



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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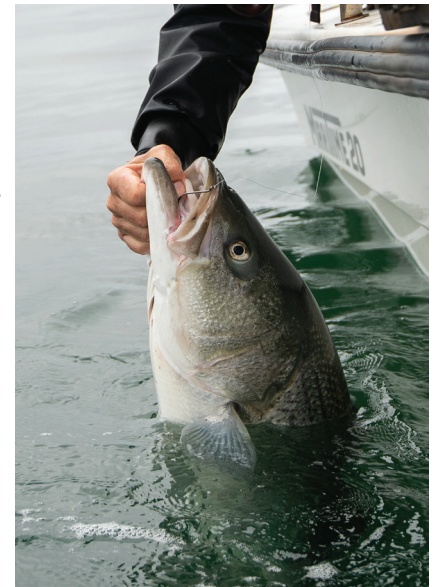
Atlantic Striped Bass Board Meeting Scheduled for December 16th to Consider Changes to 2025 Management Measures

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board will meet in-person and via webinar on Monday, December 16, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. to consider changing 2025 management measures to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock by the 2029 deadline. The meeting will be held at the Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Hwy, Arlington, VA 22202. The draft agenda, webinar information, and the Technical Committee Report with management options for consideration are posted at <https://tinyurl.com/29kwe3d8>. The Advisory Panel Report and all written comments received by December 10 will be posted no later than December 13.

The meeting responds to the results of the 2024 Stock Assessment Update, which indicates the resource remains overfished but is not experiencing overfishing. Female spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2023 was estimated at 191 million pounds, which is below the SSB threshold of 197 million pounds and below the SSB target of 247 million pounds. Total fishing mortality in 2023 was estimated at 0.18, which is below the fishing mortality threshold of 0.21 and above the fishing mortality target of 0.17.

Short-term projections estimate an increase in fishing mortality in 2025 due to the above average 2018 year-class entering the current recreational ocean slot limit combined with the lack of strong year-classes behind it. In this scenario, the probability of rebuilding by 2029 is less than 50%. Under Addendum II to Amendment 7, the Board can change management measures through Board action, instead of developing an addendum, if the stock assessment indicates a less than 50% probability of the stock rebuilding by 2029.

The Board continues to be concerned about low recruitment and the lack of strong year-classes to support the stock and the fishery. Six of the last seven year-classes since 2015 have been below average, with only the 2018 year-class being above average. With the 2018 year-class starting to grow into the slot limit for the ocean recreational fishery, the Board values the upcoming opportunity to consider changes to management program to support ongoing rebuilding efforts.



Joe Helbeche, MA DMF

Public Comment Guidelines

Per the Commission's public comment guidelines, the Board Chair will provide the opportunity for comment at the meeting, taking into account the time allotted on the agenda. The Chair has the discretion in deciding how to allocate comment opportunities. This could include hearing one comment in favor and one in opposition of a motion until the Chair is satisfied further comments will not provide additional insight to the Board. More meeting details can be found at <https://www.asmfmc.org/home/December-2024-AtlStripedBassBoard-meeting>.

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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December 12 (9 - 11 AM)

Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/12/2024/northern-shrimp-advisory-panel/2424>

December 12 (9 - 11 AM)

Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/12/2024/northern-shrimp-section/2423>

December 12 (2:30 - 4:30 PM)

Industry Workshop on Safe Work Environment for Observers, The Westin - Annapolis, MD (Senate A&B room); for more details visit
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/ensuring-safe-work-environment-observers>

December 16 (10 AM - 2PM)

Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board, Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/12/2024/atlantic-striped-bass-management-board/2427>

December 12 (2:30 - 4:30 PM)

Atlantic Menhaden Natural Mortality Work Group; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/12/2024/menhaden-m-working-group/2472>

January 6 (9 AM - Noon)

Atlantic Menhaden Work Group; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/1/2025/atlantic-menhaden-work-group/2471>

January 6 (Noon - 4 PM)

Atlantic Menhaden ERP Work Group; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/1/2025/atlantic-menhaden-erp-work-group/2461>

January 8 (1 - 3 PM)

Shad and River Herring Technical Committee; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/1/2025/Shad-and-River-Herring-Technical-Committee/2483>

January 6 (Noon - 4 PM)

Atlantic Menhaden atural Mortality Work Group; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/1/2025/menhaden-m-working-group/2473>

January 28 - 30

New England Fishery Management Council, Venue at Portwalk Place, Portsmouth, NH; for more details visit
<https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/january-2025-council-meeting>

February 4 - 6

ASMFC Winter Meeting, Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/2/2025/2025-ASMFC-Winter-Meeting-/2311>

February 11 - 12

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (webinar only); for more details visit
<https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2025/february-council-meeting>

February 18 - 19

NEAMAP Operations Committee Annual Meeting; for more details visit
<https://asmfc.org/calendar/2/2025/neamap-operations-committee-annual-meeting/2463>



Public Participation: An Integral Component of Our Management Process

Recently, stakeholders have sought additional public participation opportunities in the Commission's fisheries management process as well as expressed concerns that management actions do not reflect the opinions of the public. These are serious matters that are not taken lightly by the Commission leadership. Through this article, I seek to clearly outline opportunities that the public is provided with to participate in our management process and provide recent examples where the public opinion has had a prominent role in board decisions.

The passage of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (Atlantic Coastal Act or Act) in 1993 ushered in a new era of fisheries management for the Commission and its 15 member states. Through the Act, Congress formally recognized the important work of the states in cooperatively managing Atlantic coastal fisheries. A key provision of the Atlantic Coastal Act was the establishment of conservation measures in each fishery management plan and the support of the federal government in ensuring the implementation of those measures through compliance standards (i.e., the ability of the federal government to close any state fishery not in compliance with a Commission fishery management plan).

Another important element of the Act was the call for increased public participation in the Commission's fisheries management process. In response to the Commission's increased authority and responsibilities, the Commission developed the Interstate Fisheries Management Program Charter, which outlines the standards and procedures for the fisheries management program. The Charter has been revised several times since 1995 to reflect changes in voting procedures, the role and responsibilities of technical support groups, and practices regarding appealing noncompliance findings, among other things.

Regarding public participation, the Charter called for the establishment of advisory panels, composed of state-appointed recreational, for-hire, and commercial industry representatives (including processors/dealers) from the involved states to provide input on proposed fishery management actions and identify emerging fishery issues. Currently, there are 17 advisory panels. Most of them are species-specific, but a few cover multiple species, such as one for summer flounder/scup/black sea bass and another for South Atlantic species. As the panels have evolved, so too has the membership, with an increasing number of non-traditional stakeholders joining the advisory panels. Examples include the representation of the biomedical industry and shorebird conservation interests on the Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel and environmental NGOs on panels for American eel and shad and river herring. During the development of fishery management plans and amendments, the advisory panels provide feedback and

recommendations to the board on various management options.

The Charter also specifies the various ways where public comment is sought. These include opportunities for input on the development of a new fishery management plan or amendment, both of which allow for at least a 60-day public comment period. Comment may be provided in writing or at a public hearing. For draft addenda, the public has at least 30 days to provide comment. In addition to public comment on draft management documents, the Commission provides three opportunities for the submission of public comment prior to a board meeting and has a standing agenda item on every board agenda to allow additional public comment on items not on the agenda. For high profile issues, many board chairs also allow for public comment on motions prior to a board vote.

As for the issue of the boards' responsiveness to the public input they receive, in this past year alone there are three examples of a management board deciding in favor of public opinion, sometimes despite the prevailing science on the issue.

- **American Lobster** – In October 2023, in response to an observed decline in recruit abundance indices, the American Lobster Management Board approved implementing a series of gradual changes to gauge and escape vent sizes throughout the Gulf of Maine, in federal waters, and in the Outer Cape Cod to improve the resiliency of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock. Initially, the Board set the implementation date for these measures for June 2024. However, in response to concerns raised by the industry and Maine regarding potential impacts to the US lobster fishery, the Board extended the implementation date to January 1, 2025. Following discussions with Canadian lobster managers and industry, the Board determined that postponing implementation for an additional six months (through July 1, 2025) would allow further consideration of complementary measures by Canada, as well as offset potential impacts to the lobster industry that imports smaller lobster in the early part of the year.
- **Atlantic Menhaden** – Over the past decade, there has been a significant advancement in the science and management of Atlantic menhaden as an important forage species. The impetus for ecosystem management was largely driven by stakeholders and environmental NGOs. As a precautionary measure, the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board also implemented a Chesapeake Bay cap on the reduction fishery (named because it "reduces" the whole fish into fish meal, fish oil, and fish solubles). Increasingly, Chesapeake Bay stakeholders have been demanding that further action

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be taken to reduce reduction fishery harvest in the Bay based on concern about the possible impact of reduced menhaden availability for bird and fish species that feed on menhaden. While data limitations have hindered our ability to assess the menhaden population within the Bay, the Board has responded to the concerns by establishing a Work Group on Precautionary Management in Chesapeake Bay. The Work Group's objective is to consider and evaluate options for further precautionary management of Chesapeake Bay menhaden fisheries, including time and areas closures to be protective of fish-eating birds and fish during critical points of their life cycle. The Work Group will come back to the Board in the Spring of 2025 with recommendations for possible Board action.

- **Horseshoe Crab** – Notwithstanding the Adaptive Resource Management Framework outputting a limited harvest of female horseshoe crabs based on horseshoe crab and shorebird population numbers, the Board has prohibited female harvest in the Delaware Bay region for the past three years. This action is in response to significant public concern about female harvest, despite the recent increases in the population to 16.6 million mature females. Because of conflicting views among different stakeholder groups, the Commission held a horseshoe crab Management Objectives Workshop to consider how management of the Delaware Bay region bait fishery might better align with various stakeholder values. The Board will continue to evaluate the management program in the Delaware Bay region with stakeholder input over the next year.

It's true that boards do not always make management decisions that reflect submitted public comment but that does not mean they are not absorbing the public's feedback. Board inaction or delayed action may be because the Board needs more information or data before it can make an informed decision. Or it could be that board members themselves are divided in their positions. It's important to remember that on a coastwide board, for example, there are 15 member states, each represented by three Commissioners, with each state delegation striving to balance the needs of their constituents against the needs of the resource on a coastwide basis. Finding a shared solution to meet the divergent needs of stakeholders along the Atlantic coast can be challenging and can take longer than stakeholders would prefer. However, I believe that it is the discussions between these divergent views that is a keystone of success in our process and ultimately leads to a much stronger management policy, one that not only addresses stakeholder concerns but is in the best interest of the resource and its users over the long-term.

Wishing you all a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season.



Recently, two longtime participants of the Commission passed: Philip G. Coates of Massachusetts and Lewis Gillingham of Virginia.

Philip G. Coates

As Director of the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Division from 1979 – 2000, Phil served as Massachusetts Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC and as the Commonwealth's representative to the New England Fishery Management Council. As Chair of the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board from 1980 - 1995, he led the Commission in bringing about the recovery of striped bass along the Atlantic coast. Phil brought the same steadfast dedication and clarity to his other Commission chairmanships, which included serving as Commission Chair from 1991 to 1993, and Chair to the Weakfish Management Board from 1996 to 1998. In everything that he did, he brought a keen sense of humor to address the most difficult and stressful situations. His humor had a way of melting away dissension and bringing the states back to common ground. In recognition of his profound contributions to the Commission and fisheries management along the Atlantic coast, he received the Commission's most prestigious David Hart award in 1996.

After his retirement and well into his later years, he remained abreast of the fisheries issues facing his home state and along the coast. We are saddened by his passing and send his family, friends, and colleagues our deepest condolences. Rest in peace, Phil, and thank you for your commitment to Atlantic coast fisheries management.

Lewis Scott Gillingham

Lewis Scott Gillingham joined Virginia Marine Resources Commission in 1985 as a Fisheries Management Technician and became the Director of the Virginia Saltwater Game Fish Tournament in 2007. Lewis was a longstanding participant in the Commission, serving on technical committees, the Coastal Sharks Advisory Panel, and as Virginia's representative on the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program.

Lewis was always a fisherman. By the time he was six years old, he was already a determined fisherman and an incredibly skilled one at that. He continued along that path throughout his life. He loved his job and the people he worked with. He was always ready to lend an ear to any question or spend unlimited time telling stories. Rest in peace, Lewis, and thank you for your commitment to Atlantic coast fisheries management.

River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment Finds Populations Remain Depleted at a Coastwide Level Though Some Rivers Show Signs of Improvement

Introduction

River herring (the collective term for alewife and blueback herring) are anadromous fish that spend the majority of their adult lives at sea, only returning to freshwater in the spring to spawn. Historically, river herring spawned in virtually every river and tributary along the Atlantic coast. Today, they are at a fraction of what they once were, with the 2024 benchmark stock assessment determining that alewife and blueback remain depleted on a coastwide basis. The majority of abundance indices for both species are likely to be higher now than they were in 2009, aided in some places by improvements to fish passage with habitat restoration and dam removal.

Life History

Alewife spawn in rivers, lakes, and tributaries from northeastern Newfoundland to South Carolina, but are most abundant in the Mid-Atlantic and the Northeast. Blueback herring prefer to spawn in swift flowing rivers and tributaries from Nova Scotia to northern Florida, but are most numerous in waters from the Chesapeake Bay south. Mature alewife (ages three to eight) and blueback herring (ages three to six) migrate rapidly downstream after spawning. Juveniles remain in tidal freshwater nursery areas in spring and early summer, and may also move upstream with the encroachment of saline water. As water temperatures decline in the fall, juveniles move downstream to more saline waters. Little information is available on the life history of juvenile and adult river herring after they emigrate to the sea and before they mature and return to freshwater to spawn.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

River herring formerly supported significant commercial and recreational fisheries throughout their range. Fisheries traditionally occurred in rivers, estuaries, and coastal waters. Although recreational harvest data are scarce, most harvest is believed to come from the commercial industry.

Commercial landings have declined dramatically from historic highs. River herring are caught both as a target species and as bycatch in ocean fisheries targeting other species, such as Atlantic herring and mackerel. Although river herring are caught by recreational anglers, both as a target species and as bait for other gamefish like striped bass, there is very little data on recreational landings. East Coast commercial landings of river herring have ranged from a high of 74.9 million pounds in 1958 to an historic low of approximately 273,000 pounds in 2006. Landings since the moratorium in 2012 have averaged at approximately 2.2 million pounds with over 2.8 million pounds landed in 2022.

As river herring are migratory species that traverse both state and federal waters, the Commission has also worked closely with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (MAFMC and NEFMC, respectively) to reduce river herring bycatch in small-mesh fisheries. Both the NEFMC and MAFMC have implemented bycatch caps in the Atlantic mackerel and Atlantic herring fisheries, and the NEFMC is currently developing Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Herring FMP to consider options for further bycatch avoidance measures.

Stock Status

The [2024 River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment](#) finds the coastwide populations of both alewife and blueback herring are depleted relative to historic levels, with the habitat model indicating that overall productivity of both species is lower than an unfished population before the occurrence of any habitat modifications (e.g., dams or human alterations to the environment). The depleted determination was used instead of overfished and overfishing because of the many factors that have contributed to the declining

Species Snapshot



Alewife
Alosa pseudoharengus

General Characteristics

- Adults average 10-11" in length; 8-9 oz. in weight
- Range from Nova Scotia to South Carolina
- Primarily feed on plankton
- Congregate in large schools, numbering in the thousands
- Excellent food fish, marketed both fresh and salted

Interesting Facts

- In the US, alewife are known as sawbelly, grayback, bigeye, and freshwater and spring herring. In Canada, they are known as gaspereau or kiack.
- The origin of the name alewife is a reference to the large belly of the fish, which reminded New England fishermen of alehouse wives.
- The Latin name *pseudoharengus* means "false herring."



Blueback Herring
Alosa aestivalis

General Characteristics

- Adults average 11" in length; 7 oz. in weight
- Range from Nova Scotia to Northern Florida
- Primarily feed on plankton
- Name derived from dark blue/bluish gray coloring on back

Interesting Facts

- Blueback herring are also known as summer herring or black belly.
- Blueback herring have teeth on the roof of their mouths, while alewife do not. The teeth disappear with age.

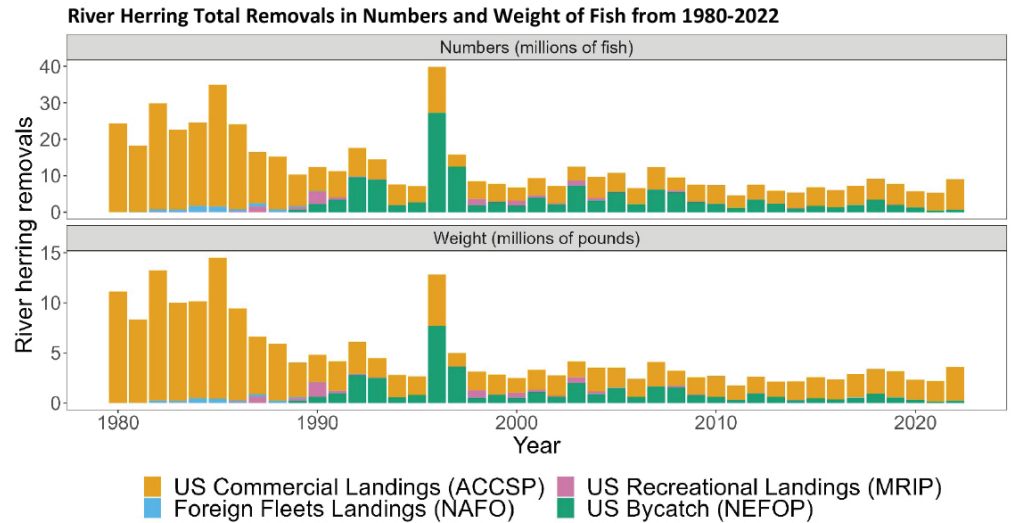
Stock Status: Depleted on a coastwide basis, with stock status varying by river system for both species

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abundance of river herring, which include not just directed and incidental fishing, but also habitat loss, predation, and climate change.

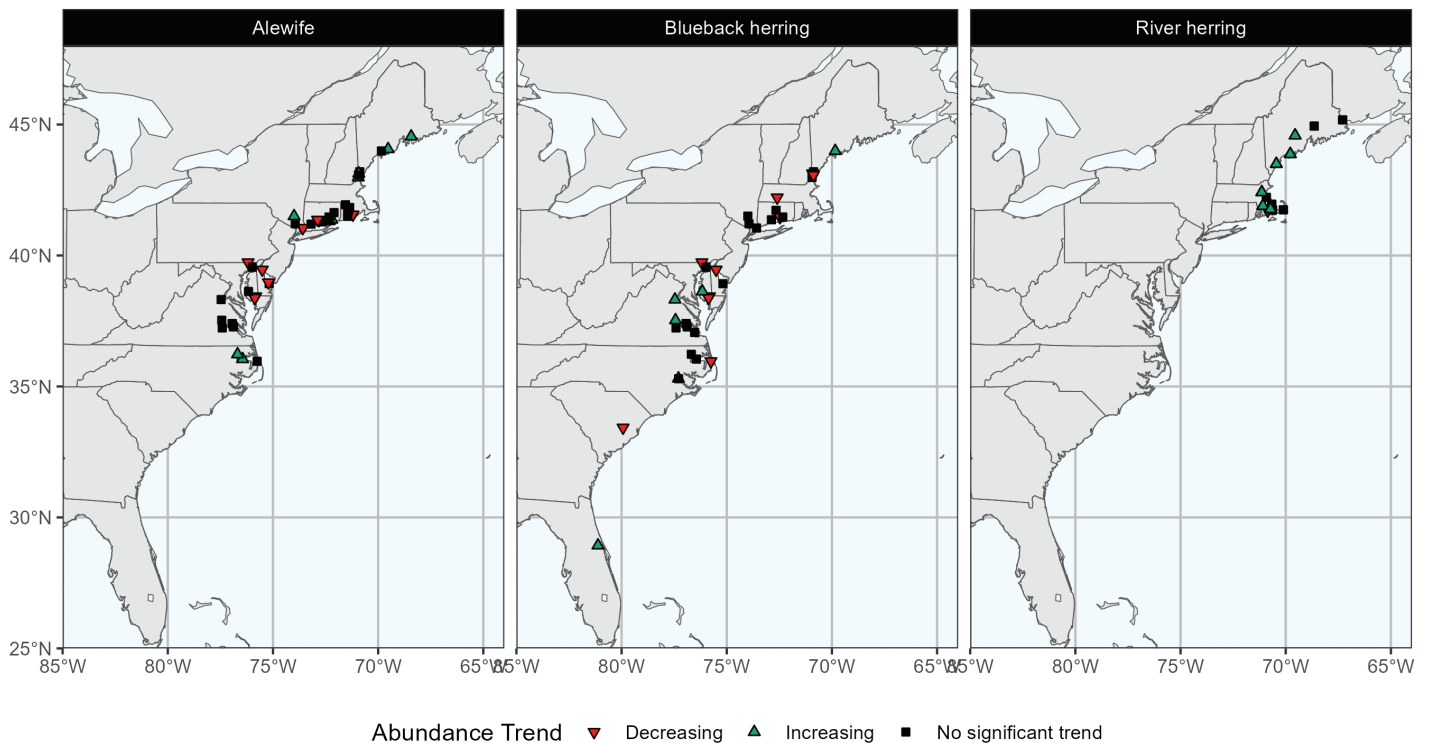
In terms of recent trends, there is no clear signal for either species across the coast. Even within the genetic stock-regions, trends in abundance and mortality differed from river to river, with some rivers showing increasing trends and low mortality rates, and others showing flat or declining trends and total mortality rates above the reference point. Although very few significant trends overall were detected since the adoption of Amendment 2 in 2009, the majority of indices of abundance for both alewife and blueback herring are likely to be higher now than they were in 2009. However, half of the blueback populations and 65% of the alewife populations have a high probability of being above the total mortality reference point, indicating total mortality on adult fish was too high. Total mortality is the removal of fish from a population due to both fishing and natural causes.

The northern New England region shows more positive trends and a higher probability of abundance in the most recent years being greater than in 2009 (see below figure). It is unclear why



that is the case, especially as the more northern regions also have higher probabilities of being above the total mortality reference point. States in the northern New England region have conducted extensive habitat restoration and dam removal, but so have states further south, and they have not seen the same degree of positive trends in run counts and indices. In addition, states in the northern stock-region have also accounted for the majority of directed catch in recent years, while states in the Mid-New England, Southern New England, and Mid-Atlantic stock-regions have closed their fisheries. Genetic analysis indicates most of the ocean bycatch around Cape Cod and Long Island Sound was of alewife from the Southern New England stock-region and blueback herring from

Abundance trends over the full time series



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the Mid-Atlantic stock-region, two areas that have had more negative trends in recent years despite habitat restoration efforts and directed fishery closures.

In 2011, the National Resources Defense Council petitioned NOAA Fisheries to list river herring on the endangered species list throughout all or part of the species range. NOAA Fisheries conducted a status review and found that listing river herring under the Endangered Species Act was not warranted in 2013, and agreed to reevaluate the listing determination within five years. In June 2019, NOAA Fisheries released a new listing determination that found listing is not warranted for river herring at this time.

In 2015, the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG), a group of scientists, industry representatives, conservation groups, tribal leaders, and government officials with expertise in river herring conservation convened to provide input and information on the River Herring Conservation Plan. The conservation plan was released by the Commission and NOAA Fisheries in May 2015 and sought to increase public awareness about river herring and foster cooperative research and conservation efforts to restore river herring along the Atlantic coast. Since completion of the conservation plan in 2015, river herring practitioners have continued to meet biannually to promote collaboration, information exchange, and outreach about these species. In 2020, the TEWG was renamed the Atlantic Coast River Herring Cooperative Forum (River Herring Forum), a name that reflects the voluntary



Photo (c) Keith Ellenbogen

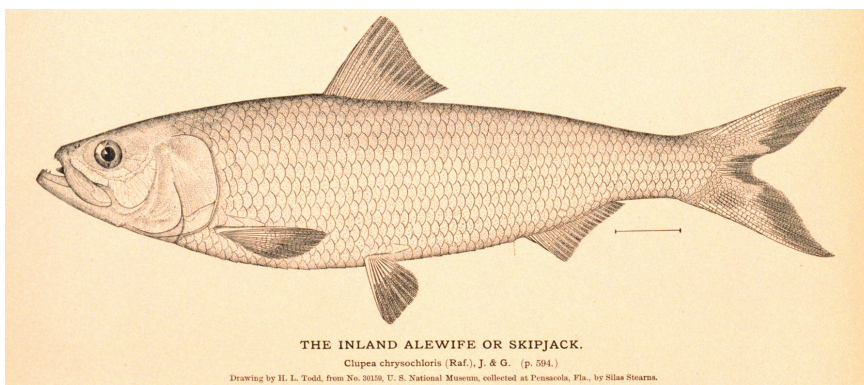
meeting of river herring experts and practitioners for the purpose of sharing information and collaborating on efforts to study and conserve these species. In addition to a new name, an updated river herring habitat conservation plan was published in 2023 and can be found [here](#). More information can be found on the [River Herring Forum webpage](#).

Atlantic Coastal Management

River herring are managed under Amendment 2 (2009) to the FMP for Shad and River Herring, which addresses concerns regarding declining river herring populations. Similar to shad, the Amendment requires that states and jurisdictions develop SFMPs in order to maintain a commercial and/or recreational river herring fishery

beyond January 2012. Currently, SFMPs have been approved for Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, and South Carolina. The remaining states and jurisdictions are required to prohibit commercial and recreational harvest. Under Amendment 2, states may implement, with Board approval, alternative management programs for river herring that differ from those required by the FMP. States and jurisdictions must demonstrate that the proposed management program will not contribute to overfishing of the resource or inhibit restoration of the resource. The Management Board can approve a proposed alternative management program if the state or jurisdiction can show to the Management Board's satisfaction that the alternative proposal will have the same conservation value as the measures contained in the FMP. Currently, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida are the only states with approved alternative management plans.

For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org.



Fishery Management Actions & Stock Assessment Results

American Lobster

The American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum XXXI to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Addendum postpones the implementation of certain measures from Addendum XXVII to July 1, 2025, to allow Canada more time to consider implementing complementary management measures, as well as reduce potential impacts to the US and Canadian lobster industries.

In October 2023, a series of changes to the current gauge and escape vent sizes in Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMA) 1 (Gulf of Maine), 3 (federal waters), and Outer Cape Cod (OCC) were triggered based on observed changes in recruit abundance indices. Initially, these measures were to be implemented in June 2024. However, in response to concerns raised by industry and the State of Maine, the Board extended the implementation date to January 1, 2025, to allow the Gulf of Maine states the opportunity to coordinate with Canada regarding possible trade implications, and give the industry and gauge makers additional time to prepare for these changes.

In June 2024, US and Canadian lobster fishery managers and industry members met to discuss the management structures and stock assessments of the two countries. Based on these discussions, the Board determined that postponing implementation for an additional six months would allow further consideration of complementary measures by Canada, as well as offset potential impacts to the lobster industry that imports smaller lobster in the early part of the year.

Based on Addendum XXXI, the following measures will be implemented starting July 1, 2025:

- Measures under Section 3.1 of Addendum XXVII to create a common size limit and v-notch definition for state-only and federal permit holders fishing in OCC
- Increases in LCMA 1 minimum gauge and vent sizes, and decrease to the maximum gauge size for LCMA 3 and OCC under Section 3.2 of Addendum XXVII

Addendum XXXI does not postpone regulations prohibiting the issuance of 10% additional trap tags in Areas 1 and 3 above the trap limit or allocation; this provision will become effective January 1, 2025. Addendum XXXI is available [here](#). For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Horseshoe Crab

The Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved 2025 harvest specifications for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay-origin. Taking into consideration the output of the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework, the Board set a harvest limit of 500,000 male horseshoe crabs and zero female Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crabs for the 2025 season.

The Board elected to maintain zero female horseshoe crab harvest for the 2025 season as a conservative measure, considering continued public concern about the status of the red knot population in the Delaware Bay. To make up for the lost harvest of larger female crabs, the Board agreed to increase Maryland and Virginia's male harvest quotas with an offset ratio of 2:1 males to females. Using the allocation methodology established in Addendum VIII, the below quotas were set for New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

The Board also initiated Draft Addendum IX, which will consider adding an additional specifications tool that would allow for male-only harvest for multiple years. The Draft Addendum responds to recommendations from the Horseshoe Crab Management Objectives Workshop held in July 2024.

The Workshop convened a small group of stakeholders to explore management objectives for the Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crab fishery. The workshop participants recommended the Board establish an interim solution to maintain male-only harvest while changes to the ARM Framework are explored to better align the model with stakeholder values.

The Board will consider Draft Addendum IX for public comment in February 2025. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Mid-Atlantic Species

The Commission has released for public comment Draft Addenda on Recreational Measures Setting Process for Bluefish, Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass. The Draft Addenda consider changes to the process used by the Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to set recreational management measures (bag, size, and season limits) for bluefish, summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The Council is considering an identical set of options through a framework action. The option that is ultimately selected by the Commission and Council is intended to replace the currently used Percent Change Approach implemented through the Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda, which will sunset at the end of 2025. The Draft Addenda propose five possible options for setting recreational measures. Taking final action on these addenda in 2025 will not implement any specific bag, size, or season limits, but start a new specification process for setting recreational management measures starting with 2026 measures.

2025 Delaware Bay Origin Horseshoe Crab Quota for New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia

	Delaware Bay Origin Horseshoe Crab Quota (no. of crabs)	Total Quota**
State	Male Only	Male Only
Delaware	173,014	173,014
New Jersey	173,014	173,014
Maryland	132,865	255,980
Virginia*	21,107	81,331

*Virginia harvest refers to harvest east of the COLREGS line only

**Total harvest quotas for Maryland and Virginia include crabs which are not of Delaware Bay origin.

The states of Maine through North Carolina have scheduled hearings to gather public input on the Draft Addenda between January 14 and January 29, 2025, and written comments will be accepted through February 15, 2025. The details of those hearings can be found [here](#).

The Draft Addenda are available [here](#) or on the Commission’s Public Input webpage at <https://asmfc.org/about-us/public-input>. All those interested in the management of summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish are encouraged to provide input either by participating in public hearings, which may be conducted in-person or via webinar, or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until **11:59 PM (EST) on February 15, 2025** and should be sent to Chelsea Tuohy, FMP Coordinator, at 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, Virginia 22201; or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Recreational Measures Setting Process). For more information, please contact Chelsea Tuohy, FMP Coordinator, at ctuohy@asmfc.org.

Red Drum

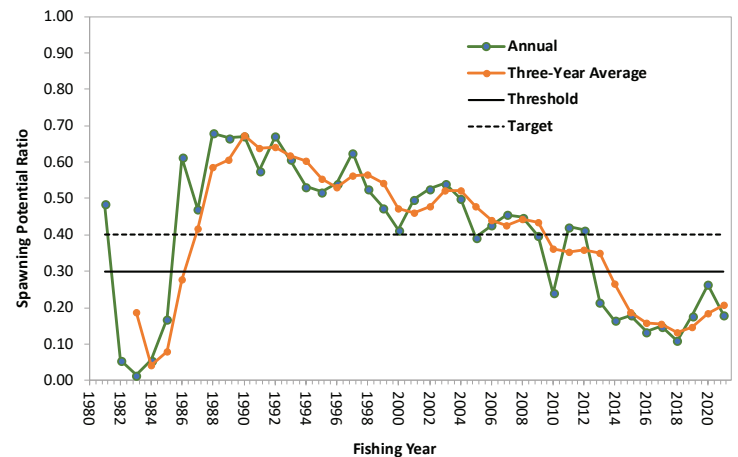
The 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicates the northern stock of red drum (New Jersey through North Carolina) is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing, while the southern stock (South Carolina through the east coast of Florida) is overfished and experiencing overfishing.

The two stocks were assessed separately, using different methods. The southern stock was assessed using the Stock Synthesis (SS) assessment model. Stock status is based on the latest three-year (2019-2021 September-August fishing years) averages of population measures. The three-year average spawning potential ratio (SPR) is less than the 30% SPR threshold, indicating the stock is experiencing overfishing. Spawning potential ratio is a measure of spawning biomass expected under current fishing mortality levels compared to spawning stock biomass expected if no fishing mortality were occurring. The three-year average female spawning stock biomass (SSB) was 8,737 metric tons (19.27 million pounds), less than the SSB threshold of 9,917 metric tons (21.87 million pounds), indicating the stock is overfished.

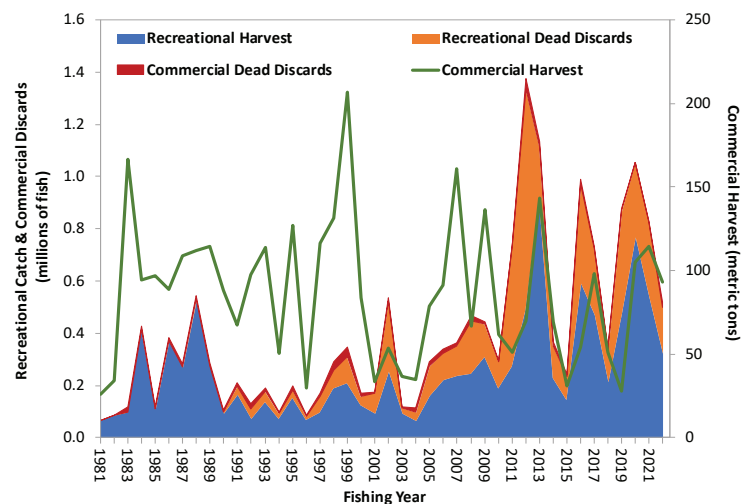
A robust, technically-sound SS model could not be developed for the northern stock, so the stock was assessed using a traffic light analysis (TLA). The TLA assigns a color (red, yellow, or green) to categorize relative levels of metrics that reflect the condition of red drum adult abundance and fishery performance (i.e., fishing mortality). Although these metrics were not red in the last three years of the assessment, indicating the stock was not overfished nor experiencing overfishing, consistent yellow fishery performance metrics indicated increasing fishing mortality in recent years. Continued monitoring of the northern stock and the increasing trend in fishing mortality is recommended in future years through updates to the TLA.

Red drum fisheries are predominately recreational. Removals (harvest + dead discards) increased to relatively high levels at the end of

Red Drum Southern Stock Spawning Potential Ratio



Red Drum Northern Stock Fishery Removals



the assessment time series for both stocks. In the northern stock, removals have increased to time series highs. In the southern stock, they have increased to levels similar to time series highs observed in the early 1980s. Commercial landings currently only occur in the northern stock, but are a small proportion of total removals and have fluctuated without trend.

The Commission’s Sciaenids Management Board accepted the benchmark stock assessment and peer review reports for management use and tasked the Red Drum Technical Committee with additional analyses to evaluate possible paths forward for red drum management.

A more detailed description of the stock assessment results, as well as the Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report, are available on the Commission website at <https://asmfc.org/species/red-drum> under Stock Assessment Reports. For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, FMP Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org or Jeff Kipp, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, at jkipp@asmfc.org.

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Spiny Dogfish

The Spiny Dogfish Management Board approved Draft Addendum VII to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Dogfish for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers potential measures to maintain consistency with the federal Fishery Management Plan in response to the proposed rule to implement Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6.

The Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils developed Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6 in response to a 2021 Biological Opinion and 2022 Action Plan that called for reducing bycatch of Atlantic sturgeon in spiny dogfish gillnet fisheries. The coastwide Atlantic sturgeon population is made up of five distinct population segments, all of which are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and Atlantic sturgeon harvest has been under a coastwide moratorium in federal and state waters since 1998. The Commission's Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic sturgeon maintains the moratorium through at least 2038. While the 2024 stock assessment update showed signs of improvement, the stock remains depleted coastwide.

The Board initiated Draft Addendum VII in August 2024 after the Councils recommended measures to NOAA Fisheries to prohibit overnight soaks for federal spiny dogfish permit holders on gillnets with 5-10 inch mesh in November and May for a certain area of state and federal waters off of New Jersey, as well as for gillnets with 5.25-10 inch mesh in November through March in specified areas off of Maryland and Virginia. The options in the Draft Addendum aim to establish equivalent overnight soak restrictions for spiny dogfish harvesters in state waters that do not possess a federal spiny dogfish permit.

The Draft Addendum is available at https://asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/SpinyDogfishDraftAddendumVII_PublicComment_Oct2024.pdf, with public hearings scheduled for mid-December. The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the addendum in February at the Commission's Winter Meeting.

The Board also revised the commercial quota for the 2024/2025 fishing from 11,331,747 to 10,249,260 pounds to be consistent with the federal quota. For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org.

Summer Flounder

The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) have jointly approved modifications to two exemptions from the summer flounder commercial minimum mesh size requirements. The Board adopted these changes through Addendum XXXV to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan, and the Council recommended identical measures through a framework action which will be submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service for review and implementation.

Current regulations for the summer flounder trawl fishery require a minimum mesh size of 5.5-inch diamond mesh or 6.0-inch square mesh to retain more than 200 pounds of summer flounder from November through April, or 100 pounds of summer flounder from May through October. The Small Mesh Exemption Program provides an exemption from these requirements for authorized vessels fishing in a designated area from November 1 through April 30. This exemption is designed to allow vessels to retain some bycatch of summer flounder while operating in other small-mesh fisheries. Through this action, the Board and Council agreed to expand the exemption area by moving the boundary of the northern portion of the area approximately five miles west, then connecting the western boundary to the southern scup Gear Restricted Area. While this has the appearance of notably increasing the size of the exemption area, a large portion of the area overlaps with the Frank R. Lautenberg deep sea coral zone, where bottom tending gear is already prohibited. The intent of this change is to increase economic opportunities for industry while continuing to protect the summer flounder stock and prevent regulatory discards.

The Board and Council also voted to implement a tiered monitoring approach for the Small Mesh Exemption Program. Current regulations allow the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Regional Administrator to terminate the program for the remainder of the season if vessels fishing under the exemption are discarding on average more than 10%, by weight, of their entire catch of summer flounder per trip. Under the new tiered monitoring approach, the discard trigger will be increased to 25%, and once the trigger is reached, a more detailed review of discards will be conducted to determine whether the exemption should be rescinded. The intent of this review is to allow for a more comprehensive consideration of the drivers of, and appropriate response to, discards.

Finally, the Board and Council approved a revised definition of the term "flynet" as it relates to the flynet exemption from the summer flounder commercial minimum mesh size requirements. The revised definition encompasses similar high-rise net types which have very large mesh in the wings, with mesh size decreasing through the body of the net. These nets are not designed to catch flatfish and generally catch small amounts of summer flounder.

Addendum XXXV, including the map showing the approved boundaries, is available [here](#). Updates on the Council's framework will be posted at <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/summer-flounder-commercial-mesh-exemptions>.

For more information, please contact either Chelsea Tuohy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at ctuohy@asmfc.org or Kiley Dancy, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, at kdancy@mafmc.org.



COMMISSIONERS

REPRESENTATIVE JENNIFER ARMINI

Ongoing proxy Sarah Ferrara

In October, Representative Jennifer Armini became the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Legislative Commissioner to the ASMFC. She replaces Sarah Peake who served in that role since 2009. Representative Armini represents the 8th Essex District, which encompasses Marblehead, Swampscott, and parts of Lynn.

She began her career as a senior legislative aide on Capitol Hill. She brought that experience to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, where she worked to strengthen the Commonwealth's child support enforcement laws. Later, she served as the chief speechwriter for Governor Jane Swift before working as the head of communications for MassINC, the state's leading nonpartisan think tank. She was awarded a Public Service Fellowship for her graduate degree at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Following the 2016 presidential election, Representative Armini and a friend launched ElectBlue, a grassroots political group dedicated to electing Democrats to the US House and Senate in 2018. In her free time, she enjoys helping women get elected to local office and cheering for her alma mater, the University of Virginia. Representative Armini lives in Marblehead with her husband, two children, and a dog named Wallace. Please join us in thanking Sarah Peake for her many years of service and welcoming Representative Armini to the Commission.



STAFF

KRISTEN ANSTEAD

For over nine years, Kristen Anstead, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, has played a critical role in supporting the Commission science activities. Over that time, she was the stock assessment scientist for American eel, Atlantic croaker, Atlantic menhaden, Atlantic sturgeon, spiny dogfish, and horseshoe crab. She contributed to the advancement of ageing techniques and protocols, and represented the US on international discussions on the science of American eel. She leaves the Commission the end of November to work for the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a Biologist. We wish Kristen the very best in all her future endeavors!



LISA HARTMAN

Since 2012, Lisa Hartman has been an integral part of the Commission's Finance and Administration Department and outreach efforts. Her responsibilities have ranged widely from accounts payable and auditing travel vouchers, to helping onboard and orient new commissioners and proxies, managing the Commissioner Manual, and assisting with the design, layout and publication of the Commission annual report, bimonthly newsletter *Fisheries Focus*, the annual issue of *Habitat Hotline Atlantic*, and several habitat management series reports. With Lisa retiring the end of December, we want to wish her the very best and thank her for all her efforts.



JONATHAN SIPIN

In late October, Jonathan Sipin joined the Commission staff as Bookkeeper. Previously, he was a staff accountant at International Food Policy Research Institute, working on the accounts payable process, account reconciliation, and database management. He has a Bachelors in Accounting from George Mason University. Please join us in welcoming Jonathan.

ACCSP Data Warehouse and Custom Data Requests

The Data Warehouse is an online database populated with Atlantic coast fishery-dependent data supplied by the ACCSP's 23 program partners. The Warehouse harmonizes all the data received into one set of codes for variables such as species, gear, and fishing area, making it possible to combine datasets from different sources for regional and coastal analyses.

The Data Warehouse contains commercial landings from Maine through Florida, beginning in 1950 through the most recent full calendar year. Commercial data for each year are added in April/May of the following year. Customizable reports which provide non-confidential, publicly-available summaries are very useful. However, occasionally users need a unique data set that cannot be obtained through the public Data Warehouse. These individuals can submit a custom data request.

Custom data requests can be useful to the public for many reasons including research opportunities, community engagement, resource management, and policy development. Tailored datasets can support academic and scientific research focused on unique ecosystems or demographic shifts in the area. They facilitate engagement with local communities, ensuring that data reflects the concerns and needs of residents. Custom data requests can support better resource management by providing targeted information on fisheries, tourism, and coastal infrastructure needs. They can also inform policymakers by offering evidence-based insights that address regional priorities and challenges.

The most important thing when submitting a custom data request is to be able to define your fishery and be specific about what data you need. (i.e., species, gears, regions, months or years). The term fishery can refer to harvest of

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Scott Cuppett Receives the 2024 ACFHP Melissa Laser Fish Habitat Conservation Award

Scott Cuppett, Program Manager at Cornell University's Water Resources Institute and the Hudson River Estuary Program with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), was awarded the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership's (ACFHP) prestigious Melissa Laser Fish Habitat Conservation Award on October 21, 2024, at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's 82nd Annual Meeting.

Scott's 25-year career reflects an enduring commitment to conserving Atlantic coastal and estuarine habitats. Known for his vision, dedication, and exceptional leadership, Scott has developed and led several cornerstone initiatives across New York State that continue to safeguard fish habitats. His pioneering work on the "Trees for Tribs" program (NYSDEC) has provided free trees and shrubs to streamside landowners, mobilizing volunteers to protect the Hudson River's tributaries while educating communities on the value of riparian buffers. This program has connected countless individuals with conservation efforts and strengthened communities throughout the region.

Scott also played a key role in establishing the Hudson River Watershed Alliance (HRWA), which fosters collaboration between watershed groups and government agencies in stream conservation. Since its inception, the HRWA has grown to support over 20 watershed groups, providing essential technical support and fostering a shared commitment to preserving aquatic habitats.



Scott Cuppett with ACFHP Chair Jessica Coakley

As a staunch advocate for improving fish passage, Scott has influenced habitat restoration policies across New York by championing dam removals and culvert enhancements to improve aquatic connectivity. Under his guidance, the Hudson River Estuary Program and its partners have assessed over 60% of road-stream crossings in the estuary watershed, developed 23 municipal road-stream crossing management plans, and supported projects that led to the removal of five dams and the restoration of eight culverts.

The Melissa Laser Fish Habitat Conservation Award honors the legacy of Dr. Melissa Laser, a founding ACFHP steering committee

member and visionary biologist with the Maine Department of Marine Resources. Melissa was instrumental in developing the Strategic and Operational Plan for the Restoration of Diadromous and Resident Fishes to the Penobscot River. Her work included coordinating fish passage projects across the North Atlantic, managing ESA-related actions for Atlantic salmon, and leading habitat research and restoration in Maine's Sea Run Fisheries Program. The award recognizes individuals who, like Melissa, demonstrate exceptional dedication to restoring and protecting Atlantic coastal and estuarine habitats.

For more information on the Melissa Laser Award, please visit <https://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/melissa-laser-fish-habitat-conservation-award/>.

ACFHP Announces Available Funding for FY2026 Habitat Conservation Projects

ACFHP is requesting project applications for funding to restore and conserve habitat necessary to support coastal, estuarine dependent, and diadromous fish species. Federal funding available through the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) program will be used to support the top ranked proposals.

Available funding: A total of approximately \$200,000 in funding is available to support 2-4 projects each year; however, exceptional projects may be funded for the full amount. This process is highly competitive, with funding requests regularly surpassing available resources. As mentioned, successful proposals are expected to demonstrate at least a 1:1 non-federal match. Once NFHP grant funds are matched with non-federal funds or in-kind contributions, additional federal and non-federal contributions to the project are permitted without limit. Projects offering more than the minimum match may receive special consideration from ACFHP.

Application deadline: January 31, 2025

For complete information and guidelines please review the [funding instructions](#) or visit: [FY26 Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Funding Cycle](#). To view previously funded projects, visit [On the Ground Projects – Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership](#). For additional information please contact Simen Kaalstad, ACFHP Director, at skaalstad@asmfc.org.

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Madeline Musante Named Employee of the Quarter

Madeline Musante, Outreach and Fisheries Assistant, was named Employee of the Quarter (EOQ) for the third quarter of 2024. In her two years at the Commission, Madeline has contributed to a wide array of projects and proven to be a valued member of the Commission staff. This recognition is a testament to Madeline's impressive, dedicated, and outstanding work on several important Commission projects.



Madeline at the Panama Canal

Madeline is an integral part of the Commission's outreach program for the past two years, including helping to manage the ASMFC website and developing the weekly issues of Atlantic Coast Fisheries News and monthly issues of news clippings. This year, as the Commission has been in the process of redesigning its website, Madeline has played a critical role in the development process. In anticipation of the website redesign, she developed and provided a summary analysis of an outreach survey on the Commission's communications tools. She also helped review 21 website proposals and conduct interviews for the top web design vendors. She has approached the development of the new website with gusto, meeting weekly with the web developers, providing guidance on new formats

and content, and working with relevant staff to ensure all had the opportunity to provide feedback in a timely way. In addition to contributing to special projects, Madeline continues to provide support to ISFMP and Science. For the past year, she assumed the responsibility of formatting board proceedings and compiling ACFMCA reports. Madeline plays a big role in ensuring that our quarterly meetings run smoothly through her management of presentations, motions, and the webinar platforms – a task she excels at and all of staff is grateful

for. She also assists in meeting week follow-ups through the timely rendering of board meeting recordings and uploading of these recordings to the Commission's YouTube Channel.

Madeline's recognition as Employee of the Quarter highlights her dedication and drive to provide excellent results on every project she takes on. Her support across departments has been vital in advancing the Commission's outreach, science, and management goals. As the EOQ recipient, Madeline received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in her personal record. In addition, her name is on the EOQ plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Madeline!

HABITAT HAPPENINGS, continued from page 12

Funding Opportunity for Coastal Fish Habitat Projects

NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation and Recreational Fishing Initiative announced that they are collaborating again this year to offer another informal funding opportunity in FY25 for coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (FHP) projects that support habitat conservation or restoration and engagement with the recreational fishing community.

- The total funding available is approximately \$150,000 and will be used to support several FHP projects (up to max ~\$75,000 per project).
- The Call for Proposals can be found [here](#), or on our [Funding Opportunities page](#).

As it applies to the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, this grant opportunity could be used for projects focused on

recreational, saltwater or diadromous species that actively engage the recreational fishing community in habitat protection or restoration.

You can check out the last round of funded projects at [National Fish Habitat Partnership Projects to Engage Recreational Fishing Communities and Restore Habitat | NOAA Fisheries](#)

On a broader note, there are a total of ten Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) that are eligible for these funds across the country; see the list in the [Call for Proposals](#) and the [National Fish Habitat Partnership \(NFHP\) website](#) for more general information about the NFHP program. The closest neighboring FHPs to ACFHP are the [Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership](#) and [Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture](#).

For more information, please contact Simen Kaalstad, ACFHP Director, at skaalstad@asmfc.org.



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a particular species with a specific gear or be defined by a precise geographic area.

Along with data dissemination comes the responsibility of protecting confidentiality. ACCSP strives to achieve the right balance between confidential and available data. The ACCSP policy for confidentiality requires that any data summary that is publicly disclosed must include landings from at least three dealers, three harvesters and three vessels to be considered non-confidential.

The Data Team will initially respond to your request within two weeks. However, issues with confidentiality can extend the time needed to complete data requests. Therefore, please allow for ample lead time when you are submitting a custom data request. Submit a custom data request at <https://www.accsp.org/what-we-do/data-warehouse/>.

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. For further information please visit www.accsp.org.

