

ATLANTIC COASTAL COOPERATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM

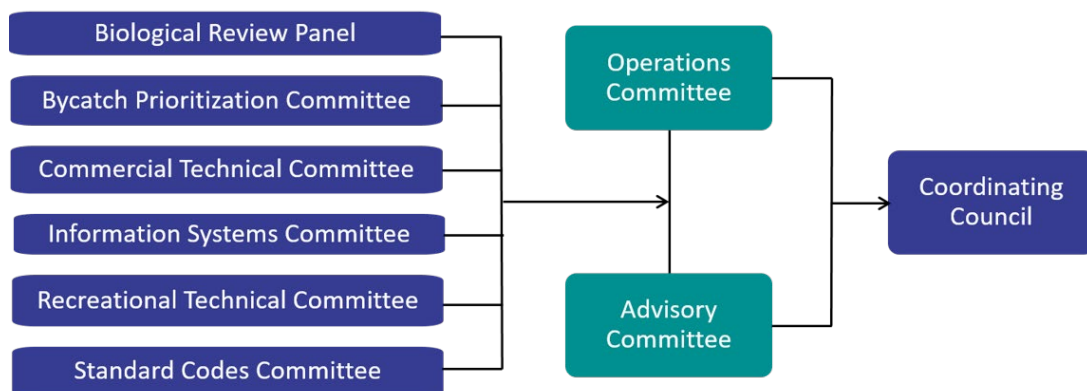
The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) was established in 1995 as one of five regional Fisheries Information Networks (FINs) to address the issues of inconsistent temporal and spatial coverage and dataset compatibility by standardizing and centralizing fishery-dependent data collection and data management along the Atlantic coast. FINs are collaborative state-federal programs that supply dependable and timely marine fisheries data in their respective regions.

In 2017, ACCSP transitioned to a Commission department to increase the ACCSP's visibility among partners and stakeholders and streamline administration.

ACCSP is composed of representatives from marine fisheries management agencies coastwide, including the Commission, the three Atlantic coast regional fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the District of Columbia, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, NOAA Fisheries, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. ACCSP was created as a platform for partners to develop a unified approach to fishery-dependent data collection and management, guided by the following values:

- Accurate data are required for good fisheries management decisions
- Coordination and collaboration among program partners are essential for success
- The program must be responsive to the changing needs for fisheries data
- Processes must be open and transparent, but confidential data must be protected
- Data should be accessible and easy to use
- Responsibilities should be matched with available resources

ACCSP consists of the Coordinating Council, which is the primary decision-making body for the program; the Operations Committee, which is a steering committee that oversees the general operations of the program; an advisory committee, composed of commercial and recreational industry representatives who advise the Council; and six technical committees – all of which are comprised of representatives from the partner agencies. This committee-based structure provides the framework for the collaborative processes that create and manage the data standards and govern 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.

Data Storage and Access

ACCSP's Data Warehouse serves as the data portal 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 ACCSP began compiling Atlantic commercial landings data for NOAA's *Fisheries of the United States* in 2007.

In 2016, ACCSP released a major modernization of its Data Warehouse. The modernized version identifies and evaluates the level of access granted to a user during the login process to the application. This allows 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 partner data managers. On a continuing basis, the Program makes minor enhancements to the Warehouse.

Data Collection

ACCSP develops and maintains the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), a coastwide fisheries data collection system developed to meet the needs of scientists, managers, and industry. Since the initial deployment of eDR (dealer reporting module) in 2004, SAFIS has expanded to include a full suite web-based and mobile applications and APIs (connections to send data to the SAFIS database) designed to allow both dealers, captains, and fishermen to report their data electronically. Additionally, the SAFIS Management System allows partners to manage application preferences, and review and edit data. eTRIPS (trip reporting) applications were redeveloped in 2022 and eDR is completing a redesign at the end of 2025. The data collected through the applications and API are contained within a single database and share ACCSP standards and codes.

SAFIS enables centralized data collection; however, the data are still collected under the authority of the program partners. The partners review and audit their data before they are transferred to the Data Warehouse, ensuring the best available data on the Atlantic coast.

Recreational Data Activities

In 2016, ACCSP assumed responsibility for coordinating state conduct of the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) from Maine to Georgia. As the catch component of NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), 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. ACCSP led the transition from the use of scanned paper forms to electronic field data entry for APAIS in 2019. The MRIP For-hire Telephone Survey (FHTS) and Large Pelagics Telephone (LPTS) add-on also transitioned to ACCSP and state conduct in 2019.

In its 2023 [*Atlantic Coast Recreational Implementation Plan*](#), the ACCSP identified six priorities for improving recreational data collection on the Atlantic coast over the next five years. The Implementation Plan helps guide MRIP in allocating resources to further improve and address data needs for fishery assessors and managers on the Atlantic coast. It is also used to support the annual ACCSP request for project proposals.

The priorities identified in the plan include:

1. Improved precision (PSE) and presentation of MRIP estimates
2. Comprehensive for-hire data collection and monitoring
3. Improved recreational fishery discard and release data
4. Improved timeliness of MRIP recreational catch and harvest estimated
5. Expanded biological sampling for recreational fisheries
6. Improved in-season monitoring

Partner Project Funding

ACCSP supports further innovation in fisheries-dependent data collection and management technology through an annual funding process. Each year, ACCSP issues a Request for Proposals (RFP) to its Program Partners worth approximately \$1 million. The ACCSP Operations and Advisory Committees review submitted project proposals and make funding recommendations to the Coordinating Council for consideration and approval at the ASMFC Annual Meeting, which occurs in the Fall.

Citizen Science

In 2024, ACCSP launched SciFish, a new mobile application that allows the public to participate in scientific research by collecting and sharing data on Atlantic coast fisheries. This app standardizes the collection of citizen science data from Atlantic coast fisheries by providing a single platform for multiple data collection projects. The project builder allows researchers to create new data collection projects with no development costs. Projects developed in SciFish focus on collecting data for marine and/or diadromous fisheries along the Atlantic coast. The projects help address current data gaps and research needs, clearly explain how collected data will be used in management and stock assessments,

and encourage collaboration between scientists and fishermen.

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