

ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence



Award Recipients (from left): Sergeant James Kane, Michael Hendricks, Steven Heins, Jeffrey Brust, Janice Plante, Dr. Matthew Cieri

At its Spring Meeting, the Commission presented Steven Heins, Dr. Matthew Cieri, Jeffrey Brust, Michael Hendricks, Sergeant James Kane, and Janice Plante with its Annual Awards of Excellence for their outstanding contributions to fisheries management, science, law enforcement, and outreach along the Atlantic coast.

"Every year a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence recognize outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries," said ASMFC Chair Louis B. Daniel, III of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. "This evening, we honor several exceptional individuals for their contributions to the management and conservation of Atlantic coast fisheries."

Management & Policy Contributions

Steven Heins, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC)

Steven Heins has been dedicated to state, interstate, and federal management issues for nearly three decades, providing leadership, innovation, and technical excellence that represents the core mission and values of the Commission. From 1988 to 2000, Mr. Heins oversaw New York's species monitoring programs, playing an important role in helping inform management decisions at the Commission and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) level. He developed and implemented New York's Artificial Reef and Access Program, authoring the original Reef Management Plan and environmental impact statement that made the program a reality. He is also a longstanding member and past chair of the Commission's Artificial Reef Committee, which has been providing guidance on and coordinating artificial reef development activities along the Atlantic coast since the mid-1980s.

continued, see ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE on page 9

Upcoming Meetings

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 the 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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June 2-5

Bluefish and Scup Stock Assessment Review Workshop, NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA.

June 8 (begins at 9 AM) - 11 (ends at 5 PM)

ASMFC American Lobster Assessment Peer Review, NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 122 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA.

June 8 - 12

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Doubletree Grand Key Resort, 3990 S. Roosevelt Boulevard, Key West, FL.

June 9 - 11

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Doubletree by Hilton, Raleigh Brownstone University, 1707 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC.

June 9 (begins at 1 PM) - 11 (ends at Noon)

Red Drum Assessment Workshop, Maritime Institute Conference Center, 692 Maritime Boulevard, Linthicum Heights, MD.

June 12 (9 AM - 5 PM)

Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel & Section, Westin Portland Harborview (formerly Eastland Hotel), 157 High Street Portland, ME.

June 16 - 18

New England Fishery Management Council, Hotel Viking, Newport, RI.

June 17 (10 AM - 4 PM)

ASMFC/MAFMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Advisory Panels, Double Tree by Hilton, BWI Airport, 890 Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, MD.

June 29 (10 - Noon)

Atlantic Herring Section Days Out Conference Call, dial 888.394.8197 and enter passcode 499811 to join the conference call.

June 29 (begins at 1 PM) - July 2 (ends at Noon)

Black Sea Bass Assessment Data Workshop, Hilton Garden Inn Providence Airport/Warwick, 1 Thurber Street, Warwick, RI.

July 27 - 30

Weakfish Assessment Workshop, ASMFC Offices, 1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200A-N, Arlington, VA.

July 30

Atlantic Herring Section Days Out Conference Call, time to be determined.

August 4 - 6

ASMFC Summer Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA.

August 11 - 13

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn Midtown, 440 West 57th Street, New York City, NY.

August 25 - 27

SEDAR Red Drum Assessment Review Workshop, Charleston, SC.

September 14 - 18

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Beach House Resort, 1 South Forest Beach Drive, Hilton Head Island, SC.



Robust Data and Innovative Data Collection Approaches are Key to Successful Management

The Commission relies on quality data to support its 26 fishery management programs. Sustainable management and stakeholder confidence rely on the accuracy, reliability, and timeliness of the data.

I recently had the opportunity to present testimony at a hearing before a U.S. Senate subcommittee on the importance of reliable fisheries data and opportunities

that exist for improvement.

While it may sound obvious to some, my testimony emphasized the foundation of U.S. marine fisheries management is strong science. The Commission relies on quality data to support its 26 fishery management programs. Sustainable management and stakeholder confidence rely on the accuracy, reliability, and timeliness of the data. Given that Atlantic coastal fishery resources provide billions of dollars of economic activity and hundreds of thousands of jobs, as well as food and recreation, it is essential for resource managers to seek innovative methods and approaches to collect and utilize fisheries data.

Stock assessments today are growing increasingly complex as managers grapple with the fact that fishing pressure is only one part of the story. Further, we are just beginning to understand how the rise or fall of one stock can impact other

stocks or ecosystems at the regional scale. Until recently, management measures that account for other factors outside fishing pressure were simply not possible.

From 2013 through the end of this year, the Commission will have conducted nine benchmark stock assessments that provide population estimates that will be the basis for management of these species for years to come. The Atlantic striped bass assessment spurred the states to reduce harvest to increase spawning stock biomass through the protection of the strong 2011 year class. The black drum assessment, which was the first coastwide assessment for this species, enabled us to move from an unknown stock condition to one that was found to be not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. Data for this assessment included commercial landings extending all the way back to the early 1900s. Due to the availability of robust data at the regional scale, the tautog benchmark

assessment shifted from a coastwide assessment to a regionally based assessment of this locally-resident species, providing a more accurate reflection of regional differences in life history characteristics and harvest patterns, as well as reducing the risk of overfishing. Lastly, improved data and assessment capabilities yielded a much improved and more credible Atlantic menhaden assessment, establishing the foundation for the Commission to move forward with the development of ecologically-based reference points to manage the menhaden resource. These are just four recent examples of what can be achieved when we have access to timely and accurate fisheries data. Without quality and timely data, we cannot successfully manage America's fisheries.

On the East Coast, the Commission has been at the forefront of innovative approaches to assess and manage fishery resources. The Commission's horseshoe crab management program is the first to use the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) to balance the competing needs of threatened migratory shore birds, horseshoe crab harvesters, and the biomedical community to set annual specifications. Unfortunately, the ARM Framework's utility is currently threatened due to funding shortfalls that have curtailed the conduct of the Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey in 2013 and 2014. Our Atlantic Menhaden Board is in the process of developing ecological reference points that balance menhaden's role as a forage species with its use by reduction fisheries and bait harvesters.

Understanding that new and better management methods put ever increasing demands on data, the Commission and ACCSP continue to make data collection more nimble, creative, and efficient. At the center of this effort is the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). SAFIS is made up of five applications developed by ACCSP that efficiently collect state, federal, recreational, and commercial fishery-dependent data along the Atlantic coast. Though February, SAFIS contains over seven million records, including approximately 5.6 million dealer reports, 1.3 million trip records, and over 10,000 volunteer angler records.

Timely and accurate fishery-dependent data, in conjunction with robust fishery-independent data, are essential to the success of marine fisheries management. The Commission, ACCSP, and our state partners are committed to seeking innovative and cost-efficient approaches to address our data collection and management needs.

Species Profile: Tautog

Commission Explores New Regional Management Program for Blackfish

Introduction

Prized for being a “delicious fish,” tautog is a highly sought after recreational species from Massachusetts through North Carolina. Approximately 90% of the total harvest is taken by anglers, who catch them among hard structures such as rocky shorelines, piers, pilings, and natural and artificial reefs. Recently, the commercial fishery has expanded in some states, such as New York, where there has been an increased demand for tautog in the live fish market.

A slow growth rate and high site fidelity (tautog tend to stay near and return to their “home” reefs) make tautog particularly susceptible to overfishing. The 2015 benchmark stock assessment indicates this non-migratory reef fish would be more appropriately managed as three stock units. The stock is overfished coastwide, with overfishing occurring in the northern portion of the range and not subject to overfishing in the southern portion. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) has remained at low levels and management measures have proven insufficient to rebuild the stock. In response to the new assessment, the Board initiated an amendment with the intent to adopt a three-unit stock structure and implement a new management program to rebuild overfished tautog populations.

Life History

A member of the wrasse (Labridae) family, tautog is a stout fish with an arched head and broad tail. Juveniles are greenish in color and become darker with age. Fishermen have given tautog the nickname “blackfish” due to its dark mottled sides that are either dull black, brown, blackish green, or blackish blue. Anglers also call tautog “white chin” because this coloring pattern commonly occurs on large males.

Tautog are slow growing and can live 35 to 40 years. Males and females are sexually mature at three to four years of age, but studies have shown that larger females produce significantly more (and potentially higher quality) eggs than smaller females. Tautog are distributed along the Northeast Atlantic coast from Nova Scotia to Georgia, with the greatest abundances occurring in the U.S. between Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and Chesapeake Bay. North of Cape Cod, tautog typically remain close to shore in waters less than 60 feet deep. South of Cape Cod, they inhabit waters 40 miles offshore at depths up to 120 feet. During spring, as water temperatures approach 48° F, tautog migrate inshore

to spawn in estuaries and nearshore marine waters. They may remain inshore throughout the summer, then move to deeper (80- 150 feet) offshore wintering areas as fall approaches and water temperatures drop below 52° F. Toward the southern end of their range, some adults may remain offshore throughout the year.

Tautog are daytime feeders, and feeding activity peaks at dawn and dusk. Adults feed primarily on oysters, mussels, and invertebrates, while the juvenile diet consists of amphipods and copepods. There are no species that preferentially feed on tautog, but fish-eating birds such as cormorants prey on juveniles. Smooth dogfish, barndoor skate, red hake, silver hake, sea raven, and goosefish have been reported to feed on both adults and juveniles.

Species Snapshot



Tautog
Tautoga onitis

Common Names:

blackfish, tog, white chinner, black porgy

Family:

Labridae, commonly referred to as wrasses, which have protactile mouths, usually with separate jaw teeth that jut outwards. Many species can be recognized by their thick lips, the inside of which is sometimes curiously folded.

The word “wrasse” comes from the Cornish word *wragh*, a lenited form of *gwragh*, meaning an old woman or hag.

Interesting Facts:

- Tautog have several specialized adaptations for living around hard structures, including a blunt nose, thick lips, and powerful jaws.
- They have conical (pointy) teeth in front, crushing teeth in back, and a set of pharyngeal teeth in their throat, which allow them to pick-up, crush, and sort hard prey such as mollusks and crustaceans.
- Their rubbery skin has a heavy slime covering that protects them while swimming around rocks.
- They are particularly hardy and can survive for hours kept on ice – which makes them desirable for the live fish market.

Maximum Age/Size: 34 years/3.1 feet

Stock Status:

Overfished throughout range, with overfishing occurring in the northern portion and not subject to overfishing in the southern region.



Photo © Chip Lynch, NOAA Fisheries

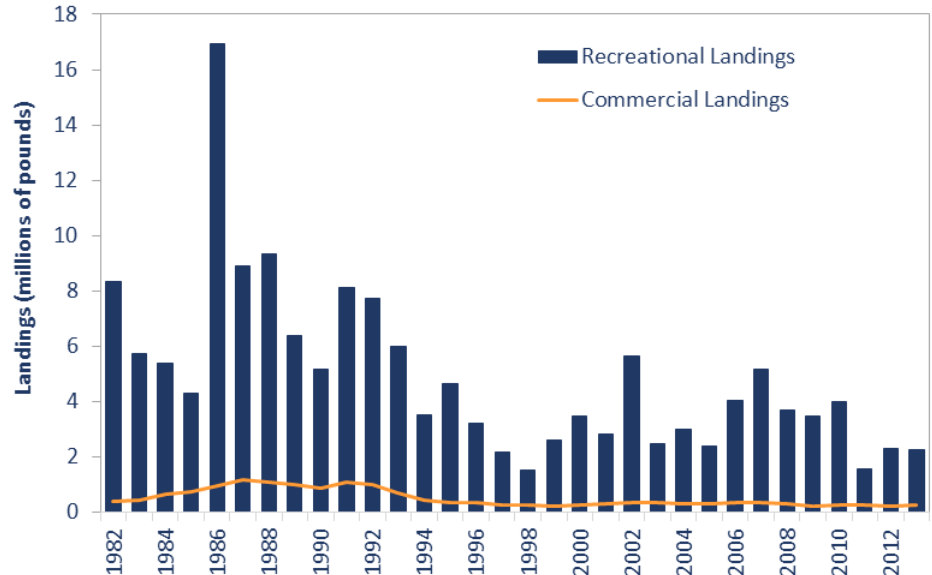
Throughout their life, tautog aggregate around structured habitats. Shallow, vegetated estuaries and inshore areas serve as juvenile nurseries, while larger juveniles cohabitate with adults in deeper offshore waters. North of Long Island, tautog are generally found around rocks and boulders. Toward the southern end of their range, tautog often inhabit wrecks, jetties, natural and artificial reefs, and shellfish beds. They are also found near the mouths of estuaries and other inlets. Adults stay close to their preferred home site and, although they may move away during the day to feed, they return to the same general location at night where they become dormant and may actually sleep. This aggregation around structure makes tautog easy to find and catch, even when biomass levels are low. The easy catchability and slow growth rate make tautog highly susceptible to overfishing and slow to rebuild.

Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

Tautog can be found in waters off Massachusetts to Virginia, with the majority of landings occurring in state waters between Cape Cod and the Chesapeake Bay. Historically, tautog – or “tog” as many fishermen like to call this popular game fish – was a recreational fishery, with about 90% of the coastwide harvest taken by marine anglers. In recent years, however, commercial landings accounted for up to 40% of the catch in some states, largely due to a growing market for live fish. Most tautog are landed in the spring and fall, although some Mid-Atlantic fishermen pursue tautog year-round, and there is an active fishery off the Virginia coast in the winter.

Over the past 30 years, recreational harvest has ranged from a time series high of 16.9 million pounds in 1986 to a low of 1.5 million pounds in 1998. Since 2000, recreational harvest has averaged 3.3 million pounds, with 2013 harvest estimated at 2.3 million pounds. Connecticut anglers accounted for 45% of the 2013 recreational harvest, followed by Rhode Island (24%), and New York (11%).

Tautog Commercial and Recreational Landings
Source: 2015 Tautog Assessment and Peer Review Report



Commercial landings have ranged from a high of 1.2 million pounds in 1987 to a low of 208,800 pounds in 1999. Landings have averaged about 290,000 pounds since 2000, with 2012 landings estimated at 263,000 pounds. More than 50% of the 2013 commercial harvest was landed in Massachusetts and New York. Rod and reel are the predominant commercial gear, although floating fish traps, fish pots, and otter trawl harvest are also used.

Stock Status

Unlike previous assessments, which assessed the stock on a coastwide basis, the 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report evaluated stock status regionally to reflect differences in life history characteristics and harvest patterns. Based on analysis of all available data, including life history information, the assessment offers three regional alternatives to assess and manage tautog. Two approaches divide the tautog population into three regions. The first is composed of a Southern New England region (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut), a New York-New Jersey region, and a DelMarVa region (Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina). The second approach includes the regions of Massachusetts to Connecticut, New York to New Jersey,

and Delaware to North Carolina. The last approach assesses tautog based on two regions, a Northern stock (Massachusetts through New York) and a Southern stock (New Jersey through North Carolina). The Peer Review Panel and the Tautog Technical Committee supported use of either of the three-region approaches since they balance a smaller geographical scale with data integrity while reducing the risk of overfishing. Stock status and associated reference points for the alternative stock units is presented in the table on page 8. Regardless of the region, tautog continues to be overfished, with overfishing occurring in its most northern range (Massachusetts and Rhode Island), while the southern portion of their range (Delaware and south) is not subject to overfishing.

Based on these findings, the Tautog Board moved forward with the development of a new amendment to consider the management and assessment implications of regionalization and choose its preferred regions for future management.

Atlantic Coastal Management

In response to concerns over increasing recreational and commercial fishing pressure on tautog stocks, the Commission approved the first Interstate Fishery

continued, see SPECIES PROFILE on page 8

Proposed Management Actions

Atlantic Herring Draft Amendment 3 Released for Public Comment: State Hearings Scheduled

The Atlantic Herring Section has released Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for public comment. Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, and possibly the states of Rhode Island through New Jersey, will be conducting public hearings on the Draft Amendment this summer. The details of these hearings will be released as soon as they become finalized.

Draft Amendment 3 was initiated to strengthen spawning sea herring protections in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) and address concerns raised by the commercial Atlantic herring industry. The Draft Amendment proposes (1) changing the spawning monitoring program (default start dates, area boundaries, and length of the closure period); (2) removing the fixed gear set-aside rollover provision, and (3) requiring a vessel's fish hold to be emptied before leaving on a fishing trip. The empty fish hold provision is also being addressed by the New England Fishery Management Council under Framework Adjustment 4 to the Federal Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring.

The Plan Development Team conducted a review of the current spawning monitoring program and recommended new tools and adjustments to improve protection for spawning fish. The review revealed spawning events occur at different times each year and typically last six weeks. Therefore, a modification to the spawning protection program would be appropriate to protect the herring resource. The suite of options include a new forecast system to allow fisheries biologists to pool samples of herring from Maine and Massachusetts and project the date of peak spawning. A range of options for adjusting the default closure start dates are based on analysis of spawning data from the past decade, and provides flexibility in the proportion of spawning

fish protected. The Draft Amendment proposes merging the Western Maine (WM) and Massachusetts-New Hampshire (MA-NH) spawning areas because there have been no significant differences in the starting dates of spawning events. Lastly, an option proposes to extend the closure period in MA-NH (or WM-MA-NH) to six weeks reflecting the current characteristics of the rebuilt herring population, which is characterized by a broader age class structure and longer overall spawning season since the current spawning program was developed.

At the request of the fishing industry, the Draft Amendment also includes options to remove the fixed gear set-aside provision and establish a requirement for empty fish holds. Currently, 295 mt is set-aside for the fixed gear fishery in Area 1A until November 1, after which the remaining set-aside is made available to all Area 1A gear types. Maine fixed gear fishermen have requested access to the set-aside until the overall total allowable landings limit has been harvested. Draft Amendment 3 also includes a proposal to establish a requirement for fish holds to be empty of fish prior to trip departures. Members of industry initiated the empty fish hold provision because it would prevent mixing of catch from multiple trips, which can improve accounting of catch and bycatch. In addition, the provision could encourage less wasteful fishing practices by creating an incentive to catch amounts of herring as demanded by markets.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Amendment either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. The Draft Amendment can



be obtained at http://www.asmf.org/files/PublicInput/DraftAtlanticHerring_Amendment3_PublicComment.pdf or via the Commission website, www.asmf.org, on the *Public Input* page. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on July 24, 2015 and should be forwarded to Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Amendment 3). For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Jonah Crab Draft FMP Released for Public Comment: State Hearings Scheduled

The states of Maine through Rhode Island and Maryland have scheduled their public hearings to gather input on the Draft Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Jonah Crab. The details of those hearings follow.

Maine Department of Marine Resources July 6, 2015; 6-8 PM

Casco Bay Lines Conference Room
56 Commercial Street
Portland, Maine
Contact: Terry Stockwell at 207.624.6553

New Hampshire Fish and Game Dept.

July 7, 2015; 7:30 PM
Urban Forestry Center
45 Elwin Road
Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Contact: Doug Grout at 603.868.1095

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

July 8, 2015; 5-9 PM

Fairfield Inn and Suites
185 MacArthur Boulevard
New Bedford, Massachusetts

Contact: Dan McKiernan at 617.626.1536

Rhode Island Dept. of Environmental Management

July 9, 2015; 5-9 PM

University of Rhode Island Bay Campus
Corliss Auditorium
South Ferry Road
Narragansett, Rhode Island

Contact: Mark Gibson at 401.423.1935

Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

June 30, 2015; 4-7 PM

Ocean Pines Library
1106 Cathell Road

Ocean Pines, Maryland

Contact: Craig Weedon at 410.643.4601

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft FMP either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. The Draft FMP can be obtained at http://www.asmf.org/files/PublicInput/DraftJonahCrabFMP_PublicComment.pdf or via the Commission's website, www.asmf.org, under Public Input. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on July 24, 2015 and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Jonah Crab). For more information, please contact Megan Ware at mware@asmfc.org.

Atlantic Menhaden 2015 and 2016 TAC Set at 187,880 MT: Board Initiates Amendment to Establish Ecological Reference Points

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved a total allowable catch (TAC) for the 2015 and 2016 fishing seasons at 187,880 mt per year, a 10% increase from the 2014 TAC. The increase responds to the positive findings of the 2015 Atlantic menhaden benchmark assessment which indicates the resource is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing relative to the current biological reference points. The TAC will be made

2015 ATLANTIC MENHADEN QUOTAS*		
STATE	QUOTA (MT)	QUOTA (LBS)
ME	73.24	161,466
NH	0.06	123
MA	1,559.74	3,438,630
RI	33.32	73,457
CT	32.45	71,537
NY	103.13	227,365
NJ	20,816.87	45,893,335
DE	24.56	54,153
MD	2,553.08	5,628,568
PRFC	1,154.66	2,545,595
VA	158,700.12	349,873,884
NC	916.55	2,020,645
SC	-	-
GA	-	-
FL	33.43	73,695
TOTAL	186,001.20	410,062,453

*Quotas may be adjusted pending final 2014 landings. Total landings after 1% set-aside for episodic events.

available to the states/jurisdictions based on the state-by-state allocation established by Amendment 2 (see above table). The Board also committed to moving forward with the development of an amendment to establish ecological based reference points that reflect Atlantic menhaden's role as a forage species. The amendment will also consider changes to the current state-by-state allocation scheme.

"The Board struck an important balance by increasing fishing opportunities to both the reduction and bait fisheries and committing to fully evaluating the ecological role of Atlantic menhaden through the amendment process," stated Board Chair Robert Boyles from South Carolina.

The Board has established a working group to aid in the development of issues to be addressed in the Public Information Document (PID) and draft amendment. The Board will meet later this year to review the working group's progress. The PID is the first step in the Commission's amendment process. It will gather information concerning the Atlantic menhaden fishery and resource and provide an opportunity for the public to identify and comment on major issues relative to the management of this species. For more information, please contact Mike Waine, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mwaine@asmfc.org.

The Jonah Crab FMP was initiated in response to concern about increasing targeted fishing pressure for Jonah crab, which has long been considered a bycatch in the lobster fishery. However, growing market demand has doubled landings in the past seven years. Given the absence of state and federal management programs and a stock assessment for Jonah crab, there is concern current harvest may compromise the sustainability of the resource. The Draft Jonah Crab FMP presents management objectives, proposed regulations to the commercial and recreational fisheries, monitoring requirements, and recommendations for federal waters fisheries.



Photo © MA DMF

Species Profile (continued)

Management Plan (FMP) for Tautog in 1996. The FMP's primary objective was to reduce fishing mortality through a 14" minimum size limit and a combination of measures (seasons, bag limits, and quotas) to achieve the fishing mortality target (F_{TARGET}). The 1996 FMP established an F_{TARGET} of 0.15 but set an interim F rate of 0.24 for 1997 and 1998, allowing states to gradually reduce their fisheries. In 1997, the Board

approved Addendum I to extend the deadline to achieve F_{TARGET} until April 1, 2000. Addendum II (November 1999) further extended implementation until April 1, 2002, and Addendum III (February 2002) changed the F_{TARGET} from 0.15 to 0.30 (40%SSB).

In response to the findings of the 2005 assessment, Technical Committee recommendations, and public input, the Board implemented Addenda IV and V, which reduced the F_{TARGET} to 0.20. All states implemented regulations to achieve the $F = 0.20$ by January 2008. Five years later, the 2011 assessment update found that the stock continued to be overfished, spawning stock biomass remained flat, and management measures had been insufficient to rebuild the stock. In response, the Board approved Addendum VI, which reduced the F_{TARGET} to 0.15 and required a 39% reduction in coastwide exploitation from the average of 2008 and 2009 levels.

While the 2015 stock assessment still finds the tautog resource overfished, it paves the way for a new approach to manage the resource. By refining the stock unit from a single coastwide population to three units, the management program will be adapted to reflect the regional differences in the species' biology, as well as the behaviors of recreational and commercial fishermen who utilize the resource. As a first step in the amendment development process, the Commission will develop a Public Information Document (PID) to gather input from stakeholders on the future management of tautog. Specifically, the Commission is interested in the public's preference for an appropriate stock unit structure. The PID, which is currently being drafted, will be considered by the Board later this year. The Commission also continues to be concerned with the commerce of illegally sized tautog and will form a working group consisting of managers and law enforcement officers to explore the breadth of this problem.

Tautog Stock Status and Proposed Biological Reference Points by Stock Regions under 2 Regional Scenarios

Stock Region	Stock Status	SSB Target (in MT)	SSB Threshold (in MT)	F Target	F Threshold
REGION ALTERNATIVE #1					
Massachusetts/Rhode Island/Connecticut	Overfished	3,883	2,912	0.15	0.20
	Experiencing Overfishing				
New York – New Jersey	Overfished	3,570	2,640	0.17	0.26
	Not Experiencing Overfishing				
Delaware/Maryland/Virginia	Overfished	2,090	1,580	0.16	0.24
	Not Experiencing Overfishing				
REGION ALTERNATIVE #2					
Massachusetts – Rhode Island	Overfished	2,633	1975	0.16	0.38
	Experiencing Overfishing				
Connecticut – New Jersey	Overfished	4,695	3521	0.17	0.24
	Experiencing Overfishing				
Delaware/Maryland/Virginia	Overfished	885	664	0.16	0.24
	Not Experiencing Overfishing				

American Lobster Addendum XXIV Aligns State and Federal Trap Transfer Programs for LCMAs 2, 3 and Outer Cape

The American Lobster Management Board has approved Addendum XXIV to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Lobster Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum aligns state and federal measures trap transfer programs for Lobster Conservation Management Areas 2, 3, and Outer Cape Cod regarding the conservation tax on trap allocations when whole fishing businesses are transferred, trap allocation transfer increments, and restrictions on trap allocation transfers among permit holders who are authorized to fish both state and federal waters (dual permit holder) within a single lobster management area.

Addendum XXIV removes the 10% conservation tax on full business transfers. Transfer tax on full business transfers was found to be not necessary to prevent the activation of latent effort and that current regulations provide sufficient controls for latent effort. Addendum XXIV also specifies traps shall be transferred in 10 trap increments in all areas that currently have a trap transferability program, unless specified otherwise.

This change allows for fewer traps to be transferred at one time thus allowing more flexibility for a permit holder in the trap transfer process. This repeals restrictions on vessel size and trap allocation transfers and does not require a permit be retired if the permit holder has less than 50 traps.

Finally, Addendum XXIV allows dual permit holders to transfer allocation with dual permits holders from other states. If a dual permit holder chooses to purchase a federal trap allocation from a dual permit holder from another state, only the federal allocation will transfer. Therefore, the buyer must also purchase state allocation from a permit holder in their own state to align the federal and state allocations. If the state and federal allocations do not align, the most restrictive rule applies. The Addendum's measures are effective immediately. The Addendum will be available on the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, on the American lobster page. For more information, please contact, Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.

Since 2006, with his promotion to Chief of Finfish and Crustaceans Section, Mr. Heins has represented NYS DEC on the MAFMC and a number of its committees including Atlantic mackerel, squid and butterfish; surf clam, ocean quahog and tilefish; and demersal and coastal migratory species. He is the lead for management and compliance information for all Commission-managed species in New York and has been a longstanding member and active participant on the Management & Science Committee. He is also a member and current chair of the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) Board, which oversees three fishery-independent data collection surveys for the coastal waters of Maine to North Carolina. When other funding was unavailable to support the program, Mr. Heins played a pivotal role in securing over \$500,000 to support NEAMAP. Recently, he helped craft the current summer flounder regional management approach and he continues to work to find solutions to current management challenges with striped bass, black sea bass, tautog and Atlantic sturgeon.



Scientific & Technical Contributions

Matthew Cieri, Ph.D., Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR)

Throughout his career, Dr. Matthew Cieri has provided critical assessment expertise to aid in the management of marine resources in Maine, New England and along the Atlantic coast.

Since 2001 as a marine resource scientist, Dr. Cieri has led ME DMR Maine's Atlantic herring monitoring and stock assessment activities, providing technical advice and data analysis for resource assessment and management purposes. The monitoring program, which Dr. Cieri oversees, encompasses the collection and verification of landings data and biological information, and management of the herring ageing program and portside bycatch sampling program. On the regional front, Dr. Cieri has helped formulate herring "days out" options for managers and industry decision making, and worked closely with the New England Fishery Management Council's Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team to develop river herring and shad catch cap options for use in the Council's Framework 3.

He is also a member and important contributor on numerous Commission and Council committees, including technical/stock assessment committees for Atlantic menhaden, spiny dogfish, American eel, and Atlantic herring, which he chaired for many years. He chaired the Commission's Multispecies VPA (MSVPA-X) Subcommittee and the American Eel Stock Assessment Committee. His efforts led to the successful review of the MSVPA-X, as well the timely and successful completion of the first coastwide benchmark stock assessment for American eel. The findings of the American eel benchmark assessment led to the current American eel management program.

Jeffrey Brust, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJ DFW), Marine Fisheries Administration

For the past 16 years, Jeffrey Brust's hard work, dedication and innovative approaches to assessment science has made significant improvements to the Commission's stock assessment process and modelling techniques. For the last decade, Mr. Brust has either chaired or been one of the lead scientists for a number of species assessments, including weakfish, American eel and tautog, developing innovative modelling approaches and successfully navigating them through peer review for their use in management. He is one of the lead scientists for assessing data poor species by employing methods traditionally used on the West Coast and applying those techniques to Commission species, such as American eel. Even when not serving on the stock assessment subcommittee, our recipient has a way making an impact on the success and utility of an assessment. As a member of the Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee, which he also chaired through the development and implementation of Amendment 2, Mr. Brust conducted a review and analysis of the historical menhaden fecundity studies, finding an error in the interpretation of those results which led to new fecundity-at-age/size estimates and a significantly improved stock assessment.



Dedicated to increasing the stock assessment capabilities of state biologists, Mr. Brust has taught a number of beginner and intermediate stock assessment training courses. He also created, through the Assessment Science Committee, a stock assessment mentoring program to help technical committee members get exposed to the assessment process in an effort to develop future lead assessment scientists.

Michael Hendricks (retired), Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Michael Hendricks dedicated his 32-year career to restoring American shad to Pennsylvania's Susquehanna, Delaware, Lehigh and Schuylkill Rivers. As a past member and chair of the Commission's Shad and River Herring Technical Committee, he pioneered the use of oxytetracycline (OTC) for marking American shad. He chaired the OTC Tagging Task Force which coordinates otolith tagging of hatchery produced American shad among the Commission member states. He developed and implemented culture techniques for American and hickory shad, and led research activities at the Van Dyke



continued, see ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE on next page

hatchery, located on the Juniata River, for over 25 years. The Van Dyke hatchery was constructed in 1976 and was the first modern American shad hatchery in the nation. Under our recipient's direction, approximately 237 million American shad fry have been reared and stocked in Pennsylvania's rivers. Mr. Hendricks has also chaired the Technical Committee of the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Cooperative, playing a lead role in drafting the current comprehensive Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Plan. He has served on the Delaware River Fish and Wildlife Cooperative Committee.

Dedicated to improving the passage of anadromous fish both up and down stream, Mr. Hendricks provided consultation on fishway development and implementation on the Schuylkill and Lehigh Rivers and served on various Chesapeake Bay Commission fish passage and fisheries management plan committees. He was an active participant on fish passage technical committees for four Susquehanna River hydroelectric dams and was a key player in the ongoing FERC relicensing of four hydroelectric facilities on the Susquehanna River from 2004 to 2013 to ensure that anadromous fish protection and restoration are in the forefront in the negotiations.



Law Enforcement Contributions *Sergeant Jim Kane of the Connecticut State Environmental Conservation Police*

Sergeant Jim Kane's dedication, knowledge of fishing practices and laws, and ability to work well with other law enforcement agencies throughout the region has earned him the respect and admiration

of his law enforcement colleagues. For a decade, he has worked to ensure fishery management regulations within Rhode Island and neighboring states are being upheld, consistently performing a high level of at-sea and dockside inspections of commercial and recreational fishing vessels in his state, as well as numerous recreational shoreside fisherman inspections. Sergeant Kane has worked with New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts Law Enforcement as well as NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) on a number of fisheries investigations and enforcement initiatives. Several of these multi-state investigations involved commercial and recreational lobster, scallop, striped bass, scup, American eels, winter and summer flounder. A couple of the investigations have been high level, such as one case which involved the illegal possession and sale of striped bass taken from Rhode Island and offloaded in Connecticut. Another case involved the successful prosecution of a Rhode Island commercial lobster fishing investigation, which involved New York and NOAA OLE; several hundred illegal lobster traps were seized as part of the investigation. During the past several years, Sergeant Kane has also been involved with numerous violations and federal referrals to NOAA OLE for

commercial fishing vessels landing over the legal limits or possession of illegal species.

Outreach & Advocacy Contributions

Janice Plante, former writer and associate editor for Commercial Fisheries News (CFN) and Fish Farming News



Through her diligent reporting on fisheries issues, Janice Plante has significantly advanced stakeholder understanding of fisheries management and scientific activities along the Atlantic coast. No writer or journalist has done more to bridge the gap between fisheries managers/scientists and commercial fishermen than Ms. Plante. For the past three decades, Ms. Plante has not only been committed to, but also excelled at, breaking down complex fisheries management and science issues in clear, understandable, and accessible language that both inform and engage New England fishermen in the fisheries management process at all levels of government (state, interstate, regional and federal). Not an easy task given that she has had to digest complicated fishery stock assessments, gear requirements, and regulatory issues, translating the bottom line into terminology easily grasped by commercial fishermen and the public. She has covered a multitude issues ranging from American lobster to Atlantic herring, northern shrimp, spiny dogfish, and groundfish. Even though the news that she reported on has not always been favorable from the perspective of the commercial fishing industry, she has always done it in an unbiased way, presenting both the facts of matter and the full range of viewpoints, allowing her readership to come to their own opinions about the issue at hand. Throughout her career with CFN, Ms. Plante has work closely with Commission staff to ensure that her stories correctly characterize the management issues at hand and the science behind the Commission's management decisions, always with the intent to demystify and make more accessible the Commission's activities to the stakeholders it impacts the greatest. Ms. Plante's body of work is a true testament to her deep and abiding commitment to both the fisheries management process and the industries it seeks to support.



Photo © NYSDEC

Upcoming Stock Assessment Activities

With the successful review and adoption of three benchmark stock assessments early this year, the Commission and its state and federal partners have a busy schedule ahead of them working on another six benchmark assessments. Following is a brief overview of the status of each assessment as well as opportunities for academic researchers and stakeholders to submit data and/or alternative analyses for possible use in the assessments.

Bluefish and Scup

The bluefish and scup benchmark stock assessments will be peer-reviewed **June 2-5, 2015** in Woods Hole, MA through the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop/Stock Assessment Review Committee (SAW/SARC). The assessments' results will be considered by the Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council during their joint meeting in August. Visit <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/> for more information on the peer review.

American Lobster

The benchmark stock assessment for American lobster will be peer-reviewed **June 8-11, 2015** through the Commission's peer review process, the results of which will be considered by the American Lobster Management Board at the Commission's Summer Meeting in August. The peer review will be held at NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 122 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA. For more information on the details of the peer review, please contact Patrick Campfield, Science Director, at pcampfield@asmfc.org.

Black Sea Bass

Work has begun on the development of the next benchmark stock assessment for black sea bass, which will evaluate the health of the black sea bass population (north of Cape Hatteras) and inform the management of the species.

The Commission welcomes the submission of data sets that will improve the accuracy of the assessment. These include, but are not limited to

data on growth, maturation, migration, genetics, tagging, recruitment, natural mortality, and abundance/biomass. An essential need is information on the adult component of the stock, specifically with regards to spatial extent. For data sets to be considered, the data must be sent in the required format, with accompanying methods description, to the Commission by **June 19, 2015**. For those interested in submitting data, including the appropriate format, and/or attending the Black Sea Bass Data Workshop, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org. All available data will be reviewed and vetted by the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Working Group for possible use in the assessment.

The Data Workshop will be conducted **June 29-July 2, 2015** at the Hilton Garden Inn Providence Airport/Warwick, 1 Thurber Street, Warwick, RI. The first Assessment Workshop will be conducted in the early fall, with the possibility of additional assessment workshops to follow. The peer review will be conducted in 2016.

Weakfish

The Weakfish Stock Assessment Workshop will be conducted **July 27 – 30, 2015** at the Commission's offices at 1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200A-N, Arlington, VA. The assessment will evaluate the



Juvenile weakfish © NYSDEC

health of the weakfish stock and inform the management of this species. The Commission's stock assessment process and meetings are open to the public, with the exception of discussions of confidential data, when the public will be asked to leave the room.

The Commission welcomes the submission of alternative analyses and models for consideration in the weakfish benchmark stock assessment. To be considered, alternative analyses and models must be sent in the required format, with accompanying description of methods, to the Commission by **June 29, 2015**. For more information on requirements for submission and presentation of materials at the Assessment Workshop, please contact Dr. Katie Drew (kdrew@asmfc.org), Senior Stock Assessment Scientist. Space will be limited at the Workshop. Please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org if you are interested in attending.

The benchmark stock assessment will be peer reviewed through the Commission's external review process in November 2015; details for the peer review workshop will be announced in September.

Red Drum

The red drum benchmark stock assessment will be peer reviewed **August 25-27, 2015** in Charleston, SC through the SouthEast Data, Assessment and Review process (SEDAR). The assessment results will be considered by the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board at the Commission's Annual Meeting in November. For more information on the peer review, contact Patrick Campfield at pcampfield@asmfc.org or visit <http://sedarweb.org/sedar-44>.



Dominant, male black sea bass as evidenced by the nuchal hump at the top of its head before its dorsal fin. Photo © NEAMAP.

U.S. Senate Hearing: Improvements and Innovations in Fishery Management and Data Collection

On May 20th, the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard held a hearing to discuss the importance of data in managing marine fisheries. ASMFC's Executive Director, Bob Beal, served as an expert witness and discussed innovative solutions being developed by the Commission and the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) to meet the data and management needs of the Atlantic coast states. Mr. Beal also discussed upcoming improvements to the Marine Recreational Information Program Access Point Angler Intercept Survey that the Commission and ACCSP are taking the lead on. Senators in attendance were Chairman Marco Rubio (R-FL), Ranking Member Cory Booker (D-NJ), Ed Markey (D-MA), Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), Bill Nelson (D-FL), and Dan Sullivan (R-AK).

Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization

In other notable news coming out of the May 20th hearing, Senator Rubio announced he will reintroduce the Florida Fisheries Improvement Act. The legislation, which Rubio introduced late in the last Congress, outlines his vision for reauthorizing the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Some of the notable provisions of the legislation are increased flexibility for rebuilding timelines; a mandated schedule for updating federal stock assessments; a periodic allocation review; and a repeal of Gulf of Mexico red snapper catch limits. No timeline has been announced for further action on the Florida Fisheries Improvement Act.

On the other side of the Capitol, the U.S. House of Representatives is moving more quickly to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act. On May 15th, the House Committee on Natural Resources approved H.R. 1335, Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act. Days later, the President issued a Statement of Administration Policy that he would veto H.R. 1335 should it reach his desk. It cites opposition to provisions in H.R. 1335 that alter existing National Environmental Policy Act regulations, relaxed rebuilding timelines, and management of red snapper. The full House is expected to consider and approve H.R. 1335 early in June.

Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations

The House Appropriations Committee approved 2016 appropriations legislation for the Department of Commerce on May 20th. The legislation includes \$32 million for the "Councils & Commissions" line item, part of which provides funding for Atlantic state management programs and the Commission. The figure represents a decrease of approximately \$700,000 from 2015. The legislation also eliminates funding for "Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants," which match state funding for fishery management programs.

The House funding bill also contains two provisions notable to the Commission. This first is a requirement for NOAA Fisheries to consider "completing a survey of the [Mid-Atlantic] Horseshoe crab population and report back to the Committee on what would be required to complete such a survey, including a budget and comprehensive plan." This language was included at the request of Representatives John Carney (D-DE) and Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ). Additionally, the House appropriations bill notes that it "supports the continued development of area-specific reference points and management for the Atlantic striped bass fishery."

The Senate Appropriations Committee is just kicking off the appropriations process, and has begun subcommittee markups of the 13 annual appropriations bills. No timeline has been announced for subcommittee action on appropriations legislation for the Department of Commerce.

For more information, please contact Deke Tompkins at dtompkins@asmfc.org.

ASMFC Comings and Goings

PAUL DIODATI

With his April 24th retirement from the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF), Paul stepped down as the state's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Paul was with MA DMF for a total of 37 years of public service and has been involved in the Commission process for nearly as long, serving on a number of species technical committees, including northern shrimp, Atlantic striped bass, shad & river herring. Paul was an Administrative Commissioner for the past 15 years and served as Commission Chair from 2011-2013.



Under his chairmanship, the Commission selected a new Executive Director and approved a new 5-year Strategic Plan, revising the Commission's Vision to *Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*. He led the Commission through the successful completion of benchmark stock assessments for American eel and Atlantic striped bass, both of which formed the basis for new, recently adopted management programs for both species. Paul strengthened the Commission's relationship with the Pacific and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions, forming an even greater collective of the coastal states to address issues of mutual concern. He reenergized the Commission's legislative agenda and strengthened the Commission's financial footing and long-term federal support through improved relationships with members of Congress and by positioning the Commission as respected source of information to Congress and the Administration. Paul also helped to improve coordination and information sharing between the states and our federal partners, particularly on potential Endangered Species Act listings. We are grateful for Paul's leadership and support these many years and wish him fair winds and following seas.

Conservation Plan Seeks to Aid in Coastwide Restoration Efforts

In May, the Commission and NOAA Fisheries announced the release of the River Herring Conservation Plan. The goals of the plan are to increase public awareness about river herring (alewife, *Alosa pseudoharengus*, and blueback herring, *A. aestivalis*), and to foster cooperative research and conservation efforts to restore river herring along the Atlantic coast. The plan, which is available online and will be refined over time with public input, builds upon past and current river herring conservation projects and coordinates ongoing activities. The Plan was developed with input and information provided by the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG), a group of scientists, industry representatives, conservation groups, tribal leaders, and government officials with expertise related to river herring.

The Plan seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Increase coordination of river herring data collection, research and conservation
- Identify and undertake key research projects related to assessment and conservation
- Identify any further conservation actions to address threats
- Cultivate and engage research groups to address key topics in protecting or restoring herring populations
- Identify funding sources and secure funds for river herring research and conservation
- Improve information to be used in conservation efforts and incorporated into the next assessment
- Increase public outreach about river herring and the need for addressing impacts to these resources

“By focusing on areas where there is the greatest need, the plan is an ideal tool for anyone interested in restoring river herring populations coastwide,” said Kimberly Damon-Randall, Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources, Greater Atlantic Region, NOAA Fisheries. “It provides extensive background on each species’ life history, stock condition, and current management measures, and identifies areas where research and conservation efforts should be concentrated. Importantly, the plan and what it seeks to achieve represent the collective input and efforts of a broad constituency of individuals and agencies dedicated to the restoration of these important species. It is our hope that by following the roadmap we have laid out in the plan, restoration can be achieved.”

On August 12, 2013, NOAA Fisheries announced that listing river herring under the Endangered Species Act as either threatened or endangered was not warranted based on the analysis of available information. As part of that decision, NOAA Fisheries committed to working collaboratively with the Commission, which manages U.S. East Coast river herring stocks, and other partners to implement a coordinated coastwide effort to proactively conserve river herring and help to fill data gaps. The Conservation Plan and the TEWG are products of that commitment and collaborative effort. Since initiation of these efforts, important progress has been made towards each of the plan’s goals, including:

- Increased coordination among partners by establishing the TEWG and developing the Conservation Plan.
- Provided funding to:
 - A collaborative project involving the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, the University of California-Santa Cruz, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, The Nature Conservancy, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and the U.S. Geological Survey’s Massachusetts Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to advance our understanding of alewife and blueback herring bycatch in commercial Atlantic herring and mackerel fisheries and impacts of this fishing activity on river herring populations. The project will also gather information from six nursery systems between Maine and Connecticut to provide insights into what factors influence freshwater productivity of juvenile river herring. These efforts will then be combined to examine the importance of different life stages to river herring populations.
 - The Barnegat Bay Partnership and Rutgers University to conduct surveys and collect data to improve our understanding of historic and current distribution of alewife and blueback herring spawning habitats in Barnegat Bay and the Raritan River in New Jersey.

Migrating river herring. Photo © Greg Wells



continued, see RIVER HERRING on page 15

ACCSP Releases Request for 2016 Proposals

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has issued a request for proposals (RFP) to program partners or committees for FY16 funding. The Funding Decision Document provides general guidance and includes information on proposal preparation and the project approval process. Projects in areas not specifically addressed may still be considered for funding if they help achieve Program goals. These goals, listed by priority, are improvements in:

1. Catch, effort, and landings data (including licensing, permit and vessel registration data)
2. Biological data
3. Releases, discards and protected species data
4. Economic and sociological data

Project activities that will be considered, according to priority, may include:

- Partner implementation of data collection programs
- Continuation of current Program funded partner programs
- Funding for personnel required to implement Program related projects/proposals
- Data management system upgrades or establishment of partner data feeds to the Data Warehouse or Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information Systems.

For more information please visit <http://www.accsp.org/funding.htm>. Proposals should be submitted to Mike Cahall, ACCSP Director, at mike.cahall@accsp.org by June 22, 2015.

Call for Nominations for First ACCSP Annual Award of Excellence

The ACCSP solicits nominations for its first Annual Award of Excellence to provide special recognition to individuals who have contributed to the advancement of the Program and fisheries-dependent data collection in general. The Award will be presented at the Coordinating Council's meeting in St. Augustine, FL in November 2015. Anyone associated with the activities of the ACCSP is encouraged to nominate worthy candidates.

A "worthy candidate" is an individual or individual(s) from a program partner agency that has (have) managed the implementation of a successful Atlantic coast fisheries-dependent data project. A successful project should:

- Focus on data collection modules such as catch and effort, biological, bycatch/species interaction, or socio-economic. Projects may include secondary modules as well.
- Demonstrate an impact with broad applications, including multi-partner or regional impacts (e.g., stock assessments)
- Exhibit improvements in data quality, quantity, and timeliness.
- Illustrate highly significant contributions to fisheries-dependent data collection on the Atlantic coast.

Please note that candidates nominated but not selected will be carried forward and therefore do not need to be re-nominated. Selection will be based on specific accomplishments and other information included in the letter of nomination. Letters of endorsement are not necessary. Selection of the recipient will be by the Awards Committee.

Nominations should be sent to Ann McElhatton at ann.mcelhatton@accsp.org. All nominations must be received no later than **July 17, 2015**. Please indicate on your nomination that it is a confidential document.

Geoff White Named ACCSP Recreational Program Manager

A long time ACCSP staff member, Mr. White has taken on the role of Recreational Program Manager. In his new position, Mr. White will be responsible for all aspects of the recreational data program. This includes maintenance of recreational data standards and recreational related projects as well as providing oversight for the Access Point Angler Intercept



ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and the integration of those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit www.accsp.org.

Survey (APAIS) for Atlantic coast states. APAIS, which is a component of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), is currently administered by NOAA Fisheries through a third party contractor. A major component of Mr. White's role will be the facilitation of the transfer of APAIS from collection by contract services to collection by state partners of marine recreational fishing catch and effort data in their own waters. Over the past decade several states (e.g., Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia) have successfully improved data quality, and stakeholder confidence in that data, through direct state conduct of the APAIS interviews.

It will be rewarding to lead the transition to state conduct of APAIS. I have already witnessed a positive change in a more cooperative approach to recreational data collection.

Mr. White's initial focus is to work with ASMFC and NOAA Fisheries to facilitate completion of the cooperative agreement between them needed to support first transition activities, and then ongoing data collection once the program is up and running. Through the end of 2015, Mr. White will also be charged with putting the required infrastructure in place including personnel and training. This preparation period is critical to the successful transition to state conduct of the field work and submission of high quality data to NOAA.

In 2016, states will begin APAIS data collection on pre-existing schedules. North Carolina collects data January through December, Massachusetts

to Georgia conduct the survey March through December, and Maine and New Hampshire collect data from May through October. Mr. White will ensure that a standardized, efficient process is followed to perform the data collection according to established procedures.

The direct involvement of ACCSP and the Atlantic coast states in the APAIS data collection demonstrates a new level of state-federal partnership and support of MRIP.

- The states currently performing the APAIS field work have noted improved data quality and stakeholder confidence through state conduct of the survey. For instance, Rebeca Heuss of New Hampshire Fish and Game points out, "The biggest benefit to the anglers is the quality of the data, from the effort put in by interviewers to the many reviews the data goes through before and after it leaves our office. Additional benefits include having a familiar point of contact and the inherent trust that comes from an interviewer marked as an employee of the department."
- The collaboration process between ASMFC and ACCSP fosters sharing of information and resources among state and federal partners and supports implementation of ACCSP data collection standards.
- This process will bring the Atlantic coast into alignment with the rest of the nation. NOAA Fisheries will continue to provide survey design and data estimation.

Mr. White notes that "It will be rewarding to lead the transition to state conduct of APAIS. I have already witnessed a positive change in a more cooperative approach to recreational data collection."

RIVER HERRING continued from page 13

- NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center to develop a river herring/Atlantic herring oceanic habitat overlap forecast tool for use by the commercial Atlantic herring fishery to minimize incidental river herring catches.
- The Atlantic Salmon Federation to continue river herring counts at the Milltown Dam fishway in the St. Croix watershed.
- Conducted a coastwide social science survey to document fishermen's observations of river herring in commercial, recreational, and subsistence fisheries.
- Identified the Penobscot River in Maine and the Choptank River in Maryland as Habitat Focus Areas under NOAA's Habitat Blueprint, targeting financial resources and technical assistance to support habitat conservation and restoration efforts in these high-priority watersheds.
- Incorporated information provided by the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Pleasant Point, on the cultural importance of river herring to the Tribe into this conservation plan.

NOAA Fisheries and the Commission are committed to strengthening river herring conservation. An important first step is to improve upon and ensure data collection consistency throughout the Atlantic coast, including the Canadian Provinces. The Commission's Shad and River Herring Technical Committee in conjunction with federal partners will convene later this year to develop recommendations to standardize data collection methods for future survey programs, as well as how best to standardize current survey data collected across the species range. NOAA Fisheries and the Commission will be providing support for this meeting.

The Conservation Plan is available at <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/riverherring/conserv/index.html>

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Shanna Madsen Named Employee of the Quarter

In less than two years, Shanna Madsen has made her mark advancing the Commission's scientific activities on issues ranging from fishery-independent data collection and management, to ecological reference points, to fisheries socioeconomics, and climate change impacts on species distributions. In recognition of her numerous accomplishments, Shanna was named Employee of the Quarter for the second quarter of 2015.

As Fisheries Science Coordinator, Shanna oversees the activities of several science committees, including the Management and Science Committee, Assessment Science Committee, Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS), the Ecological Reference Points Work Group, as well as the Boards and supporting technical committees for the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) and the South Atlantic component of the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP). She brings to her responsibilities the innate ability to motivate committee members and create valuable scientific products, raising the bar for the Commission's scientific advice to fisheries managers. Over the past year, her efforts have resulted in considerable progress towards the

development of ecological reference points for use in Atlantic menhaden management, expanding roles for SEAMAP, a more inclusive and progressive collaboration among NEAMAP surveys, and a more engaged CESS that is focused on addressing the needs of the Commission's species management boards.

Much of Shanna's success is due to her ability to build strong working relationships with committee members and her co-workers. She brings new ideas and fresh perspectives to collaborative efforts as well as constructive approaches to challenging tasks. As a staff member, Shanna plays an invaluable role collaborating with fellow Science and ISFMP staff to address important issues that span fisheries science and management.

Shanna has a Master of Science in Marine Science from the University of South Alabama and a Bachelor of Science in Marine Science from SUNY at Stony Brook. As an Employee of the Quarter, she received a 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, Shanna!



*Employee of the Quarter Shanna Madsen with
ASMFC Executive Director Bob Beal*