



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations Priorities for Atlantic Interstate Fisheries Management

Report Language Requests from Member States

ASMFC and the 15 Atlantic states request report language for the following items:

- 1) NorthEast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP)
- 2) Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey
- 3) Improving Protections for Endangered North Atlantic Right Whales and Mitigating Regulatory Impacts on U.S. Fisheries
- 4) Industry-Based Fishery Survey Pilot Program
- 5) American Lobster and Jonah Crab Research Fleet
- 6) Chesapeake Bay Atlantic Menhaden Abundance
- 7) Four Commission/USGS Cooperative Research

Line Items and Programs, Projects and Activities (PPA) Priorities

ASMFC and the 15 Atlantic states have identified the following Line Items and Programs, Projects and Activities (PPA) as priorities for FY24:

- 8) Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act & Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions
- 9) Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants
- 10) Joint Enforcement Agreements
- 11) Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments
 - a. Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP)
 - b. Fisheries Information Networks
- 12) Recreational Data Collection and Management

Report Language Requests from Member States

1) Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program

Fisheries Surveys— within Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments, NMFS is directed to fully fund both Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) trawl surveys: the Maine-New Hampshire Inshore Trawl Survey and Mid-Atlantic/Southern New England Nearshore Trawl Survey.

2) Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey

Horseshoe Crabs —Adequate data is required to ensure States and interstate managers can effectively manage the Horseshoe Crab population, which is important to the biomedical and commercial fishing industries, as well as to the ecology of the Mid-Atlantic region. The

Committee directs NMFS to continue the Horseshoe Crab survey to generate the data necessary to ensure that the Horseshoe Crab stock remains on a sustainable path.

3) Improving Protections for Endangered North Atlantic Right Whales and Mitigating Regulatory Impacts on U.S. Fisheries

North Atlantic Right Whale — NOAA shall continue to support disentanglement, stranding response, and necropsy activities, and is encouraged to develop habitat and distribution models and long-term tagging methods. NOAA is directed to support monitoring efforts, including aerial surveys, vessel surveys, and passive acoustic monitoring in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean that is equivalent to or greater than the efforts supported by the fiscal year 2024 enacted level, particularly in the Gulf of Maine and other areas where there are data gaps on North Atlantic Right Whale (NARW) habitat or increased risk from human activities, including vessel traffic. Within increased support provided, no less than the fiscal year 2024 enacted level shall be to support pilot programs to develop, refine, and field test innovative lobster and other fishing gear technologies as described in Senate Report 116-127 and codified in Public Law 116-93.

Within funding provided, \$26,000,000 shall be provided to States through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, which shall be used to cover costs associated with testing or voluntary implementation of innovative gear to inform future Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan rule development and electronic tracking requirements within the Northeast lobster and Jonah crab fisheries. Funding may also support broad-scale monitoring efforts to inform understanding of NARW habitat use, dynamic management, and the development of alternative distribution and risk models. Funding to the States shall be proportional to the number of active federally permitted lobster trap harvesters in each State, and the allocation details shall be developed by the States through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Not more than 5 percent shall be used for administrative costs.

NOAA shall continue to work with Canadian officials to develop risk reduction measures that are comparable in effectiveness for both vessels and fisheries and to incorporate Canadian fishery measures, Canadian vessel restrictions, and U.S. vessel restrictions into future assessment of overall risk reduction. To improve regional engagement, NOAA is encouraged to include regional management bodies and pertinent States in bilateral engagements with Canadian officials regarding coordinated efforts to enhance NARW recovery.

Northeast Lobster Enforcement — Within Enforcement, the Committee provides not less than \$1,400,000 for NMFS, in partnership with the relevant States, JEA partner agencies, and the Atlantic State Marine Fisheries Commission, to continue the pilot cooperative offshore lobster enforcement program that was initiated in fiscal year 2021.

Plankton Recorder Survey — The Committee notes the continued importance of understanding the distribution of *Calanus finmarchicus* plankton to inform the conservation of North Atlantic right whales. Within the amount provided for Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and

Assessments, the Committee provides not less than \$300,000 to conduct a continuous plankton recorder survey.

International Fisheries Management Coordination —The Committee is aware that conflicting American and Canadian fisheries management measures in the Gulf of Maine have generated concerns from the domestic fishing and lobster industries, due to differing conservation regulations. The Committee encourages NOAA to work with Canadian and state fisheries officials to explore the development of an agreement that provides for cooperative fisheries management of this unique area.

4) Industry-Based Fishery Survey Pilot Program

Industry-Based Fishery Survey Pilot Program — The Committee is increasingly concerned that Federal vessel-based fisheries surveys necessary for determining sustainable and optimal harvest rates for commercial and recreational fisheries have been canceled with increasing frequency in recent years, without effective contingency plans for covering the resulting data gaps. Lost sea days on federal vessel-based surveys result in lost commercial fishing opportunities, as greater uncertainty around stock size and movement necessitates more conservative harvest strategies.

The Committee recognizes that an industry-based multispecies bottom trawl survey (IBS) would create resiliency in survey activities in the Northeast region and could enhance fishermen's trust of the data informing stock assessments. The Committee provides an additional \$3,000,000 within Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments to design and implement a pilot industry-based fishery survey. This program will be designed to run in conjunction with and in complement to NOAA's established surveys. The IBS should seek to complement the Bigelow's work, and follow NMFS protocols to the extent practicable.

5) American Lobster and Jonah Crab Research Fleet

American Lobster and Jonah Crab Research — American lobster is the nation's most valuable single-species fishery. Adequate data are required to ensure that State and interstate managers can effectively and sustainably manage lobster and Jonah crab stocks. The Committee provides up to \$300,000 within Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments to support a cooperative research program to collect biological, fishery, and environmental data for American lobster and Jonah crab using modern technology on commercial fishing vessels.

6) Chesapeake Bay Atlantic Menhaden Abundance

Chesapeake Bay Atlantic Menhaden Abundance —The Chesapeake Bay is a critical nursery area for Atlantic menhaden and other commercially and recreationally important species like blue crab and striped bass. Menhaden comprise a majority of the forage base in the Chesapeake Bay and are the primary food source for other fish, birds, and whales in the region. The Committee provides \$2,700,000 within Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to complete the research outlined in the Virginia Institute of Marine Science "Atlantic Menhaden Research Planning" document. Funding may be

distributed by the Commission to the entities listed in the “agency” section of each research priority.

7) Four Commission/USGS Cooperative Research

Cooperative Research – Within the increase to the U.S. Geological Survey’s Ecosystem Mission Area, the Committee provides no less than \$4,000,000 for U.S. Geological Survey Science Centers to conduct cooperative research with the Atlantic, Gulf, Pacific and Great Lakes interstate/international fishery commissions. Funding shall be distributed equally to support each Commission. Research shall address state and USGS/DOI science priorities, including climate considerations, that emphasize actionable science in support of fisheries management. Projects that include a combination of state, commission, and USGS scientists should be prioritized. These funds shall supplement not supplant current funding for USGS Science Centers.

Line Items and Programs, Projects and Activities (PPA) Priorities

8) Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions

The Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions Line Item supports the eight regional fishery management councils, and three interstate marine fisheries commissions, as well as the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (Atlantic Coastal Act). The Atlantic Coastal Act provides funding to the 15 Atlantic coast states and NOAA Fisheries to meet the requirements of the law.

- a) Atlantic Coastal Act
- b) Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions

9) Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants provide 1:1 matching funds to states and the three interstate marine fisheries commissions for fisheries data collection and research on commercial and recreational fish stocks.

10) Joint Enforcement Agreements

Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEA) provide funding to 28 state and U.S. territory law enforcement agencies (13 Atlantic coast states) to perform enforcement services in support of Federal regulations. JEAs are funded through NOAA’s Office of Law Enforcement Cooperative Enforcement Program (CEP) via the Enforcement Line Item.

11) Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments

- a) Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program

The Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) is a cooperative program to facilitate the collection, management, and dissemination of fishery-independent data from the waters of the southeastern United States. SEAMAP has three components: Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic (SEAMAP-SA), and Caribbean. SEAMAP-South Atlantic was implemented in 1983.

b) Fisheries Information Networks

Fisheries Information Networks, funded through the Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments Line Item, provide funding for state-federal cooperative programs to collect, manage and disseminate commercial fisheries data. On the Atlantic coast, Fisheries Information Network funding is used to support ASMFC's Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP). ACCSP is the primary source of dependable and timely marine fishery statistics for Atlantic coast fisheries.

12) Recreational Data Collection and Management

Recreational effort and catch are estimated by NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), composed of three primary surveys: Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS), Fishing Effort Survey (FES), and For-Hire Survey (FHS). On the Atlantic coast, APAIS has been conducted by the state agencies and ASMFC/ACCSP since 2016 – producing higher quality data and substantial cost savings. Several PPAs under NOAA Fisheries fund work important to sustainable and vibrant recreational fisheries: Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments; Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services; and Fishery Information Networks (ACCSP). ASMFC requests adequate funding for NOAA Fisheries' activities related to recreational fishing data, analysis, and management.

Public Law 115–405 supports collaborative programs to improve recreational fishery data collection. Particularly to assist states establish, test, and implement more reliable recreational fishery data collection tools, such as smartphone applications or text messaging supplements. ASMFC continues to support implementation of the statute.