



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Volume 13, Issue 1

January 2004

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.



Senator Owen Johnson and Jack Travelstead Honored at ASMFC Annual Meeting



The Commission's 62nd Annual Meeting was a time for hard work and celebration. On the celebratory front, the Commission had the opportunity to honor two remarkable men -- Senator Owen Johnson and Jack Travelstead -- for their contributions to Atlantic coastal fisheries conservation.

The Honorable Owen Johnson of New York was presented the Commission's most prestigious award, the Chairman's Award for Distinguished Meritorious Service. Throughout his career of public service as a Member of the New York State Senate, Owen Johnson has maintained a steadfast commitment to interstate marine fisheries conservation and management. For over twenty years he has worked tirelessly to promote the mutual efforts of the states in the Commission process. As Chair of the Legislative Commissioners for many years, Senator Johnson was a strong advocate of a greater role for the Legislative and Governors' Appointee Commissioners on species management boards. His vision and efforts resulted in the full participation that is today afforded to all Commissioners.

Senator Johnson's long-standing presence and support of the Commission and its programs provides a model for responsible stewardship of our shared coastal resources. He sets an example of support for the Commission's work through his active participation and that of his staff. His public life is a testament to safeguarding the mutual interests of both the people and marine environment he represents. Through his actions Senator Johnson has consistently demonstrated his commitment 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.

Senator Johnson is the fourth recipient of the Chairman's Award for Distinguished Meritorious Service, established by the Commission in 1996. It is conferred to individuals that have had a unique and profound impact on the conservation of Atlantic coastal resources over the course of their career. Prior honorees are Representative Gerry E. Studds, the late Senator John H. Chafee of Rhode Island, and Senator Judd Gregg of New Hampshire.

2003 Hart Award Recipient

Jack Travelstead, Chief of Fisheries Management for the Virginia Marine Resources Commission was presented the Commission's David H. Hart Award, at

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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 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.

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Upcoming Meetings

1/27 - 29:

New England Fishery Management Council, Hotel Viking, Newport, Rhode Island.

2/2 - 4:

ASMFC American Lobster Model Development Subcommittee, Stock Assessment Subcommittee and Technical Committee, New Hampshire Fish and Game, 225 Main Street, Durham, New Hampshire.

2/2 - 6:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, The Lord Baltimore Radisson Hotel, 20 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland; (410)539-8400 (see page 11 for additional information).

2/11 & 12:

ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Alternative Bait Workshop, Comfort Inn (BWI) Airport, 6921 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland.

2/18 (10AM - 5PM):

ASMFC Winter Flounder Technical Committee, Sheraton Providence Airport Hotel, 1850 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island.

2/24:

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Technical Committee, Providence Biltmore Hotel, Kennedy Plaza, Providence, Rhode Island.

2/25 - 27:

ASMFC Bluefish Technical Committee, Providence Biltmore Hotel, Kennedy Plaza, Providence, Rhode Island; (401)421-0700.

3/1 - 5:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sea Palms, 5445 Frederica Road, St. Simons Island, Georgia; (912)638-3351.

3/4 - 6:

Maine Fishermen's Forum, Samoset Resort, Rockport, Maine.

3/8 - 11:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Radisson Hotel Old Town Alexandria, 625 First Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

3/16 - 18:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Shell Island Oceanfront Suites, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina.

Our 62nd Annual Meeting in New York City was terrific, thanks to the generous support and hard work of our hosts from New York. We had the opportunity to formally recognize New York State Senator Owen Johnson and Jack Travelstead from Virginia for their long history of involvement and support for the Commission. Our cover article contains additional information about their awards. Following is my Executive Director's Report for 2003.

2003 marks the end of my first full year at the Commission. I came aboard with excitement and enthusiasm, both of which have continued to grow. We have worked hard at building and strengthening our staff. Besides smoothly integrating a number of new people onto our team, we've provided professional training for our staff and technical committees to improve their meeting management skills.

We continue to look for efficiencies in the administrative and travel functions of the Commission. Gains have been made through our Technical Committee Meeting Weeks and the use of web-based meeting systems. These new approaches and technologies clearly result in savings of time and money.

Over the past year, I traveled to most of our states, meeting with Commissioners and participating in stakeholder forums. I attended meetings of all three East Coast regional fishery management councils, affirming the Commission's commitment to working cooperatively with our federal management partners. I have been pleased to participate in ceremonies recognizing achievements of partner agencies' staffs and law enforcement personnel.

The Commission now has a new 2004-2008 Strategic Plan, setting our course for the future. It is easy for organizations to defer this type of planning when confronted with continual short-term issues. Our Commissioners are to be commended for having the wisdom, foresight and discipline to focus on the future in a meaningful way and commit their time to this important project. I am proud of their leadership, and the superb efforts of Geoff White and Brad Spear who staffed this project in addition to their other duties.

Commissioners also approved our Action Plan for 2004. Directors, Laura Leach, Bob Beal, and Lisa Kline did a terrific job pulling together a plan that reflects the input of our Board Chairs, stays within our budget, and compliments the new Strategic Plan. This team also presented Commissioners with an item-by-item accounting of accomplishments from the 2003 Plan. For

2004, we are committed to providing a midyear progress report. This is another example of the wonderful talent and dedication we have on our staff.

Looking outside the Commission, 2004 will be an important year as the national dialogue on fisheries management for the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act will be framed by the findings of the Pew and U.S. Oceans Commissions. Several key themes are emerging that will likely result in calls for policy changes. There is concern that certain fisheries managers are voting their own personal or sector interest at the expense of their stewardship responsibility to the resource and the broader general public. This is an opportunity for our Commissioners to set the example by taking actions and demonstrating results that are contrary to this perception.

There is concern managers cannot be trusted with fisheries science. Critics argue managers will either use the uncertainty in scientific advice or reject it entirely to make management decisions that put the resource at risk. The Commission's response should be to continue to strengthen the role of our scientific advisors in our management process. The more fragile the status of the stock, the closer their advice should be followed.

We can expect the debate to continue about whether the current federal management system is so bogged down in process it precludes timely response to problems. This is an opportunity for the Commission to demonstrate its ability and commitment to act quickly and decisively, especially when stocks first show signs of trouble. It is in the Commission's interest to be proactive in approaching these public concerns.

I am excited by the opportunities I see ahead of us for 2004. This is a chance to ensure that we:

- Demonstrate continued progress in restoring stocks;
- Show through our actions that ASMFC is a trusted steward of the public's marine resources;
- Distinguish our organization through effective and efficient use of public funds; and
- Operate through a fair and open process respected for its consistency and results.

With your continued support, creative thinking and cooperative spirit, all of these are achievable. I pledge to you all my support and energy to help you succeed together in reaching our vision, "Healthy self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." I hope this is something we can all agree to.



Species Profile: Atlantic Striped Bass The Challenges of Managing a Restored Stock

Introduction

Striped bass have formed the basis of one of the most important fisheries on the Atlantic coast for centuries. They have been regulated since European settlement of North America. Early written accounts recorded their great abundance. Striped bass were once so plentiful they were used to fertilize fields. Like those earlier years, today's Atlantic striped bass population is thriving. In a little more than 15 years, the resource has rebuilt from an historic low of about 20 million pounds to an all-time high of 160 million pounds. This rebuilding did not occur without hardships. Both commercial and recreational fishermen alike have endured severe harvest restrictions and closures in some cases with the hope of seeing greater benefits in the near future. Fortunately, those sacrifices are paying off! Now the Commission focuses on the challenge of managing a restored stock.

Life History

The Commission's Atlantic striped bass management program centers on the migratory population and spawning stocks from Maine through North Carolina, but the species can be found as far north as the St. Lawrence River in Canada and as far south as the St. John's River in Florida. A long-lived species (at least up to 30 years of age), striped bass typically spends the majority of its adult life in coastal estuaries or the ocean, migrating north and south seasonally and ascending to rivers to spawn in the spring.

Mature females (age six and older) produce large quantities of eggs (see side-bar), which are fertilized by mature males (age two and older) as they are released into riverine spawning areas. While developing, the fertilized eggs drift with the downstream currents and eventually hatch into larvae. The larvae and post-larvae begin feeding on microscopic animals during their downstream journey. After their arrival in the nursery areas, located in river deltas and the inland portions of coastal sounds and estuaries, they mature into juveniles. They remain in coastal sounds and estuaries for two to four years and then join the coastal migratory population in the Atlantic Ocean. In the ocean, fish tend to move north during the summer and south during the winter. Important wintering grounds for the mixed stocks are located from offshore New Jersey to North Carolina. With warming water temperatures in the spring, the mature adult fish migrate to riverine spawning areas to complete their life cycle. The majority of the coastal migratory stock originate in the Chesapeake Bay spawning areas, with significant contributions from the spawning grounds of the Hudson and Delaware Rivers.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Commercial fishermen harvest striped bass with a variety of gears including gill nets, pound nets, haul seines, and hook-and-line. Commercial harvest peaked at almost 15 million pounds in 1973, then declined to 3.5 million pounds in 1983, a 77 percent decrease. During the early to mid-1980s, a number of states closed their striped bass fisheries in order to initiate rebuilding of the stocks. The commercial fishery grew slowly under a partial reopening of state waters in the early 1990s, with coastwide harvest rising from 825,000 pounds in 1990 to 2.01 million pounds in 1994. Most of this growth resulted from the fact that Maryland was permitted to impose flexible quotas that have risen with increasing stock size.

Under restored status, the striped bass commercial harvest steadily grew from 3.4 million pounds in 1995 to peak at 6.6 million pounds in 2000. Over the past two years, the commercial harvest dropped slightly to six million pounds. Beginning in 2003, the

Morone saxatilis

Interesting Fish Facts:

- Average Chesapeake Bay 6-year old female produces 500,000 eggs, while a 15-year old produces 3 million eggs
- Bass tagged in the Bay have been recaptured in Canadian waters, over 1,000 miles away

Largest Recorded: 125 pound female, NC, 1891

Age at Maturity:

- Females - 50% mature at age 6 (25 - 26"); 100% mature at age 9 (32")
- Males - 100% mature at age 3 (18")

Age at Recruitment:

- Chesapeake Bay Fishery = age 4 (18")
- Coastal Fishery = age 8 (28")

Stock Status: not overfished, overfishing is not occurring

commercial quotas increased under Amendment 6 allowing the states to implement coastal commercial quotas equivalent to the average harvest during 1972-1979.

The growing popularity of saltwater recreational fishing since the 1960s and 1970s, and the lack of recreational harvest caps in most states, led the sport fishing sector to land a larger percentage of the total catch. Recreational harvest grew from 3.1 million pounds in 1990 to a record high of 19.6 million pounds in 2001. In 2002, the recreational harvest declined to about 18.6 million pounds. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of striped bass landings and discard losses by fishing sector in 2002.

The payoff for the years of restricted harvest has been big. Total biomass, or the total pounds of fish in the fishery, has increased eightfold over the last 20 years. Recreational fishing for striped bass is at an all-time high. Commercial fisheries have also benefited with increases in commercial quotas, yielding greater economic profits.

Stock Status

The Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee, Stock Assessment Subcommittee and Tagging Subcommittee completed the latest annual assessment in late 2003. The assessment report included data through the 2002 fishing year and determined that striped bass are not overfished and overfishing did not occur in 2002. Not only is the spawning stock biomass 25 times greater than the levels seen in the early 1980s, but the total biomass increased by an order of magnitude during the same period (Figure 3). Both the total striped bass population and female spawning stock biomass peaked in 2002 at 114 million pounds and 49 million pounds, respectively. The fishing mortality generally trends upward since the moratoria in the mid-1980s. The 2002 average fishing mortality rate for ages 8 to 11 equaled 0.35, which is above the Amendment 5 and 6 F targets of 0.31 and 0.30, re-

Figure 1. Atlantic Striped Bass Total Catch & Fishing Mortality, 1982-2002

Source: ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee, 2003

NOTE: Landings are shown in #s of fish, not pounds

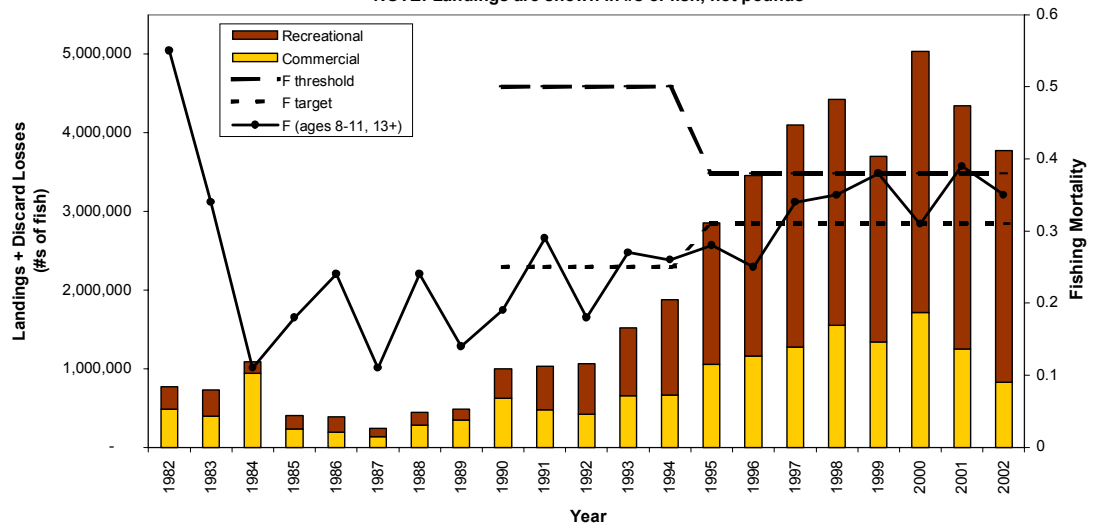


Figure 2. Total Atlantic Striped Bass Catch in 2002 (3,770,486 fish)

Source: ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee, 2003

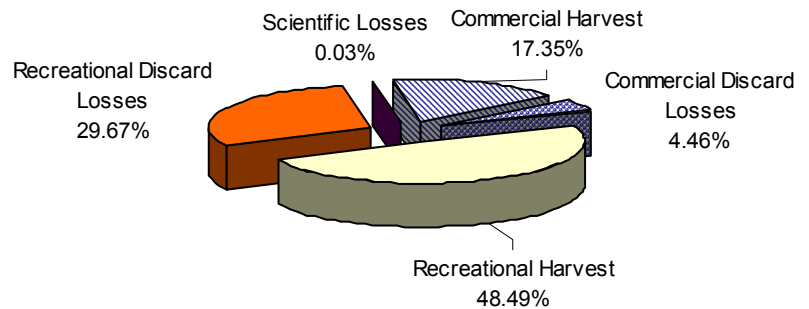
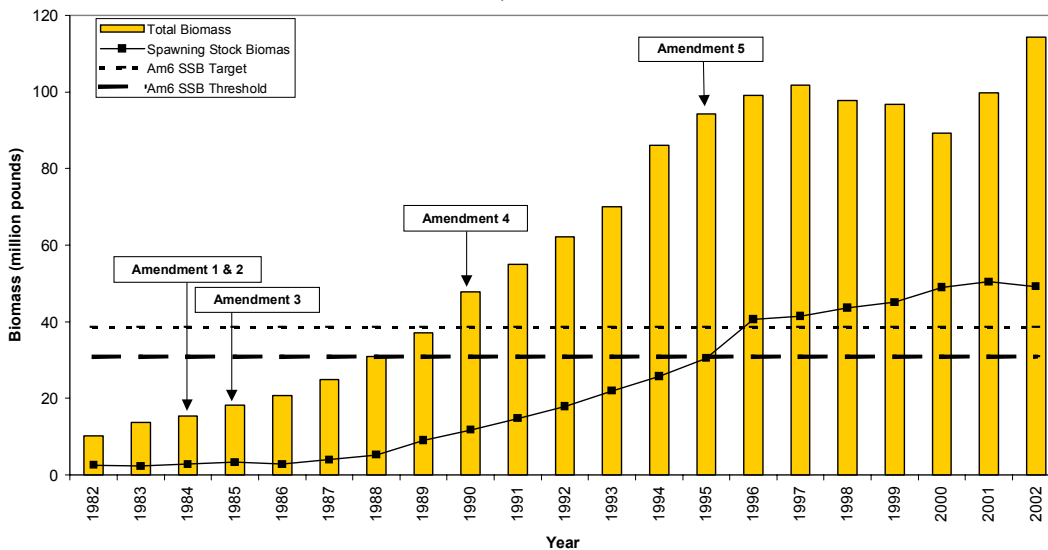


Figure 3. Atlantic Striped Bass Total & Female Spawning Stock Biomass, 1982-2002

Source: ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee, 2003



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Senator Owen Johnson and Jack Travelstead Honored at ASMFC Annual Meeting (continued from page 1)

its 62nd Annual Meeting in New York City.

Jack Travelstead epitomizes the traits for which the Hart Award was first created – leadership, commitment, and integrity. For nearly a quarter of a century, Mr. Travelstead has been dedicated to the conservation and management of Atlantic coastal fisheries, not only in the Commonwealth of Virginia, but coastwide. He has been a consistent and valuable participant of the Commission process since the early 80s, representing the Commonwealth well while respecting and supporting the principles and mission of the Commission and the Compact that unites the member states.

Mr. Travelstead has helped guide the evolution of the Commission's programs and policies into the 21st century. His forward thinking and continuous participation have aided the Commission in making significant changes to the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program, as well as the development and implementation of a coastwide data collection and management program under the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program.

As management board chair, he has a direct influence on the development and implementation of sound fisheries conservation and management programs for many of the Commission's managed species, including bluefish, tautog and shad & river herring.

He has also been a longtime member of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council on which he currently serves as Chair of its Highly Migratory and Bluefish Boards. He has been instrumental in the development of some two dozen fishery management plans for the Commonwealth. A consummate fisheries manager, Jack Travelstead has provided effective and consistent leadership at the state, interstate and federal levels for over twenty years, earning the respect of peers and fishing constituents alike.



From left to right: ASMFC Vice-Chair Preston Pate, Jr. (NC), William Pruitt (VA), ASMFC Chair John I. Nelson Jr., Hart Award Recipient, Jack Travelstead (VA) and ASMFC Executive Director John V. O'Shea

The Commission instituted the "Captain David H. Hart Award" in 1991 to recognize individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the betterment of marine fisheries on the Atlantic coast. The award is named for the Commission's oldest and longest serving member, a Governor's Appointee from New Jersey who was dedicated to the advancement and protection of marine fishery resources.

ASMFC Approves 2004 – 2008 Strategic Plan

The Commission has approved its Strategic Plan for 2004 – 2008, charting a course to achieve its long-term Vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." The Plan establishes nine major goals and related strategies to pursue this Vision and guide the Commission's activities over the next five years. Below are the Plan's nine goals.

1. Rebuild and restore depleted Atlantic coastal fisheries, and maintain and fairly allocate recovered fisheries through cooperative regulatory planning.
2. Strengthen cooperative research capabilities and improve the scientific basis for stock assessments and fisheries management actions.
3. Expand and fully utilize cooperative fisheries statistics programs.
4. Improve stakeholder compliance with Commission fishery management plans.
5. Enhance and cooperatively protect fisheries habitat.
6. Strengthen congressional, stakeholder, and public support for the Commission's Mission, Vision, and achievements.
7. Respond efficiently and effectively to member states needs.
8. Develop and advance strategies to enhance learning and growth within the Commission.
9. Provide efficient administration of the Commission's business affairs and ensure the Commission's financial stability.

Species Profile: Atlantic Striped Bass

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spectively, but below the overfishing threshold of 0.38 under Amendment 5 or 0.41 under Amendment 6.

Overall, the Atlantic stocks of striped bass appear to be abundant in number, capable of producing strong incoming year classes and are being fished at levels within the bounds of the current fishery management plan. The population should be considered fully exploited.

Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

Before the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Striped Bass (1981), states independently promulgated regulations (i.e. minimum size limits) to constrain the fishing mortality on the Atlantic coast striped bass population. Striped bass fisheries would not be where they are today, however, without the support of the 1984 Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act. This Act, which was the precursor to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, provided Atlantic coastal states with the necessary tools to cooperatively and more effectively conserve and manage striped bass stocks.

In an effort to regenerate the scarce mature adult portion of the population, many of the jurisdictions implemented moratoria in the mid-1980s to protect the 1982 and subsequent year classes. As a result of Amendments 4's stringent management program, the Commission

declared Atlantic coastal striped bass stocks fully recovered in 1995.

Since Amendment 4, the foundation of the striped bass management program has been to maintain harvest below a target fishing mortality rate (F). While Amendment 6 modifies the F targets and thresholds, it also introduces a new set of biological reference points to more effectively monitor the status of the population (Figure 4). On an annual basis, the female spawning stock biomass will be monitored to ensure this portion of the population remains above the threshold of 30.8 million pounds to avoid an overfished status. These new reference points, as well as new management triggers, enable the Management Board to be more responsive to changes in the stock.

The Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle-Roanoke regulatory programs differ from the coastal migratory stock because these programs are predicated on a more conservative Ftarget than the coastal migratory stock. The independent Ftarget allows these jurisdictions to implement separate seasons, harvest caps, and size and bag limits as long as they remain under that target.

While the NOAA Fisheries continues to implement a ban on the possession and harvest of striped bass in the exclusive

Figure 4. Amendment 6 Control Rule

	FISHING MORTALITY RATE	FEMALE SPAWNING STOCK BIOMASS
TARGET	F = 0.30*	38.6 million pounds
THRESHOLD	F = 0.41	30.9 million pounds

*The target fishing mortality rate for the Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle-Roanoke stock is F=0.27

In addition to the control rule, Amendment 6 phases in new regulations for both the commercial and recreational fisheries. Beginning in 2003, the coastal commercial quota for striped bass was restored to the state's historical average landings during the 1972-1979 base period, a 43 percent increase from the 2002 coastal commercial quotas. As of January 1, 2004, all states are required to implement a two fish recreational bag limit with a minimum size limit of 28 inches, except for the Chesapeake Bay fisheries, Albemarle-Roanoke fisheries, and states with approved conservation equivalency proposals.

economic zone (3-200 miles offshore), Amendment 6 includes a recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce to consider reopening the EEZ to a controlled striped bass fishery. NOAA Fisheries has initiated the rulemaking process and is considering the Commission's recommendation.

Over the next year, the states will fully implement Amendment 6 and begin to monitor the effects of its regulations on the stock. For more information, please contact Megan Gamble, Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <mgamble@asmfc.org>.



Gene Kray with a keeper.

ASMFC Releases Atlantic Herring PID for Public Comment States Schedule Hearings for February

The Commission's Atlantic Herring Section approved the Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for public review and comment. Initially developed in response to increased effort in the inshore Gulf of Maine component of the stock complex, the PID has expanded to address the implementation of a limited access program for all management areas. Additionally, the PID identifies maximum sustainable yield, management area boundaries, spawning area restrictions, internal waters processing, fixed gear fisheries, as well as several other issues for public comment. While many of the PID topics are similar to the New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) scoping document for Amendment 1 to the federal FMP, the Commission is specifically seeking input on the management of Atlantic herring in state waters.

Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Jersey have scheduled the dates and times of their public meetings. The specific details follow.

Maine Department of Marine Resources

February 9, 2004; 6:00PM

Samoset Resort, Penobscot Bay Room

220 Warrenton Avenue

Rockport, Maine

Contact: Lewis Flagg at (207)624-6548

February 11, 2004; 6:00PM

Scarborough Town Hall

Council Chambers B

259 US Route 1

Scarborough, Maine

Contact: Lewis Flagg at (207)624-6548

February 12, 2004; 6:00PM

Perry Municipal Building

US Route 1

Perry, Maine

Contact: Lewis Flagg at (207)624-6548

New Hampshire Fish & Game

February 17, 2004; 7:00 PM

Urban Forestry Center

45 Elwyn Road

Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Contact: John Nelson at (603)868-1095

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

February 18, 2004; PM

Holiday Inn – Dedham

55 Ariadne Road

Dedham, Massachusetts

Contact: Melanie Griffin at (617)626-1528

Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife

February 12, 2004; 6:00 PM

URI Narragansett Bay Campus

Corless Auditorium

South Ferry Road

Narragansett, Rhode Island

Contact: Najih Lazar at (401)423-1926

Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection

February 11, 2004; 7:00 PM

DEP Marine Headquarters

333 Ferry Road

Old Lyme, Connecticut

Contact: David Simpson at (860)434-6043

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

February 10, 2004; 7:00 PM

Nacote Creek Research Station

Mile Post 51, Route 9

Port Republic, New Jersey

Contact: Bruce Freeman at (609)633-2408

In addition to approving the PID in December 2003, the Section approved a timeline that brings the Commission's process in sync with the development of the NEFMC's Amendment 1 to the federal FMP. The PID is the first step in the amendment development process. Following the public comment period, the Section will begin drafting Amendment 2.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the PID, either through attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400 or via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Public Input. While public comment will be accepted throughout the entire process, comments on the PID will be accepted until **March 5, 2004**. All comments should be forwarded to Megan Gamble, Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 289-6051 (FAX) or at mgamble@asmfc.org. For more information, please contact Megan Gamble at (202) 289-6400.

American Lobster Board Approves Addendum IV

The Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum IV to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum establishes management measures for Areas 2 and 3, and modifies vent sizes and the interpretation of the most restrictive rule for multi-area fishermen. In addition, the Board approved Massachusetts' request for conservation equivalency in the Outer Cape Management Area.

Addendum IV was initiated to address significant stock declines in lobsters of all sizes in Area 2 (waters off of Rhode Island and Massachusetts). The management measures include gauge size increases and effort control, neither of which will be implemented until 2005. Gauge sizes will increase incrementally from 2005 to 2008, ending at a minimum gauge size of 3 1/2". The Board approved a proposal by the Area 2 Lobster Conservation Management Team (LCMT) designed to decrease the number of traps in Area 2 over time through a trap transferability program. Reductions would occur through passive re-

movals when permits and traps are transferred.

For offshore waters (Area 3), the Board approved a LCMT proposal for a new trap transferability program and a 10% trap reduction by 2008. This program would allow Area 3 fishermen to transfer traps to other Area 3 fishermen. The Board discussed the overall trap cap for the program and decided to initiate Addendum V to address the issue.

Addendum IV includes a vent size increase for circular vents associated with the 3 3/8" minimum gauge size to 2 5/8" as well as specifying the required vent sizes for minimum gauge sizes of 3 1/2". These vent size changes are based on a vent selectivity study by the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries.

In other business, the Board approved a Massachusetts conservation equivalency proposal for the Outer Cape Cod Management Area. Instead of allocating traps as outlined in Addendum III, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries will be using 1999 through 2001



as qualifying years to identify potential participants and will allocate traps based on fishing performance during 2000 – 2002, with pounds as the qualifying parameter.

The Commission will be conducting a peer reviewed stock assessment for American lobster in 2004. This stock assessment will consider new modeling approaches and input parameters such as natural mortality.

Copies of the Addendum will be available in January and can be obtained from the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org on the American lobster page. For more information, please contact Carrie Selberg, FMP Coordinator, at cselberg@asmfc.org.

Fourth Long Island Sound Lobster Health Symposium Postponed

The Fourth Long Island Sound Lobster Health Symposium, previously scheduled for May 3 at SUNY Stony Brook, has been postponed to late summer (date to be announced). Anyone wishing more information should contact Nancy Balcom, with the Connecticut Sea Grant Extension Program, at nancy.balcom@uconn.edu or (860) 405-9127 (phone).

Mark Your Calendars! ASMFC 2004 Meeting Week Dates

March 8 - 11:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Radisson Hotel Old Town Alexandria, 625 First Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

May 24 - 27:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Radisson Hotel Old Town Alexandria, 625 First Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

August 16 - 19:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Radisson Hotel Old Town Alexandria, 625 First Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

November 7 - 11:

ASMFC 63rd Annual Meeting, Wentworth by the Sea, 588 Wentworth Road, New Castle, New Hampshire.

ASMFC & MAFMC Approve 2004 Recreational Measures for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

In December, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved the following recreational management measures for the 2004 summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass recreational fisheries. These measures are intended to restrict catch to meet recreational harvest limits.

The 2004 scup recreational fishery will be managed under separate regulations for state and federal waters (see above table for federal regulations). The Board approved conservation equivalency for scup fisheries occurring in state waters; management measures will be developed in early 2004. The Council approved the development of a framework to

period's total quota (5.56 million pounds) is projected to be met. This action is intended to prevent an early closure of the fishery, thereby, allowing commercial fishermen the opportunity to land scup throughout the entire quota period. Industry members have voiced concern that this trip limit may not address the potential discard problem if the fishery closes early. As such, the Commission will begin developing an addendum in 2004 to address 2005 Scup Winter I Period trip limits.

Species	Recreational Harvest Limit	Minimum Fish Size	Possession Limit	Open Season
Summer Flounder	11.21 million lbs	state-specific	state-specific	state-specific
Scup	3.99 million lbs	10" (EEZ)*	50 fish (EEZ)*	Jan 1 – Feb 29 Aug 15 – Nov 30*
Black Sea Bass	4.01 million lbs	12"	25 fish	Jan 1 – Sept 7 Sept 22 – Nov 30

* For state waters, the Board will develop a conservation equivalency system for scup in 2004.

The Commission and Council adopted conservation equivalency for the 2004 summer flounder fishery, requiring the states to develop state-specific management measures (i.e., possession limits, size limits, and seasons). The states will develop management proposals and submit them to the Commission for approval in early 2004.

implement conservation equivalency for scup, allowing for consistent state/federal management.

The Commission established a 15,000-pound weekly trip limit for the 2004 Scup Winter I Period (January 1-April 30). Trip limits will drop to 1,000 pounds per week once 80 percent of the

recommendations to NOAA Fisheries for final approval. The Commission's actions are final. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <tkerns@asmfc.org>.

The Council will be forwarding its

ASMFC Summer Flounder Board Approves Addendum VIII Recreational Repayments Omitted from Addendum

On December 15, the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board decided to not implement the payback provision of Addendum VIII. This provision would have required states that exceeded their annual summer flounder recreational harvest limit to deduct overages from the following year's quota. While the Board did not take action to address the problem of recreational overages at this time, it committed to working with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

on a future amendment to address the issue.

The Board approved one provision of Addendum VIII, establishing 1998 as the base year for calculating the proportion of state-specific recreational allocations. This action was based on the recommendation of the Technical Committee that 1998 is the most appropriate base year, since it was the last year regulations among the various states were consistent.

While the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council manage summer flounder jointly, the Board's actions regarding Addendum VIII are taken exclusively under the states' management authority. Addendum VIII will be available on the Commission's web site in January.

For more information please contact, Toni Kerns, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at <tkerns@asmfc.org>.

ASMFC Spiny Dogfish Board Approves 4 Million Pound Quota for 2004 - 2005 Fishing Year

The Commission's Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Shark Management Board approved specifications for the 2004-2005 fishing year, setting a 4 million pound annual quota with trip limits of 600 pounds in quota period one (May 1 to October 31) and 300 pounds in quota period two (November 1 to April 30). These actions were taken in response to the results and recommendations of the 37th Stock Assessment Review Committee and the Commission's Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee.

The 2003 peer reviewed stock assessment report indicates a seventh year of the lowest pup biomass in the time series, a truncated size range (i.e., low pup and reproductive female biomass), and no progress towards rebuilding the population to the female spawning stock biomass target. Using the constant fishing mortality rate of 0.03 and ignoring the low recruitment over the last seven years, the projections indicate the stock will recover in 23 years. While discard mortality is projected to be 10.5 million pounds, the Board did not have enough scientific evidence that a higher quota would change discards into landings without increasing the mortality on the stock.

The federal specifications for the spiny dogfish fishery are still to be determined. The Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils recommended to the Secretary of Commerce a 1,500 pound trip limit and quotas for the 2004-2005 fishing year of 4 million pounds and 4.4 million pounds, respectively. The Secretary will set the



federal specifications prior to the start of the fishing year on May 1, 2004. The Board will next meet in the fall of 2004 to set the annual specifications for the 2005-2006 fishing year, as required by the Interstate Fishery Management Plan. For more information, please contact Megan Gamble, Spiny Dogfish Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <mgamble@asmfc.org>.

2004 Technical Committee Meeting Weeks Scheduled

In 2003, the Commission piloted two Technical Committee Meeting Weeks with the hope of reducing the number of travel days for members of the technical support groups, as well as travel costs for the Commission. Given the favorable review of the 2003 pilot, the Commission has decided to implement four Technical Committee Meeting Weeks in 2004.

The schedule for these meetings follows:

February 2 - 6, Baltimore MD
April 12 - 16, location to be determined (TBD)
June 21 - 25, location TBD
September 20 - 24, location TBD

February Technical Committee Week

February 2 - 6, 2004
Lord Baltimore Radisson Hotel
20 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland
(410) 539-8400

Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee

Monday, February 2, 2004

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Tuesday, February 3, 2004

9:00 AM - Noon

Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee

Tuesday, February 3, 2004

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Wednesday, February 4, 2004

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Atlantic Striped Bass Tagging Subcommittee

Wednesday, February 4, 2004

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee

Thursday, February 5, 2004

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Friday, February 6, 2004

8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee

Thursday, February 5, 2004

10:30 AM - 5:00 PM

Friday, February 6, 2004

8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

To help members improve the efficiency of their meetings, meeting management training seminars will be periodically conducted throughout 2004. All members are encouraged to attend these seminars.

For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline or Robert Beal at (202)289-6400.



The ACCSP Announces 2004 Funding

Increased Proposals and Stagnant Budget Make Funding Decisions Difficult

The Coordinating Council of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), a state and federal partnership for marine fisheries statistics, has allocated \$3.5 million to its state and federal partners for new and ongoing projects to improve fisheries-dependent data in 2004.

For the first time, the ACCSP's partner agencies requested more than twice the Program's total annual budget. Given the increased readiness to implement commercial trip reporting in the Northeast and the relatively stagnant ACCSP budget, the Coordinating Council was unable to fund several quality proposals for dockside biological sampling and at-sea bycatch sampling.

\$1,176,828 was allotted for improving commercial catch and effort data collection and vessel/fisherman/dealer registration systems. This sum will support ACCSP-standard trip-level reporting and electronic reporting by dealers through the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) by Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR), New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Virginia Marine Resources Commission.

New England and Mid-Atlantic state partners will continue their implementation of SAFIS, a web-based system to collect real-time landings data. NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office (NERO) and Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), and the ACCSP staff are de-

veloping an integrated state-federal system that eliminates duplicative reporting, provides better real-time access to information, provides an extremely cost-effective data collection and data entry application for multiple partners, and allows the fishing industry access to its own data while protecting confidentiality.

Some ACCSP partners that are already collecting commercial data to the Program's standards requested funds to upgrade and maintain infrastructure. Funding was provided to NERO and NEFSC for travel costs to ACCSP and SAFIS implementation meetings with various state partners. Georgia DNR will receive funds for implementing electronic reporting using a commercial software product and for a onetime redevelopment of their commercial fishing license and boat registration system.

Partners will receive a total of \$329,929 for biological sampling projects, providing critical management information on important Atlantic coast fisheries. A cooperative project to sample the snapper-grouper complex and coastal pelagic fish by North Carolina DMF, South Carolina DNR, Georgia DNR, and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center expands on similar work conducted by North Carolina with a 2003 ACCSP grant. The ACCSP Coordinating Council approved continuation of work conducted by the Maine DMR that samples Atlantic herring and other Northeast fisheries from Maine through New Jersey. NOAA Fisheries NERO and NEFSC roving sampler project will continue and further improve sampling of fisheries with traditionally low levels of

biological samples, important for stock assessments and management of groundfish, spiny dogfish and other Northeast fisheries.

The ACCSP awarded a total of \$663,924 to NOAA Fisheries for continuing improvements of recreational and for-hire fisheries data collection on the Atlantic coast. These funds will support increased sampling of private boat and shore fishing from Maine to Virginia through the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey and increased sampling of charter and head boats on the Atlantic coast through the new for-hire survey, which began on the Atlantic coast in 2003.

Remaining funds were allocated to the administrative grant, which supports travel for partners participating in continued development of program standards, ACCSP administration and personnel, and operation of the ACCSP data warehouse and SAFIS. Actual project proposals and specific funding amounts will soon be available at www.accsp.org.

Upcoming ACCSP Meetings

Recreational Technical Committee

January 21 & 22, 2004
West Palm Beach, FL

Advisory Committee

January 29 & 30, 2004
West Palm Beach, FL

Operations Committee

February 10 - 12, 2004
St. Simon's Island, GA

Megan Gamble Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

Megan Gamble is truly an exceptional employee. Since joining the Commission two and a half years ago, she has become a vital part of its interstate fisheries management program, coordinating the development of fishery management programs for several contentious Atlantic coast fisheries. Her exacting eye for detail and thoroughness, her ability to be proactive and to anticipate potential problems, and her dedication to a job well done have all contributed to her success at the Commission and to the betterment of Atlantic coast fisheries. It is these traits for which Megan was recently named the Commission's newest Employee of the Quarter (January - March 2004).

Megan personifies the qualities for which the award was developed -- teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude and results. She willingly assists members as they tackle difficult projects. During staff transitions, she has provided guidance and support to the new coordinators and taken on additional responsibilities, in-

cluding the coordination of striped bass while in the middle of Amendment 6 development. Her work products are organized and complete, clearly framing issues and serving to optimize Commissioner's valuable time.

In less than three years, her efforts have resulted in an updated striped bass management program, a new spiny dogfish management program, and a comprehensive plan for the next update of Atlantic Herring. All of this was accomplished with a cheerful, optimistic, and energetic attitude. Her outstanding teamwork and exceptional professional competence have increased the overall productivity and quality of work of the ISFMP, and promoted 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."

Megan received a Bachelor of Arts in Biology and Environmental Science from Boston University and a Masters of Arts in Marine Affairs from the Uni-



versity of Rhode Island. Her masters thesis was on "An assessment of social impacts analyses in US regional fishery management plans."

As Employee of the Quarter, Megan received a \$500 cash award, an engraved pewter pencil cup, and a letter of appreciation for her personnel record. In addition, Megan's name will be engraved on the Employee of Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby, alongside those of Edith Carr, Carrie Selberg, Geoffrey White and Kristina Ballard. Congratulations, Meg!



The Commission extends a special thanks to New York Commissioners, Senator Owen Johnson (and his proxy Brian Culhane), Gordon Colvin and Pat Augustine for a wonderful Annual Meeting!

ASMFC Chair John I. Nelson Jr. congratulates Senator Owen Johnson of New York on his award for Distinguished Meritorious Service.

ASMFC Launches New Website

www.asmfc.org

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission announces the launch of its new website at www.asmfc.org. Come visit our new species, fisheries research and habitat pages; participate in discussion forums on fisheries management, law enforcement and protected species; provide your input on proposed management measures; or just learn more about the Commission.

“We are excited about our new site, designed to be user friendly, informative and accessible to all our stakeholders,” states John V. O’Shea, ASMFC Executive Director. “The new website reflects a commitment by the Commission in our new Strategic Plan to empower stakeholders to become active participants in the Commission’s programs. It provides the public greater access to our management process and activities. It also provides the public tools to mea-

sure the Commission’s progress in meeting our stewardship responsibilities. The new discussion forums offer additional opportunities to learn more about the Commission, while exchanging views in an open and constructive way.”

New website features include:

- *Species-specific pages*, with links to fishery management plans and addenda, stock assessment reports, and meeting summaries and proceedings;
- *Expanded pages on the Commission’s science, research and statistics activities*, including multispecies assessments, socioeconomics, power plants, aquaculture and fisheries independent data collection and management;
- *Revised habitat pages* with links

to species-specific habitat fact sheets and fishery management plan information;

- **Contact information and committee lists** for all relevant boards, committees and advisory panels; and
- Discussion forums providing an informal way for stakeholders and constituents to dialogue with Commission staff, ASMFC Commissioners and other interested parties on issues related to Atlantic coastal fisheries conservation and management.

To access the web site go to www.asmfc.org. **If the site is already bookmarked on your computer, press control/refresh to load the new version.** For more information, please contact Tina Berger, Public Affairs Specialist, at (202)289-6400.

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