



ASMFC

Fisheries *focus*

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October 1999

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

ASMFC 58th Annual Meeting

October 31-November 4, 1999

Mystic Hilton
Mystic, Connecticut

AGENDA

Sunday, October 31, 1999

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM Legislative Committee

- Review of 106th congressional legislation/develop positions
- Federal Commerce and Interior Department Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2000
- Sport Fish Restoration Fund (Wallop/Breaux) accounting issue
- Update on OCS Reinvestment proposals
- Enacted public laws of the 106th Congress

Monday, November 1, 1999

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Tautog Management Board

- Review public comments on Addendum II
- Approve Addendum II to the FMP
- Discuss Rhode Island compliance issue
- Update on the stock assessment

10:00 AM - Noon Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Review public hearing comments
- Discuss management measures for Amendment 1
- Review/approve FMP review

12:30 PM - 3:30 PM American Lobster Management Board

- Review state plans for implementing Addendum I
- Discuss potential state/federal agreements in implementing Addendum I
- Discuss potential for a Commission-sponsored trap tag contract
- Review recommendations from the historical participation working group

12:30 PM - 6:00 PM Management & Science Committee

- Discuss recommendations on Commission aquaculture activities
- Approve standard compliance reports
- Peer review process update and priorities
- Workshop planning on alternative uses of regulatory discards
- Workshop planning on multispecies interactions

3:30 PM - 6:00 PM Habitat Committee

- Discuss program update
- Program planning for fiscal year 2000
- Gear Impacts to Submerged Aquatic Vegetation

3:30 PM - 6:00 PM Advisory Committee

- Review results of the Advisor Questionnaire
- Finalize recommendations for action by the ISFMP Policy Board

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM **Reception at the Mystic Aquarium**

Tuesday, November 2, 1999

8:30 AM - Noon Striped Bass Management Board

- Approve state management plans for year 2000
- Discuss the schedule for the next amendment or addendum

8:30 AM - Noon Joint Habitat Committee/Management & Science Committee Workshop on Fishing Gear Impacts to Submerged Aquatic Vegetation

continued on page 6

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, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Upcoming Meetings

10/6:

ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee, Ramada Inn-Philadelphia International Airport, 76 Industrial Highway, Essington, Pennsylvania; 610/521-9600.

10/6 (11:00 AM - 5:00 PM):

ASMFC Striped Bass Advisory Panel, Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, Rhode Island; (401)732-6000.

10/7 (9:30 AM - 4:00 PM):

ASMFC Striped Bass Management Board, Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, Rhode Island; (401)732-6000.

10/8 (9:00 AM - 5:00 PM):

ASMFC American Lobster Management Board, Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, Rhode Island; (401)732-6000.

10/12 - 14:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Ramada Inn and Conference Center, Kill Devils Hills, North Carolina; (252)441-2151.

10/13 (10 AM - 3 PM):

Joint ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board and MAFMC Meeting, Ramada Inn and Conference Center, Kill Devils Hills, North Carolina; (252)441-2151.

10/18:

ACCSP Advisory Committee, Radisson Hotel Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria, Virginia.

10/21 & 22:

Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) Data Management Group, Radisson Riverwalk Hotel, Jacksonville; (904)396-5100.

10/31 - 11/4:

ASMFC 58th Annual Meeting, Mystic Hilton, 20 Coogan Boulevard, Mystic, Connecticut; (800)826-8699.

11/2-5:

The Second Wetlands Regulatory Workshop, Holiday Inn on the Boardwalk, Atlantic City, New Jersey. For more information, contact either Ralph Spagnolo at (215)814-2718 or Frank Reilly at (540)286-0072.

12/5 - 8:

National Symposium on Catch and Release in Marine Recreational Fisheries, Virginia Beach Resort and Conference Center, Virginia Beach, Virginia. For more information, see page 10 of this newsletter.

My goodness, how quickly the time passes. The memories of Jekyll Island are still fresh, yet here we are preparing for another Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Annual Meeting. This year the Commissioners will gather in another of the picturesque, traditional towns that make up our coastal areas — Mystic, Connecticut. The meeting will be held on October 31 - November 4, 1999. Our hosts will be the Connecticut delegation to the Commission: Ernie Beckwith, Senator George "Doc" Gunther, and Lance Stewart.

1999 has been a year of both change and consolidation for the Commission. The Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP), under an able, new Director, has been absorbing the breakneck activity of the last two years, while, at the same time, casting in new directions such as spiny dogfish and sharks. In the area of research and statistics, we have built upon existing programs (such as SEAMAP and stock assessment training) and headed down new trails (such as NEAMAP, the Uncertainty Workshop, forage fisheries, regulatory discards). And these are just highlights of a very broad program of support to state marine fishery agencies.

This has also been a transitional year for the Commission as it seeks to implement its new Strategic Plan. A detailed action plan for 1999 was prepared; and a review of progress and items for next year's action plan will be an important item of discussion at the 58th Annual Meeting. We expect to formalize the change to the ISFMP Charter that will place full state delegations on management boards. The Management and Science and Law Enforcement Committees will hold their semiannual formal meetings. There will be a familiar roster of fishery management board meetings, including anticipated approval by the Commission of the American Eel Fishery Management Plan. We will be holding a special symposium on bluefish to review the latest in the scientific research funded by Congress for the past few years. In response to requests from Commissioners, there will be a special workshop aimed at explaining many of the technical concepts that we

deal with in fisheries management at a level that most of us can understand. The Commission will once again honor a new recipient of the Capt. David H. Hart Award. After the Commission concludes business on the last day, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council will conduct its fall meeting. And of course, there will be a full range of social gatherings and tours that will give us an opportunity to savor one of New England's prettiest coastal areas in the fall.

It is going to be a full week, a hard-working week, and a fun week. Along with our hosts we hope to see you all there!

On another note, it's nice to know that folks out there are reading the newsletter! I received more reaction to my column last month about "fairness" than anything I have written during the last eight years of ruminations for *ASMFC Fisheries Focus*. Thank you for all of the comments, both the supportive and the critical. My "Life isn't fair" quote was intended to be introductory, not a moral imperative. Of course we should always try to be as fair as possible. My intention was to demonstrate something about the legal parameters of fairness debates, hopefully to make them more effective and productive. The federal fisheries law simply does not give this vague notion of "fairness" the legal stature that many people seem to believe it does. My point was that it is not always obvious what is fair; and one person's fairness is often another's downfall. Some of the responses I received were very heartfelt, from people struggling to make a go of it in this tough climate. And, I readily apologize to anyone who may have thought my remarks were callous or uncaring. Yes, we must always be committed to fairness. But, that is often a difficult value to discover.



Draft Tautog Addendum II Available for Public Comment: *Hearings to be Held in New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island*

On September 22, 1999, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission announced the release of the Public Hearing Draft of Addendum II to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Tautog for public comment and review. State public hearings are scheduled to be held in New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island in late October. Detailed information on the hearings follow below.

October 18, 1999; 6:00 PM

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Comfort Inn Airport
1940 Post Road
Warwick, Rhode Island
Contact: Dick Sisson at (401)789-3094

October 19, 1999; 6:30 PM

New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife
Ocean County Administration Building
101 Hooper Avenue, Room 119
Toms River, New Jersey
Contact: Bruce Freeman at (609)292-7794

October 20, 1999; 7:00 PM

New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Division of Marine Resources
205 Belle Mead Road
East Setauket, New York
Contact: Gordon Colvin at (516)444-0430

Addendum II addresses two issues – modification of the compliance schedule and topics to be considered in a subsequent addendum or amendment to the plan. The first and primary issue concerns perceived problems in the compliance schedule established under Addendum I and the Tautog FMP. Specifically, Addendum II proposes to delay implementation of state management measures to achieve the final fishing mortality rate specified in the plan (i.e., $F=0.15$) by two years, or until April 1, 2002. This delay will provide the states with the necessary time to evaluate the effectiveness of interim fishing mortality rate reductions, which were implemented as of April 1, 1998, and determine the most appropriate measures to achieve the final fishing mortality rate reductions.

Addendum II also begins to identify a list of issues that need to be addressed in the next addendum or amendment to the plan. Such issues include: development of alternative targets which

would achieve the goals and objectives of the plan (i.e., targets for biomass mortality and relative exploitation); methods to evaluate differential bag and season limits by mode of fishing (i.e., recreational angler versus party/charterboat fishermen); and monitoring requirements.

The public is encouraged to provide comment on Addendum II either through the states' public hearing process or through submission of written comments to the Commission. **Public comment period will be accepted through October 27, 1999.**

Copies of the draft Addendum II can be obtained by contacting either Jeanette Braxton, Administrative Assistant, at (202)289-6400, or via the Commission's webpage under "Public Input" at <http://www.asmfc.org>. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400, or via email at rbeal@asmfc.org.

Stock Assessments Made Easy: *ASMFC to Hold Technical Workshop*

Have you ever sat through a stock assessment presentation and wondered, "What do all these numbers mean?" Well, you are not alone. At its 58th Annual Meeting in Mystic, Connecticut, the Commission will hold the first in a series of workshops intended to provide layman information on how fisheries stock assessments are conducted and how to interpret the results of these assessments. The workshops will focus on these issues from the fisheries managers perspective, as opposed to the technical aspects of conducting assessments. A series of two to three workshops will be conducted to explain the full range of issues involved in conducting an assessment.

The first workshop, scheduled for Wednesday, November 3, 1999, from 7:30 - 9:00 AM, will provide information on how to evaluate fisheries data sources, what factors can influence these evaluations, and how to interpret uncertainty in fisheries data when attempting to make an informed management decision. Interested public and meeting attendees are welcome to participate in this workshop.

For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline, Director of Research & Statistics, at (202)289-6400, or via email at lkline@asmfc.org.

States Hold Public Hearings on Addendum IV to the Striped Bass FMP



On September 23, 1999, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission announced the release of the Public Hearing Document for Addendum IV to Amendment 5 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass for public comment and review. Throughout late September and early October, the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina, and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission conducted public hearings on the Public Hearing Document.

The Public Hearing Document for Addendum IV is intended to gather public comment on possible strategies for management of Atlantic coastal striped bass fisheries for the year 2000. Specifically, the document addresses several options for state management of striped bass in the year 2000, and begins to identify issues that will need to be addressed in a future addendum or amendment to Amendment 5.

Currently, striped bass fisheries are managed under Addendum III to Amendment 5, which, among other things, maintains state striped bass regulations to those promulgated in 1998. However, Addendum III stipulates that if the 1998 fishing mortality estimate is significantly above the target specified in Amendment 5 (i.e., $F=0.31$), the states can take action in 1999 to reduce harvest to safe levels in the year 2000. A recent stock assessment indicated that the 1998 fishing mortality of fully recruited fish (age four and older) exceeds $F=0.31$. Upon hear-

ing these results in early August, the Management Board decided to undertake a public hearing process to evaluate various options for reducing fishing mortality in the year 2000 in order to meet the plan's target.

Through the Public Hearing Document, the Management Board also notifies the public of its intent to develop a future addendum or amendment to Amendment 5 for the management of striped bass fisheries for years 2001 and beyond. This addendum or amendment will address long-term policy, management, and scientific issues to ensure a healthy, viable striped bass resource well into the new millennium. Public input will be sought throughout the development process.

Comments from the public hearing process will be reviewed by the Management Board on October 7, 1999, at which time the Board will approve the Addendum and make recommendations to the states for their striped bass management programs for year 2000. The states will then develop proposals to meet the required reductions and submit these proposals for final Board approval at the Commission's 58th Annual Meeting on November 2, 1999, in Mystic, Connecticut. For more information, please contact, Robert Beal, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400.

ASMFC Bluefish Symposium

On November 3, 1999, during the Commission's 58th Annual Meeting, researchers from Rutgers University will present the results of a two-year, congressionally-funded research project on the species interactions of striped bass and bluefish. Funding for this research began in fiscal year 1997 based on concerns regarding the limited data available on striped bass and bluefish interactions. This research will provide more detailed information that will allow scientists and fishery managers to make more informed decisions.

Results will be presented on: (1) comparison of habitat use by juvenile bluefish, (2) essential fish habitat for bluefish (3) recruitment of spring and summer-spawned bluefish, and (4) impact of prey abundance and size structure on growth of spring and summer-spawned bluefish. There will be time for questions following each presentation, and a general discussion period at the end of the symposium. Interested public and meeting participants are invited to attend the symposium. For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline, Director of Research & Statistics, at (202)289-6400, or via email at lkine@asmfc.org.

Update on Federal Appropriations

As of September 29, 1999, Congress and the President have not yet agreed to spending levels to fund federal operations for the fiscal 2000 calendar year. The 2000 appropriations year begins on October 1, 1999 and extends through September 30, 1999. Congress has approved a temporary spending bill to extend fiscal 1999 spending levels through November 1, 1999. The President is expected to sign the measure. The regular appropriations bills for the Department of the Interior (H.R. 2466 and S. 1292) and for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies (H.R. 2670 and S. 1217) await reconciliation between House and Senate versions of the bills, though conferences have not yet been scheduled.

For more information, please contact Lori Rosa, Special Assistant, at (202)289-6400.

ASMFC 58th Annual Meeting Agenda (continued from page 1)

Tuesday, November 2, 1999 (continued)

8:30 AM - 5:00 PM Law Enforcement Committee

- Review implementation of 1999 recommendations
- Review and make recommendations for FMPs for 2000

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM American Eel Management Board

- Review revised FMP as approved on August 3, 1999
- Discuss deadlines for states to submit *de minimis* status requests
- Discuss implementation dates for FMP
- Approve final FMP
- Discuss action by Board: recommendation to ISFMP Policy Board for adoption of FMP

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM Management & Science Committee (continued)

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Shad & River Herring Management Board

- Discuss PRT (annual reports and 1999 FMP review) and Technical Committee Reports (Fishing Recovery Plan issues raised at August 4, 1999, Meeting)
- Approve State Fishing Recovery Plans

7:00 PM - 10:00 PM **Dinner**

Wednesday, November 3, 1999

7:30 AM - 9:00 AM Technical Workshop for Commissioners

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM Legislators & Governors' Appointees

- Review of recommended changes of the Administrative Oversight Committee to the ISFMP Charter
- Brainstorming of topics for next technical workshop
- Election of Legislator Officers
- Election of Governor's Appointee Officers

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Discuss Advisory Panel and Technical Committee reports
- Update on implementation of Maine and Rhode Island state management proposals
- Development of year 2000 coastal cap on the commercial bait fishery for horseshoe crabs

1:00 PM - 2:15 PM **Captain David H. Hart Award Luncheon**

2:30 PM - 5:00 PM Bluefish Symposium

8:00 PM - 9:30 PM Administrative Oversight Committee

Thursday, November 4, 1999

7:30 AM - 10:00 AM ISFMP Policy Board

- Review/approve American Eel FMP as recommended by the American Eel Management Board
- Review/approve Charter changes proposed by the Administrative Oversight Committee (AOC)
- Update by Northern Shrimp Section
- Reports and recommendations of the Habitat Committee, Law Enforcement Committee, Management & Science Committee and Advisory Committee
- Review progress under the Strategic Plan (1999)
- Review, prioritize, and approve planned work under the 2000 Strategic Plan

10:00 AM - Noon Executive Committee

Noon - 1:30 PM Business Session and Lunch

1:30 PM - 5:00 PM ACCSP Coordinating Council



USFWS National Outreach and Communications Program Takes Form

The 1998 amendment to the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (aka Wallop-Breaux) required the Secretary of Interior to develop a national outreach and communications program within a year of passage. The purpose for such a program is to "improve communications with anglers, boaters, and the general public regarding angling and boating opportunities, to reduce barriers to participation in these activities, to advance adoption of sound fishing and boating practices, to promote conservation and the responsible use of the nation's aquatic resources, and to further safety in fishing and boating." Further, the Act defines Aquatic Education Program as a program "designed to enhance the public's understanding of aquatic resources and sport fishing, and to promote the development of responsible attitudes and ethics toward the aquatic environment." To carry out this requirement, the Act provides \$36 million to be dispersed over a five-year period for fiscal years 1999 to 2003. The Act also allows the Secretary to augment these funds by up to \$2.5 million per year, and is authorized to make grants and to fund contracts to any state or private entity to carry out elements of the program. Each state also is required to develop an outreach plan consistent with the National Plan using one percent of the state apportionment of Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration funds.

The Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council provided recommendations to the Secretary last year for a national outreach and communications program. These recommendations were adopted by the Secretary in September, 1998 and can be found on line at <http://www.fws.gov/r9sfbpc/>. Five objectives and guiding principles form the basis of the plan. These are as follows:

Objective 1:

Create a top of the mind campaign that will develop mindshare and a national awareness of recreational boating and fishing as a recreational activity of choice.

Objective 2:

Retain, recruit, and educate boating/fishing participants.

Objective 3:

Target market segments to recognize and respond to your messages.

Objective 4:

Educate stakeholders on marketing and outreach and how to successfully and innovatively market and implement national strategies to the target demographic groups.

Objective 5:

Focus on access to meet future needs; make people aware of

existing access opportunities; facilitate a national set of standards for facility evaluation; educate facility providers with ways to improve end-user service.

Guiding Principle 1:

Recognize the importance of aquatic habitat and natural resource management.

Guiding Principle 2:

Enhance the image of anglers and boaters as conservationists by communicating their contributions to conservation efforts.

Guiding Principle 3:

Use a single, coordinated, encompassing effort to promote recreational boating and fishing involving all stakeholders.

Guiding Principle 4:

Industry will benefit by supporting and implementing a consistent marketing effort that markets the activity using this plan.

Guiding Principle 5:

Enhance urban boating and fishing opportunities.

In order to implement these recommendations and carry out the plan, the Secretary established the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. Information on the foundation's membership can be found on line at http://www.asafishing.org/news_room/foundation.htm. The Foundation recently hired Bruce Matthews, former Information and Education Chief with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, to administer the business of the Foundation. During a recent meeting of the Foundation Board of Directors in Rutland, Vermont on September 15, 1999, Matthews announced a delay in implementing the plan provisions. Although the Foundation is not yet fully staffed, it has been working through several task forces of state, industry, and academic specialists to develop strategies for plan implementation. One action taken by the Board during this meeting was to approve a \$121,000 grant to the National Fishing Week that will be matched by industry contributions.

For more information, please contact Richard Christian, Sport Fish Restoration Coordinator, at (202)289-6400.



Evaluating Fishing Gear Impacts to SAV

A Joint Habitat Committee/Management and Science Committee Workshop on Fishing Gear Impacts to Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) is scheduled for Tuesday, November 2, 1999 from 8:30 AM to noon as part of the Commission's Annual Meeting in Mystic, Connecticut. At the workshop, the two committees will review and discuss the draft report, *ASMFC's Guidelines for Evaluating Fishing Gear Impacts to Submerged Aquatic Vegetation and Determining Mitigation Strategies*. Interested persons are welcome to attend and there will be an opportunity for public comment. Copies of the draft report will be available at the meeting. Results from the workshop will be reported to the Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board.

In 1997, the Commission adopted a policy to protect SAV because of the importance of this habitat. The SAV policy states the Commission will, "in partnership with National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service develop technical guidelines and standards to objectively determine gear impacts, and develop standard mitigation strategies." The report is the culmination of that charge. The guidelines and miti-

gation strategies, along with the SAV policy and supporting documentation, provide the necessary basis for addressing the impact of state fishing activities on SAV through the Commission's fisheries management program.

A work group was appointed and met in September 1998 to discuss key issues and develop information to be included in the report. Commission staff worked with meeting participants and other interested persons to prepare the report. Topics covered in the report include: determining SAV distribution and developing an operational definition for determining patchy SAV distribution; identifying key SAV life history requirements and ecological characteristics; and determining impacts from fishing activities. The report also describes mitigation strategies that avoid or minimize impacts to SAV from fishing gear, including time/area closures, gear prohibitions/restrictions/modifications, and effort limitation; and includes guidance for identifying appropriate mitigation measures.

For more information, please contact Robin Peuser (rpeuser@prodigy.net; 703-998-8090), or Dianne Stephan (dianne.stephan@noaa.gov; 978-281-9397).

Horseshoe Crab Management for the Year 2000 and Beyond

In August 1999, the Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board reaffirmed its commitment to maintain the Plan's implementation schedule for developing a cap on landings for commercial bait fisheries in 1999, to be implemented in the year 2000. A coordinated coastwide harvest control/reduction strategy is necessary to control the shift in landings which have occurred from mandated harvest reductions in New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland. The Management Board is scheduled to take action on this issue on November 3 at the Commission's Annual Meeting in Mystic, Connecticut. In preparation for this meeting, several important meetings have been scheduled for October.

A joint meeting of the Commission's Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment Committee and the Spawner and Egg Count Survey Workgroup has been scheduled for October 4 in Essington, Pennsylvania. The objective is to develop a comprehensive horseshoe crab monitoring and funding strategy for 2000 and beyond. Results from the following 1999 surveys will be presented: (1) Delaware Bay Horseshoe Crab Spawner Survey; (2) Maryland Horseshoe Crab Spawner Survey; (3) Delaware Bay Egg Count Survey; (4) Genetic Project; (5) Tagging Program; (6) Benthic Survey Workshop; and (7) Shorebird Research and Monitoring.

On October 5, the Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee and Advisory Panel will be conducting a Horseshoe Crab Alterna-

tive Bait - Trap Design Workshop in Essington, Pennsylvania. The objective is to begin a dialogue among fishermen, scientists and others, leading to the identification of successful strategies that fishermen can employ to reduce their dependence on horseshoe crabs for bait. This dialogue will also identify methods to disseminate these strategies coastwide as soon as possible (year 2000).

The Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for October 6 in Essington, Pennsylvania. The objective is to review the status and quality of horseshoe crab landings and recommend the level at which the Management Board should cap horseshoe crab landings for the commercial bait fisheries in 2000. Given past concerns about the quality of this landings data, the Technical Committee will also provide the Management Board with recommendations for alternative management strategies in case a coastwide cap is not implemented.

The Horseshoe Crab Plan Review Team (PRT) is also scheduled to meet in October as part of the Commission's annual fishery management plan review process. The PRT will prepare a report to the Management Board on the status of the Plan's implementation.

For more information, please contact Tom O'Connell, Horseshoe Crab Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (410)260-8271 or via email at toconnell@dnr.state.md.us.

ACCSP Completes State-by-State Implementation Meetings

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Implementation Meetings have been completed. During the summer, Program staff visited many of the ACCSP partner states in the Northeast and conducted a single meeting for the South Atlantic partners in Charleston. Productive discussions ensued among the Council members, the technical staffs, and representatives from partner agencies that collect data within each jurisdiction. Some agencies agreed to begin the process of reduction of duplicative data collection/management programs. The meetings served as an 'education' for personnel who may not have realized the scope and breadth of the ACCSP. Most importantly however, was an examination of the ACCSP model and having all partners on a baseline level of understanding about the ACCSP, so that substantive funding proposals could be prepared for the 2000 funding cycle. Thanks to all who took time from their schedules to make the meetings a success. Additional, perhaps regional, meetings will be planned for the future.

The ACCSP is entering its first funding decision cycle. A Request for Proposals was circulated to all program partners in June 1999 and as of the September 15, 1999 deadline, a number of substantive proposals had been received. The Operations Committee will examine these proposals and make recommendations for funding at its October 6 - 8 meeting. Their recommendations will be presented to the Coordinating Council during the Commission's Annual Meeting in Mystic, Connecticut in early November.

The Information Systems Program Manager, Mike Cahall, has visited Georgia and Florida to assist those partners' data management sections with technical issues related to uploading information to the ACCSP data management system. 'Real' data has been received from Florida and the National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Region. Commercial data from Georgia will be forthcoming in the near future.

Between now and the Annual Meeting, the ACCSP Commercial and Recreational Technical Committees, the Advisory Committee, and the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee will meet to comment on the proposed Program confidentiality protocols, review the data management host site recommendation, and do some advance planning for the 2000 Operations Plan. Meetings of the Discard Prioritization Committee and the Biological Review Panel are being scheduled for early January 2000.

For more information, please contact Joe Moran, Program Manager, at (202)289-6400, or via email at jmoran@asmfc.org, or Mike Cahall, Information Systems Program Manager, at (301)713-2328 or via email at mcahall@asmfc.org. The ACCSP web site may be accessed at www.accsp.org.

American Lobster Board Discusses Implementation of Coastwide Trap Tag System

The American Lobster Management Board met on September 14, 1999. The primary purpose of the meeting was to review a couple of issues related to the implementation of a coastwide trap tag system, as established by Addendum I to Amendment 3 to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan. Specifically, the Board discussed the potential for a common trap tag contract and the development of state-federal agreements to avoid duplication of effort and ensure consistency and legality of the system throughout the full range of the fishery (state and federal waters).

On the first issue of a common lobster trap tag contract for all the involved jurisdictions, Commission staff presented a product specification and request for bidding that was sent to 11 possible vendors. The deadline for bidding was September 30, 1999. The primary purpose of the common vendor is to secure a lower cost for the tags through economy of scale and to make enforcement of the new system easier. States will not be obligated to use the common vendor; they can choose to purchase tags from the common vendor or use an alternate vendor.

Regarding the development of state-federal agreements, the Board established a subcommittee to begin working out the legal issues of a joint agreement. Some lobster management areas covered in Amendment 3 and Addendum I encompass both state and federal waters. Furthermore, many fishermen fish in more than one management area, sometimes in both state and federal waters. The purpose of these agreements, therefore, is to ensure the consistent management and enforcement of the fisheries by both state and federal jurisdictions, while avoiding duplication of effort.

The Board also reviewed the final language for Addendum I to ensure that it incorporated the final edits made to the document at the August 3 Board meeting, when the Addendum was approved. Addendum I and Amendment 3 will be published as one document, and will be available by the end of October.

For more information, please contact Amy Schick, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400.



National Symposium on Catch and Release in Marine Recreational Fisheries

December 5-8, 1999

Virginia Beach Resort Hotel and Conference Center

Sponsors include:

National Sea Grant Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
American Fisheries Society
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
National Marine Fisheries Service
Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Sea Grant Marine Advisory/Extension Programs
(VA, NY, NC, GA and CA)
Chesapeake Bay Foundation

American Sportfishing Association
The Billfish Foundation
AFTCO Manufacturing Co.
Federation of Fly Fishers
Eagle Claw Fishing Tackle
American Fly-Fishing Trade Association
Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
Coastal Conservation Association-Virginia

Objective and Format

The meeting provides a forum for discussing a variety of research, education, and fisheries management catch-release (and tag-release) issues in coastal and offshore recreational fisheries. Presentations, roundtable discussions, a poster session, and educational displays will enhance information exchange. Professional conference facilitators will lead consensus-building sessions to define future research and education-outreach needs. A proceedings is planned through the American Fisheries Society.

Major Issues

The symposium will highlight research on impacts of circle hooks on survival of released fish, including striped bass, summer flounder, billfish, tuna, chinook salmon, and Pacific halibut. Work will be presented on bait-lure and single-treble hook effects on release mortality, venting fish swim bladders, pop-up satellite tag tracking of tournament released billfish, and blood chemistry changes in fish brought to the boat for release. Discussions will also focus on the increasingly important role of catch and release in marine fisheries management, i.e., striped bass, billfish, and other species. Anglers' attitudes and approaches to catch and release fishing will be examined. Roundtable discussions will address the effects of education, including media and tackle industry promotion, on marine anglers' catch-release fishing practices. The latter discussions will include Rip Cunningham and Doug Olander, editors-in chief, respectively, for *Salt Water Sportsman* and *Sport Fishing* magazines, George Reiger, conservation editor for *Salt Water Sportsman*, and Pete Barrett, associate publisher of *The Fisherman*.

Registration information is available on VIMS web page (www.vims.edu) under Catch and Release Symposium. *Early registration deadline is November 17, 1999.* Daily registration is available.

For more information contact: Jon Lucy, Symposium Chair, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William and Mary (804-684-7166; FAX 804-684-7161; email: lucy@vims.edu).

Atlantic Coastal News Bites



Georges Bank Oil Moratorium. On September 23, 1999, scientists from the New England Aquarium and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution released a report [<http://www.neaq.org/beyond/pr/09.21.scient.html>] outlining areas to consider when deciding whether to pursue oil and gas drilling on Georges Bank. [Associated Press, New England Aquarium press release]

Estuarine Habitat Hearing. On September 23, 1999, the House Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans was scheduled to hold a hearing on H.R. 1775, proposing to catalyze estuarine habitat restoration. [personal communication]

Floyd's Floods. On September 22, 1999, North Carolina scientists estimated that water from Hurricane Floyd flooding down the Neuse, Tar, and Roanoke Rivers of North Carolina will close shellfishing, destroy hundreds of crab pots, and threaten the white shrimp fishery. Fishing industry officials estimated that North Carolina commercial fishermen would suffer \$19 million in lost income and gear from Hurricanes Dennis and Floyd. Flood waters are expected to create anoxic "dead zones" in estuaries that could last a week or more. [Raleigh News & Observer]

Georges Bank Scallops. On September 22, 1999, the New England Fishery Management Council voted to increase the number of trips scallop vessels can make into the reopened portions of Closed Area II before December 31, 1999, to catch the 9.5 million pound quota. In addition, the Council began consideration of new proposals to allow scallop vessels access to other parts of Closed Area II and to Closed Area I. [Boston Herald]

Georgia Sea Turtle Nests. In mid-September 1999, Georgia Department of Natural Resources biologists estimated that Hurricane Floyd destroyed more than five percent (at least 109 of a total 1,420) of Georgia's loggerhead sea turtle nests. [Augusta Chronicle]

VMS Approval. On September 9, 1999, the National Marine Fisheries Service published notice of approved mobile transmitting units and communications service providers for the Atlantic highly migratory species vessel monitoring system (VMS) program. All commercial vessels fishing for Atlantic highly migratory species with pelagic longlines are to have an approved VMS system in operation by January 1, 2000. [Federal Register]

Chesapeake Bay. In early September 1999, Virginia Institute of Marine Science biologists reported the annual summer survey of striped bass young-of-the-year in Virginia rivers found the lowest abundance in eight years. The 1999 index value is only about half the 27-year average. On September 8, 1999, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation released a report on the health of the Bay, noting that, on a scale of 0 to 100, the Bay rated a 28. This is a one-point improvement from 1998, and still far short of the long-term goal of 70. This index combines assessments of 13 environmental factors. Recent improvements occurred with rockfish, oysters, and shad, while pressures increased on blue crabs and Virginia wetlands. [The Virginian-Pilot, Richmond Times-Dispatch, Associated Press, Journal Newspapers]

Pfiesteria? In early September 1999, Maryland Department of Natural Resources officials, after finding menhaden with lesions in tributaries of Baltimore County's Middle River, asked the public to exercise care in swimming and boating. Non-toxic *pfiesteria*-like organisms were detected in the water. On September 27, 1999, the National Sea Grant College Program will hold a press conference to present the results of a survey of coastal residents on their understanding of *pfiesteria* and related issues at the National Press Club, Washington, DC. [Washington Post, Journal Newspapers, National Sea Grant College Program press release]

Marine Disease. An article published in the September 3, 1999 issue of Science, and authored by 14 scientists reported on the growing risk to marine life from a range of diseases, whose spread is being hastened by global warming and human activities such as pollution and fish culture. [BBC News, London Times, Environmental News Network]

Lobster Control Date. On September 1, 1999, the National Marine Fisheries Service published notice that it is considering limiting access in the American lobster fishery and is considering September 1, 1999, as the possible "control date" after which fishing activity would not contribute to determining future eligibility for fishery access. [Federal Register, Associated Press]

The above information was compiled for the U.S. Congress by the Congressional Research Service, and downloaded from HDRFISH@listserv.tamu.edu, a service of the Human Dimensions in Recreational Fisheries Committee of Texas A&M University, Wildlife and Fisheries Department.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Alicon Morgan -- After working for the Commission for six years, Alicon will be leaving to pursue developing her own business in desktop publishing and web design. Alicon first came to the Commission in 1993 as an Administrative Assistant and Receptionist. Later, she provided staff support to the Interstate Fisheries Management Program. In 1997, Alicon became a contract employee working with the National Marine Fisheries Service as a Fisheries Specialist. There she was the editor of the SFA Update newsletter and coordinated the activities of the Ecosystem Task Force.

Lee Benaka -- Lee has been under contract with the Commission since January 1999, assisting with the review and implementation of the National Marine Fisheries Service's Atlantic Tuna, Swordfish, and Shark Fishery Management Plans. Lee helped to implement the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act by creating a needs-assessment survey to determine a National Fishery Observer Competencies Standard. Also, he organized and administered the Highly Migratory Species and Billfish Advisory Panel meetings in February and June. Lee is looking forward to continuing his work in helping to ensure responsible management of living marine resources, as well as spending time with his wife and six-month old baby boy.

John Reisenweber -- John joined the Commission in June 1997 on assignment to the National Marine Fisheries Service, working on Disaster Relief, Federal Investment Study, and the Central Lien Registry. John's plans for the future include entering the realm of politics.

The Commission would like to thank Alicon, Lee, and John for their valuable service and wishes them the best in their future endeavors.

Matt Mitro -- This September, Matt joined the Commission staff as its new Stock Assessment Biologist, a position Najih Lazar had held for the last several years. Like Najih, Matt will be working out of an office with the Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife. Matt comes to the Commission with a Ph.D. in Fisheries Biology from Montana State University and a M.S. in Fisheries Statistics from the University of Vermont. Matt's primary responsibility will be to conduct Commission stock assessments. His first task will be to assist in the drafting of the Stock Assessment User Manual, a product of the Stock Assessment Training Workshops that were conducted last year. We welcome Matt and the stock assessment expertise he brings to the Commission's fisheries management and research activities!

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