



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

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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 Presents Annual Awards of Excellence

Mr. Fred Schwab and Colonel Joseph Fessenden were presented the Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence at its Spring Meeting in Alexandria, Virginia for their contributions to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. They received awards for their efforts in the categories of scientific, technical and advisory, and law enforcement, respectively.

"Every year a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence recognizes outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries," said ASMFC Chair George D. Lapointe of Maine. "Today, we honor several outstanding individuals for their contributions to the management and conservation of Atlantic coast fisheries."



From Left: ASMFC Executive Director John V. O'Shea, AAE Recipients Fred Schwab and Colonel Joseph Fessenden, and ASMFC Chair George Lapointe (ME)

Scientific, Technical and Advisory

Mr. Fred Schwab, long-standing fisheries conservation advocate and striped bass advisor to the Commission, received the award for work in the area of scientific, technical and advisory contributions. Mr. Schwab has been an avid supporter of striped bass conservation for over 30 years. He and other Northeast fishermen were instrumental in convincing resource managers and elected officials that the decline in striped bass abundance and the problems associated with overfishing and wasteful fishing practices required a coordinated multi-state conservation program to restore the stock. Their advocacy was pivotal in leading to enactment of the Emergency Striped Bass Study and development of an Interstate Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). As one of the charter members of the Commission's Striped Bass Advisory Committee from 1978 to 1982, he played an important role in the creation of the original Striped Bass Plan. His unstinting advocacy for the resource's conservation ensured that the plan would include effective conservation measures. Once the FMP was adopted, he worked hard to see it implemented in his home state of New York, personally lobbying his state legislator on the eve of the Assembly debate on the bill. Mr. Schwab rejoined the Commission's Striped Bass Advisory Panel in 1994 and has served up until this year, consistently advocating for resource conservation. His experience and extraordinary knowledge, coupled with his willingness to listen to all points of view, and his evenhanded treatment of issues and interests, have made him a model AP member and Chair. The Commission's ability to achieve fisheries man-

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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

6/11 - 15:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Doubletree Grand Key Resort, 3990 S. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West, Florida; 800-222-8733.

6/12 - 14:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Embassy Suites, 1700 Coliseum Drive, Hampton, Virginia; 757-827-8200.

6/18 - 21:

Challenges for Diadromous Fishes in a Dynamic Global Environment, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

6/19 - 21:

New England Fishery Management Council, Eastland Park Hotel, Portland, Maine.

6/25 - 29:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, Holiday Inn Brownstone, 1707 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, North Carolina (see schedule on page 10).

7/9 - 11 (9 AM - 5 PM each day):

ASMFC Striped Bass Tagging Subcommittee, Radisson Hotel Manchester, 700 Elm Street, Manchester, New Hampshire.

7/9 - 13:

ASMFC Maximum Likelihood Workshop, Radisson Plaza, Lord Baltimore, Maryland.

7/16 - 20:

Shad Stock Assessment Peer Review, Washington, DC area.

7/31 - 8/2 (9 AM - 5 PM each day):

ASMFC Striped Bass Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Radisson Hotel Manchester, 700 Elm Street, Manchester, New Hampshire.

8/7 - 9:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Danford's on the Sound, 25 East Broadway, Port Jefferson, New York; 631-928-5200.

8/13 - 16:

ASMFC Summer Meeting Week, Crowne Plaza Old Town, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; (800) 333-3333.

9/17 - 21:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Avista Resort, 300 North Ocean Boulevard, North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; 800-968-8986.

Improving Marine Recreational Fisheries Data

Most readers understand the value of accurate catch data for our recreational fisheries. Scientists use harvest data to help estimate stock abundance and managers use them to make decisions about allocations, quotas, and regulations. In response to concerns raised by stakeholders about the quality of this data, NOAA Fisheries Service asked the National Research Council (NRC) to examine marine recreational fisheries data collection systems on the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts, as well as in Alaska. The NRC issued its final report and recommendations in April 2006, but left it up to NOAA Fisheries Service to decide which changes should have highest priority given costs and benefits. The following is a summary of what has happened:

- NOAA Fisheries Service's Office of Science and Technology has initiated a review of existing data that could be used to evaluate potential causes of bias issues identified in the NRC report and other sources.
- NOAA Fisheries Service, working through the Gulf States Commission, designed a side-by-side study to be completed this year comparing the random dial phone survey with a phone survey based on calls to saltwater fishing license holders. Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi are participating in this effort.
- In September 2006, NOAA Fisheries Service and the three interstate fisheries commissions held a workshop in Denver to identify the diverse data needs of scientists and fishery managers. This workshop was intended to ensure that corrective actions taken to respond to the NRC report would support managers and scientists throughout the U.S.
- In October 2006, NOAA Fisheries Service tasked the University of Miami Center for Independent Experts with a review of the programs used to collect economic data on recreational fishing. The review found the suite of economic models used by NMFS to be appropriate, and made several recommendations for improvements to the models.
- In early 2007, an Operations Team of experts, representing a broad cross section of regions, fishery management entities, and constituencies, was assembled. The team includes staff members from the Commissions, regional fishery management councils, states, and the recreational community.

They been tasked with incorporating the findings of the NRC report and the Denver workshop into a set of standards for regional recreational data collection programs. Their approach recognizes the important regional differences of the programs operated by NOAA Fisheries Service, the Commissions, and the states. It reflects the fact that these programs are at different levels of development and acceptance. It provides the flexibility to strengthen them, where appropriate, rather than replace them. The team has been charged with ensuring its recommendations are solidly based on widely accepted statistical and scientific principles.

- Finally, a Communication and Education Group (CEG) is being established to promote communication between federal and state partners and constituents during the redesign process. A primary task of the CEG is to ensure that the actions by the redesign teams and the reasons for changes in survey designs and analysis methods are understandable to constituents and other data users.

Designing the best possible data collection program is intended to be a cooperative effort between scientists, managers, and fisheries stakeholders. NOAA Fisheries Service is committed to a process that provides opportunities for an open dialogue about recreational data needs, collection, and uses. The Commission is supporting this important effort through the participation of our staff and state directors in both the workshops and ongoing activities.

You can learn more about the specific steps taken to date, read reports of the various meetings, and check out the opportunities for public input by visiting the NOAA Fisheries Service website at: www.st.nmfs.gov/RecSurveyUpgrade/RecSurveyUpgrade.html Given the critical role recreational data collection plays in the science and management of our fisheries, we should all welcome this important initiative. The establishment of a credible data collection system is hopefully an outcome we could all agree with.

As a closing note, many of you know our Spring Meeting is the occasion for our Annual Awards of Excellence. This year we took time to recognize Fred Schwab from New York and Colonel Joseph Fessenden from the Maine Marine Patrol. The details of their awards are located on pages 1 and 8. I hope you will take a moment to read about their important contributions over the years to support our vision of working towards restoring Atlantic coast stocks.

Species Profile: Weakfish

The Challenge of Managing a Stock Decline When Fishing is Not the Cause

Introduction

Weakfish have formed one of the most important parts of a mixed-stock fishery on the Atlantic coast since the 1800s. Recently, however, fishermen have had increasing difficulty landing weakfish. The apparent decline in weakfish biomass has occurred despite the considerable reductions borne by commercial and recreational fishermen since the first mandatory management measures implemented in 1995. In the late 1990s, the weakfish resource experienced modest growth, which prompted the development of Amendment 4 to build upon these gains. However, a stock assessment following the implementation of Amendment 4 depicted falling biomass after 1999. Problematic for management, the assessment ascribed the declining weakfish abundance to increasing natural mortality, not fishing mortality.

Life History

Weakfish are a migratory species occurring along the Atlantic coast of North America from Nova Scotia to southeastern Florida, although they are more common between New York and North Carolina. Important wintering grounds for the stock are located in offshore waters from Chesapeake Bay to Cape Lookout. When water temperatures rise in the spring, the mature fish migrate north and inshore to the spawning grounds. In these nearshore and estuarine areas between March and September, mature females produce large quantities of eggs that are fertilized by mature males as they are released into the water. Females continuously produce eggs during the spawning season and release them over a period of time rather than once. In the fall, an offshore and southerly migration of adults, coinciding with declining water temperatures, brings the mature weakfish back to the wintering grounds.

Feeding on microscopic animals, larval weakfish journey from the spawning areas to coastal nursery areas, located in deeper portions of coastal rivers, bays, sounds, and estuaries. Growing into juveniles, they stay in the nursery areas until October to December of their first year, after which they migrate to the coast. Growth in weakfish is especially rapid in the first year and they mature at a young age (see side-bar). Size at age one is variable but most fish are ten to eleven inches long. As adults, weakfish are often found near the periphery of eelgrass beds, perhaps because weakfish feed primarily on shrimp, other crustaceans, and small fish that are found near these grass beds.

Recreational & Commercial Fisheries

Weakfish are highly sought after by both commercial and recreational fishermen. The primary commercial gear for weakfish are trawls and gillnets, although weakfish are also landed using pound nets and haul seines. From 1950 to the late '60s, commercial landings fluctuated without trend, ranging from three to nine million pounds.



Photo courtesy of Captain Walter Bateman, www.carolinaguide.com

Weakfish

Cynoscion regalis

Common Names: gray trout, squeateague, sea trout, summer trout, tiderunner

Family: Sciaenidae (along with croaker, spot, spotted seatrout & red drum)

Interesting Fish Facts:

- The name “weakfish” refers to the tender, easily torn membrane of the fish’s mouth, rather than its fighting ability

- Delaware declared weakfish its state fish in 1981.

Food for Thought:

Weakfish flesh is white, sweet, lean, and finely textured. It makes a delicious meal when fried, broiled or baked.

Largest Recorded: 30”, 19 lbs. 2 oz., DE Bay, 1989

Oldest Recorded: 17 years

Age at Maturity: 90% mature at age 1, 100% by age 2

Stock Status: Depleted, overfishing is not occurring

The early '70s began a period of tremendous growth in the commercial fishery, with landings peaking at 36 million pounds in 1980. The commercial fishery declined steadily throughout the 1980s, dropping to a low of six million pounds in 1994. Commercial harvest continued to produce between six and eight million pounds, largely in response to harvest restrictions under the FMP, until 1999 when commercial landings began a decline that would result in the all time low of under 1.5 million pounds in 2005.

Recreational landings have followed a similar trend to that of commercial landings. After several high harvests above ten million pounds in the early 1980s, landings decreased to below two million pounds by 1989. In the early 1990s, recreational landings fluctuated between one and two million pounds, and then between two and four million pounds from 1996 to 2002. In the last three years for which data are available (2003-05), recreational landings averaged 1.1 million pounds with the lowest landings on record of 860,000 pounds in 2004.

Stock Status

The last weakfish stock assessment was completed in 2006 and concluded that biomass fell suddenly after 1999 and approached the lowest level in the time-series by 2003. This result sharply contrasted the findings of the previous assessment that depicted weakfish on the path to recovery into the late 1990s. The new assessment indicated that, while fishing mortality was low throughout the 1990s and 2000s, total mortality began a steady increase in the mid-1990s. The large decline in biomass between 1999 and 2003 could not be attributed to rising fishing mortality. Instead, evidence suggested that natural mortality had risen greatly and caused weakfish stocks to decline.

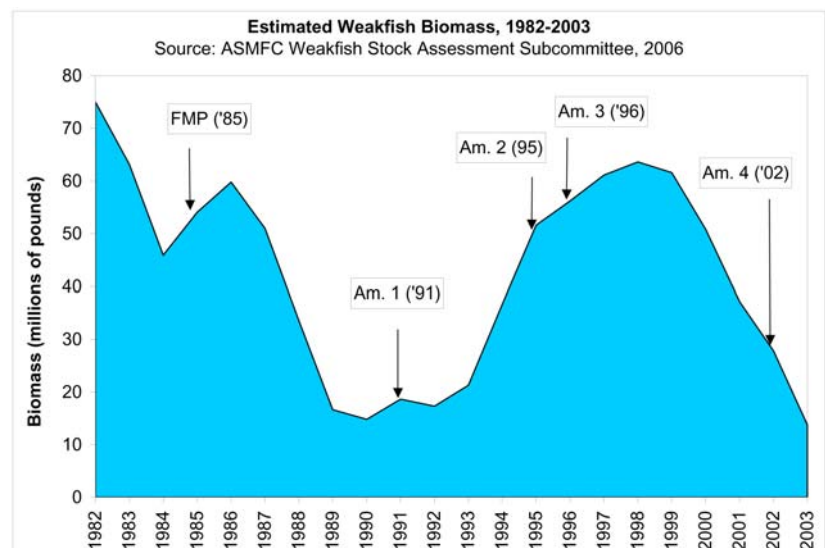
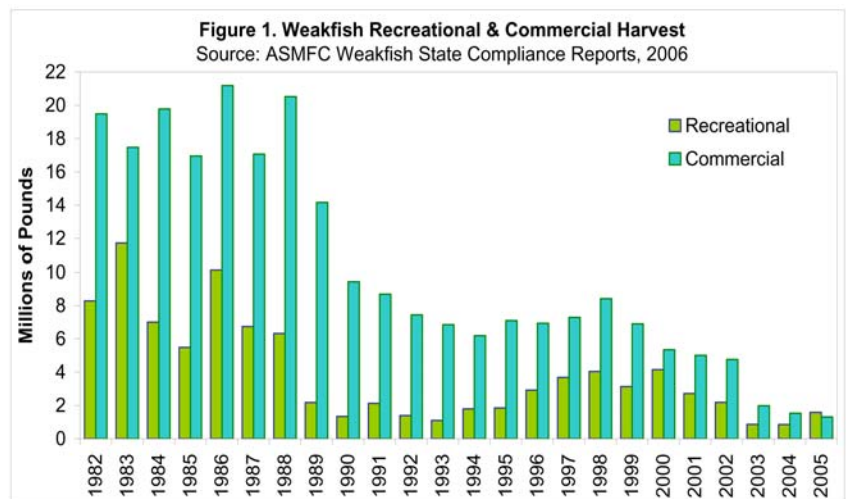
Trying to understand stock status in more detail, the Weakfish Stock Assessment Subcommittee developed and tested specific hypotheses to evaluate the effects of predators and competitors, forage species, environmental factors, high bycatch losses, and overfishing on weakfish biomass.

Insufficient forage, especially Atlantic menhaden, and increased predation by striped bass emerged as leading hypotheses that support rising natural mortality as cause for stock decline, but contributions by other species or factors may not have been completely detected or tested.

While the recommendations of the stock assessment were not endorsed by a peer review panel in 2006, the Weakfish Management Board accepted five conclusions for management use: (1) the stock is declining; (2) total mortality is increasing; (3) there is not much evidence of overfishing; (4) something other than fishing mortality is causing the decline in the stock; and (5) there is a strong chance that regulating the fishery will not, in itself, reverse stock decline.

Atlantic Coast Management Considerations

In 1985, as a result of population declines and limited biological information, the Commission initiated the development of its first FMP for weakfish. While the goals of the plan, as well as its two subsequent amendments, were well intentioned, the states were unable to stop the continued decline of weakfish stocks. It was not until 1996 that the Commission, armed with the compliance mandates of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, was able to develop and implement a new, mandatory plan (Amendment 3) aimed at recovering the overfished weakfish stocks.



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Species Profile: Weakfish (continued from page 5)

Amendment 4 was implemented in July 2003 to establish biological reference points, set a rebuilding schedule if limits were exceeded, provide a suite of recreational management options, maintain the commercial measures required under Amendment 3, and increase the plan's bycatch allowance. In 2005, the Management Board adopted Addendum I to Amendment 4 to replace the biological sampling program in Amendment 4. Under Addendum I, each state's landings are used to determine its sampling requirements (the number of fish ages and lengths to be collected) for each year.

Responding to the decline in weakfish stock size, the Board initiated the development of a new addendum in 2006. Indications that fishing mortality was not the cause of low stock size hindered the addendum's development. However, recognizing that low fishing mortality is required for timely recovery if natural mortality declines, the Board approved several management options in February 2007 aimed at controlling expansion of the fishery in the event that stock status improves.

Under Addendum II, the states of Massachusetts through North Carolina are required to implement a six fish creel limit at their current size limit for the recreational fishery. (South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, because of their

insignificant weakfish landings, will maintain their current creel and size limits.) For the commercial fishery, the Addendum reduces the allowable bycatch limit from 300 pounds to 150 pounds per day or trip. Addendum II also establishes two management triggers that will require the Board to reevaluate the management program when reached. These are: (1) when coastwide commercial landings equal or exceed 2.99 million pounds (80% of the average landings for 2000-2004), and (2) when any single state's landings exceed its five-year mean by more than 25% in any single year. States are required to fully implement the Addendum by October 29, 2007.

The Board also approved Addendum III this May to modify Amendment 4's bycatch reduction device (BRD) requirements for the southern penaeid shrimp trawl fishery. When the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council changed the amount and type of bycatch reduction required to certify a BRD for use, action was required by the Board to make new BRDs certified for use in federal waters also allowed in state waters. The change implemented in Addendum III affects newly certified BRDs only. All BRDs previously certified through the Council's BRD certification program continue to be certified for the southern penaeid shrimp trawl fishery. States now require vessels in this

Reflections from the Past

The following was taken from the Yankee III's website at <http://www.yankee3.com/Fish/Weakfish.html>. The Yankee III has been part of Captree Charterboat Fleet (located on Long Island, New York) since 1962.

"During the years shortly after World War II fleets of charter boats and commercial seiners were unable to more than dent the vast schools of "tide-runner" weakfish that invaded eastern Long Island from late April to July. No fish has such extreme highs and lows in its abundance. Weakfish virtually disappeared in the early 50s and showed no sign of recovery until 1972. The local catch in New York also varies from year to year, and weakfish are likely to be most abundant in the marketplace in the fall and, to a lesser extent, in late spring."

fishery to employ previously certified BRDs or those newly tested and certified to reduce the weight of finfish bycatch by 30 percent. Copies of Addendum III will be available by late May. For more information, please contact Nichola Meserve, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or nmeserve@asmfc.org

ASMFC Tautog Board Initiates Draft Addendum V

The Commission's Tautog Management Board has initiated development of Draft Addendum V to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Tautog. The Draft Addendum proposes to modify the management program contained in Addendum IV by providing the states flexibility in the development of their management programs to achieve a 25.6 percent reduction in exploitation. If approved, the Addendum would allow states to attain their necessary reductions through adjustments to their recreational and/or commercial fisheries.

Currently, Addendum IV targets reductions to the states'

recreational fisheries only. While the recreational sector accounts for approximately 90 percent of tautog harvest coastwide, some states have significant commercial fisheries. By including flexibility, Addendum V would allow states to tailor reductions to their specific needs.

The Draft Addendum will also include an option to exclude North Carolina from the tautog management unit since the state has an insignificant tautog fishery. The Tautog Board is scheduled to approve the Draft Addendum in May. Once approved, the Draft Addendum will be available for public comment in early June.

ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Addendum XI

Addendum Establishes Measures to Rebuild SNE Stock of American Lobster

On May 8, 2007, the Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum XI to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for American Lobster. The Addendum responds to the findings of the 2005 peer-reviewed stock assessment which called for additional harvest restrictions given the Southern New England (SNE) stock's depleted stock abundance, low recruitment, and high fishing mortality rates over the past few years. The Addendum's comprehensive program (minimum and maximum size limits, and trap reductions) is designed to address the peer review's recommendation for a common biological management strategy for the region.

SNE Rebuilding Program

The Addendum establishes a 15-year rebuilding timeline (ending in 2022) for SNE with a provision to end overfishing immediately. The American Lobster Management Board will monitor the progress of the rebuilding program and consider adjustments if necessary.

The Addendum also institutes a comprehensive rebuilding plan that includes the following management measures for all SNE lobster fisheries (commercial trap, non-trap, as well as recreational harvesters):

- Minimum size of 3 3/8" for all SNE areas [Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 2 - inshore SNE, 4 - inshore Northern Mid-Atlantic, 5 - inshore Southern Mid-Atlantic, and 6 - New York and Connecticut State Waters) except for all Area 3 permit holders (offshore waters] who would still be bound by the schedule of minimum size increases terminating at 3 1/2" in 2008.
- Maximum size for males and females of 5 1/4" for all SNE areas (LCMAs 2, 4, 5 and 6). For vessels fishing in Area 3 the maximum size shall be 7"

and shall be lowered 1/8" per year for the following two years resulting in an eventual maximum gauge of 6 3/4".

- Delay the Area 3 vent size increase that coincides with the minimum gauge increase to 3 1/2" to 2010.
- V-notch definition would be changed to 1/8" for all SNE areas, including Area 3. Under this option a v-notched lobster would be defined as any female lobster that bears a notch or indentation in the flipper at least 1/8" deep, with or without setal hairs. "V-notched female lobster" also means any female that is mutilated in a manner which could hide, obscure or obliterate such a mark.
- V-notching by fishermen of legal egg-bearing lobsters would be a voluntary measure, and fishermen would be encouraged to notch egg-bearing legal-sized females to contribute to rebuilding.
- Area 3 active trap reductions shall be 2 1/2 percent per year in 2009 and 2010 (to immediately follow the 2007 and 2008 five percent trap reductions.) Other LCMA-specific trap reductions would be studied for future implementation with LCMT input. The Plan Review Team (PRT) and the Technical Committee would examine the status and relative effectiveness of various effort control plans before future trap reductions are considered. Specifically, the PRT and Committee would study the degree of latent effort that remains in the fisheries as affected by current effort control plans in LCMAs 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Delayed Implementation

Failure to implement any of the following management measures are believed to negatively impact achieving the goals and objectives of management program: required adjustments to minimum gauge size, maximum gauge size, v-notch possession rule, minimum vent size, trap allocation program and quotas or trip limits. To ensure timely implementation of these measures, the Addendum specifies that for each day that a state does not implement any of these management measures, that state's resident lobstermen are prohibited from fishing for or landing lobsters for an equal number of days during the same or equivalent time period in the following year, regardless of the area in which they are authorized to fish or the state in which they are authorized to land.

State proposals to implement the Addendum's requirements are due on November 1, 2007. The Management Board will meet during the Commission 2008 Winter Meeting to review and consider approval of the state plans. All management measures must be implemented by June 30, 2008. Copies of the Addendum will be available by June 1, 2007, 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 Toni Kerns, Senior Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator for Management, at (202) 289-6400 or tkerns@asmfc.org.



ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence (continued from page 1)

agement success is strongly reliant on the service of extraordinary people like Mr. Schwab, who believe in conservation, are willing to invest their time and energy, and have the ability to carefully listen and to work with other people whose views they may not share. He is one of the heroes of cooperative interstate fisheries management.

Law Enforcement

Colonel Joseph Fessenden of the Maine Bureau of Marine Patrol received the award for work in the area of law enforcement. Colonel Fessenden has over 30 years of experience in marine law enforcement and is a strong believer in cooperative resource management along the Atlantic coast. His dedication to cooperative law enforcement is demon-

strated by his long-term commitment to the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee and species management boards. He participates in the Law Enforcement Committee because of importance he places on coordinating with his state and federal colleagues and sharing new ways of conducting marine fisheries law enforcement. He has also been a strong proponent of standardized reporting of law enforcement activities and an effective voice for law enforcement concerns in the Commission's management process. He dedicates valuable time to the species management boards for Northeast species including, American lobster, Atlantic herring, northern shrimp, and winter flounder. Colonel Fessenden has also been a leader in the concept of Joint Enforcement

Agreements (JEA) with the National Marine Fisheries Service. The JEA program has allowed states and federal fisheries enforcement officials to enhance their collective ability to monitor and enforce fisheries laws, a critical component of all fisheries management programs. His leadership also helped establish the cooperative program with the US Coast Guard on maritime security. Following the establishment of this program, his state became the first in the nation to take advantage of this cooperative program. His contributions demonstrate a long-standing commitment to cooperative marine fisheries law enforcement, characteristics which help the Commission fulfill its vision of restoring and managing Atlantic coast fisheries resources.

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board Releases Draft Addendum XIX for Public Comment

The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board has approved releasing Draft Addendum XIX for public review and comment. The Draft Addendum addresses three programs under the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). These are the black sea bass commercial management strategy for 2008, the summer flounder recreational allocation strategy, and the stock status determination criteria for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. Affected states from Massachusetts through North Carolina will be conducting public hearings on the Draft Addendum; the details of those hearings will be released once they become available.

Black Sea Bass Commercial Management Strategy

Since 2003, the black sea bass commercial fishery has been managed through a state-by-state allocation system, with each state allocated a percentage of the

coastwide quota. Under this system, states are provided the flexibility to manage their quota for the greatest benefits of their commercial fishing industries, with the goal of ensuring a continuous and steady supply of black sea bass over the fishing season and equitable distribution of black sea bass to fishermen who have traditionally landed black sea bass in the state. This management strategy is set to expire by December 31, 2007. If the strategy is not revised or extended by a new addendum, the system will revert back to the quarterly quota system established by the FMP. Draft Addendum XIX presents options to extend the current management strategy by two years, five years, 10 years, or indefinitely.

Summer Flounder Recreational Allocation Strategy

Currently, summer flounder state recreational allocations are based on the proportion of state landings to coastwide landings reported in 1998. Managers

have raised concern that a single year allocation may not be the most effective method to manage the summer flounder recreational fishery. This system also provides states the flexibility to develop state-specific conservation equivalent management measures to achieve the coastwide recreational harvest limit. Draft Addendum XIX considers modifying the present system of conservation equivalency to allow for the formation of alternative state-by-state shares in the recreational fishery.

Stock Status Determination Criteria

Currently, the Board must undertake a new addendum or plan amendment in order to incorporate new stock status determination criteria (i.e., changes to biological reference points) that may result from updated, peer-reviewed science. Since the development and implementation of a new addendum or amendment can take some time (six

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What's in an Acronym? A Guide to Common Fishery-Related Acronyms

Readers of *Fisheries Focus* and other Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) publications are likely to come across a large number of acronyms, some of which they may be familiar with and some they may not. Below are a number of acronyms that appear frequently, organized by category. For ones that don't appear on this list, try the following sources:

- www.pcouncil.org/acronyms.html
- www.fao.org/fi/glossary/default.asp
- www.st.nmfs.gov/st4/documents/F_glossary.pdf

Organizations

ASMFC -Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission: An interstate compact of the 15 Atlantic coastal states with the vision of “working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015.”

ACCSP – Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program: A cooperative state-federal program to design, implement, and conduct marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and to integrate those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen.

FWS – US Fish and Wildlife Service: A bureau within the Department of the Interior with the mission of “working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.”

NOAA – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: A federal agency within the Department of Com-

merce focused on the condition of the oceans and the atmosphere.

NMFS – National Marine Fisheries Service: The service within NOAA dedicated to the stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management, and the promotion of healthy ecosystems. Also known as ‘NOAA Fisheries Service.’

NEFSC/SEFSC – The Northeast & Southeast Fisheries Science Centers of the NMFS, respectively. NMFS” fisheries research and science arms.

NEFMC/MAFMC/SAFMC – New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, respectively: Three of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson Act that are responsible for management of fisheries in federal waters (3-200 miles from shore).

PRFC – Potomac River Fisheries Commission: An interstate compact of the states of Maryland and Virginia charged with coordinating the regulation of the fisheries of the main stem of the tidal Potomac River.

Biological Terms

B – Biomass: The total weight of a stock of fish.

CPUE – Catch Per Unit Effort: The number or weight of fish caught by a given amount of fishing effort, measured frequently by time, gear type, horsepower, etc.

F – Fishing Mortality: The instantaneous rate at which fish in a stock die because of fishing. Typically includes measured bycatch, if data are available.

M – Natural Mortality: The instantaneous rate at which fish die from all causes other than harvest. Typically includes unmeasured bycatch. M is very difficult to measure.

MSY - Maximum Sustainable Yield: The largest catch that can be taken from a stock over time under existing environmental conditions without curtailing the ability of the stock to replace itself.

SSB – Spawning Stock Biomass: The total weight of the mature females within a stock of fish. Frequently used instead of total biomass as a better measure of the ability of a stock to replenish itself.

U – Exploitation: The percent of a fish population removed by fishing over the course of a year.

Z – Total Mortality: The instantaneous rate at which fish die from both natural and fishing related causes. $Z = F + M$.

Other

FMP – Fishery Management Plan: A plan to achieve specified management goals for a fishery, typically including data, analysis, and management measures. ASMFC, Regional Management Councils, and NMFS have the authority to develop FMPs for Atlantic coast fish stocks.

MRFSS – Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey: An annual survey conducted by NMFS to estimate the number, catch, and effort of recreational fishermen. Revisions to the current program are being considered, including a possible name change to Marine Recreational Information Program.

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New Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting (eVTR) Tool Available to Atlantic States

New Jersey First Atlantic State to Use New Electronic Reporting System for Fishermen

ACCSP and its partners have worked hard over the past year to develop a fishermen electronic vessel trip reporting (eVTR) system. This web-based reporting tool has been developed as an additional component to the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). SAFIS is a relatively low-cost, real-time web-based data entry tool, which has historically been used by Atlantic coast dealers only. With eVTR, not just dealers, but fishermen will be able to report their trip-level data using a web-based application. This web-based tool is expected to be ready for use by the end of May 2007.

The eVTR program will improve the quality and timeliness of fishery data on the Atlantic coast by allowing fishermen to report their trip-level catch and effort data online. Before the development of eVTR, fishermen recorded their vessel trip data in paper logbooks, which must be mailed in to state agencies for upload into an electronic database. Additionally, fishermen will be able to double check their entered data to correct errors. This will decrease the amount of errors that need to be checked after submission to the state agency.

Several state agencies, including those from New Jersey, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, have expressed interest in using this application. The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is the first state agency expected to use the application. New Jersey's eel fishermen plan to begin eVTR use this month.

In the meantime, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection are prepping to bring eVTR to their states for some of their fishermen to use.

The ACCSP Outreach Committee is currently developing training materials to help state agencies train fishermen to use the application. Those interested in learning more about eVTR outreach efforts may contact Kate Fleming, Outreach Coordinator, at kate.fleming@accsp.org. Those interested in learning more about an eVTR system in their state may contact their state agency representatives or Karen Holmes at karen.holmes@accsp.org.

About the ACCSP

The ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program to design, implement, and conduct marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and to integrate those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, including the Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac

2007 Request for Proposals is Open

The ACCSP's annual request for proposals was issued to the ACCSP's 23 partners in early May.

Proposals for fiscal year 2008 are due by **July 6, 2007**. Proposal submission details and funding criteria are available at <http://www.accsp.org/FY08rfp.htm>.

River Fisheries Commission, the DC Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For more information, please visit www.accsp.org or call (202) 216-5690.

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week

June 25 - 28, 2007
Raleigh, North Carolina

Coastal Sharks Technical Committee

Monday, June 25	11:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Tuesday, June 26	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
Wednesday, June 27	8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Bluefish Technical Committee

Monday, June 25	11:00 AM - 4:00 PM
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American Eel Stock Assessment Subcommittee

Tuesday, June 26	11:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Wednesday, June 27	8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Multispecies Technical Committee Inputs Subcommittee

Thursday, June 28	10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
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Draft Addendum XIX (continued from page 8)

months in the case of an addendum and 12 to 16 months in the case of an amendment), there can be a considerable lag in the incorporation of the biological reference points in the annual specification setting process for all three species. Draft Addendum XIX proposes allowing the Board and Council to adjust biological reference points during the species' annual specification setting process in lieu of the more protracted addendum/amendment process currently required. Reference points are used to determine whether or not any of the FMP's stocks are overfished or experiencing overfishing.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies of Draft Addendum XIX will be available in late May and 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 July 11, 2007** and should be forwarded to Toni Kerns, Senior FMP Coordinator for Management, at 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax) or tkerns@asmfc.org (Subject line: Addendum XIX). For more information, please contact Toni Kerns at (202) 289-6400 or tkerns@asmfc.org.

What's in an Acronym? (continued from page 9)

SAW/SARC – The Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop and Stock Assessment Review Committee, respectively. The SAW is a formal scientific peer-review process for evaluating and presenting stock assessment results to managers for fish stocks of the Northwest Atlantic. Assessments are prepared by SAW working groups and reviewed by an independent panel of stock assessment experts called the SARC.

SEDAR – Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review: The stock assessment peer-review process used by the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, and the ASMFC to improve the quality and reliability of fishery stock assessments in the US Southeast.

TAC or TAL – Total Allowable Catch or Landings: The annual recommended catch by a management authority to preserve or rebuild a stock.

VPA – Virtual Population Analysis: A method of estimating stock size through examination of the sizes, growth, and mortality rates of individual age groups and using that information to "back calculate" the virtual populations that must have existed previously to produce the catches currently observed in a fishery.

ASMFC Approves Amendment 14 to the Scup FMP

On May 10, 2007, the Commission approved Amendment 14 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Amendment maintains the current management program for scup, which applies a constant fishing mortality rate of $F=0.26$ to determine landings and assesses stock status based on available survey indices. This management strategy will be in place until it is demonstrated that the substitution of the research vessel *Bigelow* for the *Albatross* would not invalidate use of the long-term scup time series and rebuilding goals established via the *Albatross*' survey indices. If, at a later date, the survey indices developed from the two vessels are found to be compatible, the Commission will pursue development of a scup rebuilding plan.

Amendment 14 is inconsistent with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Amendment 14. Specifically, the Commission's plan does not establish a stock rebuilding timeline and institutes a less conservative constant fishing mortality rate ($F = 0.26$ versus 0.10). This may result in differing annual total allowable landing limits for the fishery, as well as conflicting management measures between state and federal waters.

The Council's version of Amendment 14 establishes a seven-year rebuilding period (January 1, 2008 - January 1, 2015) and uses a constant fishing mortality rate of $F = 0.10$ (compared to the current F of 0.26) to restore the scup resource. The constant F would be applied every year until the stock is rebuilt.

Amendment 14 are taken exclusively under the states' management authority and apply only to state waters (zero to three miles from shore). The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board will meet with the Mid-Atlantic Council in August 2008 to set the TAL and commercial management measures for the 2008 scup fishery. Both groups will meet again in December 2008 to set the recreational management measures.

Copies of the Commission Amendment will be available by June 1, 2007 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 Toni Kerns, Senior Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator for Management, at (202) 289-6400 or tkerns@asmfc.org.

As approved, the Commission's Amend-

The Commission's actions under

Bob Beal Recognized for 10 Years of Dedicated Service to the Commission

Robert Beal, Director for the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program, was recognized during the Commission's Spring Meeting Week for ten years of dedicated service to the Commission and its member states. Since his arrival at the Commission in 1997 as an intern, Bob has steadily progressed to positions of greater responsibility, consistently demonstrating the highest standards of professionalism and dedication. He helped establish the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences and soon advanced to FMP Coordinator for some of our most challenging and complex species. In recognition of his exceptional performance in these assignments and clear potential, he was promoted to Director of the Commission's Fisheries Management Program in 2001. As Director, Bob has consistently demonstrated sound judgment and outstanding leadership. He has earned the deep respect of both Commissioners and staff for his near perfect command of institutional knowledge and his unfailing ability to provide valuable guidance and solve complex problems. He has done all of this while providing oversight to 22 species management programs, demonstrating the highest standards of integrity, fairness, and competency. His talents and dedication have significantly helped advance the Commission's vision of healthy, self-sustaining populations of Atlantic coast fish species by the year 2015. Congratulations, Bob!



From left: ASMFC Executive Director John V. O'Shea, ISFMP Director Robert E. Beal, and ASMFC Chair George D. Lapointe of Maine

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

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