



ASMFC

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FISHERIES *focus*

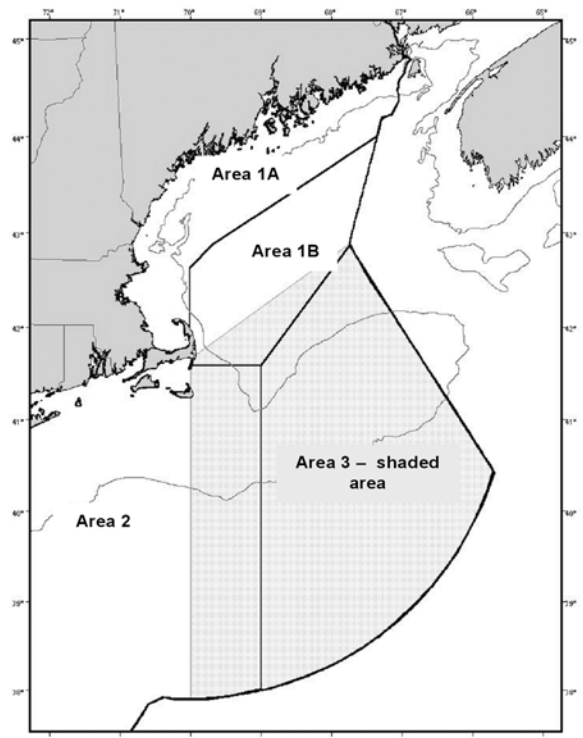
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1444 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C.

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

ASMFC Approves Atlantic Herring Amendment 2 Amendment Aims to Maintain High Abundance While Balancing Stakeholder Needs & Ecosystem Functions

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Atlantic Herring Section approved Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring. The Amendment revises management area boundaries (see map right), biological reference points, the specification process, research set-asides, internal waters processing operations, and measures to address fixed gear fisheries. These measures are intended to maintain the resource's currently high abundance level while also maintaining traditional use patterns in the fishery, allowing for an expanded bait fishery, and protecting herring's role as forage in the northwest Atlantic ecosystem.

Amendment 2 contains complementary management measures to those contained in Amendment 1 to the federal FMP, recently approved by the New England Fishery Management Council and awaiting consideration and approval by NOAA's Northeast Regional Administrator. Amendment 2 differs from the federal Amendment with regard to its effort control program ('days out' provision) and spawning restrictions.



Map of Amendment 2 Management Areas

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Amendment 2's effort control program is based on a 'days out' provision intended to allow the fishery to be prosecuted throughout the season by closing one or more days each week to fishing. It establishes a process whereby the states would meet each spring to review projected harvest by area and, if necessary, set additional management measures to control fishing effort (i.e., the start date to begin 'days out' measures, number of 'days out,' and which consecutive days of the week will have landings prohibitions). Fixed gear fisheries are exempt from the 'days out' provision and off-loading of herring is permitted during closure days. Additionally, vessels with an Atlantic herring permit will be allowed to prosecute fisheries for other species in restricted areas during the 'days out' provision. Amendment 2 also implements a 'zero tolerance' provision during spawning closures,

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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.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Upcoming Meetings

3/20 - 22:

ASMFC Weakfish Stock Assessment Peer Review Panel, Hotel Providence, 311 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

4/4 - 6:

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

5/2 - 4:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Oceanfront Hotel, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

5/8 - 11:

ASMFC Meeting Week, DoubleTree Hotel Crystal City, 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia; 703/416-4100.

5/16 - 18:

Southeast Bycatch Workshop, Hilton, St. Petersburg, Florida. For more information, please contact Mark Godcharles at 727/551-5727.

6/12 - 16:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Wyndham Grand Bay Hotel, 2669 South Bayshore Drive, Coconut Grove Florida; 800-996-3426.

6/13 - 15:

New England Fishery Management Council, Hyatt Regency, Newport, Rhode Island.

6/19 - 23:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

6/20 - 22:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn Select, Claymont, Delaware.

8/1 - 3:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Society Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

8/14 - 17:

ASMFC Meeting Week, DoubleTree Hotel Crystal City, 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia; 703/416-4100.

8/28 - 9/1:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

Regular readers of *Fisheries Focus* know that public comment is an integral part of the Commission's fisheries management process. Our process of holding in-state public hearings allows stakeholders to participate without having to travel great distances. In addition, we receive input through our advisory panels as well as through letters and email. All of this information is summarized for our Commissioners for their use during their deliberations. Having the information ahead of time allows them to give it careful consideration and helps them focus their debate and decisions on the critical issues.

We can all think of times when our management boards and individual Commissioners have been criticized for their decisions. This is especially true when their action differs from that recommended by the majority of those writing or speaking on the issue. These events often cause some to wonder how Commissioners weigh public input. They may also prompt others to ask, "What are the elements of effective public comment?"

Some clearly feel that Commissioners need to count comments or signatures and cast their vote accordingly. This thinking concludes that to do otherwise means some small group has exercised an improper influence over our Commissioners. Actually, Commissioners have a broader role. Their first obligation is to carry out their trust responsibility for proper stewardship of the public resources under their care. If the letter writers see liberal bag limits as beneficial to them, but they result in overfishing, then Commissioners might not (and probably should not) follow the public's advice.

Commissioners must also consider the interests of the broad public, including those who do not communicate on every issue. For example, we seldom hear from children about fisheries management issues, and they usually do not come to public hearings. However, there is an expectation that Commissioners will look after our children's interests by ensuring there are healthy stocks for the next generation to enjoy.

We also know, for a large segment of the public, access to public fisheries resources means going to the store to buy fish because many people do not have the time, means, or access to catch their own fish. While some states have decided to reserve certain species for sport fish use only, others have not. Until there is a coastwide

policy to assign game fish status to all saltwater species we can expect Commissioners to consider the needs of both the fish-eating and fish-catching public.

Like all public officials, Commissioners need to assess the accuracy of public comment. We can all think of cases where the public weighed in on an issue but acquired or was provided with the wrong set of facts. Individuals may believe this information with all good intentions but if the key premises are faulty and the projected outcomes unlikely or impossible, public comment should be discounted accordingly.

So, what makes for effective public comment? Clearly an informed advocate is a powerful advocate. Information regarding all of the Commission's processes and issues is readily available through our website at www.asmfc.org or by contacting our office. If there is something you do not understand about a proposed fishery management action or an assessment report, consider contacting either the ASMFC staff or your state officials. We have all heard the value of approaching an issue or process with an open mind, remembering it is easier to understand when you are listening rather than talking.

If and when you do decide to weigh in with your comments, you may find the following ideas helpful. Be organized; identify your main points and address them in a concise manner. Be clear about what you like or do not like in a proposal. If you are against something, offer realistic alternatives. Be respectful and constructive, staying focused on the issue, not the people on the other side of the issue from you. Often one well thought-out and reasoned argument can outweigh hundreds of uninformed, emotionally driven postcards or letters.

Please continue to share your views with your Commissioners and us. Your collective input is an important contribution to our public process. Public comment frequently moves Commissioners in a general direction away from their initial position. Keep in mind there are often good reasons why Commissioners might not vote exactly as you would like. They take their responsibilities seriously and are committed to doing what they perceive is the right thing, even when it is not the most popular thing. Respecting their courage is hopefully something we can all agree to do.



Tautog
Tautoga onitis

Common Names: blackfish, tog, white chinner, black porgy

Fish Facts: Tautog are exclusively daytime feeders, with feeding peaks at dawn and dusk. They also tend to stay within localized home ranges while feeding and resting. While on summering grounds, tautog establish a “home site,” a protected spot where they rest every night. Juveniles stay close to their home site during the day, while adults range more widely when feeding.

Maximum Age/Size: 35 years/3.1 feet

Age & Length at Maturity: 3 - 4 years/7 - 12”

Age & Length at Recruitment: 6 years/14”

Stock Status Overfishing is occurring; overfished status unknown

Species Profile: Tautog

Popular Recreational Fish Struggles to Rebuild

Introduction

Tautog are an important recreational species caught throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic. A limited commercial fishery targeting the live fish market has also developed over the past few years. Slow growing and long-lived tautog are commonly associated with structured habitat, making them particularly vulnerable to overfishing. The 2006 peer-reviewed stock assessment report indicates the tautog resource continues to be at low biomass levels and that overfishing is occurring.

Life History

Tautog are distributed along the northeast Atlantic coast, from Nova Scotia to Georgia, with the greatest abundances occurring in the U.S. between Cape Cod, Massachusetts and the Chesapeake Bay. North of Cape Cod, tautog are generally found close to shore, in water less than 60 feet deep. South of Cape Cod, they can be found up to 40 miles offshore and at depths up to 120 feet. During spring, as water temperatures approach 48° F, tautog migrate inshore to spawn in estuaries and nearshore marine waters. They may remain inshore throughout the summer, then move to deeper (80-150 feet) wintering areas offshore as fall approaches and water temperatures drop below 52° F. Toward the southern end of their range, some adults may remain offshore throughout the year.

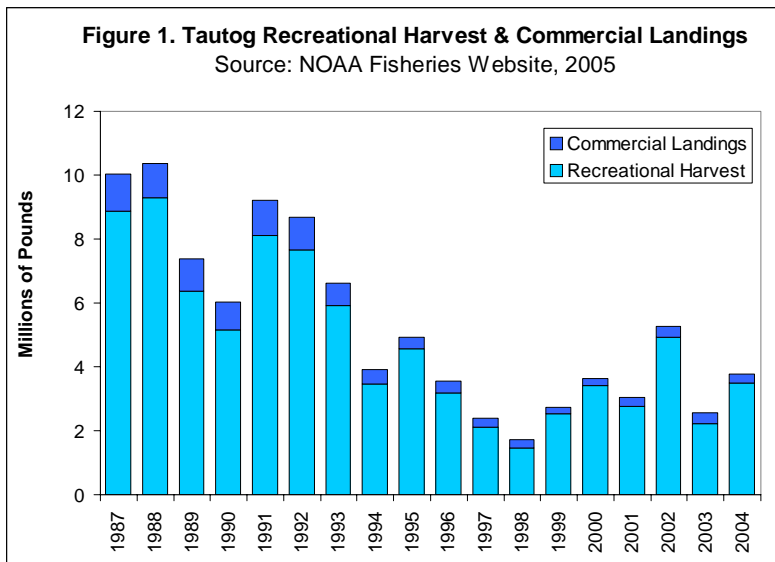
Throughout their life, tautog can be found associated with structured habitats. Shallow, vegetated habitats of estuaries and inshore areas serve as juvenile nurseries. Larger juveniles join adults offshore in deeper waters. North of Long Island, New York, tautog are generally found around rocks and boulders. Toward the southern end of its range, tautog often inhabit wrecks, jetties, natural and artificial reefs, and shellfish beds. They are also found near the mouths of estuaries and other inlets. Adults stay close to their preferred home site and, although they may move away during the day to feed, they return to the same general location at night where they become dormant and may actually sleep.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

The tautog fishery is primarily recreational, extending from Maine to Virginia with the majority of landings occurring in state waters between Cape Cod and the Chesapeake Bay. The fishery occurs primarily in the spring and fall, although many Mid-Atlantic fishermen pursue tautog year-round, and there is an active fishery off the Virginia coast in the winter.

Since 1980, total landings have averaged about six million pounds, with recreational catches accounting for 95 percent of the total (see Figure 1). The commercial fishery generally occurs between Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Historically, otter trawls have been the predominant fishing gear, although floating fish traps and gillnets have also landed significant numbers of tautog. In recent years, there has also been a slight increase in landings by pots and hook-and-line, largely the result of a growing market for live fish. Since commercial landings have not risen appre-





ciably since plan implementation and the recreational fishery accounts for approximately 90 percent of the total harvest, recent increases in recreational landings appear to drive recent increases in fishing mortality rates (see Figure 2).

Stock Status

Slow growth and reproduction, and a tendency to congregate around wrecks and rock piles, make tautog particularly susceptible to overfishing. The 2006 peer-reviewed stock assessment report indicates the tautog resource continues to be at low biomass levels (see Figure 2). Since the mid-1980s tautog has undergone a substantial decrease in biomass and remains at a low level of abundance. Total stock biomass has been stable since 1999. Since the plan does not define a specific biomass target, it cannot be determined if the population is overfished. With the 2003 fishing mortality rate of 0.30 exceeding the plan target of 0.29, the stock assessment concluded that overfishing is occurring.

The Peer Review Panel concluded that the coastwide assessment currently provides the best available scientific foundation for management. However, given the limited migratory range of this species and the potential for localized stocks, the Panel encouraged the continued development and refinement of state-specific assessments to complement the coastwide assessment.

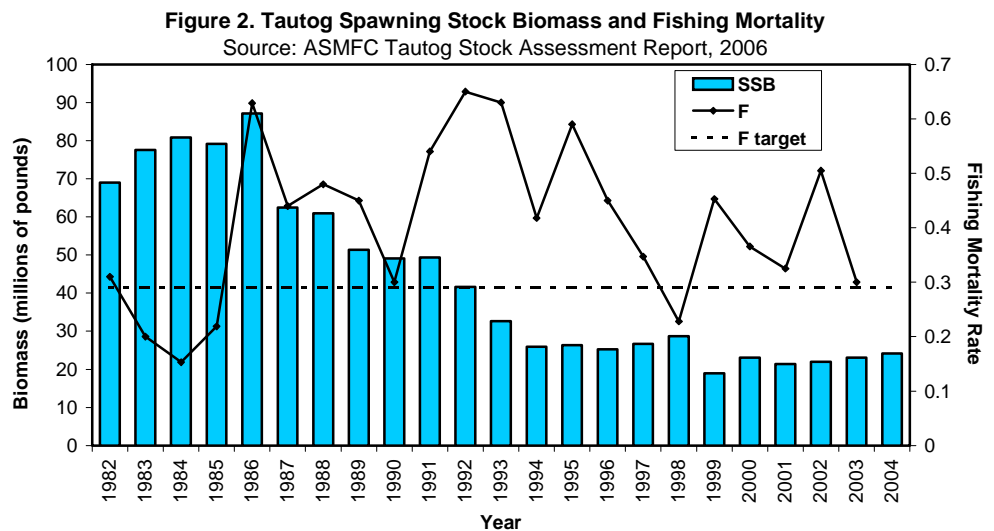
Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

In March 1996, the Commission approved the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Tautog. Because of tautog's vulnerability to overfishing

and increasing demands on the resource by both recreational and commercial fishermen, the plan primarily focuses on reducing fishing mortality through interim and final fishing mortality targets. Since plan approval, states from Massachusetts through Virginia have implemented recreational and commercial management measures in order to reduce fishing pressure on tautog stocks. These measures include minimum size and possession limits, gear restrictions and closed seasons. The FMP also identified a number of research and monitoring needs that are essential to ensuring better management of the tautog resource. These include (1) a better understanding of the relationship between stock size and recruitment (the number of young fish entering the fishery each year), (2) more extensive size and age composition data, as well as catch-at-age data at the state level, and (3) surveys dedicated

to determining discard mortality rates. There is also a need for genetic stock identification studies to determine the nature of tautog stocks and spawning groups along the coast. Finally, the plan calls for continued and increased sampling of both recreational and commercial catches.

Addendum III, approved in February 2002, required states to reduce recreational fishing mortality by 29% no later than April 1, 2003. These measures were to apply only to the recreational fishery, since recreational catch accounts for the majority of total landings. In 2003, states implemented a variety of measures including possession limits and seasons to meet the required reduction in effort. Given the continued low level of biomass, the Tautog Management Board will continue to closely monitor the status of the resource to determine whether further reductions in fishing mortality are necessary to rebuild the stock. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program, at <rbeal@asmfc.org>.



FMP Milestones: Original FMP (1996); Addendum I (1997); Addendum II (1999); Addendum III (2002)

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board Approves Addendum XVIII

The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XVIII to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum provides relief to New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts that are facing large recreational harvest reductions in their 2006 recreational fisheries. Relief comes from "savings" generated by states that have opted to maintain their 2005 recreational fishing regulations in 2006 rather than liberalizing them.

The Addendum aims to stabilize fishing rules close to those that existed in 2005, in part, to minimize the drastic reductions facing the three states. Sav-

ings will be distributed proportionately to New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts based on the percent reduction those states are required to undergo. Savings are defined as the number of fish not utilized by a state with the opportunity to liberalize its regulations. The Addendum does not alter the states' 2006 recreational harvest targets and only applies to the 2006 summer flounder recreational specification process.

Based on the 2005 summer flounder stock assessment, the 2006 coastwide total allowable landings were significantly reduced from an expected 33 million pounds to 23.59 million pounds, resulting in smaller state recre-

ational harvest limits than anticipated. On a coastwide basis, the recreational fishery did not harvest its entire 2005 limit, with the majority of states harvesting less than their state share. However, due to the drop in the 2006 harvest limit, it was necessary to reduce coastwide landings by 3.73 % (based on estimated 2005 landings).

Copies of Addendum XVIII are available via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or tkerns@asmfc.org.

States Schedule Hearings on Horseshoe Crab Draft Addendum: Addendum Considers Additional Harvest Reductions

Mid-Atlantic States from Connecticut to Virginia have scheduled their public hearings to gather comment on Draft Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Horseshoe Crab. New Jersey will also be conducting public hearings, although the details are not available yet. For more information, please the contact Peter Himchak, New Jersey Fish and Wildlife, at (609) 748-2020. The dates, times and locations of the scheduled hearings follow:

Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection

Tuesday, March 28, 2006; 7:00 PM
Marine Headquarters
Boating Education Center
333 Ferry Road
Old Lyme, Connecticut
Contact: David Simpson (860) 434-6043

New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation

Wednesday, March 29, 2006; 7:00 PM
Bureau of Marine Resources Headquarters

205 NorthBelle Mead Road
East Setauket, New York
Contact: Kim McKown (631) 444-0454

Delaware Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

Monday, April 3, 2006; 7:00 PM
Richardson & Robbins Building Auditorium, 89 Kings Highway
Dover, Delaware
Contact: Roy Miller (302) 739-3441

Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

Tuesday, March 28, 2006; 6:30 PM
Ocean Pines Library
11107 Cathell Road
Berlin, Maryland
Contact: Howard King (410) 260-8281

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

Tuesday, April 4, 2006; 6:00 PM
2600 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor
Newport News, Virginia
Contact: Jack Travelstead (757) 247-2247

The Draft Addendum proposes a number of options to reduce or eliminate

harvest of horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin. It responds to public concern regarding the horseshoe crab populations and their ecological role in the Delaware Bay. While there are a number of scientific reviews on the status of horseshoe crabs, there is no peer-reviewed coastwide estimate of horseshoe crab abundance. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Shorebird Technical Committee has indicated that the red knot, one of many shorebird species that feed upon horseshoe crab eggs, is at low population levels. Red knots have shown no sign of recovery, despite a fourfold reduction in horseshoe crab landings since 1998. The Shorebird Technical Committee concluded a moratorium of horseshoe crab harvest could provide more eggs for the birds to feed upon. The Board initiated the addendum process to evaluate further restrictions on crab harvest in the Delaware Bay region. The area is considered the epicenter of horseshoe crab production along the

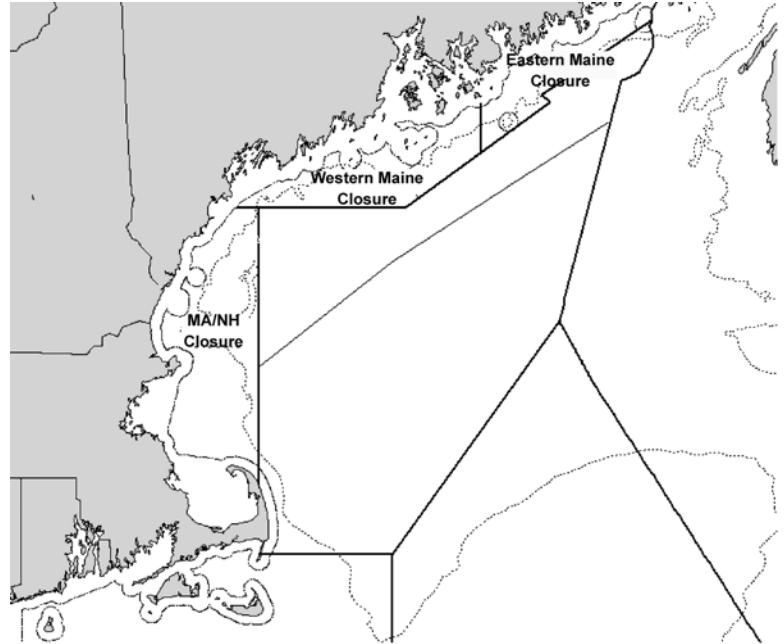
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ASMFC Approves Atlantic Herring Amendment 2 (continued from page 1)

prohibiting any vessel from fishing for, taking, landing, or possessing spawn herring from or within a restricted spawning area (see map at right). Eastern Maine fixed gear fisheries will be exempt from spawning restrictions.

While scientists from both the US and Canada have determined that the herring stock complex is at a high level of abundance, is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, they could not reach consensus on the most appropriate model to assess the magnitude of herring abundance. To address this issue, Amendment 2 establishes biological reference points (biomass and fishing mortality thresholds and targets) as precautionary measures until the next stock assessment is completed in May/June 2006.

The Amendment has an implementation date of January 1, 2007 and requires participating states from Maine through New Jersey to submit implementation proposals by April 1, 2006. The Atlantic Herring Section will meet in May 2006 to review and consider approval of the state proposals. Annual compliance reports are due on February 1 of each year. Copies of Amendment 2 will be made available by mid-March and can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org (Breaking News) or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. For more information, please contact Ruth Christiansen, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or rchristiansen@asmfc.org.



Map of Amendment 2 Spawning Area Closures

ASMFC American Eel Board Approves Addendum I: Addendum Aims to Improve Data Collection

On February 22, 2006, the Commission's American Eel Management Board approved Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Eel. The Addendum establishes a mandatory trip-level catch and effort monitoring program to collect much needed data on American eel. The Addendum provides states the option to collect the data through either a commercial eel harvester permit and mandatory reporting system or an eel dealer permit and reporting system.

The Addendum responds to concerns regarding the lack of accurate catch and effort data and the critical need for these data for stock assessment purposes. This need was identified in the recent Com-

mission benchmark stock assessment for American eel and in the peer review panel report. The external Peer Review Panel recommended the completion of additional analyses prior to adoption of the American Eel Stock Assessment for technical and management purposes.

Insufficient data prevented the American Eel Technical Committee from developing reference points or quantifying stock status. Because of this, the status of the stock is uncertain. The Technical Committee has concerns that relative abundance will continue to decline unless mortality decreases and/or recruitment increases. The peer review panel concurs that eel abundance was likely much higher in the late 1970s to mid-

1980s. The panel report states that the abundance of yellow eel has declined in the last two decades and the stock is at or near low levels.

Copies of the Addendum will be available by the end of March and can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program, at (202) 289-6400 or rbeal@asmfc.org.



Supporting Stock Assessments & Management Through Data Collection: The SEAMAP Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise

The 2006 Southeast Area Monitoring Assessment Program's (SEAMAP) Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise took place in January aboard the NOAA Ship OREGON II. The science party included representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, East Carolina University, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Sampling was conducted primarily in North Carolina waters, however, trawling was also conducted in waters off southeastern Virginia due to the concentrations of striped bass present there. The largest tagged striped bass weighed in at 48.4 pounds and was 48.5 inches in length (see photo far right).

This year's cruise ranks third overall in numbers of striped bass tagged and released. In addition to tagging and measuring 4,445 striped bass, scale samples

were taken for aging purposes. Striped bass injured during capture were sacrificed for ageing and stomach content analysis. In addition to the striped bass work, 9,555 spiny dogfish were tagged and released out of over 12,000 that were captured. Twenty-four Atlantic sturgeon were tagged and released, with an additional five sturgeon measured and released. Twelve horseshoe crabs were also tagged and released. Other species that were measured and released include summer flounder, weakfish, and three species of skates. Samples of various species were retained for ageing and stomach content analysis.

All of the information collected during the Cooperative Tagging Cruise will aid in the development and implementation of fisheries regulations by state and federal fishery management agencies, the three East Coast Fishery Management Councils, and the Commission. Rewards for striped bass and Atlantic sturgeon tag returns are offered through



Lt. Jeremy Adams, Commanding Officer of the OREGON II, with giant striper

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maryland Fisheries Resource Office, as part of the coastwide tagging program for these two species. East Carolina University distributes rewards for spiny dogfish tag returns.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

ASMFC Staff:

Elizabeth Griffin -- In February, after two and a half years with the Commission, Elizabeth Griffin has taken a job with Oceania as its Marine Wildlife Scientist. Elizabeth first came to the Commission as a contractor to characterize fisheries interactions with sea turtles in Atlantic coastal state waters. After several months on the project, she was offered a full-time position, coordinating the Commission's Protected Species Program, fisheries-independent data collection programs for both the Southeast and Northeast (SEAMAP and NEAMAP respectively), and providing staff support to the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences. We wish Elizabeth the very best in her new position.

Cecilia Butler -- In recognition of her hard work and her desire to be continually challenged professionally, Cecilia Butler has been promoted to the position of Human Resources Administrator. Cecilia has been the lead Administrative Assistant for the past five years, and fills the vacancy left from Kara Laws' departure early in the year. Congratulations, Cecilia!

Peter Mooreside -- This March, after a year with the Commission, Peter Mooreside has accepted a position with the American Association for the Advancement of Science as a copy editor for its weekly publication *Science*. As ASMFC's Fisheries Research Specialist, Peter assisted with the management and

use of the American lobster database, which served as the data warehouse for all available fisheries dependent information on American lobster. The database played a critical role in the recent peer-reviewed benchmark stock assessment for lobster. Since May, Peter assumed coordination responsibilities for NEAMAP. During the fall, he also converted the Commission's fisheries research needs document into a database, organized by fish species and research topics. It is intended to increase the utility and accessibility of research needs by fisheries scientists, researchers and academicians. We wish Pete the very best in his new position.

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Science Highlight: Natural Mortality

Editor's Note: This is the first of several articles readers will see this year, focusing on some general concepts and principles of fisheries science. Our intention is to heighten awareness and understanding of the science behind Atlantic coastal fisheries management. We welcome your thoughts, comments and specific requests for future topics.

Fisheries scientists and managers continually work on data collection and analysis methods to improve the reliability of stock status determination and improve confidence in management actions. However, one topic of fisheries science that continues to inspire both great interest and debate is natural mortality.

Fish die of either natural mortality (depicted by the symbol M) or fishing mortality (depicted by the symbol F), and the two added together constitute the total mortality (Z) experienced by a population. Assessment methods based on catch (removals of fish from a population) and its composition (i.e. the size, age, and sex of the caught fish) indicate total mor-

tality, and F only comes from subtraction of M from Z . The challenge is determining natural mortality.

Natural mortality rates generally vary between fish species. For example, fish like anchovies, mackerel, and herring have high natural mortality rates, due to the fact they mature early, grow fast, and have short life spans. By comparison, fish such as tautog, cod, sturgeon, and haddock, have lower natural mortality rates because they mature later, grow slower, and have long life spans. However, natural mortality can also vary during each life stage of a particular species of fish. Environmental variation such as temperature, competition, food availability, and predation can also have significant and often immeasurable effects on fish survival, as they mature from eggs and larvae to juveniles and adults.

Fisheries scientists attempt to include natural mortality in stock assessment calculations, because it is known that not all fish losses are due to fishing and that in some situations natural losses may be of greater significance

to a population than fishing losses. Classically, there are two methods for deriving natural mortality, one involving a constant rate of mortality among ages, and another involving age-specific mortality. Constant mortality rate assumes each life stage experiences the same rate of loss or same chance of dying from natural causes. Age-specific mortality, on the other hand, assumes that an age-1 fish will die from natural causes at a different rate (generally higher rate) than an age-10 fish. It is estimated by using information on maximum age, growth, temperature, and female reproductive maturity.

Fisheries scientists continue to try and account for all of the components of natural mortality, and their constant fluctuations in amount and impact. They use population modeling, tagging, and general life history characteristics, to better understand of how these natural mortality process functions in managed stocks. In doing so, they continue to strive to develop measures that are based on the best available science.

Commissioners:

Mr. David Chanda --With his recent promotion to Acting Director of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJ F&W), Mr. David Chanda joins the Commission as New Jersey's Administrative Commissioner. A certified wildlife biologist with a Master's in Public Administration, Mr. Chanda has been with the Division for more than 25 years. During his tenure as Assistant Director, he was involved with a multitude of wildlife management programs. He helped develop a coldwater fisheries management plan, established a Farm Bill program to encourage private landowners to protect and enhance habitat, and worked with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation to educate stakeholders about marketing and communication products for the fishing and boating industry. Welcome aboard, Mr. Chanda!

Mr. Bruce Freeman -- This February, Mr. Bruce Freeman retired from NJ F&W, Marine Fisheries Administration, marking the end of a forty-year career dedicated to Atlantic coastal fisheries management. Mr. Freeman was a member of both

the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council for most of the last 25 years, primarily representing the State of New Jersey. He has served as Chair and Vice-Chair of virtually every Commission species management board as well as various Council committees. Throughout his career, he demonstrated his dedication to the proper management of the marine fisheries resources. The progress made in restoring striped bass, summer flounder, black sea bass and scup has been aided by his efforts and steadfast commitment to conservation and management of marine resources. Mr. Freeman approached difficult fisheries management issues with diplomacy and sensitivity to the needs of his state and federal partners. He embodied the true cooperative spirit of the Commission's stewardship role and has made a tremendous lifelong contribution to the fisheries conservation profession. His participa-

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ACCSP Begins to Populate InPort Metadata System

InPort is a metadata application developed through the NOAA Fisheries national Fisheries Information System (FIS) program. It is a user-friendly, system for capturing, storing and updating metadata for a variety of data collection programs. It is similar to a library card catalog, but instead of documenting books, it describes the “what, where, when, how, and who” of data collection programs. It stores details on the quality and completeness of data, confidentiality policies, data collection methodology and usage constraints. It does not store actual raw or summary data, rather it provides information on what data exist, what is in the data, and how to access and use the data. Documentation of partner programs is necessary to help scientists properly apply these data in their various stock assessment and other management models. NOAA Fisheries has agreed to permanently host InPort for use by all ACCSP partners and the ACCSP Operations Committee endorsed the use of InPort in 2005.

In FY05, FIS funding was allocated to populating InPort for current fisheries-dependent data collection systems. The ACCSP and Gulf Fisheries Information Network submitted a joint proposal in August 2005 for \$57,000 that was approved by the FIS program. The project provides for an employee hired through an existing NOAA Fisheries contract to work with ACCSP and state partner staff to document the following systems on the Atlantic coast:

- Commercial trip ticket systems for Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia
- The Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS)
- Maine’s biological sampling program.

Population of InPort for NMFS programs will be done in parallel using FIS funds allocated to their regions and science centers. The NMFS contractor recently hired the person who will do the data entry for ACCSP. Training sessions for the contractor, the ACCSP Director and Programmer, and several state personnel were held on March 6-7 in Silver Spring, Maryland, with another one scheduled for April 22-23 in Gloucester, Massachusetts. ACCSP staff will provide the contractor with contact information for the partner programs and issue preliminary calls for existing documentation. The project also provides for travel to individual partner agencies to gather written and oral information needed to populate the system. After the population process is completed, which also serves as beta-testing for the application, we will conduct a training session for all ACCSP partners who will maintain the system in the future. This project to initially populate the application and transfer knowledge to our partners will take place over approximately a 10-month period.

After beta-testing of the system and initial population, additional information on accessing the InPort system through the web will be provided to ACCSP partners. For further information please visit

www.accsp.org.

Staff Transitions

Abbey Compton – After almost five years as the ACCSP Outreach Coordinator, Abbey Compton resigned in January to devote herself as a stay-at-home mother to her son, Kyle. She plans to stay active as an independent outreach contractor.

As the Outreach Coordinator, Abbey guided the outreach activities of the ACCSP during its formative years. She staffed the Outreach and Advisory Committees, and assisted the ACCSP Partners with outreach when implementing ACCSP program standards. Abbey was integral to the development of the ACCSP Strategic Plan and other guiding program documents. She was responsible for coordinating the redesign of the ACCSP website, and for maintaining its content. Most recently, Abbey worked closely with the Outreach Committee and NMFS to launch a campaign to improve perception of the MRFSS. We will miss her dedication, hard work, and fresh ideas. Good luck, Abbey!

Mike Lewis – In November, after two years with the ACCSP, Mike Lewis accepted a position as Project Manager for Madden Corporation. As the Maryland SAFIS Coordinator, Mike worked closely with fish dealers in Maryland to implement electronic dealer reporting in the state. During this time, Mike received training in Oracle, and developed custom databases for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. He also worked with ACCSP IS staff to facilitate the transfer of Maryland’s fisheries data into the ACCSP database. We wish Mike the very best in his new career.

Shannon Bettridge – This March, after three and a half years with the ACCSP, Shannon accepted a position with the National Marine Fisheries Service within the Protected Resources Division. As the ACCSP Program Coordinator, Shannon was responsible for providing overall support, coordination, and documentation of technical committee work on the development and implementation of the ACCSP. She worked closely with the Recreational Technical Committee, the Commercial Technical Committee, the Biological Review Panel, the Bycatch Committee, and all subcommittees of these technical committees. She also assisted in coordinating the annual funding process and monitoring of funded projects.

Lydia Munger Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

For the past three and a half years Lydia Munger has played a vital part in the management of a number of contentious Atlantic coast fisheries, significantly contributing to the Commission's vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." In recognition of her efforts, Lydia was awarded Employee of the Quarter (January - March 2006). The award is intended to recognize special contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.

During her time at the Commission, Lydia has coordinated fisheries management programs for shad and river herring, American eel, tautog, and winter flounder. With regards to winter flounder, she oversaw the development and adoption of Amendment 1 to the Winter Flounder Fishery Management Plan -- an important amendment which seeks to rebuild depressed southern New England and Mid-Atlantic winter flounder stocks and sustain the Gulf of Maine stock.

Over the past year, she assumed coordination responsibilities for striped bass, one of the Commission's most controversial management programs. She has also lead efforts to produce updated and benchmark stock assessments for striped bass, tautog, and American eel.

A huge proponent of volunteerism, both professionally and personally, Lydia has enthusiastically participated on the SEAMAP Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise for three years straight and has assisted in the DC Avon Walk for Breast Cancer for the last four years. Lydia also serves as an adjunct instructor of biology and health science for the Northern Virginia Community College.

Lydia has a Bachelor of Arts in Marine Science from Boston University and a Masters in Environmental Management from Duke University. As Employee of the Quarter, she received a \$500 cash award, an engraved pewter pencil cup, and a letter of appreciation for her per-



sonnel record. In addition, her name will be engraved on the Employee of Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Lydia!

Editor's Note: By the time this issue goes to press, Lydia will have started her new job as Technical Development Coordinator with the National Institute of Health, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. We wish Lydia the very best in her new career.

ASMFC Comings & Goings (continued from page 9)

tion and contributions will be greatly missed. We wish Mr. Freeman a healthy and happy retirement.

Other Participants:

Ms. Anne Lange -- An active participant in the Commission's fisheries management planning process, Ms. Anne Lange retired recently from the National Marine Fisheries Service, State-Federal Fisheries Division. Since 1996, Ms. Lange served as the NMFS representative on ASMFC species management boards for Atlantic striped bass and weakfish, as well as the ISFMP Policy Board. She was a strong proponent of the state/federal partnerships in the conservation and management of coastal fishery resources, and strived to ensure that management decisions were based on sound science

and in the best interest of the resource. Now retired to South Carolina, she plans to continue working on marine fishery projects near her new home.

Dr. John Merriner -- After a 35-year career in fisheries science and management, Dr. John Merriner retired in January from NOAA's National Ocean Service. Dr. Merriner was active in the Commission's science and fisheries management programs, sharing his expertise on various species, including striped bass, weakfish, menhaden and red drum. He was a respected member of the Management & Science Committee and served on the Red Drum Plan Development Team, aiding in the preparation of Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Red Drum.

We wish Dr. Merriner a healthy and happy retirement.

Mr. Byron Young -- After more than three decades of service to the State of New York conserving and managing its marine fishery resources, Mr. Byron Young retired in February from the New York State Department of Conservation as Chief of the Finfish and Crustaceans Unit. With his broad experience in local fisheries issues and particular emphasis on striped bass population dynamics, Mr. Young was appointed as New York's very first representative to the Commission's Scientific and Statistical Committee (now known as the Management and Science Committee). The

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S&S Committee, with the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act as a guide, was responsible for development of the first fishery management plan for striped bass, subsequently used as a model for other species management plans. More recently, Mr. Young provided key leadership to the Management and Science Committee's Power Plant Subcommittee, the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program Board and the workgroup that crafted the Interstate Fisheries Management Program Charter. With the advent of adaptive fisheries management under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (1993), Byron became the lead architect of Part 40, the regulatory compilation for marine fish in New York. We wish Mr. Young a healthy and happy retirement.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
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Return Service Requested

Horseshoe Crab Draft Addendum (continued from page 6)

coast as well as a critical stopover area for many migratory shorebirds including the red knot.

The Management Board will meet in May 2006 to review public comment, select the management measures to be contained in the Addendum, and consider its final approval. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Addendum either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies of the Draft Addendum can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News . Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM on April 17, 2006** and should be forwarded to Braddock Spear, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax) or comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Horseshoe Crab).