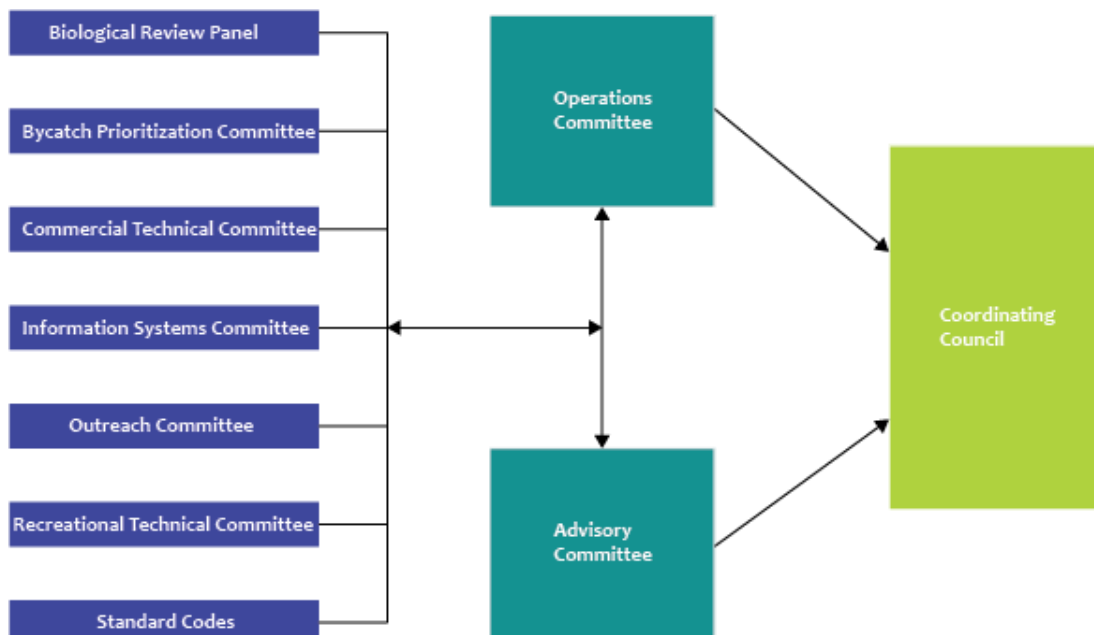


ATLANTIC COASTAL COOPERATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM

In 1995, 23 state and federal partners established the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) to address data deficiencies constraining Atlantic coast fisheries management. Incompatibilities between state and federal data systems, a lack of standardized trip-level catch and effort reporting, a lack of universal permit and vessel registration data, and a general need for more and better data made it difficult for management agencies to develop accurate catch estimates and decide on appropriate management measures. The ACCSP was created as a platform for partners to develop a unified approach to fishery-dependent data collection and management, guided by the following principles:

- Data collection and management standards should be developed cooperatively among the partners and implemented across jurisdictional lines;
- Data standards should apply coastwide and data should be managed through a single integrated system;
- Data on all fishing activities (e.g., commercial, for-hire, and recreational) should be collected;
- A modular design should be used for data collection and management projects.

Currently, the program consists of the Coordinating Council, a policy committee; the Operations Committee, a steering committee; an advisory committee; and seven technical committees— all of which are comprised of representatives from the partner agencies and representatives from the fishing industry. This committee-based structure is designed to encourage and facilitate partner participation in determining the growth and direction of the program.



Data Standards

The committees set minimum data standards for data collection and management based on fisheries stock assessment and management needs. These standards define the types and resolution of data that should be collected, minimum data elements required, standard codes for storage, timeframes for data submissions, and quality control and assurance practices. All ACCSP partners agree to meet the minimum data standards and, through the committees, participate in their periodic review. Periodic reviews are used to update the standards to match current management priorities, account for new data collection technologies, and reflect updated stock assessment data needs. The program released the most recent iteration of its Atlantic Coast Fisheries Data Collection Standards in 2012.

In addition to acting as a platform for the development and promulgation of coastwide fisheries-dependent data standards, over the past 15 years the ACCSP has evolved to play large roles in fishery-dependent data storage, collection, and dissemination.

Data Storage and Access

The ACCSP's Data Warehouse serves as the storage system and access point for standardized Atlantic coast fisheries data. The Warehouse is populated with fishery-dependent data supplied by the program partners and harmonized into one set of codes for variables such as species, gear, and fishing area. The warehouse's harmonized data can be aggregated for cross-jurisdictional analyses. First deployed in 2002, the warehouse earned full partner buy-in once the ACCSP began compiling Atlantic commercial landings data for NOAA's *Fisheries of the United States* in 2007.

In 2016, ACCSP released a new version of its Data Warehouse. The new version identifies and evaluates the level of access granted to a user during the login process to the application, allowing a single application to address the needs of a wide suite of data users, including: public and login non-confidential data users, high-level confidential data users, SAFIS data users, and the Program Partner data managers.

Data Collection

In 2003, the ACCSP developed and deployed the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), a web-based data collection system for dealer-reported landings. Since then, SAFIS has expanded to include five distinct web-based and two mobile applications designed to allow both dealers and fishermen to report their data electronically: e-1Ticket, eTrips and eTrips/Mobile, eLogbook, eDR and eDR/Mobile, and the SAFIS Management System. While the applications function independently, they are maintained within the same database and share standards and codes that are ACCSP-compliant. It is important to note that SAFIS simply enables centralized data collection—the data are still collected under the authority of the program partners. The partners check and approve their data before they are transferred to the Data Warehouse, ensuring that the information is the best available data on the Atlantic coast.

Recreational Data Activities

The ACCSP has also recently expanded its efforts to improving the collection and management of recreational fisheries data, assuming responsibility for coordinating state conduct of the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) from Maine to Georgia in 2016. As the catch component of NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), the APAIS is designed to collect marine recreational fishing catch and effort data via in-person angler intercepts at public fishing access points. Previously administered by a federal contractor, the survey is now conducted by the states for their own waters, with ACCSP providing central administration, coordination, and data processing capabilities.

In 2016, MRIP requested the ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee's (RTC) input on priorities for improving recreational data collection in the Atlantic region. With its state, federal, Commission, and council representatives, the RTC is well-placed to coordinate cross-jurisdictional discussion and consensus-building.

The RTC members worked together to produce the *Atlantic Coast Recreational Implementation Plan*, which identifies the committee's top six priorities for improving recreational data collection on the Atlantic coast over the next five years. The plan was approved by the ACCSP Coordinating Council and submitted to MRIP in 2017. It is intended to help MRIP allocate resources strategically by addressing the data needs of fishery assessors and managers in the Atlantic coast region.

The priorities identified in the plan include:

- Improved precision (PSE) of MRIP catch estimates
- Comprehensive for-hire data collection and monitoring
- Improved recreational fishery discard and release data
- Biological sampling for recreational fisheries separate from MRIP APAIS
- Improved spatial resolution and technical guidance for post-stratification of MRIP estimates
- Improved timeliness of recreational catch and harvest estimates