



ASMFC

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FISHERIES *focus*

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA

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



ASMFC 71st Annual Meeting

**Radisson Plaza - Warwick Hotel
220 South 17th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Preliminary Agenda

Please note: The 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. All meetings (with the exception of closed sessions) will be open to the public free of charge. Registration for the meeting's social events can be made online at www.asmfc.org under *Breaking News*. Please see page 11 for the Commission's Public Comment Guidelines.

Monday, October 22, 2012

8:00 – 9:00 AM	Atlantic Herring Section
9:15 – 11:15 AM	American Lobster Management Board
11:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Tautog Management Board
1:00 – 5:00 PM	Law Enforcement Committee
8:30 AM – 5:00 PM	Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership
1:30 – 3:00 PM	Winter Flounder Management Board
3:15 – 5:15 PM	Shad & River Herring Management Board
6:30 – 8:00 PM	Welcome Reception

Tuesday, October 23, 2012

8:30 – 11:30 AM	Executive Committee (Closed Session begins at 9:30 AM)
8:30 AM – Noon	Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (continued)
8:30 AM – Noon	Law Enforcement Committee (continued)
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Atlantic Menhaden Management Board
1:00 – 5:00 PM	Habitat Committee
1:45 – 2:45 PM	Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species. 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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Upcoming Meetings

9/5 & 6:

ASMFC Delaware Bay Ecosystem Technical Committee, ASMFC Offices, 1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200A-N, Arlington, Virginia.

9/5 - 7:

ASMFC American Lobster Stock Assessment Life History Workshop, Maine Department of Marine Resources, West Boothbay Harbor Office, 194 McKown Point Road, West Boothbay, Maine.

9/10 - 14:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Charleston Marriott Hotel, 170 Lockwood Boulevard, Charleston, South Carolina.

9/17 - 20:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, (committees scheduled to meet include Assessment Science Committee, MSVPA Joint Subcommittee, Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee, and Tautog Technical Committee). Meeting location to be determined.

9/20 (begins at 9:30 AM) :

Joint ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section & NEFMC Herring Committee, Comfort Inn, 1940 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island.

9/25 - 27:

New England Fishery Management Council, Radisson Hotel, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

9/24 - 26:

ASMFC Data Poor Stock Assessment Training Workshop, Radisson Plaza – Warwick Hotel, 220 South 17th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

9/25 (begins at 1 PM) - 27 (ends at Noon):

ASMFC Fish Passage Work Group, Providence Biltmore, 11 Dorrance Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

10/16 - 18:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Ocean Place Resort, One Ocean Blvd., Long Branch, New Jersey.

10/21 - 25:

ASMFC 71st Annual Meeting, Radisson Plaza – Warwick Hotel, 220 South 17th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 215.735.6000.

11/13 - 15:

New England Fishery Management Council, Newport Marriott, Newport, Rhode Island.

11/13 - 16:

ASMFC Intermediate Stock Assessment Training Series: A Mock Assessment Workshop – Part II, Providence, Rhode Island.

Bill Seeks to Reinforce State/Federal Partnerships

I had the opportunity to provide testimony on H.R. 6906, the Atlantic Fisheries Statutes Reauthorization Act, which reauthorizes the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, as well as the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act and the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act. All three acts have provided the states the opportunity to form successful partnerships among themselves and with their federal counterparts to carry out their public trust responsibility of sustainably managing shared marine fishery resources. Below is a brief summary about the importance of these Acts to interstate fisheries management along the Atlantic coast.

Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act

The success of the Atlantic striped bass fishery is a direct result of the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act and the commitment of the states and their fishermen to not only rebuild the stock but maintain the stock at an abundant level once it was rebuilt. Upon its initial passage in 1984, the Act required the Commission to facilitate state action to recover the collapsed striped bass stock. The interstate fishery management plan – agreed to, implemented, and enforced by the states – provided protection to the spawning populations and fully rebuilt the population by 1995. This restoration has resulted in renewed recreational and commercial fishing opportunities as well as expanded economic benefits to coastal communities throughout the range of the stock. The success of this Act paved the way for the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, which empowered the Commission to develop and implement mandatory conservation measures for all of its interstate plans. This management process and results would not have been possible without the continued leadership of Congress and its recognition of the need for an interstate management forum.

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act

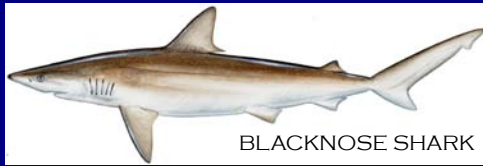
Passed by Congress in 1986, the Interjurisdictional Fisheries (IJF) Act has long recognized the states' role in ensuring fisheries management activities across the state/federal jurisdictions along the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts. Recently, our Commission along with the Pacific and Gulf States Commissions voiced our collective support for ensuring continued funding to the states through the IJF grants. These grants, though some may be small, have been successfully leveraged by the states to boost their survey, data collection, and monitoring abilities, including northern shrimp and American lobster

sampling in New England; monitoring state quotas of black sea bass, summer flounder, and striped bass in the Mid-Atlantic; and surveying flounders, drum, shrimp and crabs in the South Atlantic. An authorization level of \$5 million for the IJF grants would enable the states to further leverage these funds to support the assessment and management of nearshore fisheries.

Anadromous Fish Conservation Act

The Anadromous Fish Conservation Act, as with the IJF Act and the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, recognizes the need to partner across political boundaries to ensure coordinated management of anadromous and interstate fishery resources. Anadromous fish traverse numerous marine, coastal, and inland habitats and through multiple jurisdictions (federal, state, and local) throughout their life cycle. One such species is Atlantic sturgeon, which migrates from the ocean into coastal estuaries and rivers to spawn. Managed under a coastwide moratorium since 1998, and recently listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), this species exemplifies the challenges of managing an anadromous fish. Unfortunately, FY2008 was the last year states received funding under the Act. Since then, Atlantic sturgeon have been listed under ESA and listing proposals are currently being reviewed for American eel and river herring. All three species are managed by our states through the Commission process and all would greatly benefit from increased funding support through the Act. The ESA is not the law under which fisheries are best managed; funding for the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act can help our states manage fisheries before their populations decline to levels that need to be considered for ESA listing.

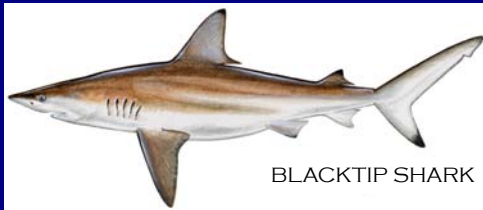
All three Acts up for reauthorization under H.R. 6096 were passed by Congress with the recognition that state and federal agencies must work together to ensure the conservation and management of nationally important fishery resources. No one state or federal agency has the resources or authority to do it alone. This notion is never more relevant than today with dwindling state and federal budgets and ever increasing fishery resource challenges and needs. Now, more than ever, the states and their federal partners need to maintain and strengthen their partnerships, providing for efficient and effective fisheries management across all agencies. Sustainable fisheries, sound management, and healthy coastal communities are all results of informed fisheries management. Fully supporting these Acts will provide for further opportunities to see positive results.



BLACKNOSE SHARK



SHORTFIN MAKO



BLACKTIP SHARK



SANDBAR SHARK

Coastal Sharks

Interesting Facts:

- * Sharks have a special sensory organ called the Ampullae of Lorenzini which enables them to detect electromagnetic fields emitted by living animals.
- * The earliest known sharks have been identified from fossils from the Devonian period, over 400 million years ago.
- * The life span of sharks in the wild is not known, but it is believed that many sharks may live more than 30-40 years.
- * There are ~350 species of sharks; ASMFC's FMP addresses 40 of these.
- * Extreme diversity among shark species exist, with the pygmy shark being the smallest at 7.8" and the whale shark being the biggest at 39'.
- * The 1st hybrid shark, containing both common and Australian blacktip DNA, was found off the coast of Australia in 2011. Scientists theorize this may be a potential sign that predators are adapting to cope with climate change.

Stock Status: Varies by species and species group

* Shark illustrations by Diane Rome Peebles

Species Profile: Atlantic Coastal Sharks States Plan Studies to Implement Shark Conservation Act Measures

Introduction

Sharks are a vital part of ocean ecosystems all over the world. Scientists consider them to be a keystone species because they generally reside at the top of the food chain, having a strong impact on other species either directly or indirectly. Removing or reducing shark populations in an area can cause an imbalance in the food chain and produce far reaching negative impacts. Because of this, the health of shark populations in an ecosystem is often an accurate indicator of the overall health of the system.

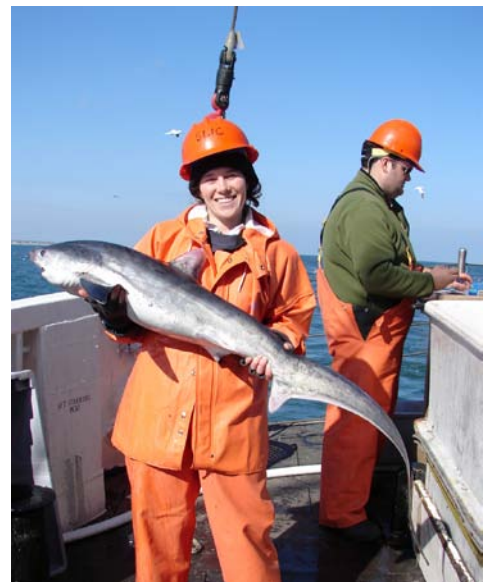
Though well understood today, fisheries managers did not always fully understand the life cycle and ecological role of sharks. In the mid-1980s, sharks were considered an under-utilized resource and fishermen were encouraged to target them. Over the next few years, fishing effort increased considerably and the impact of unregulated harvest was beginning to take its toll on some shark species.

In the early 1990s, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implemented a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Sharks of the Atlantic Ocean to rebuild depleted stocks and protect healthy stocks from overfishing. In May 2008, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission adopted an Interstate FMP for Atlantic Coastal Sharks to complement federal management actions and increase protection of pregnant females and juveniles inshore in nursery areas.

Passage of the Shark Conservation Act of 2010 instituted additional measures to protect shark species from illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, as well as allowed for the continued, regulated harvest of smooth dogfish within U.S. waters. As part of these efforts, the Act adjusts the required fin to carcass ratio of processed smooth dogfish from 5% to 12%. The Commission's Coastal Sharks Technical Committee will conduct studies this fall to determine the appropriate fin to carcass ratio for the smooth dogfish fishery, based on a fishery's particular processing methods. These efforts will help ensure continued enforcement of shark regulations and protection of other shark species.

Life History

Sharks belong to the class Chondrichthyes (cartilaginous fish) that also includes rays, skates, and deep-water chimaeras (ratfishes). Relative to other marine fish, sharks have a very low reproductive potential. Various factors create this low reproductive rate such as slow growth, late sexual maturity, one to two-year reproductive cycles, a small number of young per brood, and specific requirements for nursery areas. These biological factors leave many species of sharks vulnerable to overfishing. Sharks have internal fertilization and the embryo of most species spend their entire developmental period



Nichola Meserve (MA DMF) with a common thresher shark captured during the SEAMAP Winter Cooperative Tagging Cruise.

protected within their mother's body, although some species lay eggs. Females produce a small number (2 – 25) of large pups, which have an increased chance of survival due to their size. Adults usually congregate in specific areas to mate and females travel to specific nursery areas to pup. These nursery areas are discrete geographic areas, usually in waters shallower than those inhabited by the adults. Frequently, the nursery areas are in highly productive coastal or estuarine waters where abundant small fish and crustaceans provide food for the growing pups. These shallow areas have fewer large predators than deeper waters, thus enhancing the chances of survival of the young sharks.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Commercial shark fishing effort is generally concentrated in the Southeastern U.S. and Gulf of Mexico. Commercial fishermen catch sharks using bottom longlines and gillnets. The Atlantic fishery targets both large coastal shark (LCS) and small coastal shark (SCS) species. Bottom longline is the primary commercial gear employed in the LCS and SCS fisheries in all regions. Gear characteristics vary by region, but in general an approximately ten-mile long bottom longline, containing about 600 hooks, is fished overnight. Skates, other sharks, or various finfish are used as bait. The gear typically consists of a heavy monofilament mainline with lighter weight monofilament gangions, or branch lines coming off the main line. The Southeast shark gillnet fishery is comprised of several vessels based primarily out of ports in northern Florida that use nets typically 456 to 2,280 meters long and 6.1 to 15.2 meters deep, with stretched mesh from 12.7 to 22.9 cm.

Recreational fishing for Atlantic sharks occurs in federal and state waters from New England to the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea. In the past, sharks were often called “the poor man’s marlin.” Recreational shark fishing with rod and reel is now a popular sport at all social and economic levels, largely because of accessibility to the resource. Sharks can be caught virtually anywhere in salt water, with even large specimens available in

Table 1. Stock Status of Atlantic Coastal Shark Species and Species Groups

Species or Complex Name	Stock Status		References/Comments
	Overfished	Overfishing is Occurring	
Porbeagle	Y	N	Porbeagle Stock Assessment, ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics Report (2009)
Dusky	Y	Y	SEDAR 21 (2011) 'Prohibited' species
Large Coastal Sharks	Unknown	Unknown	SEDAR 11 (2006) Difficult to assess as a species complex due to various life history characteristics/ lack of available data
Blacktip	Unknown	Unknown	SEDAR 11 (2006)
Sandbar	Y	N	SEDAR 21 (2011)
Atlantic Sharpnose	N	N	SEDAR 13 (2007)
Blacknose	Y	Y	SEDAR 21 (2011)
Bonnethead	N	N	SEDAR 13 (2007)
Finetooth	N	N	SEDAR 13 (2007)
Smooth Dogfish	Unknown	Unknown	No Assessment

the nearshore area to surf angler or small boaters. Most recreational shark fishing takes place from small to medium-size vessels. Makos, white sharks, and large pelagic sharks are generally accessible only to those aboard ocean-going vessels. Recreational shark fisheries are exploited primarily by private vessels and charter/headboats although there are some shore-based fishermen active in the Florida Keys.

Stock Status

Stock status is assessed by species complex for most coastal shark species and by species group for species with enough data for an individual assessment (see Table 1). A 2011 benchmark assessment of dusky (*Carcharhinus obscurus*), sandbar (*Carcharhinus plumbeus*), and blacknose (*Carcharhinus acronotus*) sharks indicates that both sandbar and dusky sharks continue to be overfished with overfishing occurring for dusky sharks. Blacknose sharks, part of the SCS complex, are overfished with overfishing occurring. The Board approved the assessment for management use in February 2012, and NOAA Fisheries' Highly Migratory Species Division (HMS) is incorporating the results of the assessment as part of Amendment 5 to its FMP.

Porbeagle sharks were assessed by the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics in 2009. The assessment found that while the Northwest Atlantic

stock is increasing in biomass, the stock is considered to be overfished with overfishing not occurring.

The 2007 SouthEast Data Assessment Review (SEDAR 13) assessed the SCS complex, finetooth, Atlantic sharpnose, and bonnethead sharks. The SEDAR 13 peer reviewers considered the data to be the ‘best available at the time’ and determined the status of the SCS complex to be ‘adequate.’ Finetooth, Atlantic sharpnose and bonnethead were all considered to be not overfished and not experiencing overfishing.

SEDAR 11 (2006) assessed the LCS complex and blacktip sharks. The LCS assessment suggested that it is inappropriate to assess the LCS complex as a whole due to the variation in life history parameters, different intrinsic rates of increase, and different catch and abundance data for all species included in the LCS complex. Based on these results, NMFS changed the status of the LCS complex from overfished to unknown. As part of SEDAR 11, blacktip sharks were assessed for the first time as two separate populations: Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic. The results indicated that the Gulf of Mexico stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, while the

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Atlantic Menhaden Board Selects Options for Inclusion in Draft Amendment for Public Comment

The Commission's Atlantic Menhaden Management Board has selected the options to be included in Draft Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. Among the series of options approved for public comment are a range of harvest reduction options from 0-50% for 2013. Given that substantive changes were made to the document at the meeting, the Board approved the Draft Amendment for Public Comment contingent upon an additional round of review by Board members and final review and approval by a subcommittee of the Board. Release of the document for public comment is slated for early September, followed by an extensive public comment period and state hearings. The Board's intent is to take final action on the Amendment this year for implementation in 2013.

The Board was also presented the findings of the 2012 stock assessment update, which included the addition of data for 2009 – 2011 to the peer review approved assessment model. The update results contained considerable uncertainty because the model fit the data poorly; however, similar issues were observed in the 2010 benchmark stock assessment that passed peer review. Despite the uncertainty in the update results, the Technical Committee believes the stock is experiencing overfishing, but is not overfished based on the current reference points used to assess the stock. The Technical Committee plans to address the issues with the stock assessment at the next scheduled benchmark assessment.

The final Amendment had been scheduled for approval at the Commission's Annual Meeting in October. Given the Commission's public comment procedures, which requires the Draft Amendment be released 30 days prior to the first public hearing and must be extended two weeks after the final hearing is conducted, the Board will meet sometime after the Annual Meeting to take final action on the Amendment for 2013 implementation. A subsequent press release will announce the availability of the Draft Amendment for public comment, the state hearing schedule, as well as the timeline for the Amendment's final approval. For more information, please contact Mike Waine, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mwaine@asmfc.org.



Atlantic menhaden. Photo by Brian Gratwicke

ASMFC 71st Annual Meeting Preliminary Agenda (continued from page 1)

Tuesday, October 23, 2012 (continued)

3:00 – 4:00 PM	American Eel Management Board
4:15 – 5:15 PM	South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board
6:00 – 10:00 PM	Dinner at The National Constitution Center

Wednesday, October 24, 2012

8:00 – 9:00 AM (Closed Session)	Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Executive Committee
9:00 AM – Noon	ACCSP Coordinating Council
8:30 – 11:30 AM	Legislator & Governors' Appointees Blank Rome Workshop
8:30 AM – Noon	Habitat Committee (continued)
8:30 AM – 5:00 PM	Management & Science Committee
12:15 – 1:15 PM	Captain David H. Hart Award Luncheon
1:30 – 2:30 PM	Horseshoe Crab Management Board
2:45 – 5:00 PM	ISFMP Policy Board
5:00 – 6:00 PM	Business Session

Thursday, October 25, 2012

8:30 – 10:30 AM	Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board
10:45 – 11:45 AM	Weakfish Management Board
11:45 AM – 12:15 PM	Buffet Lunch for Commissioners and Proxies
12:15 – 2:15 PM	Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board
2:30 – 4:30 PM	Summer Flounder, Scup, & Black Sea Bass Management Board
4:30 – 5:00 PM	ISFMP Policy Board (continued)
5:00 – 5:15 PM	Business Session (continued)

Species Profile: Atlantic Coastal Sharks (continued from page 5)

current status of blacktip sharks in the Atlantic region is unknown.

There is no assessment for smooth dogfish on the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Coastal Sharks Technical Committee has identified a smooth dogfish assessment as a top research priority.

Atlantic Coastal Management

In August 2008, the Commission's Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board approved the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Coastal Sharks. The FMP addresses the management of 40 species, including smooth dogfish, and establishes a suite of management measures for recreational and commercial shark fisheries in state waters (0 – 3 miles from shore). Prior to this plan, shark management in state waters consisted of disjointed state-specific regulations. The plan allowed for consistency across jurisdictions.

The complementary Interstate FMP also closed loopholes and allowed for joint specification setting throughout the entire Atlantic shark range. In addition, the FMP protects shark nurseries and pupping grounds that are found primarily in state waters. Interstate regulations provide protection to sharks during a particularly vulnerable stage in their life cycle in a location that federal jurisdiction cannot protect. Commercial and recreational fishermen are prohibited from possessing silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead sharks species from May 15 – July 15 from Virginia through New Jersey to protect pupping females. All fishermen are required to keep the fins attached to the carcass through landing as well, with the exception of smooth dogfish from March to June. This change in management occurred as part of Addendum I in 2009, which allowed processing at sea of smooth dogfish from March to June, when overlap with other shark species, mainly protected sandbar sharks, is extremely low.

Recreational fishermen are prohibited from harvesting any species that are illegal to land in federal waters. Recreational landings are controlled through possession limits with a 4.5' fork length size limit for all species except for Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, blacknose, bonnethead and smooth dogfish that do not have a minimum size limit. Smooth dogfish do not have recreational possession limits. In addition, recreational anglers can only harvest sharks caught with a handline or rod & reel.

The commercial fishery is managed based on maximum sustainable yield using quotas and possession limits to control harvest level and effort. Sharks were split into six commercial species groups based on fisheries, biology, and stock status of the various species —prohibited, research, small coastal, non-sandbar large coastal, pelagic, and smooth dogfish (see Table 2 for a list of spe-

Table 2. List of Species and Species Groups within the Interstate FMP

Species Groups	Species Within Group
Prohibited	Sand tiger, bigeye sand tiger, whale, basking, white, dusky, bignose, Galapagos, night, reef, narrowtooth, Caribbean sharpnose, smalltail, Atlantic angel, longfin mako, bigeye thresher, sharpnose sevengill, bluntnose sixgill, and bigeye sixgill sharks
Research	Sandbar sharks
Small coastal	Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, blacknose, and bonnethead sharks
Non-sandbar large coastal	Silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead sharks
Pelagic	Shortfin mako, porbeagle, common thresher, oceanic whitetip, and blue sharks
Smooth dogfish	Smooth dogfish

cies by species groups). Fishermen are prohibited from catching or landing any species in either the prohibited or research species groups without a state display or research permit.

The Commission does not set quotas for the SCS, LCS, or pelagic species groups but rather opens and closes the fishery in response to the federal fishery. The Board has the authority, but not the requirement, to set a quota and possession limits for smooth dogfish. Fishing effort for the allowed species groups is controlled through possession limits. Fishermen may harvest species contained in the smooth dogfish, SCS, LCS, and pelagic species groups as long as the fishery is open and all sharks are caught according to the regulations contained in the FMP.

Commercial fishermen must have a general state commercial fishing license or permit to harvest sharks. Dealers are required to hold a federal commercial shark dealer permit to buy and sell sharks in order to monitor the quota as efficiently as possible and reduce the chance of quota overages. Fishermen may use handlines, gillnets, trawl nets, shortlines, pound nets/fish traps, and weirs to harvest sharks commercially. Captains and vessel owners must use circle hooks and attend a NMFS Protected Species Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshop in order to harvest sharks using shortlines.

Addendum I, approved in 2009, modified recreational possession limits for smooth dogfish and other species, allowed at-sea processing of smooth dogfish from March – June, and removed the two-hour net check requirements, which was determined to be ineffective at reducing bycatch. Since 2010, consistent with the federal specifications, the Coastal Sharks Management Board has maintained the 33-fish LCS commercial possession limit based on the successful distribution of the quota throughout previous seasons. The Board also initiated an addendum to consider smooth dogfish state shares in response to a proposed federal smooth dogfish commercial quota, but postponed approving the document for public comment until the proposed federal quota is published. It is anticipated that HMS will implement a smooth dogfish quota for the 2013 fishery. For more information, please contact Danielle Chesky, FMP Coordinator, at dchesky@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

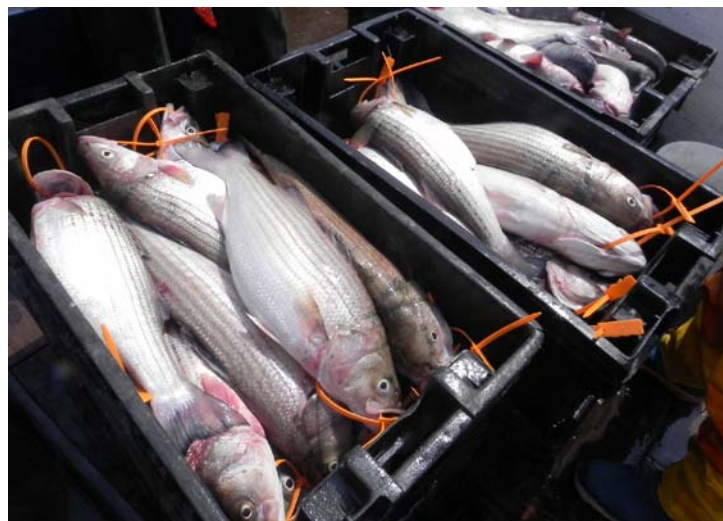
Atlantic Striped Bass Addendum III Establishes Mandatory Coastwide Commercial Tagging Program

In August, the Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board approved Addendum III to Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass. The Addendum establishes a mandatory commercial tagging program for all states and jurisdictions with commercial striped bass fisheries and recommends increasing penalties for illegally harvested fish. The tagging program includes requirements for timely catch reporting, increased accounting of unused tags, improved standardization of tag type, and the use of biological metrics for determining state/jurisdiction tag quantity. These measures are intended to prevent commercial striped bass quota overages and the illegal harvest of striped bass. Both undermine the sustainability of striped bass populations, as well as reduce the economic opportunities of commercial and recreational fishermen who legally participate in the fishery.

The Addendum responds to recommendations of the Interstate Watershed Task Force (IWTF). The IWTF conducted a multi-year, multi-jurisdictional investigation on illegal commercial striped bass harvest within Chesapeake Bay, resulting in over \$1.6 million dollars in fines against

19 individuals and three corporations for more than one million pounds of striped bass harvested illegally. The investigation revealed some current control measures for regulating the harvest of striped bass were ineffective or inadequately designed to maximize compliance. The investigation also found that greater accountability of wholesalers was necessary. All public comment received on the Addendum was in favor of the mandatory tagging program and, in addition, the program was supported by NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

All states and jurisdictions, with the exception of Massachusetts and North Carolina, are required to implement Addendum III's measures by the opening of their respective 2013 commercial fishing seasons. North Carolina was granted an extension due to



Atlantic striped bass tagged during a Cooperative Federal/State/Industry Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch Reduction Survey. Photo by Kate Taylor, ASMFC.

the timing of its season (North Carolina's fishery opens December 1st), while Massachusetts lacks an established commercial tagging program and needs additional time to develop its program. Both states will be required to implement their programs by January 1, 2014.

The Addendum will be available on the Commission website (www.asmfc.org) under *Breaking News* by the end of August. For more information, please contact Kate Taylor, FMP Coordinator, at ktaylor@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

American Eel Draft Addendum Initiated to Improve Conservation and Protection of the Stock

In August, the Commission's American Eel Management Board initiated the development of Draft Addendum III with the goal of reducing mortality and increasing the conservation of American eel stocks across all life stages. The 2012 benchmark stock assessment found the American eel population in U.S. waters is depleted. The stock is at or near historically low levels, due to a combination of including historical overfishing, habitat loss, food web alterations, predation, turbine mortality, environmental changes, toxins and contaminants, and disease.

The Draft Addendum will include a range of options suggested by the American Eel Technical Committee, including possible moratoria on glass (elver) and silver eel harvest, reductions in glass and yellow eel catch and effort, seasonal closures, and future monitoring requirements. The commercial fishery is currently regulated by a six inch size minimum, with the exception of Maine and South Carolina glass eel fisheries, and the recreational fishery is currently regulated by a 50 fish per day creel limit. States and jurisdictions are required to annually report on commercial

harvest and monitor juvenile abundance. The Draft Addendum will be developed for preliminary review by the American Eel Management Board in October.

For more information, please contact Kate Taylor, FMP Coordinator, at ktaylor@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.



Winter Flounder Draft Addendum Initiated to Consider Changes to Gulf of Maine State Waters Fisheries

In August, the Commission's Winter Flounder Management Board initiated the development of Draft Addendum II to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for the Inshore Stocks of Winter Flounder. The Draft Addendum will propose changes to the commercial and recreational management requirements for the Gulf of Maine (GOM) stock in response to updated stock status information and recent federal action to significantly increase the GOM winter flounder state waters annual catch limit (ACL) subcomponent.

A peer reviewed stock assessment (SAW/SARC 52) of GOM winter flounder was completed in 2011, which changed the stock's status to not experiencing overfishing, although the overfished status could not be determined. NOAA Fisheries responded to this finding by more than doubling the ACL for the remainder of

2011 fishing year. The ACL was nearly doubled again for the 2012 fishing year. The state waters ACL-subcomponent for 2012 fishing year has increased to 272 mt, a 450% increase from 60 mt in 2010.

The Commission manages winter flounder under Addendum I. Approved in May 2009, the Addendum required an 11% reduction in fishing mortality for the recreational sector and a 250 pound possession limit for non-federally permitted commercial fishermen (estimated 31% reduction in harvest). Recreational reductions were achieved through a combination of possession limits, seasons, or other measures. These actions were taken in response to the results of the 2008 benchmark assessment which determined the GOM stock was likely to be overfished with overfishing likely to be occurring. The Addendum's provisions were also intended to complement federal man-

agement measures on groundfish stocks, including winter flounder, in offshore waters (3 – 200 miles).

Given the significant increase in state waters ACL-subcomponent for the 2012 fishing year, the Draft Addendum will consider modifying Addendum I's GOM winter flounder requirements by increasing the commercial trip limit from 250 pounds to 500 pounds limit and expanding the recreational season to a year-round fishery. The Draft Addendum will include an annual specifications process to allow the Board to respond to changes in stock condition. The Board tasked the Technical Committee with evaluating the impacts of relaxing the recreational and commercial measures on state water landings. The Board will review the Technical Committee Report prior to taking action to approve the Draft Addendum for Public Comment in the next few weeks.

American Lobster Board Approves Addendum XVIII Trap Reductions for LCMA 2 and 3

In August, the Commission's American Lobster Board approved Addendum XVIII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Addendum establishes a consolidation program for lobster conservation management areas (LCMAs) 2 and 3 (Southern New England and offshore waters, respectively) to address latent effort by reducing the overall number of traps allocated. It is estimated that latent effort is 40% and 30% in LCMAs 2 and 3, respectively. Implementation of the Addendum's measures is contingent upon NOAA Fisheries' implementation of transferability and trap reduction rules for federal waters.

LCMA 2 trap allocation will be reduced by 25% in year one and then by 5% for the following five years, ultimately reduc-

ing total traps allocated by 50%. Trap allocation reductions will be from the initial (2007) permit allocation for state-only permit holders and, for federal permit holders, from the final allocations established by NOAA Fisheries. LCMA 3 trap allocations will be reduced each year by 5% each year for five years, totaling 25%. Trap allocation will be reduced from the current (2012) permit trap allocation. LCMA 3 had previously undergone approximately a 30% reduction in traps allocated since 2003. In addition, any other allocation obtained by the permit holder subsequent to the initial allocation would also be cut for both areas.

The Addendum responds to the depleted



Lobster boat with traps. Photo by Brant McAfee, MA DMF

condition of the Southern New England (SNE) lobster resource and the Board's intent to scale the capacity of the SNE fishery to the size the SNE resource, with an initial goal of reducing qualified trap allocation by at least 25% over a five to ten

How is SAFIS Implemented in Your State?

The Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) is a real-time, web-based reporting system for landings on the Atlantic coast produced by the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP). The partners of ACCSP created SAFIS to meet the increasing need for real-time commercial landings data. It is important to recognize that the data entered into SAFIS is integrated into the ACCSP Data Warehouse (an on-line database populated with fisheries-dependent data supplied to ACCSP by the partners) after thorough quality assurance and quality control protocols at quarterly intervals.

Some of the key features of SAFIS include:

- Providing up-to-date information on species caught and their impact on fisheries and quotas
- Allowing confidential access to data-of-record by fishermen and dealers
- Fulfilling state and federal reporting requirements through online data entry and reporting
- Facilitating maintenance of partner-owned data such as participants, online permits, and vessels

The system is now comprised of five distinct applications. It is important to recognize that while these applications function independently, all are kept within the same database and share standards and codes that are ACCSP-compliant. The following is a summary of the various applications, as well as an overview of partners currently implementing each application.

Electronic Dealer Reporting (eDR)

- A web-based application that collects landings data from dealers. This includes species, disposition, and price. Program partners currently using this application are ME DMR, RI DEM, NH FGD, MA DMF, CT DEEP, NYS DEC, NJ DFW, DE DFW, MD DNR, and the Southeast Region of NOAA Fisheries.

Electronic Trip Reporting (eTRIPS)

- A web-based application that compiles catch and effort data from fishers. Trip reports, or logbooks in some fisheries, provide catch and effort data from a permitted fishing entity (fisherman of a vessel) or a single vessel. A trip is any single event where fishing was attempted, regardless of catch. Trips may be categorized as commercial, party/charter or recreational. Program partners currently using this application are RI DEM, MA DMF, CT DEEP, NYS DEC, NJ DFW, and MD DNR.

Voluntary Angler Logbooks (eLOG-BOOK)

- A web-based application that collects data from private recreational anglers on a voluntary basis. Program partners currently using this application are RI DEM, MA DMF, NJ DFW, and DE DFW.

Electronic One Trip Ticket (e-1Ticket)

- A web-based application providing the ability to collect trip/effort/catch data and simultaneously create a dealer report. Program partners currently using this application are GA DNR, SC DNR, and the Southeast Region of NOAA Fisheries.

SAFIS Management System (SMS)

- A web-based application providing administrative tools to SAFIS administrators for management of information such as user accounts, participants, or permits. It is often used to monitor quotas.

Want an easier way to sign up for online reporting? You should see the below image on the ACCSP homepage (www.accsp.org). This image links to a page with a list of the program partners that offer online reporting through SAFIS. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has a sign up form directly linked from that page. For more information about SAFIS please visit <http://www.accsp.org/safis.htm> or email info@accsp.org.



American Lobster Addendum XVIII (continued from page 9)

year period. For trap limits to be effective in reducing harvest and rebuilding the stock, latent effort must first be addressed to prevent this effort from coming back into the fishery as the stock grows and catch rates increase. Since the scope of the SNE resource encompasses all or part of six of the seven LCMAs established by Amendment 3, additional addenda will be developed to address effort reductions in the remaining LCMAs.

The Board deferred action on three options that were presented in Draft Addendum for public comment –trap banking, controlled growth, and trap caps for participants in the fishery. The Board will continue to work with industry and NOAA Fisheries to develop a viable transferability program to address industry's needs for flexibility. The Addendum will be available on the Commission website (www.asmfc.org) under *Breaking News* or by contacting the Commission at 703.842.0740 by the end of August. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Acting ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org.

Spiny Dogfish Board Approves Addendum IV

Addendum Updates Overfishing Definitions Consistent with the Federal Plan

In August, the Commission's Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Sharks Management Board approved Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Dogfish. The Addendum updates the definition of overfishing consistent with that of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and provides the Board the flexibility to update or modify the management program's overfishing definition through Board action based on the recommendations of its Technical Committee.

The prior overfishing definition, adopted in 2002, was based on the number of pups per female that recruit to the stock. The updated definition will now

be based on maximum sustainable yield or a reasonable proxy, consistent with the best available science. Although there are no immediate impacts in regulations, the change allows the Commission and Council to work from the same starting point when determining annual specifications.

The Board considered modifying the management program's 5% rollover provision to either preclude rollovers entirely without specific Board approval or to allow rollovers beyond the current 5% maximum with Board approval. The Board voted to maintain the 5% maximum rollover. Any rollover is predicated on a rebuilt stock.



These changes do not require any modifications to current regulations and become effective immediately. The updated overfishing definition will be used when determining the 2013/2014 spiny dogfish quota; Board action is scheduled to occur at the Commission's Annual Meeting in October.

The Addendum can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmf.org (under Breaking News). For more information, please contact Danielle Chesky, FMP Coordinator, at dchesky@asmfc.org.

ASMFC Public Comment Guidelines

With the intent of developing policies in the Commission's procedures for public participation that result in a fair opportunity for public input, the ISFMP Policy Board has approved the following guidelines for use at management board meetings:

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 use a speaker sign-up list in deciding 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 an ASMFC Meeting (Monday, October 1, 2012) will be included on the briefing CD.
2. Comments received by 5:00 PM on the Tuesday immediately preceding the scheduled ASMFC Meeting (Tuesday, October 16, 2012) will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.
3. Following the Tuesday, October 16, 2012 5:00 PM deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for the management board consideration at the meeting (a minimum of 50 copies).

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, fax, and email.

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ASMFC Comings & Goings

Staff

Lisa Hartman -- In July, Lisa Hartman joined the Commission staff, providing support to the Finance and Administration Department. Lisa comes to the Commission from KCS Communications, Inc., where she worked for the last ten years serving in a variety of capacities, including financial management and payroll, executive office manager, and graphic designer. Welcome aboard, Lisa!



Christopher Vonderweidt -- In July, Christopher accepted a position as a Policy Development Specialist with the Maine Department of Marine Resources. Since 2006, Christopher served as the Fishery Management Plan Coordinator for Atlantic herring, spiny dogfish and coastal sharks, tautog, and winter flounder. In recognition of his accomplishments, Christopher was named Employee of the Quarter for the second quarter of 2010. His specific accomplishments included development of the first Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Coastal Sharks, development of management responses to assessment information indicating that tautog and winter flounder stocks were significantly depleted, and alignment of state and federal management of Atlantic herring. We wish Christopher the very best in his new position!

ASMFC Habitat Committee Releases Offshore Wind Report

The Commission announces the availability of the latest installment of the Habitat Management Series, *Offshore Wind in My Backyard?* With the accelerating development of offshore wind power, the Commission's Habitat Committee developed a concise report to outline the considerations that should be made when providing comment on proposed offshore wind projects. This report focuses on habitat issues that are broadly applicable along the Atlantic seaboard for the siting, construction, and monitoring of offshore wind facilities. The environmental issues associated with developing a wind facility are outlined and recommendations are offered on how to offset identified impacts. The report, now available on the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under *Breaking News*, will continue to be updated as new sources of information become available. For more information, please contact Megan Caldwell, Habitat Coordinator, at megfishconsult@gmail.com.