



ASMFC

# FISHERIES *focus*

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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA

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

## **ASMFC 69th Annual Meeting November 7 - 11, 2010**

**The Francis Marion Hotel  
387 King Street  
Charleston, South Carolina**

### **Preliminary Agenda**

The preliminary agenda is subject to change. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein. Please visit the Commission website at <http://www.asmfc.org/69thAnnualMeeting.htm> for agenda updates and public comment guidelines.

#### November 7, 2010

2:00 - 6:00 PM                      Registration  
7:00 - 9:00 PM                      Welcome Reception

#### November 8, 2010

7:00 AM - 2:00 PM &  
4:30 - 6:30 PM                      Registration  
8:00 - 10:00 AM                      Atlantic Herring Section  
10:15 AM - 12:15 PM                      Atlantic Menhaden Management Board  
1:15 - 2:45 PM                      Horseshoe Crab Management Board  
3:00 - 6:00 PM                      Shad & River Herring Management Board

#### November 9, 2010

7:00 AM - 2:00 PM                      Registration  
8:00 - 9:00 AM                      Executive Committee  
8:30 AM - 4:00 PM                      Management and Science Committee  
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM                      Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Steering Committee

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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 diadromous 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

**10/5 & 6:**

ACCSP Operations Committee, Radisson Hotel Manchester - The Center of New Hampshire, 700 Elm Street, Manchester, New Hampshire.

**10/6:**

ACCSP Advisory Committee, Radisson Hotel Manchester - The Center of New Hampshire, 700 Elm Street, Manchester, New Hampshire.

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

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Technical Committee, Portsmouth Courtyard by Marriott, 1000 Market Street, Portsmouth, New Hampshire; 603/436-2121.

**10/12 - 14:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Congress Hall, 251 Beach Avenue, Cape May, New Jersey; 609/884-8421.

**10/19 (10 AM - 3:30 PM):**

ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel, Sheraton Providence Airport Hotel, 1850 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island.

**11/3 (1:00 - 4:30 PM):**

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section, New Hampshire Urban Forestry Center, 45 Elwyn Road, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

**11/7 - 11:**

ASMFC 69th Annual Meeting, The Francis Marion Hotel, 387 King Street, Charleston, South Carolina; 843/722-0600 (see pages 1 & 8 for the preliminary agenda).

**11/16 - 18:**

New England Fishery Management Council, Ocean Edge Resort, Brewster, Massachusetts.

**12/5 - 10:**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton New Bern, 100 Middle Street, New Bern, North Carolina.

**12/14 - 16:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront, 3001 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, Virginia; 757/213-3000.

**2011**

**1/25 - 27:**

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Harbor-side, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

## Improving Fisheries Law Enforcement

Much has been written about the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement this past year. Unfortunately, not all of the reports have been as accurate or as complete as they could have been. Shortly after Dr. Lubchenco was confirmed to lead NOAA, she directed the Inspector General to investigate complaints of heavy-handed and unfair enforcement actions against fishermen, mostly in New England. Among the Inspector General's findings was the observation that communications could be improved between NOAA's enforcement entities (agents/prosecutors) and fishermen.

In response and to their credit, Dr. Lubchenco, NOAA General Counsel Lois Schiffer, and Eric Schwaab, head of NOAA Fisheries, recently convened a Law Enforcement Summit in Washington, D.C. More than 80 invitees from a broad cross section of stakeholders from around the nation attended. They included recreational and commercial fishermen, state and federal enforcement officers, NOAA General Counsel attorneys (who prosecute cases), defense attorneys, and representatives from the regional councils and Commissions. Participants were asked to assist NOAA's leadership in improving compliance with regulations and developing strategies to advance its law enforcement programs.

The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution retained a neutral third-party firm to design and facilitate the Summit. The facilitator conducted a series of pre-meeting interviews with various stakeholders and used the results to guide the Summit. Following several overarching presentations, participants convened in smaller facilitated work groups, purposely diversified to consider various enforcement related topics. The plenary sessions were broadcasted live on the Internet.

Senior NOAA officials acknowledged the importance of the issues that have been raised about enforcement and committed to working with stakeholders to improve the system. With a force of 168 special agents and officers, NOAA OLE is stretched thin across the country and the waterfront. It has responded by building partnerships with state and federal law enforcement agencies to coordinate their collective forces to enforce fisheries regulations. Industry representatives spoke of the complexity of fisheries regulations and the challenges fishermen face in keeping up to date. Others described the need for enforcement standards, penalties, and processes that are consistent, transparent, timely, and fair.

The smaller breakout groups then exchanged views on these topics, quickly illustrating the competing objectives and principles embedded in the enforcement system. Council members explained that in the case of multispecies fisheries, with numerous harvesters using different gear types, there is often strong pressure to develop fishery management plans that provide flexibility to accommodate the needs of fishermen. This results in multi-component plans, requiring numerous complex regulations. Fishermen and managers from different regions acknowledged that the scale, profitability, and compliance rate of fisheries varies among regions. Effective penalties for a North Pacific factory trawler and an East Coast dragger are inherently different and therefore purposely inconsistent.

There were also discussions on the value of educating fishermen about regulations and the desirability by some for greater use of warnings and lower penalties, especially for first offenses. Enforcement officers

pointed to the trade-offs of reducing the incentive for fishermen to be knowledgeable of the rules, and having minor penalties being viewed as the cost of doing business. With regard to the goals of a timely and fair process, both prosecution and defense attorneys spoke to the desirability and inherently contradictory nature of these objectives.

While the Summit was not intended to reach specific conclusions or result in immediate action, a number of recommendations were made and are included in the Summit report. Although the meeting included the exchange of frank and at times critical comments, attendees felt the tone of the Summit was one of respect and courtesy. Many of the participants shared the view that an effective enforcement system is a necessary element of successful fishery management. At the end of the day, attendees were surprised with how much had been accomplished and pleased with the opportunity to be heard.

The current challenges present an important opportunity for NOAA OLE to strengthen its image as an organization needed by others to achieve its goals. However, fisheries management can only work if the majority of the regulated community buys into the system and believes it is in their collective interest to operate within the rules.

NOAA leadership has pledged to improve the system and have asked for our collective help. Hopefully, that is something we can all agree to give them.

The Summit webcast and full report can be found at <http://noaaenforcementsummit2010.ecr.gov/>





**Atlantic Croaker**  
*Micropogonias undulates*

**Common Names:** croaker, hard-head, King Billy, grumbler

**Family:** Sciaenidae (along with weakfish, spot, spotted seatrout, and red drum)

**Interesting Facts:**

\* The characteristic croaking sound is produced by the vibration of the swim bladder and special muscles.

\* Croaker's spawning season varies based on latitude, peaking in the fall for fish north of Cape Hatteras and in the winter for fish further south.

\* The oldest reported croaker (17 years) was caught in '08 by a fishery-independent survey in Chesapeake Bay; before that, croaker fossils from archaeological excavations near St. Augustine, FL, provided a record of the oldest croaker (15 years) caught by coastal Indians during the First Spanish period

**Largest Recorded:** 8 lbs., 11 oz. and 26" in length

**Stock Status:** Overfishing is not occurring, overfished status is unknown

## Species Profile: Atlantic Croaker

### 2010 Stock Assessment Confirms Resource Subject to Sustainable Levels of Harvest

#### Introduction

Atlantic croaker, *Micropogonias undulates*, occur in coastal waters from the Gulf of Maine to Argentina. They are one of the most common inshore bottom dwelling fish along the U.S. Atlantic coast, and are targeted by both commercial fishermen and recreational anglers. This important fishery resource is managed under Amendment 1 to the original fishery management plan (FMP), which was approved in 2005 and focuses on management to ensure long-term conservation and data collection. The plan will likely be revised in 2011 to incorporate new biological reference points from the 2010 stock assessment, which found that the commercial and recreational fisheries are exploiting the resource at safe levels.

#### Life History

Atlantic croaker can be found in U.S. coastal waters from the Gulf of Maine to Florida, although they primarily occur south of New York. Seasonal migrations of croaker have not been well defined, but the fish appear to move northward and inshore during warmer months and southward and into the ocean during late fall or winter. Spawning occurs from July through December with fish located in both the lower Chesapeake Bay and in coastal oceanic waters. The larvae move into estuaries and develop into juveniles in low salinity waters before moving into higher salinity waters in the summer and fall. Croaker grow rapidly during their first year and mature between the ages of one and three. Recent data indicate they may be as small as five inches upon maturity, but the average at 50% maturity is closer to seven inches. Size at age varies throughout the species' range, although most growth is completed during the first two years. The oldest croaker ever caught was aged at 17 years. Very young croaker eat small planktonic organisms, while juveniles and adults feed on bottom organisms such as marine worms, mollusks, crustaceans, and occasionally fish. Croaker are eaten by many species, including striped bass, flounder, weakfish, and spotted seatrout.

#### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Atlantic croaker support commercial and recreational fisheries along the Atlantic coast, particularly in Virginia and North Carolina. The fish has been part of a mixed-stock commercial fishery since the 1880s. Commercial landings of croaker exhibit a cyclical trend. In some years the catch is almost 30 million pounds, while in other years it is less than two million pounds. From 1997 to 2003, commercial croaker landings were at the high end of a cycle, averaging 28 mil-

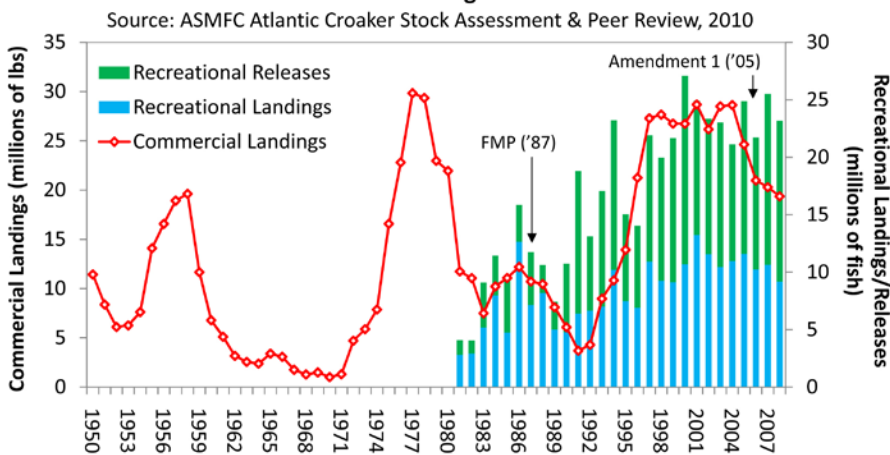


Commercial fishing for croaker. Photo courtesy of Steve Doctor, MD DNR

lion pounds. Beginning in 2004, commercial landings began to decline, falling below 16 million pounds by 2009. The dominant commercial fishing gears are trawls and gillnets, although haul seines and pound nets also contribute heavily.

Over the course of 21 years, the recreational harvest of croaker from New Jersey through Florida increased from less than two million pounds in 1981 to a high of over 11 million pounds in 2001. Landings averaged 9.4 million pounds the next five years, but have since declined by about 4 million pounds. The number of fish that are caught and released shows a strong increasing trend since 1981; anglers release 50-60% of the croaker they catch. Atlantic croaker are caught in estuarine and nearshore waters that range from a few feet deep to depths of 45 feet or more. Anglers catch them by bottom fishing or jigging from anchored and drifting boats, ocean beaches, the banks of bays and rivers, and man-made structures.

**Figure 1. Atlantic Croaker Commercial Landings & Recreational Landings and Releases**



### Stock Status

The latest stock assessment was completed and peer reviewed in 2010. Unlike the previous assessment, it evaluates the status of the resource as one coastwide population. Stock status is based on comparison of model estimates to biological reference points (i.e., spawning stock biomass and fishing mortality targets and thresholds). Revised biological reference points were recommended for adoption as part of the assessment. These reference points are ratio-based, and compare estimated fishing mortality and spawning stock biomass to the levels of each needed to produce maximum sustainable yield ( $F_{MSY}$ ).

Atlantic croaker is not experiencing overfishing. It is not possible to determine if the stock is overfished based on the model results, but it is unlikely. This statement is based on information from the data compiled for the assessment, namely increasing indices of relative abundance and expanding age structure in the catch and indices. Model estimated values of fishing mortality (F), spawning stock biomass (SSB), and biological reference points are too uncertain to be used to determine stock status (see sidebar on page 8 under “Sources of Uncertainty” for more information). Only the ratio of F to  $F_{MSY}$  is considered reliable and can be used to determine that overfishing is not occurring. It is not possible to be confident with regard to stock status, particularly a biomass determination, until the discards of Atlantic croaker from the South Atlantic shrimp trawl fishery can be adequately estimated and incorporated into the stock assessment.

## Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Q&A

### What Data Were Used?

The stock assessment used both fisheries-dependent and independent data, including information on Atlantic croaker biology and life history. Fisheries-dependent data come from recreational and commercial fisheries, while fisheries-independent data are collected through scientific research and surveys.

### Fisheries-dependent Data

The assessment used commercial landings and biological samples (length, weight, and either scales or otoliths to determine age) taken from the commercial landings in MD, VA, and NC. Since the biological sampling was only adequate to develop the catch-at-age from 1988 onwards, the model only uses data from 1988 – 2008. Over this time period, an increasing amount of older fish have been observed in the catch. This expansion of the age-structure is a good sign for the stock because it means more fish are living longer and able to reproduce more times before being caught.

The assessment used recreational catch and effort data from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) for 1988 –2008. MRFSS surveyors measure fish that are landed to develop a length-frequency of the recreational catch, which can then be used to develop recreational catch-at-age. Based on studies and stock assessments of other related species, the assessment assumed that 10% of all fish released alive die as a result of being caught.

Atlantic croaker smaller than market grade may be combined with other undersized or undesirable fish and sold as bait or scrap. These landings are not reported at the species level, but instead as “unclassified finfish.” NC is the only state that samples its scrap/bait fishery to estimate the proportions of different species in the total scrap landings. The assessment

continued on page 8

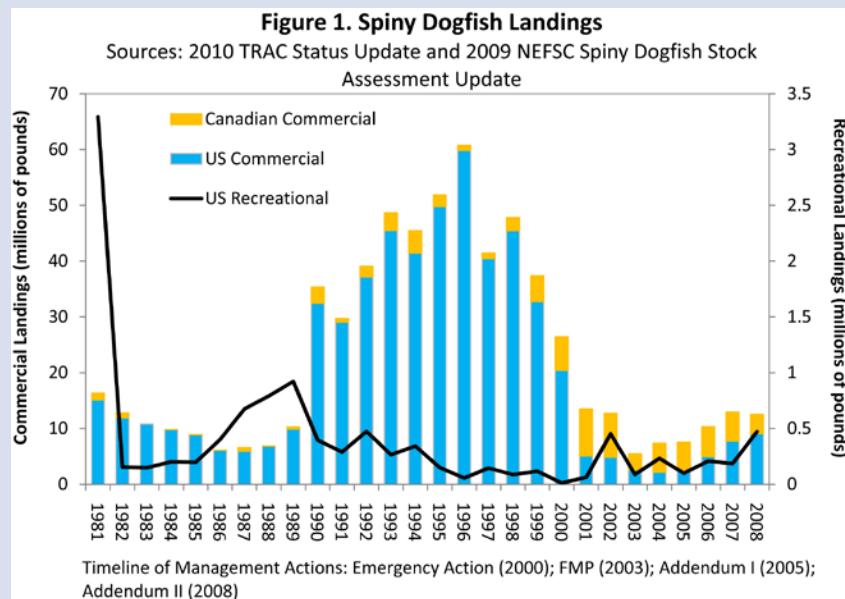
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# ASMFC 69th Annual Meeting Preliminary Agenda (continued from page 1)

<u>November 9, 2010 (continued)</u>		12:30 – 1:30 PM	Captain David H. Hart Award Luncheon
9:15 - 11:15 AM	Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board	1:45 - 2:15 PM	ISFMP Policy Board (continued)
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM	Action Plan Workshop	2:15 - 2:45 PM	Business Session
Noon - 4:00 PM	Law Enforcement Committee	3:00 - 6:00 PM	American Lobster Management Board
2:00 – 4:00 PM	Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council	<u>November 11, 2010</u>	
6:00 - 9:00 PM	Dinner at Fort Johnson	8:00 - 10:30 AM	Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board
<u>November 10, 2010</u>		8:00 AM - 12:30 PM	Habitat Committee
8:00 AM - Noon	Registration	10:45 AM - 12:45 PM	Tautog Management Board
8:30 - 10:00 AM	Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board	12:45 - 1:15 PM	Lunch for Commissioners and Proxies
8:30 AM – Noon	Law Enforcement Committee	1:15 - 1:45 PM	ISFMP Policy Board (continued)
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM	Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Annual Meeting	1:45 - 2:00 PM	Business Session (continued)
10:15 AM - 12:15 PM	ISFMP Policy Board	2:00 - 4:00 PM	South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

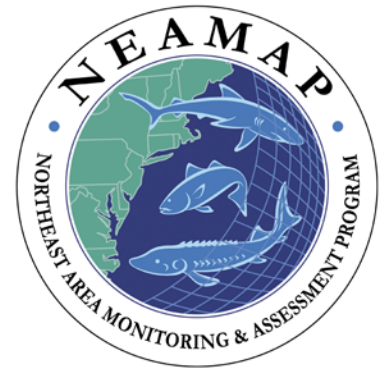
## Erratum

There was an error in the July/August issue of Fisheries Focus (page 6, Figure 1). U.S. commercial and recreational landings were incorrectly labeled. See the figure below for the corrected graph.





## Science Highlight: NEAMAP Nearshore Trawl Survey Builds Data Time Series



Since the fall of 2006, a crew from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, working aboard the F/V Darana R, owned and operated by Captain Jimmy Ruhle, have carried out the NEAMAP Nearshore Trawl Survey. The survey is the first project undertaken by the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) and is designed to sample the fishes and invertebrates of the nearshore coastal Mid-Atlantic Bight, a region that has been poorly sampled in the past. The primary objective of this fisheries-independent bottom trawl survey is to estimate the abundance, biomass, length and age-structure, diet composition, and other critical stock assessment parameters for the various fishes of management interest.

### Accomplishments:

- In addition to the pilot survey conducted in fall 2006, six full surveys have been successfully completed to date: fall 2007, spring & fall 2008, spring & fall 2009, and spring 2010.
- During each cruise, successful tows were conducted at 150 locations (the target number of tows) in coastal waters between Gay Head, Massachusetts and Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

- Sampling area is bound by the 20 ft. and 60 ft. depth contours between Montauk, New York and Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and waters between the 60 ft. and 120 ft. depth contours in Rhode Island Sound and Block Island Sound.
- Protocols and procedures were approved through an external peer review of the NEAMAP Trawl Survey conducted in December 2008. The review found no major deficiencies with the survey, and minor recommendations for improvement are being implemented.
- The accompanying table shows the substantial biomass and number of specimens, and age and diet samples collected during each cruise.

Year	Cruise	Fish Collected	Biomass (kg)	Fish Measured	Age Samples	Stomachs Collected
2007	Fall	1,101,153	49,868	73,474	5,151	3,904
2008	Spring	298,924	32,061	54,701	6,134	4,818
	Fall	731,429	43,020	60,334	4,608	3,381
2009	Spring	285,305	44,034	77,307	6,573	4,856
	Fall	1,243,056	50,362	106,323	6,444	4,560
2010	Spring	284,603	26,331	50,618	5,285	4,016

The wealth of data collected by this survey is important to many managed species in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast. The most abundant species collected include summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, winter flounder, weakfish, bluefish, striped bass, Atlantic croaker, spot, butterfish, Loligo squid, skates, and dogfish. Survey data (growth, size, and distribution) have already been used to characterize several species stocks in assessments for weakfish,

butterfish, and river herring, and data have been reviewed in several other assessments. Abundance data will be available for use in 2011 assessments. Continued funding of the survey will expand the time series of population estimates and provide increasingly valuable data to scientists, managers, and the fishing industry. A long-term source of funding is still needed.

In addition to sampling, VIMS staff members who lead this survey, Chris Bonzek, Jim Gartland and David Lange, have ar-

ranged for NEAMAP outreach efforts at various ports during each cruise. So far, over 200 individuals from a wide range of backgrounds have observed survey operations both in port and in the field during layovers in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Point Judith, Rhode Island, Montauk, New York, Cape May, New Jersey and Hampton, Virginia. These interactions have been well received and more of these important opportunities are expected on future cruises.

For more information, please visit [www.neamap.net](http://www.neamap.net) or contact Melissa Paine, NEAMAP coordinator, at [mpaine@asmfc.org](mailto:mpaine@asmfc.org)



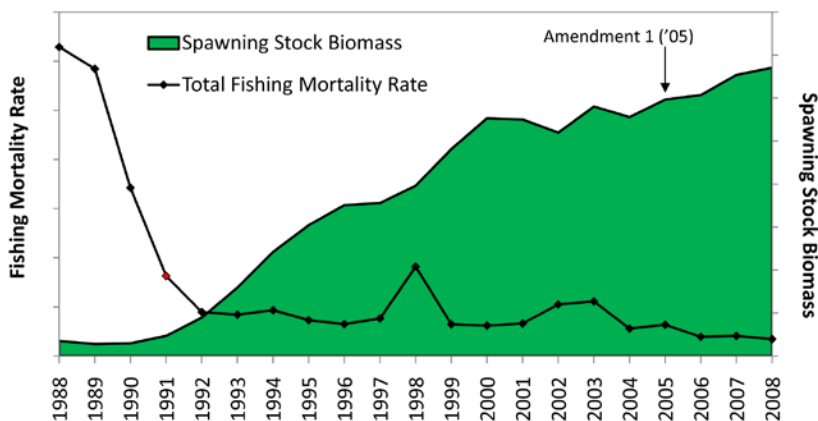
Photo courtesy of NEAMAP

## Species Profile: Atlantic Croaker (continued from page 5)

While absolute estimates of total F and SSB are unavailable because of model uncertainty, the general trends in the estimates from the model are considered reliable due to support from the data. Sensitivity runs of the model including rough estimates of shrimp trawl discards also do not change the overall trends. The trend in total F decreases substantially during the first five years of the time series (1988-1992) and shows an overall decline over the remainder of the time series, except for occasional, brief spikes. The trend in SSB is nearly consistently increasing since 1989. A series of sensitivity runs conducted over a range of plausible values of shrimp-trawl fishing mortality found that the ratio of directed fishing mortality to  $F_{MSY}$  was less than one in all cases, indicating overfishing was not occurring. Based on these results, the Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee found no biological basis for additional management restrictions at this time.

**Figure 2. Trends in Spawning Stock Biomass & Fishing Mortality Rate for Atlantic Croaker**

Source: ASMFC Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment & Peer Review, 2010



### Atlantic Coastal Management

The original FMP for Atlantic croaker was approved in 1987, with the states of Maryland through Florida participating. In the mid-1990s, the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board and the ISFMP Policy Board reviewed the FMP and found it to be vague and without any mandatory management measures. Thus, they recommended that an amendment to the FMP be prepared to define a new management program.

Developing an appropriate management program, complete with biological reference points, required a new stock assessment to be completed. After approving the 2004 assessment's findings for use in management decisions, the Management Board initiated the development of an amendment to come into compliance with the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act and perpetuate a sustainable resource to generate the greatest economic and social benefit.

The Commission approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Croaker in November 2005. Among other things, the Amendment revises the plan's management goals and objectives, expands the management unit to include the resource off of Delaware and New

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## Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Q&A (continued from page 5)

used only NC's estimates of scrap landings in the model.

Atlantic croaker may also be discarded at sea. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Observer Program uses on-board observers to record the number of fish caught and discarded at sea. From the ratio of discarded croaker to landed croaker on observed trips, estimates of total croaker discards in gillnet and trawl fisheries were developed. The low sample size of observed trips made these estimates uncertain.

### Sources of Uncertainty

The major source of uncertainty for this assessment is the magnitude of Atlantic croaker bycatch in South Atlantic shrimp trawls. Croaker are one of the largest components of the shrimp trawl catch; some studies found that shrimp trawls caught more croaker than shrimp. Most croaker caught in this fishery are less than 1 year old, too small to be marketed, and thus are discarded. There are no continuous monitoring programs to account for these discards. The studies that have looked at bycatch rates in shrimp trawls occur infrequently, cover small geographical ranges, and often use different methods of sampling and reporting data. This means that to develop a time series of total croaker catch from the shrimp trawl fishery, many assumptions have to be made and data from other areas and years have to be used to fill gaps. Therefore, the estimates of shrimp trawl bycatch of croaker are considered unreliable. This is a concern because for the years that do have adequate estimates, shrimp trawl bycatch of Atlantic croaker is comparable in size to the total reported catch of Atlantic croaker.

### Fishery-Independent Surveys

The assessment used four fishery-independent surveys. Two of the surveys catch a range of ages, while two of them target young-of-year (YOY) croaker. The NMFS Fall Bottom Trawl Survey collects samples from inshore waters from Cape Hatteras, NC north to Cape Cod, MA, and catches a range of ages. The Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program

*continued on page 9*



## Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Q&A (continued from page 8)

Survey collects samples from inshore waters from Cape Hatteras south to Cape Canaveral, FL, and catches a range of ages, although mostly younger fish. These surveys provide information on trends in relative abundance of adult croaker and together cover most of the range of the stock.

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science Juvenile Trawl Survey samples YOY croaker in the Chesapeake Bay. The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Pamlico Sound Survey samples YOY croaker in Pamlico Sound, eastern Albemarle Sound, and the lower Neuse and Pamlico Rivers. These surveys cover two important croaker nursery grounds and provide information on relative abundance of YOY croaker.

### What Models Were Used?

A statistical catch-at-age (SCA) model was used to assess Atlantic croaker. This model combines the catch-at-age data from the commercial and recreational fisheries with information from fishery-independent surveys and biological information such as growth rates and natural mortality rates to estimate the size of each age class and the exploitation rate of the population. The current model is a modified version of the model used for the last assessment. The most important change is that the observed catch-at-age data is incorporated into the calculations.

The model was run with and without bycatch estimates of Atlantic croaker in the shrimp trawl fishery, and the trends were very similar, showing increasing biomass and decreasing fishing mortality. A series of sensitivity runs conducted over

a range of plausible values of shrimp-trawl fishing mortality found that the ratio of directed fishing mortality to  $F_{MSY}$  was less than one in all cases, indicating overfishing was not occurring.

The model trends agree with the trends in the fishery-independent data and the expanding age structure that has been observed in the catch. Because of the high degree of uncertainty of the estimates of shrimp trawl bycatch, the model estimates of stock size and fishing mortality were not considered reliable. Therefore, the assessment can only provide trends in spawning stock biomass and estimates of relative fishing mortality and not absolute numbers.

### Research Needs

A large proportion of Atlantic croaker removals are not adequately documented. This includes the scrap/bait fishery, at-sea discards from directed fisheries and, most importantly, bycatch in shrimp trawls. An observer program needs to be developed to quantify the bycatch of finfish in shrimp trawls, and existing observer coverage of the gillnet, trawl, and other fleets in the Northeast should be increased and expanded to other regions of the Atlantic coast. Additionally, sampling programs similar to North Carolina's should be implemented to estimate scrap/bait landings in other states. Adequate observer coverage and sampling in all of these fleets would provide crucial information not only for croaker, but for other species such as weakfish, spot, and kingfish that may also experience large, undocumented removals from these fisheries.

## Species Profile: Atlantic Croaker (continued from page 8)

Jersey, establishes biological reference points to manage the croaker resource, allows for management on a regional basis (Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic component), and requires states to submit annual compliance reports to the Commission. There are no regulatory or monitoring requirements, although they may be implemented through adaptive management if deemed necessary. Only a handful of states have regulations specific to croaker. Amendment 1 was fully implemented January 2006.

In August 2010, the Management Board approved the new stock assessment for Atlantic croaker for management use. As

mentioned previously, the 2010 stock assessment did not assess the resource on the regional basis established in Amendment 1 because data were inadequate to support the existence of two stocks. The results of the assessment also could not be compared to the biological reference points in Amendment 1 because they were specific to the Mid-Atlantic region. Consequently, new reference points were developed during the assessment for the coastwide resource. Specific estimates of  $F$  and  $SSB$  are not calculated for these reference points because of uncertainty in the stock assessment. In order to adopt these changes into the management plan, the Management Board also initiated



an addendum in August. One benefit of adopting the recommended ratio-based reference points is that the plan will not have to be updated after each stock assessment to revise the reference point estimates. The Management will consider releasing the Draft Addendum for public comment in November, with final approval slated for March 2011.

# 2009 Fisheries Data Released

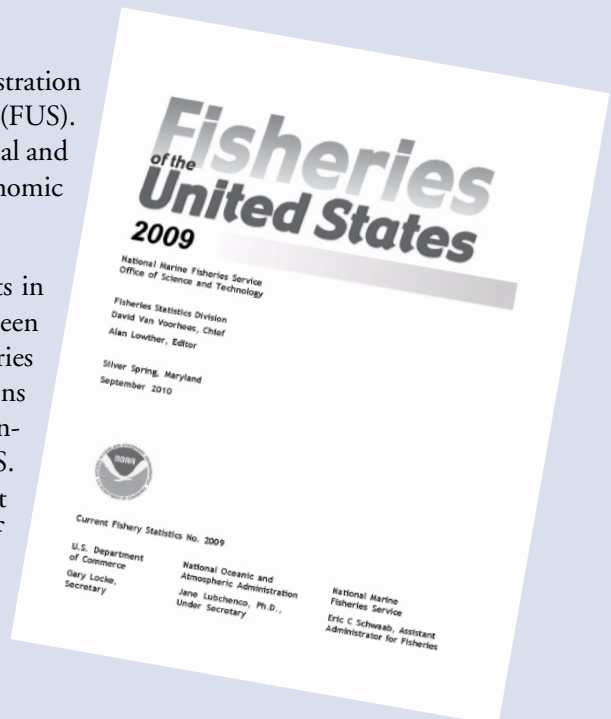
## ACCSP Considers Preliminary Proposals for 2011

### 2009 Fisheries Data Released

In mid-September, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released the 2009 edition of the Fisheries of the United States (FUS). This document is an overview of the preliminary report of commercial and recreational landings from the U.S. territorial waters, the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and the high seas.

ACCSP is pleased to be a part of the cooperative process that assists in gathering and coordinating the data. Since 2007, the Program has been supplying data from Maine through Virginia to the NOAA Fisheries Statistics Office for inclusion in the document. Other organizations that submit data are states, interstate fisheries commissions, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

For a copy of the 2009 edition of Fisheries of the United States please visit the following website <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/fus/fus09/index.html>



### ACCSP Considers Preliminary Proposals for 2011

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has received preliminary proposals for projects to be initiated or continued in 2011 from 12 state and federal partners and two ACCSP committees.

Since 1999, the ACCSP has provided funds to its state and federal partners for data enhancement projects needed for fishery management. This year the ACCSP has received a total of 17 proposals.

Preliminary proposals will be reviewed and recommendations made by the ACCSP Advisory Committee and Operations Committee. Evaluation of both preliminary and final proposals is based upon the funding decision document approved by the Coordinating Council in May 2010, which can be found at the following address (<http://www.accsp.org/funding.htm>).

#### About ACCSP

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. For more information about the Program, please contact Ann McElhatton, Outreach Coordinator, at [info@accsp.org](mailto:info@accsp.org).



### Upcoming Meetings

#### *October 5-6, 2010:*

ACCSP Operations and Advisory Committees, Radisson Hotel Manchester - The Center of New Hampshire, 700 Elm Street, Manchester, New Hampshire.

#### *November 3 & 4, 2010*

ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee, DoubleTree Hotel, 210 Holiday Court, Annapolis, Maryland.

#### *November 9, 2010:*

ACCSP Coordinating Council, The Francis Marion Hotel, 387 King Street, Charleston, South Carolina.

## Stefanie Miles Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

For more than six years, Stefanie Miles has been one of a two-person team that has formed the backbone of the Commission's administrative support. Stefanie's efforts have established her as an important contributor to the Commission's Vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." In recognition of her accomplishments, Stefanie was named Employee of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2010. The award is intended to recognize contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.

Juggling the work products and needs of busy ISFMP and Science Program is no easy task. Yet, Stefanie manages to handle her responsibilities with consistency and excellence, often ahead of schedule. Of particular note are her efforts to convert many of the Commission's historical documents into electronic format. She manages the bulk of the Commission mailings,

ensuring the timely distribution and delivery of meeting notices, press releases and the newsletters. She is an integral part of putting together the Commission's meeting briefing CDs and helps to prepare materials for various tradeshows that occur throughout the year.

She willingly comes in early and stays late to complete jobs when necessary, and is always mindful of deadlines and staff needs. Stefanie approaches her work with a positive and cheerful attitude, gracefully balancing her work responsibilities with the demands she has outside the office.

Stefanie's high work ethic, consistent attention to detail, and overall diligence have significantly increased the productivity of the entire Commission staff, which in turn reflect well on the Commission as a whole. Stefanie has an associate's degree in sociology from Prince George's Com-



munity College, and is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in social science from the University of Maryland University College. As an Employee of the Quarter, Stefanie received a \$500 cash award, a small gift, and a letter of appreciation to be placed in her personnel record. In addition, her name is on the Employee of the Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Stefanie!

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## ASMFC Comings & Goings

### Staff

**Braddock Spear** -- In September, the Commission said good-bye to Braddock Spear as he left to pursue his new career as Metrics Director with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership. In his eight years with the Commission as a Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, Brad demonstrated a steadfast commitment to fisheries management, sustainability, and policy. Since his arrival, Brad has made substantial contributions to the management of many of the Commission's species. He led the completion of Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp, contributed to the development of multiple addenda for Atlantic sturgeon, weakfish, and horseshoe crab. He also successfully completed the horseshoe crab and menhaden benchmark stock assessments, both of which were approved through the peer review process and accepted for management use. In the fall of 2006, Brad was promoted to Senior FMP Coordinator for Policy as the primary staff support to the Legislative and Legislator/Governor Appointees Committees.

Brad also played a key role in developing the Adaptive Resource Management Framework. The ARM Framework includes

modeling that links management of horseshoe crab harvest to multispecies objectives, including red knot forage needs. Both the peer review panel and the Management Board accepted the ARM Framework as a tool to provide guidance for the multispecies management of horseshoe crab.



Through his accomplishments, Brad enhanced the Commission's fisheries management processes, making significant progress in improving Atlantic coast stocks. Now, Brad will be continuing to improve fish stocks in his new position with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership. We wish Brad the very best in all his future endeavors!



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200A-N  
Arlington, VA 22201

*Return Service Requested*



same fish, new pond



As of October 25, 2010 the new address for the ...

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission &  
Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

will be ...

1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200A-N  
Arlington, VA 22201

[www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org)

| [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org)

At press time, new phone and fax numbers had not been confirmed. Please check the Commission and ACCSP websites for updates.