review and Consider Approval of Spiny Dogfish Addendum III for Public Comment, *C. Vonderweidt* - **ACTION**
- Coastal Sharks Technical Committee Nomination, *L. Daniel*
- Update on Small Coastal Shark Amendments 3 and 4, *K. Brewster Geisz*
- Other Business/Adjourn

**1:00 PM Buffet Lunch for Commissioners and Proxies**

**1:15 PM - 3:45 PM Horseshoe Crab Management Board**

- Welcome/Call to Order, *R. Boyles*
- Public Comment
- Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee Report, *L. DeLancey*

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## ASMFC Summer Meeting Final Agenda (continued from page 7)

1:15 PM - 3:45 PM                      Horseshoe Crab Management Board (continued)

- Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel Report
- Update on Legal Challenge to Delaware's Regulations, *R. Miller*
- Draft Addendum V, *B. Spear*
  - Review Public Comment
  - Review and Select Options
  - Consider Approval of Addendum V - **FINAL ACTION**
- Advisory Panel Nomination - **ACTION**
- Other Business/Adjourn

4:00 PM - 4:30 PM                      ISFMP Policy Board (continued)

- Welcome; Introduction, *G. Lapointe*
- Public Comment
- Review Noncompliance Recommendations (if necessary)
- Other Business/Adjourn

4:30 PM - 4:45 PM                      Business Session

- Welcome/Call to Order, *G. Lapointe*
- Public Comment
- Review of Noncompliance Findings (if necessary)
- Review and Consider Approval of FMPs or Amendments (if necessary)
- Other Business/Adjourn

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## ASMFC Comings & Goings

### Commissioners:

**William Orndorf** -- Bill Orndorf joins the Commission as Florida's Governor Appointee. Bill is currently Senior Vice President at Morgan Stanley. Previously, he worked with the Brevard County Florida Sheriffs Office. He is certified as a Financial Planner and Investment Management Analyst, and holds a B.A. from Ohio University. Bill has been a Coast Guard licensed Captain since 2004 and enjoys fishing, hunting and martial arts. Welcome aboard, Bill!



**April S. Price** -- This July, April Price leaves the Commission after more than two and a half years serving the State of Florida as Governor Jeb Bush's Appointee. In addition to representing the needs of Florida's recreational anglers and boat owners on various species management boards, April served as a member of the Commission's Legislative Committee. Over the last several months, she was part of a small working group of Commissioners that worked on fully revising the Commissioner Manual. Her critical review and input helped shape the new manual into a useful tool, enabling new Commisisoners to be quickly brought up to speed on the Commission and their respective roles and responsibilities. We wish April the very best in all her future endeavors!

### Staff:

**Erika Robbins** -- In just under two years with the Commission, Erika Robbins, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator for bluefish, American eel, Atlantic sturgeon, and shad and river herring, accomplished a great deal. She worked with the members of the Shad and River Herring Stock Assessment Subcommittee to complete the long-awaited benchmark stock assessment for American shad, delivering a high quality and timely document for peer review. Following approval of the stock assessment by both the Peer Review Panel and Management Board, she drafted and presented at public hearings the

*continued on page 12*

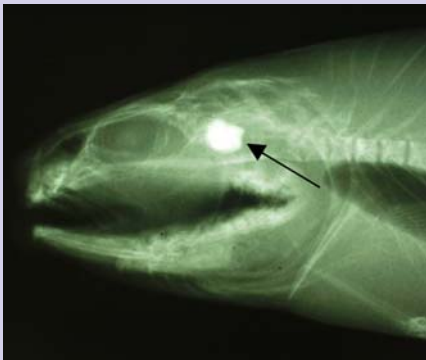


## Science Highlight: *Fish Aging*

There are many factors affecting the growth of fish. Species grow at different rates and have different life spans. Examples of large, long-lived species include the Atlantic sturgeon, which lives up to 100 years and reaches 15 feet in length, and spiny dogfish that may live to 50 years and reach four feet in length. At the other extreme, fish like spot grow to only 16 inches in length and generally live only five years, and the bay anchovy may reach just four inches long and live for one year.

### How Are Fish Aged?

Fisheries biologists determine the age of a fish by counting annual markings of growth observed on one or more body parts. The most commonly used aging structures are fish scales, otoliths (ear bones; see image below), opercula (gill plates),



Atlantic croaker otolith. Photo courtesy of Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

spines, and vertebrae. Fish endure seasonal fluctuations in temperature and food availability, resulting in variable growth rates and producing uniquely identifiable marks in aging structures. Annual markings form because a fish and its age structures grow at different rates during the warm (faster) and cool (slower) seasons, producing alternating translucent and opaque bands, respectively. These marks can be read in the same manner that

bands of rings are counted to age trees (see image below).



Atlantic croaker otolith showing annual marks. Photo courtesy of Christina Morgan Old Dominion University, Center for Quantitative Fisheries Ecology

### How is Aging information Used?

Fish age information is the basis for determining growth rate, longevity of a species, and size-at-age. Fish ages, when combined with length and abundance data, can be used to estimate the age structure of a fish population (see figure right). Age structure refers to the numbers of fish in each age-group for a fish population. Understanding how age influences the reproductive potential of a fish allows scientists to develop harvest strategies so that the population can successfully replace what was removed by fishing and natural causes. A variety of harvest strategies may be evaluated by comparing different gear sizes that capture different ages of fish. The gear size that catches the preferred ages of fish may then be implemented to meet management goals.

Fish age data are a fundamental component of fish stock assessment models. Fully understanding the age structure of the population and catch allows scientists to choose from a

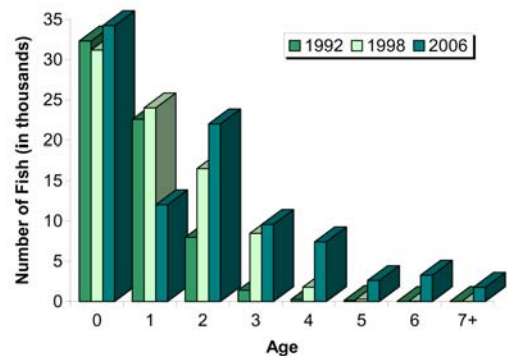
wide variety of modeling approaches designed to track changes in abundance or biomass. This information also can tell us if a stock's age structure is expanding or becoming truncated (i.e., fewer age classes, usually due to the loss of older fish).

Unfortunately, obtaining quality age data is challenging and expensive. Aging methods must be validated using controlled laboratory or tagging studies to confirm the observed markings are truly annual markings (annuli). Collecting age data requires a sampling program that adequately covers the fishery or stock, and staff and facilities to process samples.

### Otolith Collection Program

To improve the availability of age data for use in fish stock assessments, the Commission has initiated an Otolith Collection Program. This ef-

Summer Flounder Abundance at Age: 1992, 1998, and 2006  
Source: Summer Flounder Assessment & Biological Reference Point Update, 2006



fort coordinates age sampling among member states to achieve a broad representation of fish ages throughout a stock's range. Biologists and cooperating anglers gather otoliths, scales, and additional information (length, weight, sex) from fish taken in the recreational fishery or during fishery-

*continued on page 11*



## ACCSP Considers Preliminary Proposals for 2009

### Comings and Goings

#### ACCSP Considers Preliminary Proposals for 2009

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has received preliminary proposals for projects to be initiated or continued in 2009 from 14 state and federal partners and two ACCSP committees.

Since 1999, the ACCSP has provided funds to its state and federal partners for data enhancement projects needed for fisheries management. This year the ACCSP has received a total of 24 proposals.

Type	Number of Proposals
Administrative	1
Biological	5
Bycatch/Biological	2
Commercial	9
Commercial/Biological	2
For-Hire	2
Recreational	1
Recreational/For-Hire	1
Socioeconomic	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

Preliminary proposals will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee and Operations Committee. Both groups will make recommendations for improvements to the submitters. Submitters will then have the opportunity to refine their proposals and submit for final review by mid-August. Evaluation of both preliminary and final proposals is based upon the Funding Decision Process approved in May 2007. (<http://www.accsp.org/fdprocess.htm>)

#### Comings and Goings

**Paul Philip** joined ACCSP in June 2008 as a fisheries programmer. As the fisheries programmer, he will be develop-

ing software for SAFIS and other projects.

Prior to joining ACCSP, Paul worked for Princeton Consultants, an IT consulting firm, which developed an operations management software program to manage intermodal freight. As an analyst, Paul used tools such as .NET & SQL to migrate, upgrade, and debug the existing software to cohere with a new company that was setting up their own intermodal service. Paul also worked with the Army Research Lab developing software for both PCs and PDAs in order to send secure data from PDAs overseas to servers in the states and back through encrypted channels.

Paul earned his Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering from Columbia University in May 2006. Outside of school, Paul is an active volunteer in church, having taught Sunday School and lending a helping hand in charity and fund raising events. The ACCSP staff is excited to have Paul as a member of its team.

**Kate Fleming** left the ACCSP in May 2008. Serving as the Outreach Coordinator for two years, she helped to rejuvenate a program that had been without a coordinator for more than six months. Kate's positive and friendly disposition made her an asset to both the program and the office.

Kate is currently pursuing her master's degree in Conservation Biology through a joint program between the University of New South Wales and the Victorial



University of Wellington. She is living in Sydney, Australia and will be moving to New Zealand at the end of the year.

The ACCSP staff will miss Kate and wishes her the best of luck in her future endeavors.

#### About the ACCSP

The ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program to design, implement, and conduct marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and to integrate those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coast wide, including the Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the DC Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

For more information, please visit [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org) or call (202) 216-5690.

## Jessie Thomas Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

In her two years with the Commission as its Habitat Coordinator, Jessie Thomas has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to the protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish habitats through partnerships, policy development, and education. Her efforts have contributed to the Commission's Vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." In recognition of her accomplishments, Jessie was named Employee of the Quarter for the third quarter of 2008. The award is intended to recognize contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.

Since joining the Commission in June 2006, Jessie has made major contributions to the Commission's Habitat Program. She has strengthened partnerships through revitalization of the Habitat Committee and development of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, both of which are geared toward promoting healthy habitats for Atlantic coast fish species. Jessie has raised awareness of current issues of concern for aquatic habitat along the Atlantic coast through the quarterly publication of *Habitat Hotline Atlantic* and aided fish and habitat managers in conserving vital fish habitat through the publication of *The Importance of Habitat Created by Molluscan Shellfish to Managed Species along the Atlantic Coast of the United States*. She has also played a key role in overseeing two Commission workshops -- one on the Impacts of Liquefied Natural Gas and Alternative Energy Development on Fishery Resources and the other on Fish Passage Issues Impacting Atlantic Coast States. These accomplishments have enhanced the ability of the Commission's Habitat Program to make significant progress in improving Atlantic coast fish habitats.

Hard-working and passionate about improving fisheries habitat along the Atlantic coast, Jessie is an inspiration to coworkers, Habitat Committee members, and Commissioners alike. Jessie has a Master of Science in Natural Resources from Delaware State University, where she worked on American eel habitat utilization. She received a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Mary Washington College. As an Employee of the Quarter, she received a \$500 cash award, a small gift, and a letter of appreciation to be placed in her personnel record. In addition, her name is on the Employee of the Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Jessie!



### Science Highlight: **Fish Aging (continued from page 9)**

independent surveys. Sample collection and processing protocols have been developed by aging experts and Commission staff and distributed to cooperating agencies and angler groups. In 2008, the Commission is coordinating the collection of striped bass age samples. Additional species may be added in the future depending on the success of striped bass otolith collections.

#### Upcoming Aging Workshops

In another fish aging effort, the Commission is organizing a red drum and Atlantic croaker aging workshop on October 8 in Charleston, South Carolina. Several state agencies collect age samples for these two species. Aging experts from each state will meet to review otolith processing procedures and exchange samples for age reading comparisons. The goal is to ensure age samples are being processed and read in a consistent manner coast wide, providing valuable data for use in assessments of red drum and croaker populations. This is the sixth Aging Workshop conducted by ASMFC. Past workshops reviewed aging of American shad, eel, striped bass, tautog, and winter flounder. For more information, please contact Patrick Campfield, Stock Assessment Specialist, at (202) 289-6400 or [PCampfield@asmfc.org](mailto:PCampfield@asmfc.org).

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1444 Eye Street, N.W., 6th Floor  
Washington D.C. 20005

*Return Service Requested*

## **ASMFC Comings & Goings (continued from page 9)**

Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 3 to the Shad Plan to address the recommendations from the stock assessment. She also developed and presented at public hearings the PID for Amendment 2 to the Plan and wrote Draft Amendment 2, both of which focus on management measures to address declining river herring populations. Her work with the American Eel Technical Committee and Plan Development Team led to a Draft Addendum to the Interstate Eel Plan that includes a comprehensive list of management measures for consideration by the Board and public. Lastly, she coordinated an annual update of the bluefish stock assessment and an initial review of sturgeon bycatch data.

In mid-November Erika will wed Major Greg Burgess in St. Augustine, Florida. Shortly following the wedding, she will begin a new chapter of her life with her husband in Germany, where he is currently stationed. We wish Erika and her fiancé Greg the very best in all their future endeavors!

### **Mark Your Calendars! 2009 ASMFC Meeting Schedule**

#### **Winter Meeting**

February 2 - 5, 2009

Crowne Plaza Old Town - Alexandria, VA

#### **Spring Meeting**

May 4 - 7, 2009

Crowne Plaza Old Town - Alexandria, VA

#### **Summer Meeting**

August 17 - 20, 2009

Crowne Plaza Old Town - Alexandria, VA

#### **67th Annual Meeting**

November 2 - 5, 2009

Newport, Rhode Island