

ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Upcoming Meetings

page 2

From the Executive Director's Desk

In Gratitude
page 3

Species Profile

Jonah Crab
page 4

Upcoming Science & Management Activities

Summer Flounder
Bluefish
page 7

Science Highlight

Understanding Shrimp
Bycatch
page 9

On the National Scene

Red Knot ESA Listing
NOAA Fisheries River Herring Harvest Survey
IUU Fishing & Seafood Fraud
GARFO Draft Strategic Plan
page 10

ASMFC Comings & Goings

page 12

Roy Miller Recognized

page 12

ACCSP & MRIP PSE

Workshop
page 13

On the Legislative Front

page 14

Employees of the Quarter Named

page 15

Summer Flounder Biomass Graphs Revisited

page 15

ASMFC Winter Meeting

February 3-5, 2015

The Westin Alexandria
400 Courthouse Square
Alexandria, VA
703.253.8600

Preliminary Agenda

Please note: The agenda is subject to change. Bulleted items represent the anticipated major issues to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. The final agenda will include additional items and may revise the bulleted items provided below. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 8 – 8:45 AM | Winter Flounder Management Board <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set Specifications for the 2015 Fishing Season• Review and Consider Approval of the 2014 FMP Review and State Compliance Report |
| 9 – 10:30 AM | Atlantic Herring Section <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and Consider Approval of Draft Amendment 3 for Public Comment• Review and Consider Approval of the 2014 FMP Review and State Compliance Report |
| 10:45 AM – 12:45 PM | American Lobster Management Board <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and Consider Approval of Draft Addendum XXIV for Public Comment• Review Preliminary Draft of Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan• Review and Consider Approval of Nominations to the Jonah Crab Advisory Panel |
| 1:45 – 5:15 PM | Atlantic Menhaden Management Board <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and Consider Acceptance of 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Panel Reports• Discuss Ecological Reference Points (ERP) Term of Reference• Discuss Management Objectives Moving Forward Based on Results of the Benchmark Assessment/ERP Term of Reference |

continued, see WINTER MEETING AGENDA on page 6

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

Dr. Louis B. Daniel, III (NC)
Chair

Douglas E. Grout (NH)
Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal
Executive Director

Patrick A. Campfield
Science Director

Toni Kerns
ISFMP Director

Laura C. Leach
Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor
Director of Communications
tberger@asmfc.org

703.842.0740 Phone
703.842.0741 Fax
www.asmfc.org
info@asmfc.org

January 8 - 9

SEAMAP & NEAMAP Catch Processing Workshop, SC DNR, 217 Ft. Johnson Road, Charleston, SC.

January 8 - 9

ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee, The Hotel at Arundel Preserve, 7795 Arundel Mills Boulevard, Hanover, MD.

January 13 - 14

Atlantic Coast Fisheries Communications Working Group, ASMFC, 1050 N. Highland, Street, Arlington, VA.

January 13 - 16

2015 Florida Artificial Reef Summit, Clearwater Beach Marriott on Sand Key Clearwater Beach, FL.

January 20 - 23

ASMFC Biological Review Panel and Bycatch Prioritization Committee, Holiday Inn Tampa Westshore - Airport Area, 700 N. Westshore Boulevard, Tampa, FL

January 27 - 29

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Harborside, Portsmouth, NH.

February 3 - 5

ASMFC Winter Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA (see preliminary agenda on page 1).

February 10 - 12

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

February 18 - 20

ASMFC Bluefish Stock Assessment Data Workshop, The Providence Biltmore Hotel 11 Dorrance Street, Providence, RI.

March 3 - 6

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The King and Prince Resort, 201 Arnold Road, St. Simons Island, GA.

April 14 - 16

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Ocean Place Resort, 1 Ocean Boulevard, Long Branch, NJ.

April 21 - 23

New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Hotel, Mystic, CT.

May 4 - 7

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

June 2

Bluefish Stock Assessment Review Workshop, NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 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.



In Gratitude

With the year coming to a close and the holiday season upon us, I find myself reflecting back on 2014 – our accomplishments, challenges and opportunities – all of which remind me of the many things I am grateful for as Executive Director of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. I am grateful for the dedication and strong work ethic of the Commission staff, from the administrative staff who allow us to seamlessly conduct the day-to-day operations of the Commission, to the technical staff who ensure our Commissioners are provided the best scientific and management information to support their decision making, to our program directors whose sound leadership and guidance ensure we are firmly on track to achieve our annual goals and objectives as well as our vision of sustainably managing Atlantic coastal fisheries.

I am indebted to our Commissioners for their talents, wisdom and sustained commitment to the Commission and its programs. Two-thirds of our Commissioners serve without compensation, devoting their personal time and energies to fully engage in the Commission processes. The Commission is a stronger organization because of their investments and their close connections to their stakeholders. Their involvement, along with our Administrative Commissioners, ensures the broadest range of representation at the state level as well as a balanced discourse on the issues at hand. Our Commissioners made some difficult decisions this year, from management actions on American eel and Atlantic striped bass to committing to full disclosure of their conflicts of interest as it pertains to their involvement on species management boards. They did so in the spirit of cooperation, committed to fully understanding the issues before them and the needs of their sister states and their stakeholders. By doing so, they were able to identify areas of compromise that maintained our vision of sustainable management while also addressing the states' economic interests. Next year will offer additional challenges as Commissioners seek management responses to new benchmark assessments for Atlantic menhaden, black drum, tautog, American lobster, scup and bluefish. I am confident in their ability to successfully navigate these challenges and uphold their collective stewardship responsibilities.

I would also like to acknowledge the significant contributions of the staff of our member states and federal partners who serve on our species technical and stock assessment committees. They provide the solid scientific underpinning for our management actions. Without their hard work and dedication, Commissioners would not have robust science

to support sound management decisions. Their efforts are particularly noteworthy because they are provided in addition to their already full plates back at their state and federal agencies.

I am grateful for the continued support we receive from Congress and our federal partners. In 2014, appropriators recognized the importance of the Commission's work and prevented large-scale budget cuts during another tough budget cycle. And though the committees with jurisdiction over marine fisheries policy were unsuccessful in reauthorizing the Magnuson-Stevens Act, we appreciate their efforts to include the Commission's input throughout the entire process and are hopeful progress can be made next year. With the 114th Congress set to convene on January 3rd, the Commission will continue to build on its relationships in the U.S. Congress. That process begins with forging relationships with the 26 newly elected members of Congress from our member states. Not to be forgotten are the multitude of Members who keep in close contact with us and are open to hearing about our needs and ways to improve Atlantic coast fisheries management.

2014 was a year of greater engagement with our federal partners. There were three events in 2014 which clearly demonstrated NOAA Fisheries renewed commitment to state/federal partnerships. In September, state directors from the coastal states met with NOAA leadership to seek improvements to state/federal coordination. The issues discussed included budget and management priorities, Endangered Species Act findings and responses to listings, habitat conservation and management, joint law enforcement activities, and the national recreational fishing policy. Discussion on these issues was further reinforced when the regional leadership of NOAA Fisheries met with our Administrative Directors in October at the Commission's Annual Meeting in Mystic, Connecticut, and when the Executive Directors from the three interstate commissions were invited for the first time to meet with the NOAA Leadership Council this November. All involved parties are committed to continuing dialogue to better integrate state and federal science and management activities. This coordination is essential given funding constraints and our shared stewardship responsibilities.

2014 was a great year because of the outstanding people that make up the Commission family. I extend to you all best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season. I look forward to working with you in 2015.

Managers Initiate Development of Fishery Management Plan on Emerging New England Fishery

Introduction

Jonah crab (*Cancer borealis*), a marine crustacean harvested for its inexpensive meat, has gained popularity on the East Coast in recent years. Historically, Jonah crab was considered a bycatch of the New England lobster fishery. However, over the past 15 years market demand has more than quadrupled, increasing targeted fishing pressure on this species. Due to this increased fishing pressure, the Commission, working closely with the New England Fishery Management Council, has moved forward with the development of a fishery management plan (FMP) to monitor fishing pressure and preserve the sustainability of this species.

Life History

Jonah crab is a red marine crab identified by its rough edged carapace with small white to yellow spots. Its claws have distinctively tinted black-brown tips. It ranges from Newfoundland to Florida in depths up to 2500 feet, and is commonly found on rocky ocean substrates in coastal New England or soft silt floors nearing the continental slope. Snails and blue mussels are primary prey items for the Jonah crab, which uses its strong claws to crush mollusk shells. Jonah crab are preyed on by gulls and lobster, and by many fish species, such as tautog, cunner, and cod.

Average size and age at maturity is unclear, owing to differences in growth and maturation rates throughout its geographic range. It is believed male maturation occurs when the width of the carapace (CW) is around 3.5 – 4 inches across, with males larger than females. The largest recorded crab was a male measuring almost 9 inches CW. Female size at 50% maturity is thought to be roughly 3.5 inches CW, and females reach a maximum size of about 6 inches CW. The smallest known egg-bearing female measured 2.6 inches CW, found on the Scotian Shelf (continental shelf southwest of Nova Scotia). Large females can produce over one million eggs per clutch.

Jonah crab are known to migrate seasonally; they have been observed moving into Narragansett Bay in the spring and retreating into deeper water in the winter. Females presumably use warmer water temperatures in the bay to molt and mate in the summer and early fall. Scientists have had difficulty finding larval and juvenile Jonah crab within its known geographic range. Some scientists suggest that Jonah crab larvae are settling elsewhere and migrating into coastal waters later. This is supported by laboratory findings, which conclude that early stage larvae prefer water at 15°C, while latter stage larvae prefer 20°C water.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Taken in conjunction with lobster, Jonah crab is primarily harvested with trap gear. Historically, Jonah crab was treated as a bycatch fishery, with crabs usually discarded, sold to help cover fuel and operational costs, or used as bait. In recent years, the popularity of Jonah crab as a seafood item has increased the ex-vessel value of this species throughout New England, with 2013 landings valued at nearly \$12.8 million.

The increasing popularity of Jonah crab among consumers has driven commercial landings to skyrocket over the past 10 years. Throughout the 1990s, landings fluctuated between 2 and 3 million pounds per year. Landings jumped to 7 million pounds in 2005 and again to 10 million pounds in 2010. In 2013, landings totaled over 15 million pounds. Harvest of this species occurs primarily in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In 2013, these states landed 66% and 29% of the total harvest, respectively, the majority of which was caught in federal waters (3 – 200 miles from shore). The magnitude of recreational harvest is unknown due to identification issues and confusion with other Cancer crab species.

Species Snapshot

Jonah Crab
Cancer borealis

Common Names:
Jonah crab, Atlantic dungeness

Species Range:
Atlantic coast of North America from Newfoundland to Florida and into the Caribbean Sea, with the highest population concentration found from Georges Bank to North Carolina

Interesting Facts:

- Females can produce over 1 million eggs per clutch.
- Managed in Canada by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- Have complex population structures, with migrating and residential populations

Largest Recorded:
Male at 8.74 inches CW

Life Span: Unknown

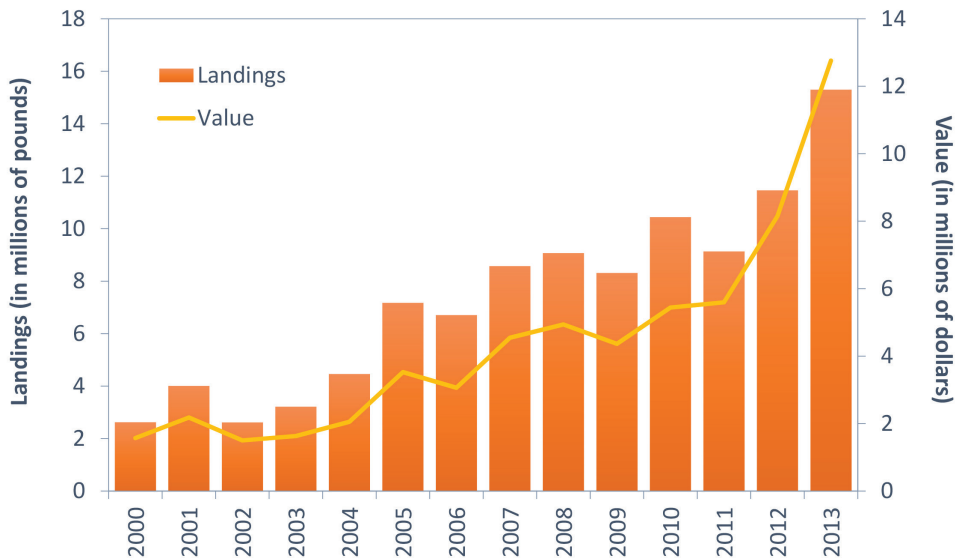
Stock Status: Coastwide status unknown; RI assessment indicates local population not overfished but overfishing occurring



Photo © MA DMF

Jonah Crab Landings & Value along the Atlantic Coast

Source: NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, 2014



Note: Misidentification between Jonah and rock crab is common. Species-specific landings may be inaccurate.

Stock Status

As there is no coastwide stock assessment for Jonah crab, the status of the resource is relatively unknown. The only available assessment was conducted by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management in 2012. The assessment, which addressed local populations of both Jonah and rock crab, found biomass to be above maximum sustainable yield for both species, however, fishing pressure exceeded acceptable limits. The assessment concluded that while the stocks were not overfished, they were experiencing overfishing.

Other sources of data come from inshore state water trawl surveys conducted by Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire, which infrequently encounter Jonah crab and, therefore, provide only minimal data. NOAA Fisheries conducts a trawl survey in federal waters which collects data on Jonah crab abundance and distribution, but this data has not yet been fully analyzed. Stock assessment strategies will be developed in conjunction with the anticipated interstate FMP, with the goal of better understanding this species' stock condition.

Atlantic Coastal Management

Jonah crab management varies from state to state, due to the lack of an existing coastwide FMP. Commercial regulations consist of minimum size limits, permit requirements, closed seasons, and harvest limits. While commercial harvest reporting is required by all states, misidentification of Jonah crab with the related species of rock crab is a prevailing complication that skews catch estimates. In federal waters, commercial harvest of Jonah crab is unregulated.

Recreational harvest is legal in all states, from Maine through Florida. Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Maryland are the only states with recreational possession limits. Limits on recreational traps and licensing requirements also vary by state.

An earnest push toward Jonah crab management began when Delhaize America, a grocery chain, realized its Jonah crab products did not meet its standards for sustainability. Delhaize initiated a Jonah Crab Fishery Improvement Project (FIP), a group of stakeholders including retailers, dealers, processors, fishermen, and academic, state, and federal scientists, who began to work together to promote sustainable use of Jonah crab.

The FIP presented the Jonah crab fishery to state and federal agencies as an issue of urgent importance. They explained that this emerging, unmanaged fishery has grown significantly in the past few years and has the potential to expand further. Fishery managers agreed the recent expansion of the fishery and resulting increased targeted fishing pressure may be compromising the sustainability of the resource. This concern prompted the Commission to initiate the development of a Jonah Crab FMP through its American Lobster Management Board. The Draft FMP will consider management objectives, proposed regulations to the commercial and recreational fishery, monitoring requirements, and recommendations for federal waters fisheries.

Due to the high percentage of Jonah crab caught in federal waters, the Commission will be working closely with the New England Fishery Management Council to develop a plan that will manage both state and federal harvest. The Board will review the first draft of the FMP at the Commission's Winter Meeting in February 2015. For more information, please contact Marin Hawk, FMP Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or mhawk@asmfc.org.

ASMFC Seeks Advisors for Jonah Crab Advisory Panel

As part of the development of the FMP, the Commission will be forming a Jonah Crab Advisory Panel. Commission advisory panels are typically comprised of commercial and recreational fishermen, processors/dealers, and other stakeholders who are concerned about fisheries conservation and management and have expertise in the respective fishery. The Jonah Crab Advisory Panel will provide the Board with advice concerning fishery practices and management activities. Those interested in becoming a member should contact their state Commissioners.

Winter Meeting Agenda (continued)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

- 8 – 9 AM **Executive Committee**
(A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Executive Committee members only)
- Discuss Staff Tenure and Workload
 - Review Suggested Changes to Commission Guidance Documents
 - Update on 2015 Annual Meeting
- 9:15 – 11:15 AM **Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board**
- American Eel Fish Passage Update
 - Review and Discuss 2014 Commissioner Survey Results
 - Discuss Updating the Roles and Responsibilities of the Committee on Economics and Social Science
 - Review and Consider Revisions to the ASMFC Committee Guidance and Assessment Process Document
- 11:30 AM – 12:15 PM **Weakfish Management Board**
- Review and Consider Approval of the Terms of Reference for the 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment
 - Review Abbreviated Stock Status Update
- 12:30 – 3:30 PM **Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) Board**
- Review NEAMAP Survey Reports
 - Review Reports and Recommendations from NEAMAP Committees
 - Review and Approve NEAMAP 2015 Operations Plan
 - Discuss Creation of NEAMAP Industry Advisory Panel
 - Elect Vice-Chair
- 1:15 – 3:15 PM **South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board**
- Review and Consider Acceptance of 2014 Black Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Panel Reports
 - Discuss Need for Management Response to the Benchmark Assessment
 - Review and Consider Approval of 2014 FMP Reviews and State Compliance Reports for Spanish Mackerel, Spot, and Spotted Seatrout
- 3:30 – 6:30 PM **Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board**
- Review and Consider Final Approval of Addendum XXVI
 - Set 2015 Black Sea Bass & Scup Recreational Management Measures

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5

- 8 AM – Noon **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**
- Review and Consider Approval of Addendum IV Conservation Equivalency Proposals and Implementation Plans
- 12:30 – 2:30 PM **Tautog Management Board**
- Review and Consider Acceptance of 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Panel Reports
 - Discuss Need for Management Response to Benchmark Assessment

continued, see WINTER MEETING AGENDA on page 7

Public Comment Guidelines

With the intent of developing policies in the Commission's procedures for public participation that result in a fair opportunity for public input, the ISFMP Policy Board has approved the following guidelines for use at management board meetings:

For issues that are not on the agenda, management boards will continue to provide opportunity to the public to bring matters of concern to the board's attention at the start of each board meeting. Board chairs will use a speaker sign-up list in deciding how to allocate the available time on the agenda (typically 10 minutes) to the number of people who want to speak.

For topics that are on the agenda, but have not gone out for public comment, board chairs will provide limited opportunity for comment, taking into account the time allotted on the agenda for the topic. Chairs will have flexibility in deciding how to allocate comment opportunities; this could include hearing one comment in favor and one in opposition until the chair is satisfied further comment will not provide additional insight to the board.

For agenda action items that have already gone out for public comment, it is the Policy Board's intent to end the occasional practice of allowing extensive and lengthy public comments. Currently, board chairs have the discretion to decide what public comment to allow in these circumstances.

In addition, the following timeline has been established for the submission of written comment for issues for which the Commission has NOT established a specific public comment period (i.e., in response to proposed management action).

1. Comments received 3 weeks prior to the start of a meeting week will be included with the main meeting materials.
2. Comments received by 5:00 PM on the Tuesday immediately preceding the scheduled ASMFC Meeting (in this case, the Tuesday deadline will be **January 27, 2015**) will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/ Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.
3. Following the Tuesday, January 27, 2015 5:00 PM deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for the management board consideration at the meeting (a minimum of 50 copies).

The submitted comments must clearly indicate the commenter's expectation from the ASMFC staff regarding distribution. As with other public comment, it will be accepted via mail, fax, and email.

Draft Addendum XXVI Released for Public Comment: Addendum Proposes Management Options for the 2015 Summer Flounder Recreational Fishery

The Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Draft Addendum XXVI for public comment at the Joint Commission/Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting in Baltimore, Maryland earlier this month. Draft Addendum XXVI proposes alternate management approaches for the 2015 summer flounder recreational fishery, including adaptive regional management options that are intended to provide more equity in recreational harvest opportunities along the coast. The states of Massachusetts through Virginia will be conducting public hearings on the Draft Addendum throughout January. The details of those hearings follow:

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

January 8, 2015 at 6 PM
Bourne Fire Station #3, Meeting Room
53 Meetinghouse Lane
Sagamore Beach, MA
Contact: David Pierce at 617.626.1532

Rhode Island Division of Fish & Wildlife

January 7, 2015 at 6 PM
University of Rhode Island,
Corliss Auditorium
South Ferry Road
Narragansett, RI
Contact: Jason McNamee at 401.423.1943

continued, see SUMMER FLOUNDER on page 8

WINTER MEETING AGENDA continued from page 6

- 12:30 – 2:30 PM **Tautog Management Board (continued)**
- Review and Consider Approval of the 2014 FMP Review and State Compliance Report
- 12:45 – 2:15 PM **Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Executive Committee**
- Status Updates on the Program and MRIP-APAIS Transition
 - Review Action Items from Previous Meeting
- 2:45 – 4 PM **Shad & River Herring Management Board**
- Review and Consider Approval of 2014 FMP Reviews and State Compliance Reports for Shad & River Herring
 - Review New Hampshire Proposal for the Removal of Taylor River Monitoring
 - Update on Shad and River Herring Related Activities of the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils
- 4:15 – 5:45 PM **ACCSP Coordinating Council**
- ACCSP Status Reports on the Program, MRIP-APAIS Transition, Committee Activities, and Independent Program Review
 - Discussion on Providing Operations Committee with More Authority to Recommend Different Funding Split than the 75/25 When Necessary



Preparations Begin for 2015 Bluefish Benchmark Stock Assessment

The Commission has scheduled the Data Workshop for the upcoming bluefish benchmark stock assessment. The assessment will evaluate the health of the bluefish population and inform the management of the species. The Commission's stock assessment process and meetings are open to the public (with the exception of discussion of confidential data).

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, stock enhancement, tagging, recruitment, natural mortality, and abundance/biomass. An essential need is information on the adult component of the stock as well as spawning stock condition. For data sets to be considered, the data must be sent in the required format, with accompanying methods description, to the Commission by **January 16, 2015**.

For those interested in submitting data, including the appropriate format, and/or attending the Bluefish Data Workshop, please contact Katie Drew, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, at kdrew@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740. The deadline for data submission is January 16, 2015. All available data will be reviewed and vetted by the Commission's Bluefish Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Working Group for possible use in the assessment.

The Data Workshop will be conducted February 18-20, 2015 in Providence, Rhode Island. A subsequent press release will announce the specific location of the Data Workshop. The Assessment Workshop will be conducted in spring 2015, with the peer review being conducted through NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center Stock Assessment Review Committee from June 2-5, 2015. For more information on the bluefish stock assessment process, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Upcoming Science & Management Activities (cont'd)

SUMMER FLOUNDER
continued from page 7

Connecticut Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection

January 6, 2015 at 7 PM
Marine Headquarters
Boating Education
Center, Building 3
333 Ferry Road
Old Lyme, CT
Contact: David Simpson
at 860.434.6043

New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation

January 22, 2015 at 6:30 PM
Bureau of Marine Resources
205 North Belle Mead Road, Suite 1
East Setauket, NY
Contact: John Maniscalco at 631.444.0437

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

January 12, 2015 at 7 PM
Toms River Township Administrative
Building, L.M. Hirshblond Room
33 Washington Street
Toms River, New Jersey
Contact: Tom Baum at 609.748.2020

Delaware Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

January 15, 2015 at 6 PM
DNREC Auditorium
89 Kings Highway
Dover, DE
Contact: Stewart Michels at 302.739.9914

Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

January 13, 2015 at 5:30 PM
Ocean Pines Library
11107 Cathell Road
Berlin, MD
Contact: Steve Doctor at 410.213.1531

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

January 14, 2015 at 6 PM
2600 Washington Avenue
4th Floor Conference Room
Newport News, VA
Contact: Rob O'Reilly at 757.247.2247



Photo © Open Boat Laura Lee

Draft Addendum XXVI was initiated to consider the continuation of the adaptive regional management approach for the recreational summer flounder as established in Addendum XXV, which allowed for the use of regional management for the 2014 fishing season only. Regional management measures required states within a region to utilize the same size limit, bag limit, and season length. Addendum XXV was developed to address a growing concern that summer flounder management measures prior to 2014 were not providing recreational fishermen along the coast with equitable harvest opportunities to the resource. Its adaptive regional management approach was designed to allow the management program to adjust to past, current, and future changes to the resource and the fishery.

Under the provisions of Addendum XXV, the Board also approved the continuation of ad-hoc regional management approaches for the 2015 recreational black sea bass fishery. Addendum XXV allowed for the Board to extend the ad-hoc regional management measures by northern (Massachusetts-New Jersey) and southern regions (Delaware-North Carolina (north of Hatteras)) utilized in 2014 for up to one year. This approach has been used since 2011 and offers some advantages over coastwide regulations, which can disproportionately impact states within the management unit. The Technical Committee will work with the states to develop regional management measures

for Board consideration and approval at the Commission's Winter Meeting in early February. Under the stipulation that the northern region states implement management measures to account for overages in previous years and constrain harvest to 2015 recreational harvest limit, the Board and Council approved federal waters management measures for recreational black sea bass that include a 12.5-inch TL minimum size, a 15 fish possession limit, and an open season of May 15-September 21 and October 22-December 31.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on Draft Addendum XXVI either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. The Draft Addendum is available at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/SFlounderDraftAddendumXXVI_PublicComment_Dec2014.pdf and can also be accessed on the Commission website (www.asmfc.org) under Public Input. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on **January 23, 2015** and should be forwarded to Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, Virginia 22201; 703.842.0741 (fax) or at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Addendum XXVI). For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Want to Go Paperless?

Please help us reduce printing and mailing costs, and minimize paper waste by receiving our information via email. Contact us at info@asmfc.org (Subject line: Subscribe to Email) to sign up to receive ASMFC Fisheries Focus, meeting announcements, and press releases electronically.

Moving Forward on Understanding Shrimp Trawl Bycatch

The South Atlantic shrimp fishery is a valuable and economically important fishery that operates in state and federal waters from North Carolina to the Florida Keys. Target species include Penaeid shrimp (brown, white, and pink) and rock shrimp.

However, observer data indicate that on average, only 20-25% of the biomass caught by a South Atlantic shrimp trawl consists of Penaeid shrimp. The rest of it is made up of fish (mostly juveniles) and other invertebrates that are not targeted. This bycatch is generally discarded at sea. Rock shrimp trawls are somewhat cleaner, but even then, the majority of the catch (58%) is made up of species other than shrimp. Regulations require the use of turtle excluder devices and bycatch reduction devices, but these have not completely eliminated the problem.

Many of the species most commonly encountered in shrimp trawl bycatch are commercially and recreationally important: Atlantic croaker, Spanish mackerel, red snapper, weakfish, and spot, among others. Because bycatch of these species isn't reported, it has been difficult to estimate how much bycatch happens every year, and what the impact of that bycatch is on the health of these populations. Several recent stock assessments of these species have emphasized the importance of developing good estimates of removals due to bycatch. This uncertainty can hinder management; for example, estimates of Atlantic croaker biomass from the 2010 assessment were rejected due to uncertainty in levels of shrimp trawl bycatch, so overfished status could not be determined.

The SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review process (SEDAR) convened a workshop in July to help address this issue. The workshop had two goals: to assemble and evaluate the available datasets relating to shrimp trawl bycatch and shrimp life history, and to



Photo © Kim Iverson, SAFMC

develop a set of best practices for the estimation of shrimp trawl bycatch and the assessment of shrimp stocks.

Prior to the workshop, SEDAR reached out to the Commission, state and federal agencies, as well as academic and non-governmental organizations to put together an exhaustive list of available datasets on shrimp biology and life history, shrimp trawl bycatch rates, and environmental conditions. At the workshop, fisheries biologists, stock assessment scientists, and data program managers evaluated the available datasets and discussed how those data could best be used to estimate shrimp trawl bycatch and to assess shrimp populations.

The core dataset for estimating shrimp trawl bycatch is NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center's (SEFSC) Observer Program, which operates in the Gulf and South Atlantic. The Observer Program has operated since the early 1990s and has been mandatory since 2008. Although this program only covers ~1% of shrimp trawl trips, it represents the longest time series and the most areas

covered out of the datasets examined. Workshop participants recommended that the SEFSC database be supplemented with state-level observer studies, fishery-independent data, and effort data to develop estimates of shrimp trawl bycatch.

Workshop participants acknowledged the limitations of the available data, and made recommendations for additional data collection. There will always be uncertainty in these estimates, particularly for the historical periods, but bringing these datasets together and developing recommendations for best practices – both for working with the existing data and how to improve those datasets in the future – will ensure assessments at the state, federal, and Commission levels are working with the best available data and methods to deal with this difficult issue.

The workshop report (SEDAR PW 6: South Atlantic Shrimp Data Evaluation) and the data inventories (SEDAR PW6: Environmental Inventory and SEDAR PW6: Shrimp Inventory) are available for download at the SEDAR website (http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/Sedar_Workshops).

US Fish & Wildlife Service Protects Red Knot as Threatened Under the Endangered Species Act

On December 9th, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced federal protection for the rufa subspecies of the red knot, a robin-sized shorebird, designating it as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. A “threatened” designation means a species is at risk of becoming endangered throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

“The red knot is a remarkable and resilient bird known to migrate thousands of miles a year from the Canadian Arctic to the southern tip of South America,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “Unfortunately, this hearty shorebird is no match for the widespread effects of emerging challenges like climate change and coastal development, coupled with the historic impacts of horseshoe crab overharvesting, which have sharply reduced its population in recent decades.”



Photo © Gregory Breese, USFWS

Since the 1980s, the knot’s population has fallen by about 75 percent in some key areas, largely due to declines in one of its primary food resources – horseshoe crab eggs in Delaware Bay, an important migratory stopover site. Although this threat is now being addressed by extensive state and federal management actions, other threats, including sea-level rise, some shoreline projects and coastal development, continue to shrink the shorebird’s wintering and migratory habitat.

Changing climate conditions are also altering the bird’s breeding habitat in the Arctic and affecting its food supply across its range, in particular through climate-driven mismatches in migration timing that affect the peak periods of food availability. The bird must arrive at Delaware Bay at exactly the time when horseshoe crabs are laying their eggs.

“Although historic threats in the Delaware Bay area have been ameliorated thanks to the actions of federal and state partners, our changing climate is posing new and complex challenges to the red knot’s habitat and food supply,” Ashe said. “It has never been more critical that we take positive action to save this bird.”

One of the longest distance migrants in the animal kingdom, some rufa red knots fly more than 18,000 miles each year between breeding grounds in the Canadian Arctic and wintering grounds along the Gulf Coast, southeast United States and South America. One bird, banded by biologists in 1995 in Argentina, has been nicknamed Moonbird because he has flown the equivalent of a trip to the moon and at least halfway back in his 21 or more years of migrations.

Along its epic migration, the red knot, which can be identified by its rufous breast, belly and flanks during breeding season, can be found across 27 countries and 40 U.S.

states in flocks ranging from a few individuals to several thousand. Although rufa red knots mainly occur along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, small groups regularly use some interior areas of the United States during migration. The largest concentration of rufa red knots is found in May in Delaware Bay, where the birds stop to gorge themselves on the eggs of spawning horseshoe crabs; a spectacle drawing thousands of birdwatchers to the area. In just a few days, the birds nearly double their weight to prepare for the

final leg of their long journey to the Arctic. International, state and local governments, the conservation community, beachgoers and land managers are helping ensure red knots have safe areas to winter, rest and feed during their long migrations. These partners help knots in a variety of ways, including managing the harvest of horseshoe crabs (which are caught for use as bait in conch and eel pots), managing disturbance in key habitats, improving management of hunting outside the United States, and collecting data to better understand these birds.

In making its decision, the Service analyzed the best available data in more than 1,700 scientific documents, and considered issues raised in more than 17,400 comments provided during 130 days of public comment periods and three public hearings. Protections under the ESA will take effect 30 days after publication in the Federal Register.

As required by the ESA, the Service is also reviewing the U.S. range of the rufa red knot to identify areas that are essential for its conservation, known as critical habitat. The Service expects to propose critical habitat for the rufa red knot for public review and comment in 2015 after completing the required review of economic considerations.

Visit <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/red-knot/> to read the final rule and response to comments; view and download video, photos and maps; and explore more resources, such as an interactive timeline and infographic. The rule is available at www.regulations.gov under docket number FWS-R5-ES-2013-0097.

NOAA Fisheries Seeks Participation in River Herring Harvest Survey

Through the end of January, NOAA Fisheries is conducting a voluntary survey of individuals who have harvested river herring (alewives and blueback herring) commercially, recreationally, or for personal use at any point in time over

continued on next page

the past 20 years. The goal of this survey is to gather first-hand observations to inform our understanding of alewife and blueback population trends and help our efforts to restore these fish populations along the U.S. east coast. Commercial, recreational, and personal use harvesters have detailed knowledge of the fish in their local areas, such as changes in fish run timing, distribution, and individual fish size and species composition. NOAA wants to document some of this local knowledge in order to better understand river herring and their habitat.

NOAA intends to use the information obtained from this survey to cross-reference scientifically collected data to better understand trends and changes in river herring populations coast-wide. This information can help NOAA identify opportunities for additional research and restoration.

Learn more: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/stories/2014/surveykickoffonRiverHerringinaugust.html>

To learn more about the survey or to participate, please contact Dan Kircheis (dan.kircheis@noaa.gov) or Julia Beaty (julia.beaty@maine.edu, 207-866-7262).



Migrating river herring. Photo © Greg Wells, Herring Alliance

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and Seafood Fraud

On December 17th, the Presidential Task Force on Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Seafood Fraud released recommendations to crack down on global pirate fishing and seafood fraud.

IUU fishing, known colloquially as pirate fishing along with seafood fraud through intentional seafood mislabeling, exerts a high level of unregulated pressure on global fish stocks. Worldwide losses from pirate fishing are estimated to range from \$10 billion to \$23 billion annually. Although the U.S. is a world-leader in fisheries management and conservation, an estimated 90% of American seafood is imported and operates outside domestic fisheries laws. The task force's recommendations send a message that the U.S. takes pirate fishing and seafood fraud seriously and will be an active participant in reducing the harmful economic and ecological impacts of the practices.

The task force was established by President Obama in June 2014 at a global oceans conference hosted by Secretary of State John Kerry. At the time, President Obama instructed the Departments of State and Commerce to develop joint recommendations to combat seafood fraud and pirate fishing, and report out recommendations in six months. The task force released 15 specific recommendations, a majority of which can be implemented by President Obama and his administration. A few of the recommendations would need congressional approval, such as one that recommends implementing the Port State Measures Agreement, for example. The 15 recommendations fall into four general themes: international pirate fishing; enforcement; domestic partnerships with state/local governments, the private

sector, and nongovernmental organizations; and seafood traceability.

A 30-day comment period on the recommendations began on December 18, and the task force is aiming to release an action plan early in 2015. The report and instructions for submitting comments can be viewed at <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/12/18/2014-29628/recommendations-of-the-presidential-task-force-on-combating-illegal-unreported-and-unregulated>.

GARFO Seeks Comments on Draft Strategic Plan

NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), which is responsible for the stewardship of the federal living marine resources from Maine to North Carolina, including the Great Lakes, has released its Draft Strategic Plan for Public Comment.

The plan is part of a national effort by NOAA Fisheries. All regional offices and science centers are drafting strategic plans that contain region-specific goals and priorities. However, it is important that these plans align with the agency's overall mission and goals, and are developed in an open and transparent manner.

GARFO's draft plan identifies objectives associated with seven primary strategic goals: sustainable fisheries; protected resources; habitat conservation; community resiliency; aquaculture; organizational excellence; and customer service. GARFO welcomes feedback on its draft plan to ensure that its strategic objectives are addressing stakeholder needs while achieving its federal mandates.

The draft plan is available at <http://tinyurl.com/ppmmo5b>. Comments can be submitted through **January 15th** to nmfs.gar.strategicplan@noaa.gov.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

December was a bittersweet month for Commission staff as we said good-bye to two longtime employees -- Genny Nesslage and Kate Taylor. Both employees brought to their jobs a deep commitment to the Commission's mission, vision and activities, and an outstanding work ethic that was reflected in the successful completion of numerous benchmark stock assessments, amendments, and addenda. Their accomplishments were coupled with the energetic and positive attitudes they brought to the workplace and all of their committee activities. While they both will be sorely missed, we are excited about the new opportunities that await them and wish them the very best in all of their future endeavors. Below is a recap of their major accomplishments while at the Commission.



Kate Taylor

In the 6 years Kate was at the Commission, first as an FMP Coordinator and later as Senior FMP Coordinator, she made substantial contributions to the Commission's fisheries management program. Over that time, she coordinated management programs for six species, including American eel, American lobster, Atlantic sturgeon, Atlantic striped bass, and shad & river herring. She oversaw the completion of benchmark assessments for 3 of the Commission's most complex species due to their extensive geographic range and multiple threats to the populations -- American shad, river herring, and American eel. She led the development of major plan amendments for shad and river herring, both of which established commercial and recreational fishing moratoria, with exceptions for sustainable systems. She also worked closely with the American Eel Plan Development Team and Management Board to respond to the findings of the American eel benchmark, seeking to reduce overall mortality across all eel life stages. At the end of December, Kate will be the NMFS Program Coordinator within the Office of the Undersecretary.

Genny Nesslage

As the Commission's Senior Stock Assessment Scientist for the past 8 years, Genny played a key role in advancing the quality



and understanding of fisheries science and stock assessments through her involvement in various stock assessments, development of the American lobster database, and stock assessment training. She was a lead assessment scientist for 2 American lobster and 2 Atlantic menhaden benchmark stock assessments, as well as the first coastwide benchmark stock assessment for American eel. She provided critical support in the development of the American lobster database, a fundamental component of the lobster assessment. She also worked closely with the Commission's Multispecies Technical Committee in developing and updating its multispecies assessment models that evaluate the relationships of several key predator/prey species, such as striped bass, weakfish, bluefish and Atlantic menhaden. Results from the multispecies models were used in both the 2010 and 2014 Atlantic menhaden assessments, and laid the groundwork for the development of ecological reference points. Genny also led the initial data gathering and analysis efforts to determine the feasibility of a black drum stock assessment, and then advised the black drum assessment team through its completion of the first ever coastwide assessment in 2014.

Genny was also a lead contributor to the evolution of the Commission's stock assessment training program, which not only enhanced our Commissioners' understanding of fisheries stock assessment concepts and models but also greatly expanded the stock assessment expertise of state technical committee members. In January, Genny will be joining the University of Maryland's Chesapeake Biological Laboratory as a Visiting Research Assistant Professor.



Roy W. Miller 2014 Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame Inductee

Earlier this year, Roy W. Miller, who served 34 years as fishery biologist, supervisor, manager, and administrator for the Division of Fish and Wildlife within Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), was inducted into the Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame for his many contributions to maintaining healthy fisheries in Delaware's estuaries. Atlantic striped bass, American shad, river herring, weakfish and horseshoe crab are among the fish species that have benefited from Roy's service. As a charter member of the Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee beginning in 1978 and later its Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board, Roy played a significant role in restoring this keystone species in the Delaware River and Bay. His leadership on the Horseshoe Crab Board came at a critical time as decisions were made to reduce fishing pressure on horseshoe crab.

Roy's achievements also include coordinating fish kill investigations for the state, helping to design an accessible fishing pier for disabled anglers at the Ted Harvey Wildlife Area, supervising the completion of Lewes' public boat ramp, negotiating settlement agreements with a utility that brought \$15.5 million to DNREC for public works, and helping to design the DuPont Nature Center at Mispillion Harbor.

Since retirement, Roy has worked as policy coordinator for the Delaware Center for Inland Bays, drafted the 2013 shellfish aquaculture legislation, and serves as Delaware's Governor Appointee to the Commission. Congratulations, Roy!



The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) with the support of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), a recreational fisheries data collection and reporting effort through NOAA Fisheries, convened a workshop on recreational percent standard error (PSE) on September 23 & 24, 2014. The focus was to evaluate levels of recreational data precision that would best support stock assessment results and fisheries management actions. More than 50 individuals from state and federal fisheries agencies participated either in-person or via webinar. Presentations reviewed a simulation model developed for this project, and supporting information on the current use of precision measures by the Councils, Commissions, and states. Dr. John Weidenmann of Rutgers University developed a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) model using simulated data to investigate the effect of varying input PSE levels (0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.5, 0.6, 0.8, 1.0) on three generalized species having slow, medium, and fast growth over various exploitation histories.

The surprising feedback from participants was that stock assessments appear to be capable of utilizing data with a higher PSE than previously considered. The group supported developing broad guidance on using data within ranges of PSE for stock assessments. There was also general agreement that management actions should be aligned with the precision of the data and the ability to measure the outcome of fishery management actions. Several avenues were identified to further clarify the issues and recommendations. These ranged from additional modeling efforts, vetting the workshop proceedings and guidance to larger audiences, and addressing the guidance to management in a separate venue. Over the next several months, ACCSP will be working with the workshop steering committee and MRIP to complete the workshop proceedings and determine the appropriate process to expand on the feedback received at the PSE workshop.

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.

ACCSP Seeks Nominations for Advisory Committee

The ACCSP is seeking nominations to its Advisory Committee. These suggestions are formally appointed by the Coordinating Council upon a recommendation from the Operations Committee state representative. The Coordinating Council members from each partner state designate one commercial and one recreational and/or for-hire representative to the ACCSP Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is expected to provide perspectives from a variety of fishing experiences. Members evaluate technical recommendations and advise on developments and implementation of the Program. To learn more on the advisory process, please review the Guidelines for ACCSP Advisors found here:

http://www.accsp.org/documents/ACCSPAdvisorGuidelines_May2013.pdf.

If you are interested in becoming an advisor, please send a letter of interest to the ACCSP Operations Committee member from your state. A list of Operations Committee members can be found at <http://www.accsp.org/opercommittee>.

Rick Bellavance, Chair of the ACCSP Advisory Committee, has this to say about his work on the committee, "Working in conjunction with dedicated industry representatives from other states along the East Coast in an effort to improve fisheries-dependent data collection is both fun and rewarding. Improved stock assessments is on the minds of both fishermen and fisheries managers and I have always felt, if given the choice, it is better to participate in the process of making things work better. The Advisory Committee to the ACCSP is one way that participation is possible and I recommend the Committee to anyone interested in learning more about data collection."

On the Legislative Front: Fiscal Year 2015 Funding

On December 16th, the President signed legislation into law funding most of the federal government through October 30, 2015. Overall funding for Operations, Research, and Facilities for NOAA Fisheries is up \$9.5 million to \$822.1 million from Fiscal Year 2014. Within that account, funding for Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions was increased by \$738 thousand to \$32,738 million, and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants line was level funded at \$2.5 million. Report language accompanying the appropriations bill contains a number of policy riders addressing a multitude of marine fisheries issues including observer coverage; Atlantic salmon habitat; Saltonstall-Kennedy Act funds; augmenting MRIP data with data collected from electronic reporting programs; the use of charter vessels for research and surveys; third party sustainability certifications; marine debris; and the Hollings Marine Laboratory in South Carolina and NOAA's Beaufort Lab in North Carolina.

Fisheries Science and Management Appropriations (in thousands \$)

	2015 House	2015 Senate	2015 Enacted	2014 Enacted	% Change
Protected Species Research and Management					
Protected Species Research and Management Programs Base	39,000	39,200	39,000	39,000	0.00%
Species Recovery Grants	7,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	0.00%
Marine Mammals	47,000	49,000	49,000	49,000	0.00%
Marine Turtles	11,000	12,200	12,200	12,200	0.00%
Other Protected Species (marine fish, plants and invertebrates)	10,000	10,200	8,000	7,000	14.29%
Fisheries Research and Management					
Fisheries Research and Management Programs Base	176,725	177,000	175,500	175,000	0.29%
National Catch Share Program	20,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	0.00%
Expand Annual Stock Assessments - Improve Data Collection	72,000	72,000	70,000	69,000	1.45%
Economics and Social Sciences Research	7,300	7,417	7,300	7,300	0.00%
Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions	32,000	32,738	32,738	32,000	2.31%
Fisheries Statistics	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000	0.00%
Fish Information Networks	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000	0.00%
Survey and Monitoring Projects	24,000	24,200	24,000	24,000	0.00%
Fisheries Oceanography	2,100	2,179	2,100	2,160	-2.78%
Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants	2,500	2,502	2,500	2,500	0.00%
National Standard 8 (Consider fishing communities to provide for sustained participation and minimize adverse economic impacts)	0	1,001	1,000	1,000	0.00%
Reducing Bycatch	3,500	3,508	3,500	3,500	0.00%
Enforcement and Observers/Training					
Enforcement	65,000	65,350	65,000	65,000	0.00%
Observers/Training	43,000	43,100	43,000	43,000	0.00%
Habitat Conservation and Restoration					
Total, Habitat Conservation and Restoration	25,000	52,190	47,000	41,700	12.71%
Other Activities Supporting Fisheries					
Aquaculture	5,600	6,000	5,700	5,600	1.79%
Climate Regimes and Ecosystem Productivity	2,000	2,500	2,000	2,000	0.00%
Cooperative Research	12,000	12,080	12,000	12,000	0.00%
Marine Resources Monitoring, Assessment and Prediction	800	801	800	800	0.00%
Regional Studies (fishery-independent data collection and research)	5,000	10,286	10,200	10,200	0.00%

For more information, please contact Deke Tompkins at dtompkins@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740

Jeff Kipp & Kirby Rootes-Murdy Named Employees of the Quarter

While this space in the newsletter is usually devoted to recognizing the contributions of one employee to achieving the Commission's vision of sustainably managing Atlantic coastal fisheries, in this issue we acknowledge the individual and collective efforts of two employees -- Jeff Kipp and Kirby Rootes-Murdy. As Stock Assessment Scientist for the past two and a half years, Jeff Kipp has made outstanding and numerous contributions to the Commission's Fisheries Science Program. This includes his work as lead assessment scientist on the recently completed and first coastwide benchmark stock assessment for black drum, as well as his efforts on upcoming benchmark stock assessments for red drum and Atlantic sturgeon. With each assessment, Jeff's ability to collaborate with fellow committee members and his proficiency in developing new modeling approaches has elevated the quality of Commission stock assessments. Jeff has also provided critical support to a diversity of science initiatives, including fish ageing, fish tagging, and fish passage.

In a little over a year and half as the Commission's Fishery Management Plan Coordinator for a number of species including summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, bluefish, Atlantic croaker, black drum, red drum, spot, spotted seatrout, Spanish mackerel, Kirby Rootes-Murdy has proved he is a critical contributor to the Commission's fisheries management program. Over the past year, he worked closely with members of the Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee and Spot Plan Development Team



Employees of the Quarter Jeff Kipp (left) and Kirby Rootes-Murdy (right) with ASMFC Executive Director Bob Beal.

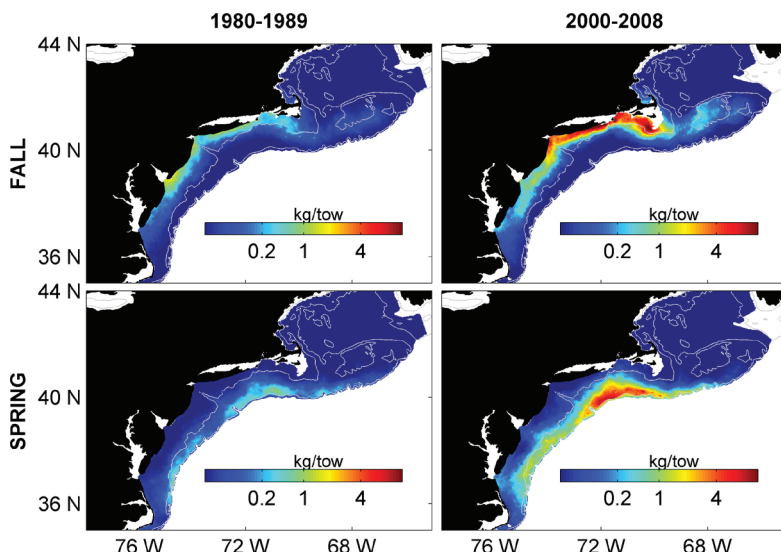
to develop a new traffic light approach to evaluate fisheries trends and develop state-specified management actions for both croaker and spot (i.e., bag limits, size restrictions, time & area closures, and gear restrictions) when harvest and abundance thresholds are exceeded. He facilitated the development and implementation of regional management approaches for both the black sea bass and summer flounder recreational fisheries and has collaborated with committee members and

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council staff on new management approaches for summer flounder. Working in close coordination with Jeff, Kirby played an important role in the successful completion of the black drum benchmark as well as providing assistance on the upcoming benchmark assessment for red drum.

Jeff's and Kirby's ability to effectively collaborate with each other, and with representatives from the states, Mid-Atlantic Council and NOAA Fisheries are terrific examples of what can be achieved when scientists and managers commit to teamwork and strong partnerships. Their strong initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitudes, and dedication to teamwork truly epitomize the attributes for which the award was created. As Employees of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2014, Jeff and Kirby received a cash award and small gift, a letter of appreciation for their personnel folder, and their names engraved on a plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations Jeff and Kirby!

Summer Flounder Biomass Graphs Revisited

In the August/September issue of *ASMFC Fisheries Focus* we illustrated some of the climate change tools the Commission is using to evaluate changes in fish stocks. The graphic associated with this article was taken from Bell et al. 2014 and visually depicts summer flounder distribution. These data were from the fall Northeast Fisheries Science Center Bottom Trawl Survey. Many of our readers expressed concern that the graphic used in this article did not reflect the same scale over time. The author of the report to ASMFC has provided this updated graphic placed on the same scale over time to address these concerns.



A comparison of changes in summer flounder biomass and distribution over time (red denotes areas of higher biomass, while dark blue reflects areas of no biomass). Source: R. Bell, NEFSC.

**Atlantic States Marine
Fisheries Commission**

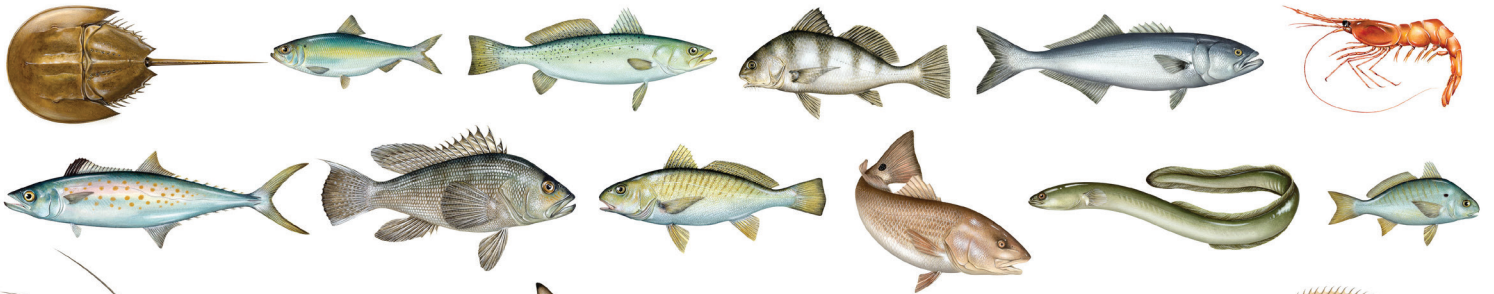
1050 North Highland Street
Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Return Service Requested

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE

PAID

MERRIFIELD, VA
PERMIT NO. 1149



Happy Holidays!

