



ASMFC

# Fisheries *focus*

Volume 12, Issues 9 & 10  
November/December 2003

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.*

## Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission 62nd Annual Meeting December 15 - 18, 2003

Roosevelt Hotel  
45 East 45th Street  
New York, NY  
(888)833-3969

### Final Schedule

#### Sunday, December 14, 2003

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM Registration

#### Monday, December 15, 2003

7:30 AM - 4:00 PM Registration

#### 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Atlantic Herring Section

- NEFMC Update on Development of Amendment 1
- Development Timeline for ASMFC's Amendment 2
- Review Draft Public Information Document

#### 8:00 AM - Noon Habitat Committee

- Updates on Shellfish Bed Habitat Paper, and Asian Oyster, Power Plant and Multispecies Activities
- Discuss Living Shorelines Activities
- Discuss Winter Flounder FMP Habitat Section
- Review 2004 Habitat Action Plan

#### 10:00 AM - Noon Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board

- Plan Review Team: 2003 FMP Review
- Discuss Addendum XIII
- Discuss Development & Timeline for Amendment/Addendum on Black Sea Bass Commercial Allocation
- Discuss Scup Recreational Allocation

#### Noon - 1:00 PM Legislative Committee

- Status of Pending Legislation
- Discuss Issues of Potential Interest
- Discuss Future Strategies

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**T**he Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

**Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**

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Preston Pate, Jr. (NC), Vice-Chair

John V. O'Shea, Executive Director  
Robert E. Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program  
Dr. Lisa L. Kline, Director of Research & Statistics  
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## Upcoming Meetings

**12/2 - 4:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Suites, 422 Delaware Avenue, Wilmington, Delaware.

**12/4 (9 AM - 5 PM):**

ASMFC Conservation Equivalency Committee, Sheraton International Hotel BWI, 7032 Elm Road, Baltimore, Maryland.

**12/8- 12:**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Blockade Runner, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina.

**12/9 (10 AM - 4 PM):**

ASMFC Bluefish Technical Committee, Sheraton International Hotel BWI, 7032 Elm Road, Baltimore, Maryland.

**12/10 (10 AM - 5 PM):**

ASMFC American Eel Young-of-the-Year Survey Workshop, Sheraton International Hotel BWI, 7032 Elm Road, Baltimore, Maryland.

**12/15 - 18:**

ASMFC 62nd Annual Meeting, Roosevelt Hotel, Madison Avenue at 45th, New York, New York (see pages 1 & 7 - 9 for final agenda).

**2004**

**1/13 & 14:**

ASMFC Committee on Economics & Social Sciences, Hilton Jacksonville Riverfront, 1201 Riverplace Boulevard, Jacksonville, Florida; 800/445-8667.

**1/20 - 22:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn Select, Alexandria, Virginia.

**1/27 - 29:**

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

**3/4 - 6:**

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

**3/8 - 11:**

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

**3/16 - 18:**

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

"Managing Our Nations Fisheries" was a major conference recently held in Washington, DC for the purpose of expanding the dialogue on what the eight regional fishery management councils are doing to protect and preserve our nation's living marine resources. It was intended to provide a critical look at how well the current fisheries management system is working and identify areas for improvement. The conference was conceived with the intention of adding a voice to the national fisheries policy debate generated by the recommendations of the Pew Oceans Commission and soon to be released report from the U.S. Oceans Commission.

Over a two and half day period, more than 700 attendees listened to dozens of fisheries managers, scientists, council members, commercial fishermen, recreational anglers, and environmentalists from around the country. The ten panels were conducted in areas ranging from Governance, to Rights-Based Management, to Protecting Fish Habitat, as well as others related to Bycatch, Research, and Ecosystems. Proceedings from the conference will be published in a few months, so you'll be able to read the details. But until then, here are some of my takes on what I heard and learned.

First, this was a diverse gathering. With the participation of the eight Councils, every region of the U.S. was represented. Attendees had the unique opportunity to hear about fishery management problems and strategies from all over the country. East Coast residents heard, some for the first time, how fisheries are managed in the North Pacific, with hard quotas, onboard observers, harvesting cooperatives, and other innovations. The Alaskan folks were exposed to the complexities of multispecies management and the political realities of the multi-state membership of the New England Council. There was also philosophical diversity. Besides the strong Council presence, members of the fishing, science, and environmental communities were there to share their views and criticisms.

Understandably, one central theme present throughout the conference was that the Council system is working well. There was general agreement that there's room for improvement, and perhaps the biggest disagreement was over how much improvement is needed. Another central theme reflected the concern that fisheries managers don't heed scientific advice as often as they should. The simplistic fix is to "separate the science from the management." Let scientists say how much fish can be safely harvested, and leave the decision of who gets to harvest them, when, where, and how to the managers.

The U.S. Oceans Commission is wrestling with this issue, and members of the environmental community are strongly advocating for changes in this direction.

Certain groups have concerns about the conflict of interest issue created by allowing fishermen to sit on the Councils. The original intent was to have people with knowledge of the fisheries on the Councils, and to encourage buy-in from the fishermen. Critics say fishermen are susceptible to voting for their own personal interests or are overly susceptible to political peer pressure. Interestingly, fishermen seem to be a common denominator on Councils that are doing a good job, as well as those needing improvement. The reality is that as long as we operate within a political system regardless of who sits in a Council seat, they will be subject to pressure from stakeholders. Some feel the response to this might be to find ways to better align stakeholder interests with the broader public interest.

The wrap up session contained a variety of suggestions and observations. These include: (1) governors need to nominate a broader list of people with different interests for council seats; (2) critics need to be ready to serve on the councils; (3) scientific and statistical committees need to be an integral part of the management process; (4) fisheries management needs enforceable regulations that encourage compliance as well as stronger enforcement; (5) a better job is needed in rebuilding overfished stocks, with more stocks managed by hard TACs and NOAA ensuring that these limits are not exceeded; (6) those who criticize the science should be prepared to come forward with solutions; and (7) interactive VMS technology offers opportunities to improve safety, enforcement, and security.

As for strengths, the Council process is one that is transparent and public. It is a bottom-up form of governance, providing broad opportunities for interested and affected citizens to participate and be heard. Perhaps most significantly, it provides the flexibility for regional solutions to regional fisheries management issues. Although this conference wasn't about the Commission, these strengths certainly apply to our process.

More importantly, though, any public debate and discussion on fisheries management is an opportunity for all of us in the Commission family to listen and learn about ways we can do a better job in managing the fishery resources under our stewardship. That was the message I heard last week and, hopefully, it is one that we could all agree with.

# Species Profile: Spanish Mackerel

## South Atlantic Species Thrives Under Joint Management Efforts



*Scomberomorus maculatus*

**Family:** Scombridae

**Interesting Fish Facts:** can grow up to 15" in length in its first year; form large schools, which travel great distances over a short time period

**Largest Recorded:** 13 pounds, Ocracoke Inlet, NC, 1987

**Age at Maturity:** 2 years (13.8 - 14.8")

**Age at Recruitment:** 0 - 2 years due to rapid growth rate in first year (12")

**Stock Status:** not overfished, overfishing is not occurring

**FMP Rebuilding Goals:** Biomass threshold (1-M)\*  
 $F_{30\%SPR}^{BMSY}$   
 Fishing mortality threshold =  $F_{30\%SPR}$

### Introduction

Spanish mackerel, *Scomberomorus maculatus*, is one of several species that the Commission manages cooperatively with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. This species supports thriving recreational and commercial fisheries in the South Atlantic waters and is gaining importance in the Mid-Atlantic. Its value to anglers includes use of the whole fish as bait in big game fishing. Since adoption of the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1990, the states of New York through Florida have implemented bag and size limits, commercial trip limits, and/or provisions for seasonal closures to complement the Council's measures in federal waters. These actions have resulted in stock rebuilding, with the species currently not overfished and overfishing not occurring.

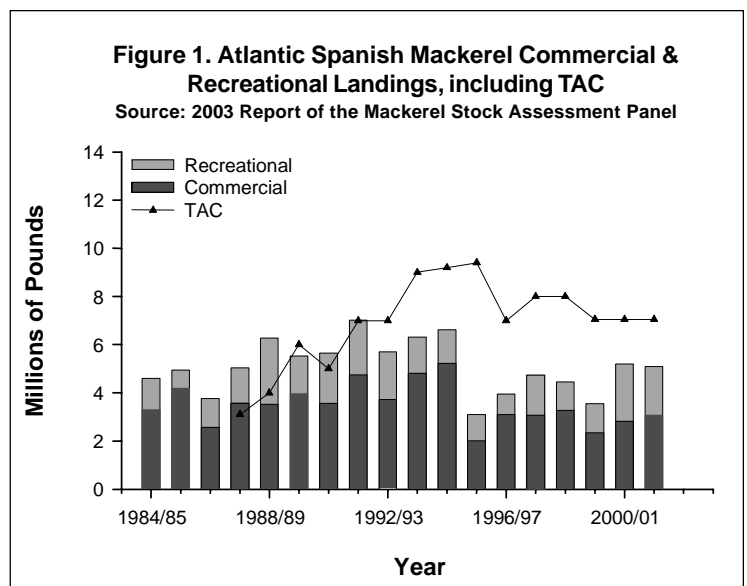
### Life History

A fast swimming fish, known to gather in large schools and travel great distances, Spanish mackerel can be found throughout the coastal waters of the eastern U.S. and the Gulf of Mexico. Their migratory and schooling nature often frustrate anglers with large congregations of fish found in an area one day and gone the next. Spanish mackerel prefer open water but are sometimes found over deep grass beds and reefs, as well as shallow water estuaries. They live from five to eight years. Females spawn by age two, releasing between half a million to 1.5 million eggs. Larvae grow quickly and reach lengths of 12 to 15 inches in a year. Older fish may weigh several pounds. Along the Atlantic coast, Spanish mackerel range from the Florida Keys to New York, and occasionally to New England. These fish winter off Florida and move northward to North Carolina in early April and to New York in June. Later in the year, as waters cool, Spanish mackerel return to Florida waters.

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Extensive commercial fisheries for Spanish mackerel in the Mid-Atlantic and Chesapeake Bay began as far back as the 1880s. Since the 1950s, however, the waters off Florida have been the major commercial fishing area, with gillnets being the principle commercial gear. In July 1995, Florida instituted a statewide net ban, which affected the commercial harvest of Spanish mackerel and changed the characteristics of the fishery, shifting the bulk of the commercial harvest into federal waters.

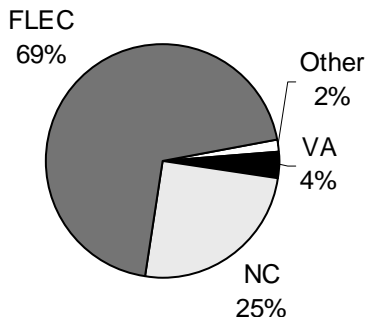
Atlantic coast commercial landings have generally fluctuated between two and eight million pounds since 1950, peaking at 10 and 11 million pounds from the mid-70s to the mid-80s. Recent landings have ranged between two and four million pounds, with ex-vessel values of



1.3 to two million dollars. Prosecuted predominately in state waters from Virginia to Florida, the majority of the commercial fishery occurs in Florida

**Figure 2. Percent of Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Commercial Landings by State, 2002**

Source: Pers. comm., NMFS, Fishery Statistics & Economic Division



(offshore waters) and North Carolina. In the past year, less than two percent of the total commercial landings occurred north of Virginia (see Figure 2).

Spanish mackerel support extensive recre-

ational fisheries in many states with primary fishing grounds in the South and Mid-Atlantic. The stock's continued resurgence into its historical range is evidenced by its increased recreational harvest in states north of Virginia. In 2002, recreational anglers harvested 1.3 million fish coastwide, up from 600,000 fish in 1998. North Carolina and Florida continue to account for the majority of recreational landings in both number and weight.

### Stock Status

Annual stock assessments are conducted by the joint Mackerel Stock Assessment Panel (MSAP) of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. The latest full assessment, conducted in 2003 and including data through the 2001/2002 fishing years, has determined that Atlantic Spanish mackerel are not overfished and overfishing did not occur in 2002/2003. Stock abundance has increased steadily since 1995, reaching a high of

24 million fish in 1999 (see Figure 3). Stock biomass has more than doubled since 1995.

### Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

Overfishing on Spanish mackerel prompted state and federal management efforts in the mid-1980s. The Council developed a fishery management plan for federal waters (three to 200 miles from shore) in 1983. A complementary interstate plan was adopted for state waters in 1990. The major components of the current management program include: a minimum size limit of 12 inches fork length, a recreational bag limit of 15 fish per person per day, closure of state fisheries when the annual commercial quota has been met, and a 3,500-pound commercial trip limit. States that choose to do so can implement more restrictive regulations.

Spanish mackerel are managed on the basis of information from the annual recommendations of stock assessments conducted by MSAP. Each year, adjustments are made to the total allowable catch (TAC) through bag, size and trip limits. State/federal management is coordinated through the Commission's South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Man-

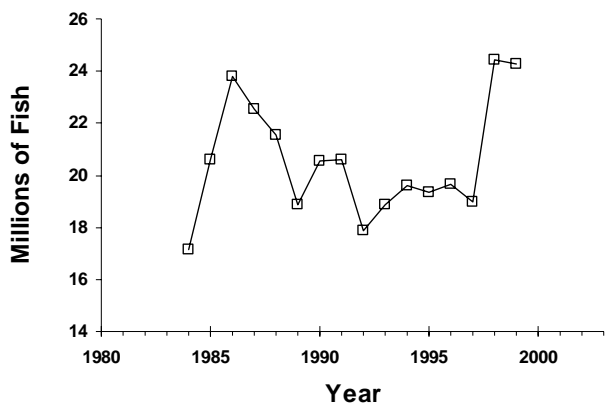


agement Board. Currently, TAC is 7.04 million pounds per year, allocated on a 55:45 basis between the commercial fishery (3.87 million pounds) and the recreational fishery (3.17 million pounds).

In the late 1990s, states also began to implement effort controls. North Carolina implemented a two-year moratorium on issuance of new commercial licenses from 1997-99. Starting in July 1999, North Carolina capped the number and has strict income-related eligibility requirements for new licenses. Maryland capped its commercial licenses at the existing number for a five-year period in 1997. Virginia delayed entry for two-years into its gillnet fishery. New York has a restrictive period for commercial licensing of nonresidents and income-related eligibility requirements associated with certain fisheries.

These actions combined with traditional management measures have contributed to the stock rebuilding, with Spanish mackerel not overfished and overfishing not occurring. The challenge will be to maintain these gains in coming years. For more information, please contact Nancy Wallace, FMP Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or nwallace@asmfc.org.

**Figure 3. Estimated Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Stock**



## Northern Shrimp 2004 Fishing Season Set at 40 Days

On November 12, 2003, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section approved a 40-day fishing season for the 2004 northern shrimp fishery, a two-day increase from last year's season. The fishing season, which is the same for mobile and trap gear, will be from January 19<sup>th</sup> through March 12<sup>th</sup>, with Saturdays and Sundays off. The Commission's Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel advocated a 64-day season, while scientists on the Technical Committee recommended, for the third successive year, that there be no fishing season.

"The Section was reluctant to increase the season by more than a couple days because the most recent stock assessment indicates that stock biomass is still low," stated Section Chair, Paul Diodati from

Massachusetts. "By extending the season to mid-March, the Section addressed industry's concern that last year's quality shrimp were not caught because the season ended in late February."

A large drop in the occurrence of the 2001 year-class and the lack of 1999 and 2002 year-classes in the latest shrimp survey are of concern to Technical Committee and Section members. "The Section is still hopeful that the 2001 year-class will provide enough income and biomass to maintain the fishery and contribute to resource recovery," continued Mr. Diodati.

The northern shrimp fishery is jointly regulated by the States of Maine and New Hampshire, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries



Commission's Northern Shrimp Section. The cooperative management program has been in place since 1972 and is currently managed under the 1986 Fishery Management Plan.

For more information, please contact Braddock Spear, Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 301.

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## Atlantic Herring Management Area 1A Closed to Directed Harvest

On November 7, 2003, NOAA Fisheries announced that as of 0001 hours, November 19, 2003, vessels issued federal permits for Atlantic herring may not retain or land more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring from Area 1A per trip or calendar day for the remainder of the 2003 fishery. This announcement was made based on projections that 95 percent of the Atlantic herring total allowable catch (TAC) allocated to Management Area 1A for the 2003 fishing year (January – December) would be harvested by November 19, 2003. The federal catch limit restriction will cease at 0001 hours, January 1, 2004.

Under the Commission's Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring, states must prohibit the landing of herring from a closed area and prohibit directed fishing for Atlantic herring in state waters of a closed area once a closure has been announced by the Regional Administrator of NOAA Fisheries. During a closure, vessels participating in other fisheries may retain and land an incidental catch of herring from a closed area that does not exceed 2,000 pounds per trip. For more information, please contact Megan Gamble, Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400.

# ASMFC 62nd Annual Meeting Agenda (continued from page 1)

## Monday, December 15, 2003

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM      **Update on Federal Fisheries Issues**  
-- Dr. William Hogarth

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM      **Special Session: Fisheries Habitat in Urban Environments**

At this session, NYSDEC and its estuary partners will explore the benefits of fisheries habitat in urban environments. Presentations will outline the importance of urban habitats to fisheries; describe significant threats to these environments and what is being done to eliminate and mitigate these threats; and discuss how to achieve goals through partnerships with other agencies. Most importantly, the session will show that urban habitats are alive and in need of restoration and protection. Specific presentations will include:

- "Evolution of Fisheries Habitat in New York Harbor" by James Gilmore, NYSDEC
- "Harbor Estuary Program: Meeting Environmental Goals through Partnerships" by Robert Nyman, U.S. EPA
- "Tidal Wetland Loss in Jamaica Bay and the Marine District" by Fred Mushacke, NYSDEC
- "Habitat Restoration and Protection Efforts in New York Harbor" by Steve Zahn, NYSDEC
- "Hudson River Estuary Management Program and Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve: Fishery Habitat Initiatives" by Frances Dunwell and Betsy Blair, NYSDEC

6:00 PM - 7:30 PM      **Welcome Reception**

## Tuesday, December 16, 2003

7:30 AM - 1:00 PM      **Registration**

7:30 AM - 9:30 AM      **Action Plan Workshop**

- Review 2004 Draft Action Plan Agenda

8:30 AM - 12:30 PM      **Law Enforcement Committee**

- Federal Agency Reports
- Presentation on Fishery Forensics -- A training session for marine resource law enforcement personnel on the latest fishery and aquatic mammal forensic capabilities. The presentation includes an overview of the National Lab, evidence collection and preservation along with chain of custody and prosecution requirements

9:30 AM - 1:30 PM      **Management & Science Committee**

- Recommended Priorities for Commission Peer Reviews
- Discuss Stakeholder Involvement in Peer Review Process
- Multispecies Subcommittee Report
  - Update on MSVPA and Spatial Multispecies Models
  - Approve Workshop Report on Linking Results of Multispecies Assessments to Single Species Management
  - Review Commission Implementation Plan
- Interstate Tagging Committee Report
  - Approve Tagging Issues Paper
- Conservation Equivalency Subcommittee Report
  - Review and Approve Conservation Equivalency Protocols
- Review of Technical Committee Functioning
  - Evaluate 2002 Technical Committee Meeting Weeks
  - Evaluate Meetings Management Seminars
- Review 2004 Action Plan
- Updates on Fisheries Characterization Project, Power Plant Assessment, Ageing Manual, Commission's Habitat Program, Species Stock Assessment Databases

9:30 AM - Noon      **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

- Review Stock Assessment Report for 2002



NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

# ASMFC 62nd Annual Meeting Agenda (continued from page 7)

## 9:30 AM - Noon Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board (continued)

- Review State Proposals
  - New York – Hudson Recreational Fishery
  - Delaware – Recreational Fishery
  - Maryland – Spring Trophy Fishery
  - Maryland – Methodology Change: Estimation of Baywide F
- Plan Review Team: FMP Review
- Discuss Development of an Addendum
  - Single Biologically-based Minimum Size Standard Reference Point
  - Producer Areas
  - Prohibition of Fishing on Spawning Areas
- Update on NOAA Fisheries Striped Bass Activities related to Amendment 6 Recommendations on the EEZ



## 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Discuss/Select Addendum III Measures
- Discuss NMFS Schuster Reserve

## 2:30 PM - 5:30 PM ACCSP Coordinating Council

- FY04 Funding Decisions
- Approve FY04 Operations Plan
- Approve Biological Sampling Prioritization Matrix
- Status Reports on SAFIS Implementation and ACCSP 2004-2008 Implementation Plan

## 6:30 PM Annual Dinner

### Wednesday, December 17, 2003

## 7:30 AM - 12:30 PM American Lobster Management Board

- MA OCC Conservation Equivalency Proposal
- Plan Review Team Reports on Tracking Effort, Trap Tag Database, and If Necessary Clauses
- Discuss Draft Addendum IV
  - Overview of Public Comment
  - Selection of Management Measures
- Stock Assessment Report
  - Review, Revise and Approve Draft Terms of Reference
  - Peer Review Process
  - Review Timeline
- Gauge Sizes Among Various LCMAs
- Most Restrictive Rule – Timing
- Lobster Database

## 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM Law Enforcement Committee

- Issues, Letters, and Reports on Current FMPs
- Presentation on the feasibility of measuring compliance -- An academic study of how to measure compliance, this research has been conducted to study the feasibility and costs associated with measuring compliance in the provisions of the American Lobster Management Plan.
- Update of enforceability ratings in the “Guidelines for Resource Managers”

## 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM Management & Science Committee (continued)

## 12:45 PM - 2:00 PM Captain David H. Hart Award Luncheon

## 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Approve 2003 FMP Review



- Review 2003 Compliance Reports
- Presentation of SEDAR Peer Review Panel's Report on the Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment
- Discuss Management Implications from 2003 Stock Assessment Report

**4:00 PM - 6:00 PM Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Shark Management Board**

- Presentation on the 37<sup>th</sup> SAW
- Technical Committee Report on 2004-2005 Fishing Year Specifications
- Update on the NEFMC and MAFMC Actions for Federal Specifications in the 2004-2005 Fishing Year
- Establish 2004-2005 Fishing Year Specifications (Annual Quota and Trip Limits)

**Thursday, December 18, 2003**

**8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Winter Flounder Management Board**

- Review FMP Review
- Review Draft Amendment I

**8:00 AM - 10:00 AM South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board**

- Review of 2003 FMP Reviews for Atlantic Croaker, Red Drum, Spanish Mackerel, Spot, and Spotted Seatrout
- Presentation of SEDAR Peer Review Panel's Report on the 2003 Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment
- Discuss Implications from 2003 Stock Assessment Report
  - Timeline to Address Peer Review Panel's Recommendations
  - Timeline to Develop Amendment 1
  - Terms of Reference
- Red Drum Update (transfer of management responsibility to ASMFC)
- Discuss ASMFC Involvement in South Atlantic Council Internet Map Server
- SEAMAP Updates
  - Blue Crab Workshop Report
  - 2004 Operation Plan
  - Funding Status and Guidance to Staff
- Advisory Panel Update

**10:30 AM - Noon Executive Committee**

- Administrative Oversight Committee Report
- Legislative Committee Report
- Future Annual Meetings
- Litigation Update

**Noon - 5:30 PM ISFMP Policy Board**

- Administrative Oversight Committee Report
  - Proxy and Conflict of Interest White Paper
  - Appeals Process White Paper
  - Parliamentary Process White Paper
  - Process Consistency White Paper
- Habitat Committee Report, including Artificial Reef/MARAD Update
- Management and Science Committee Report, including Peer Review Schedule, Multispecies Report, and Interstate Tagging
- Reports of the Stock Assessment Committee, Law Enforcement Committee, and Protected Species Committee
- Discuss ASMFC Role Regarding *Crassostrea ariakensis*
- Review Non-compliance Recommendations (if necessary)

**5:30 PM - 6:00 PM Business Session**

- Review 2004-2008 ASMFC Strategic Plan
- Review 2004 ASMFC Action Plan
- Review ISFMP Policy Board Recommendation on the ASMFC Policy on Freedom Of Information Act Requests
- Review and Consider Approval of New Fishery Management Plans or Amendments
- Review Non-compliance Recommendations (if necessary)



## NOAA Fisheries Northeast to Implement Web-based Reporting

### *SAFIS to be Available to Federal Dealers in the Northeast in 2004*

NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office is working to develop and implement an electronic reporting system for the region's nearly 700 federally permitted seafood dealers.

While based on the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), significant improvements are being made to enhance the system's security and usability. The ultimate goal is to develop a system that will meet both federal and state reporting requirements simultaneously, and make it available to all federally permitted seafood dealers in the Northeast Region, beginning in 2004.

"We have been moving toward electronic reporting for several years in an effort to save costs and to expedite quota monitoring," said Dr. John Witzig, Director of the Northeast Region Fisheries Statistics Office. "The IVR [Interactive Voice Response system] was a good start. Now, with this new system we will be able to capture these data faster, and be able to provide more timely and complete reports on quota-limited species. This will also allow us to have a single system for landings and quota monitoring."

SAFIS, initiated by the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), is now in limited use in Rhode Island and Maryland, where dealers enter landings data online through their own computers. Data are stored on a temporary server, where they are checked for errors, then transferred into the ACCSP's coastwide data management system. Partners may store data in in-house systems as required. NOAA Fisheries and the ACCSP are improving the current security level, providing a system for dealers to upload data from

their current computer systems, and developing programs to allow easier use of the data by scientists and resource managers.

"SAFIS is being modified to meet both ACCSP and partner standards," said Mike Cahall, ACCSP Information Systems Manager. "The challenge is integrating all the requirements of so many different agencies into a single application, something that hasn't been done before."

The Northeast Regional Office and Northeast Fisheries Science Center are working closely with the ACCSP staff to modify SAFIS to meet federal requirements. There are some differences in how state and federal partners collect data. For example, unlike the Atlantic coastal states, which license harvesters, NOAA Fisheries licenses vessels, so a federal version of SAFIS would have to contain current vessel data. It would also have to accommodate landings data from multiple harvesters that fished on the same vessel, selling product to more than one dealer.

NMFS is expending considerable resources to make these modifications to the system and to develop outreach and implementation material. Northeast Region port agents will be visiting dealers over the next several months to demonstrate the system as it develops. Some of the states in the Northeast Region are also planning to implement SAFIS in 2004. New York State dealers will be included in the federal implementation. Plans for Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts versions of SAFIS are underway. North Carolina is implementing electronic report-

ing for its state and federal dealers using PC-based software that is compatible with SAFIS.

#### **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 East Coast Fishery Management Councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org).

#### **Upcoming ACCSP Meetings**

**Coordinating Council**  
Decemeber 16, 2003  
2:30 PM - 5:30 PM  
Roosevelt Hotel  
New York, NY

**Biological Review Panel**  
January 6 & 7, 2004  
Tampa, FL

**Bycatch Prioritization Committee**  
January 7 & 8, 2004  
Tampa, FL

**Operations Committee**  
February 10 - 12, 2004  
Tampa, FL

## NOAA Fisheries Solicits Public Comment to Reopen EEZ to Striped Bass Fishing

Throughout November and December NOAA Fisheries is soliciting public comment regarding a recommendation from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to reopen federal waters (from three to 200 miles offshore) for recreational and commercial striped bass fishing. Federal managers of Atlantic striped bass are holding public meetings from November 5 to December 10 in New England and Mid-Atlantic states so the public can help identify the scope of issues surrounding striped bass fisheries as the agency begins to prepare an environmental impact analysis of potential revisions to the regulations.



NOAA Fisheries closed the striped bass fishery in federal waters in 1990 to aid in the rebuilding of the stock, which was declared restored in 1995. In the letter forwarding its recommendation, the Commission noted that allowing fishermen to land striped bass that are caught in federal waters as bycatch would reduce wasteful discards. The Com-

mission stated that commercial fishing is capped by an annual quota and the fishery would close as soon as the quota is reached, regardless of whether the fish were caught in state or federal waters. In addition, monitoring requirements of the fishery management plan would allow quick response if fishing restrictions are warranted in the future.

Anyone affected by or interested in Atlantic striped bass management in federal waters is encouraged to submit their comments either in writing or through participation at one of the public hearings.

NOAA Fisheries' notice of intent to develop an EIS for Atlantic Striped Bass and the scoping document are available on-line at [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/state\\_federal/state\\_federal.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/state_federal/state_federal.htm).

**Written comments must be received no later than December 22, 2003.**

Send comments to: Anne Lange, Chief, State-Federal Fisheries Division, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NOAA Fisheries, 1315 East West Highway, Room 13317, Silver Spring, MD 20910; or by fax to (301) 713-0596.

## New ASMFC Publications Available

The Terms of Reference & Advisory Reports for Atlantic Menhaden and Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Peer Reviews are now available from the Commission. Both documents will be reviewed by the relevant species management boards in December. Final reports will be published in December but can be obtained from the Commission website ([www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org)) in the meantime. For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline, Director of Research & Statistics, at (202)289-6400 or [lkline@asmfc.org](mailto:lkline@asmfc.org)



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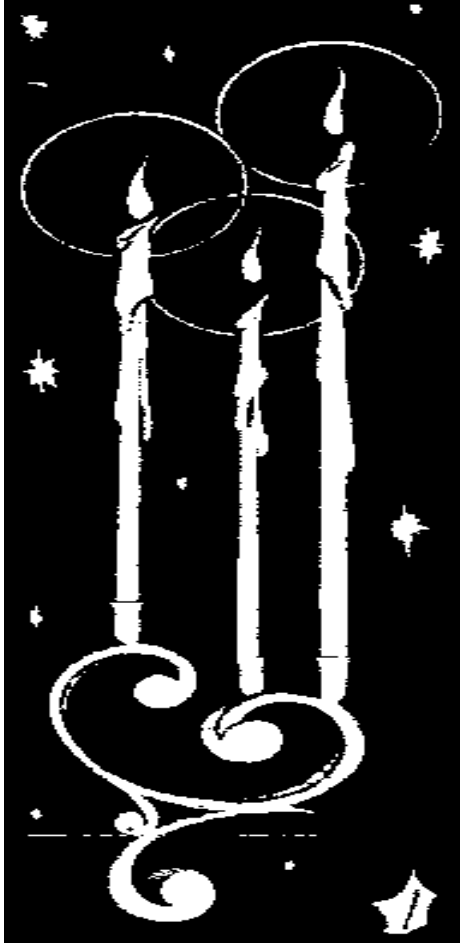
## ASMFC Comings & Goings



### Staff

**Elizabeth Griffin** -- This October, Elizabeth Griffin joined the Commission staff as a Fisheries Research Specialist. Elizabeth will be working on a project to characterize Atlantic coast fisheries in state waters and document sea turtle interactions. Elizabeth has a Masters degree from Duke University, with re-

search focusing on cetacean bycatch reduction measures. More recently, Elizabeth conducted research with Oceana on cetacean and sea turtle bycatch and fishery characterization. Elizabeth brings a great deal of background to her duties at the Commission and we are very pleased to have her join the staff. Welcome aboard, Elizabeth!



**The Staff of the Atlantic  
States Marine Fisheries  
Commission joins in  
wishing you the  
happiest of holidays and  
a healthy and prosperous  
New Year!**

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

*Return Service Requested*