



ASMFC

# FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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## Spud Woodward Elected ASMFC Chair

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, member states of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission thanked Patrick C. Keliher of Maine for an effective two-year term as Chair and elected Commissioner Spud Woodward of Georgia to succeed him.

"I'm honored to be chosen by my fellow Commissioners to lead our efforts for the next two years, during which I hope we'll once again be meeting in person. I look forward to concluding our introspective examination of *de minimis* status and conservation equivalency so we're confident that we have the proper balance between flexibility and accountability. Allocation will remain one of our most contentious and potentially divisive tasks. However, I know the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect that's the legacy of the Commission will lead us to decisions that are as fair and equitable as possible," said Mr. Woodward. Mr. Woodward continued, "I want to thank outgoing Chair, Pat Keliher, for his steady hand on the tiller during a tumultuous two years, when he faced challenges unlike those of any of his predecessors. Newly elected Vice-chair Joseph Cimino and I will strive to emulate his success working with our stakeholders, state, federal, and academic partners, Congress, and especially Bob Beal and the outstanding staff to ensure Cooperative and Sustainable Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries is not just a vision statement but a reality."

The majority of Mr. Keliher's chairmanship occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time in which his leadership truly shined. He maintained active communication with staff and fellow Commissioners, oversaw a seamless transition to virtual meetings, and consistently made decisions with the safety of Commissioners and staff in mind.

A native Georgian, Mr. Woodward has dedicated his life to marine fisheries management at the state and interstate levels. Now retired and serving as Georgia's Governor Appointee to the Commission, Mr. Woodward worked for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) for over 34 years, including serving as the Director of the Coastal Resources Division and Assistant Director for Marine Fisheries. In addition to his work with GA DNR and the Commission, Mr. Woodward has served on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council since 2018. In the Commission's 80-year history, Mr. Woodward holds the distinction of being the second Governor's Appointee to serve as Commission Chair and Vice-Chair. The first being Captain David H. Hart.

The Commission also elected Joseph Cimino, Marine Fisheries Administrator for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, as its Vice-Chair.



## 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

A.G. "Spud" Woodward (GA), Chair  
Joseph Cimino (NJ), Vice-Chair

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Patrick A. Campfield,  
Science Director

Toni Kerns,  
ISFMP Director

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Director of Finance & Administration

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#### **November 3 (begins at 9 AM) & 4 (ends at 1 PM)**

State Data Review Workshop for Bluefish Webinar; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/11/2021/State-Data-Review-Workshop-for-Bluefish/1818> for more information

#### **November 10 (1 - 3 PM)**

Atlantic Menhaden 2022 Stock Assessment Update Planning Webinar; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/11/2021/Atlantic-Menhaden-Technical-Committee/1825> for more information

#### **November 16 (begins at 9 AM) - 18 (ends at 3:30 PM)**

Horseshoe Crab ARM Framework Peer Review Workshop; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/11/2021/Horseshoe-Crab-ARM-Framework-Peer-Review-Workshop/1827> for more information

#### **November 23 (9 - 11 AM)**

Atlantic Menhaden Plan Development Team; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/11/2021/Atlantic-Menhaden-Plan-Development-Team/1821> for more information

#### **December 2**

ASMFC Law Enforcement Committee; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/12/2021/Law-Enforcement-Committee/1831> for more information

#### **December 2 (8 AM - 5 PM)**

ASMFC Habitat Committee Webinar; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/12/2021/Habitat-Committee/1807> for more information

#### **December 6 (1 - 3 PM)**

American Lobster Management Board Webinar; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/12/2021/American-Lobster-Management-Board/1840> for more information

#### **December 6 - 10**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Beaufort Hotel, 2440 Lennoxville Road, Beaufort, NC; visit <https://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/council-meetings/> for more information

#### **December 7 - 9**

New England Fishery Management Council, Hotel Viking, Newport, RI; visit <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/december-2021-council-meeting> for more information

#### **December 13 - 16**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Westin Annapolis, 100 Westgate Circle, Annapolis, MD; visit <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2021/december-2021-council-meeting> for more information

#### **December 22 (9 - 11 AM)**

Atlantic Menhaden Plan Development Team; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/12/2021/Atlantic-Menhaden-Plan-Development-Team/1823> for more information

### 2022

#### **January 4 (1 - 3 PM)**

Atlantic Menhaden Plan Development Team; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/1/2022/Atlantic-Menhaden-Plan-Development-Team/1824> for more information



**For this issue, we are dedicating this space to outgoing Commission Chair Patrick C. Keliher and the speech he presented to Commissioners at our Fall Meeting Webinar.**

With this being the last time that I speak to you as Commission Chair, I wanted to thank you all for the support you have given Spud and me over the past two years. It has certainly been a challenging time for the Commission, the states, our stakeholders, and the world at large. With the exception of my first meeting as Chair in February 2020, we have been conducting all the Commission's business through virtual meetings. And, despite the drawbacks of not meeting in person, I continue to be impressed with the scope of work we have accomplished over that time.

These accomplishments include quick action by the states to end overfishing of Atlantic striped bass; implementation of ecological reference points to manage Atlantic menhaden; positive stock status for all four tautog populations after years of effort to rebuild these stocks; a new plan amendment for bluefish; and the completion of benchmark stock assessments for American lobster, American shad, Atlantic cobia, and tautog. We have also had difficult but important discussions about reallocation that will continue into next year and beyond as we seek to respond to changes in species distribution along the coast.

Advances in habitat conservation were made by the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) through its funding of seven on-the-ground projects, which will open over 40 river miles and conserve over 300 acres of fish habitat. ACFHP also partnered with the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and The Nature Conservancy to spatially prioritize fish habitat conservation sites through GIS mapping and analyses for the Atlantic region of the U.S. from Maine to Florida.

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) continued to make significant improvements to fisheries data collection and management along the coast. Major accomplishments over the past two years include the redesign of SAFIS eTRIPS, the first and currently only fisherman trip reporting application that meets One Stop Reporting initiative; implementation of state conduct of the Marine Recreational Information Program's (MRIP) For-Hire

Survey; and electronic data collection for MRIP's Access Point Angler Intercept Survey. Lastly, ACCSP improved data security in compliance with the Federal Information Security Management Act.

Looking ahead, Spud and your new Vice-Chair Joseph Cimino, will have a full plate of issues to address. These include a new plan amendment for Atlantic striped bass, as well as broader issues such as responding to climate change impacts to our managed stocks and reallocation.

I know one of Spud's goals while Chair is to strengthen the Commission's fundamental management principles – such as conservation equivalency, use of *de minimis* provisions, and our appeals process – to ensure management and regulatory stability.

I am so grateful for the individual and collective efforts of our Commissioners and proxies, our technical and industry advisors, and our regional and federal partners in advancing the sustainable management of Atlantic coast fisheries despite the challenges that the pandemic has placed upon us.

From a personal standpoint, it is very humbling to be elected by my peers to oversee this Commission. I have a long

history with ASMFC from starting as an advisory panel member to serving as your Chair. I can honestly say that all of this time, while sometimes frustrating and even infuriating, has always been a privilege. For me that link is directly related to the fact that the Commission is a state's rights organization, and we should never, ever lose sight of that. Our individual state's rights create our greatest challenges as we balance sustainability with the needs of our respective states. Climate change and shifting stocks, without a doubt, will continue to clash with state needs. I urge you all in the years ahead to stay committed to addressing these challenges; it will not be easy, but it must happen.

I remain committed to working with our new leadership and you all in the year(s) ahead to further our mission and shared goals. Thank you for all you do!

**Our individual state's rights create our greatest challenges as we balance sustainability with the needs of our respective states. Climate change and shifting stocks will continue to clash with state needs. I urge you all in the years ahead to stay committed to addressing these challenges; it will not be easy, but it must happen.**

## Regional Assessments Show Improvements in Stock Status

### Introduction

Known for their distinctive teeth and delicious meat, tautog is a highly prized recreational species from Massachusetts through Virginia. A majority of total harvest is taken by anglers, who catch these fish among hard structures such as rocky shorelines, piers, pilings, and natural and artificial reefs. Tautog is a slow growing, long lived fish that tends to stay near “home” reefs, characteristics that make the species particularly susceptible to overfishing and localized depletion. These concerns lead to the Commission approving an interstate management plan for the species in 1996. The FMP was completely replaced by Amendment 1 in 20217, which implemented regional management and a mandatory commercial tagging program. The just release Regional Stock Assessment Update shows positive trends in the populations of all four regions after years of effort to rebuild the stocks and end overfishing.

### Life History

A member of the wrasse (Labridae) family, tautog are stout fish with an arched head and broad tail. Juveniles are greenish in color and become darker with age. Distributed along the Northeast Atlantic coast from Nova Scotia to Georgia, tautog are most abundant from Cape Cod to Chesapeake Bay. Seasonal migration varies throughout the species’ range. In the north, adults move from offshore wintering grounds in the spring to nearshore spawning and feeding areas in the fall, reversing their migration as water temperatures drop from fall to winter. In the south, tautog undergo a shorter seasonal migration and in some areas may remain either inshore or offshore year round. When water temperatures are very low, adults become torpid or lethargic, possibly allowing tautog to survive cold winter conditions, a unique trait compared to other wrasse species which typically inhabit tropical waters.

Tautog prey primarily on oysters, blue mussels, and other shellfish, using large teeth to crack and crush shells. Juveniles feed on small benthic and pelagic invertebrates such as amphipods and copepods. Adults stay close to their preferred home site and although they may move away during the day to feed, they return to the same general location at night where they become dormant and may actually sleep. There are no species that preferentially feed on tautog, but birds such as cormorants prey on juveniles. Smooth dogfish, barndoor skate, red hake, silver hake, sea raven, and goosefish have been reported to feed on both adults and juveniles.

Tautog are sexually mature at three to four years of age and can live for more than 30 years. Throughout their life, tautog aggregate around structured habitats in estuaries and inlets to offshore reefs. Shallow, vegetated inshore areas serve as juvenile nurseries, while larger juveniles cohabitate with adults in deeper offshore waters. North of Long Island, tautog are generally found around rocks and boulders. Toward the southern end of their range, tautog often inhabit wrecks, jetties, natural and artificial reefs, and shellfish beds. This aggregation around structure makes tautog easy to find and catch, even when biomass levels are low.

### Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

While tautog are targeted by both commercial and recreational fisheries, over 90% of the total harvest comes from the recreational fishery, with a majority of landings occurring in state waters. Most tautog are landed in the spring and fall, although some Mid-Atlantic anglers pursue tautog year-round, and there is an active fishery off the Virginia coast in the winter.

Historically, tautog were considered a “trash fish” until the late 1970s when demand increased and a directed commercial fishery developed. Landings quickly rose, peaking in 1987 at nearly 1.2 million pounds, then rapidly began to decline as states implemented commercial regulations starting in the early 1990s. Landings have remained at approximately the same level for the past 30 years.

## Species Snapshot



**Tautog**  
*Tautoga onitis*

**Management Unit**  
Maine through Florida

**Common Names:** blackfish, tog, white chinner, black porgy

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

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

### Interesting Facts:

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

**Maximum Age/Size:** 34 years/3.1 feet

**Stock Status:** Not overfished and overfishing not occurring in MARI, LIS, DelMarVa regions; overfished and overfishing not occurring in NJ-NYB region.



Commercial landings in 2020 were approximately 313,400 pounds, 5% of the total (commercial and recreational) coastwide harvest. The ex-vessel price (dollars per pound) for tautog has steadily increased since the late 1970s with coastwide average price in 2020 at approximately \$3.45 per pound. A majority of 2020 commercial landings (58%) occurred in New York followed by Massachusetts (20%). The fish is sold in both fresh and live markets in Northeast cities, with steady demand increasing the price for live tautog in recent years. The higher price and interest in undersized fish has led to significant illegal harvest.

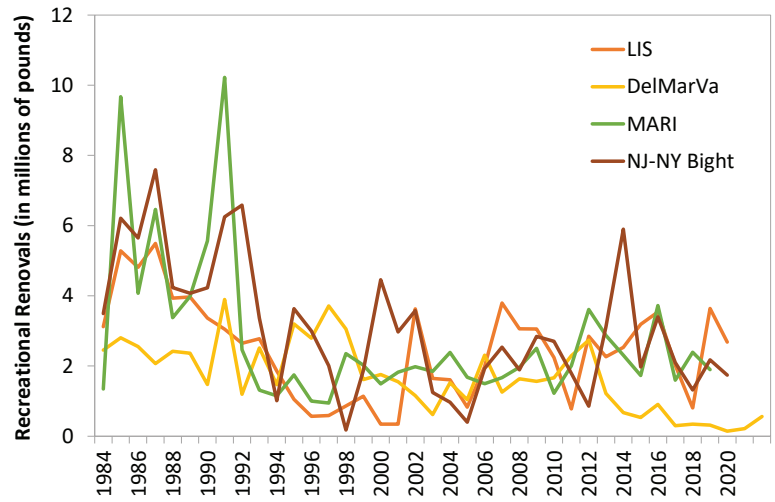
Recreational harvest occurs primarily in the fall from September–December, with green and Jonah crabs the bait of choice for many anglers. Over the past 40 years, coastwide recreational harvest has ranged from a high of over 20 million pounds in 1986 to a low of 3.4 million pounds in 2018. Harvest in 2020 was estimated at 6.2 million pounds. At the state level, New York (28%) and Connecticut (22%) harvested the most tautog in 2020, though high harvesting states have included New Jersey and Rhode Island in recent years. While harvesting at much lower levels, fisheries in the states of Delaware through Virginia are primarily recreational. Coastwide recreational discards have increased over time, with an estimated 14.6 million fish discarded in 2020. A discard mortality rate of 2.5% is assumed for the recreational fishery, resulting in an estimated 365,000 recreational dead discards or 17% of recreational removals.

### Stock Status

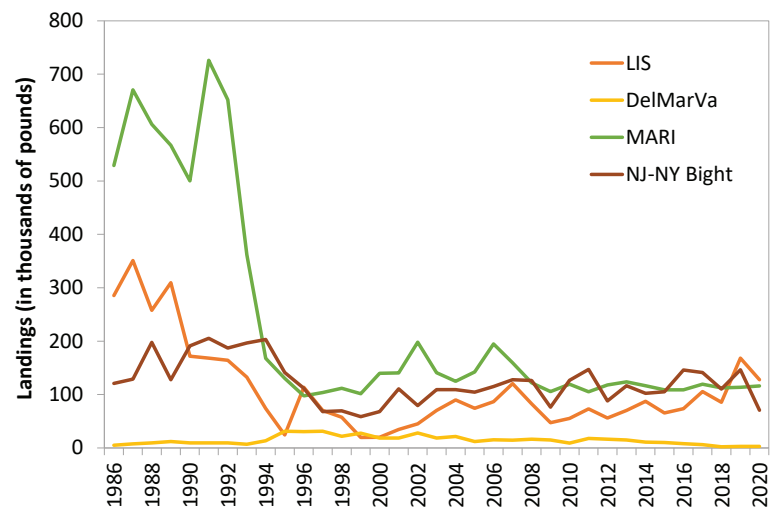
Since the 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment, stock status has been evaluated regionally due to differences in biology, fishery characteristics, and limited coastwide movement. Those regions include: Massachusetts–Rhode Island (MARI), Long Island Sound (LIS), New Jersey–New York Bight (NJ-NYB), and Delaware–Maryland–Virginia (DelMarVa).

Based on the findings of the 2021 Regional Stock Assessment Update, stock status in 2020 varied by region but was generally improved from the 2016 update. Specifically, the LIS population moved from overfished and overfishing occurring to not overfished and overfishing not occurring. The NJ-NYB population was no longer experiencing overfishing in 2020, but was still overfished, although spawning stock biomass (SSB) had increased since 2015 and was just below the SSB threshold. Additionally, the DelMarVa stock moved from overfished to not overfished status. In the MARI region, stock status remains unchanged with the stock not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. The changes in stock status reflect strong year classes and lower landings in all regions that resulted in lower fishing mortality and increasing SSB.

**Recreational Removals (harvest + dead releases) of Tautog by Region**  
Source: ASMFC Regional Stock Assessment Update, 2021



**Commercial Landings of Tautog by Region**  
Source: ASMFC Regional Stock Assessment Update, 2021



**Tautog Stock Status and Reference Points by Region**

Stock Region	Spawning Stock Biomass (in millions of pounds)			Fishing Mortality			Stock Status
	Target	Threshold	2020 Estimate	Target	Threshold	3-year Average	
MARI	10.09	7.57	14.90	0.28	0.49	0.23	Not overfished; overfishing not occurring
LIS	14.83	11.12	14.70	0.26	0.38	0.30	Not overfished; overfishing not occurring
NJ-NYB	14.45	10.78	10.54	0.19	0.30	0.26	Overfished; overfishing not occurring
DelMarVa	9.90	7.40	9.66	0.17	0.27	0.06	Not overfished; overfishing not occurring

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Each regional assessment used information through 2020, including calibrated recreational data from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). In addition to regional indices of abundance from fishery independent surveys, a catch per unit effort index was developed using MRIP data for each region because tautog are not easily sampled by standard fishery-independent surveys. The new MRIP estimates resulted in higher estimates of SSB and recruitment in all regions, but had less of an impact on fishing mortality.

### Atlantic Coastal Management

Tautog is managed under Amendment 1 (2017) to the Fishery Management Plan, which delineated the stock into four regions due to differences in biology and fishery characteristics, and limited coastwide movement. Based on these delineations, the Amendment established new regional biological reference points, fishing mortality targets, and stock rebuilding schedules, and required each region to implement measures that have at least a 50% probability of achieving the regional fishing mortality target. If the current fishing mortality exceeds the regional threshold, the Board must initiate corrective action within one year.

The 2017 assessment update found that all regions except MARI were overfished, and overfishing was occurring in the LIS and NJ-NYB regions. As such, Amendment 1 required the LIS region to reduce harvest by at least 20.3%, and the NJ-NYB region



Photo (c) Ken Neill

to reduce harvest by at least 2%. The MARI and DelMarVa regions were not required to reduce harvest, but adjusted their regulations to establish consistent measures across all the states within each region where possible. In considering the improved results of the 2021 Regional Assessments Update, the Board chose to not make any management changes at this time since no regions are experiencing overfishing.



Commercially-harvest tautog. Photo (c) Wes Townsend

Amendment 1 also established a commercial harvest tagging program to address the pervasive issue of illegal harvest of undersized and unreported tautog. Under the tagging program, all states within the management unit must require commercially permitted harvesters to tag all tautog at the time of harvest or prior to offloading. Tautog must be landed in the state that is identified on the tag. The selected tags are non-lethal and are applied to fish intended for both live and fresh markets. State implementation of the tagging program began in 2020.

The 2021 Regional Assessment Update and the assessment overview can both be found on the tautog webpage under Stock Assessment Reports at <http://www.asmf.org/species/tautog>.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior FMP Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.



## 2022 Specifications Set for Horseshoe Crabs of Delaware Bay-Origin

In October, the Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved the harvest specifications for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay-origin under the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework. The Board established a harvest limit of 500,000 Delaware Bay male horseshoe crabs and zero female horseshoe crabs for the 2022 season based on the harvest package recommended by the Delaware Bay Ecosystem Technical Committee and ARM Subcommittee. Per the allocation mechanism established in Addendum VII, the following quotas were set for the States of New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland and the Commonwealth of Virginia, which harvest horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay-origin:

State	2022 Delaware Bay Origin Horseshoe Crab Quota (no. of crabs)	2022 Total Quota*
	Male Only	Male Only
Delaware	162,136	162,136
New Jersey**	162,136	162,136
Maryland	141,112	255,980
Virginia***	34,615	81,331

\* Total male quotas includes crabs which are not of Delaware Bay origin.

\*\* New Jersey has maintained a harvest moratorium for horseshoe crabs since 2008.

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

The ARM Framework, established through Addendum VII, incorporates both shorebird and horseshoe crab abundance levels to set optimized harvest levels for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin. The horseshoe crab abundance estimate was based on data from the Benthic Trawl Survey conducted by Virginia Polytechnic Institute. This survey, which is the primary data source for assessing

Delaware Bay horseshoe crab abundance, does not have a consistent funding source. Members of the Delaware and New Jersey U.S. Congressional Delegations, with the support of NOAA Fisheries, have provided annual funding for the survey since 2016.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org).

## Peer Review for the Horseshoe Crab ARM Framework Scheduled for mid-November

The Commission's Horseshoe Crab Adaptive Resource (ARM) Framework will be peer-reviewed on November 16-18, 2021, via webinar. The ARM Framework incorporates both shorebird and horseshoe crab abundance levels to set optimized harvest limits for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay-origin. Since 2013, it has been used by the Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board to set annual specifications for the Delaware Bay region.



Photo © Gregory Breese, USFWS

The Delaware Bay is home to both the largest staging area for migratory shorebirds in the Atlantic Flyway and the largest population of horseshoe crabs in the world. An estimated 425,000 to one million migratory shorebirds including the threatened Rufa red knot converge on the Delaware Bay to feed and rebuild energy reserves prior to completing their northward migration, with horseshoe crab eggs providing an important component of the shorebirds' diet. To address this interrelationship, the Commission adopted use of the ARM Framework in 2012 to ensure that horseshoe crab harvest within the Delaware Bay region took into account the forage needs of migratory shorebirds. Nearly 10 years since its development and use, and with more available data, the

Horseshoe Crab ARM Committee has been exploring revisions to the Framework. The peer review will evaluate the appropriateness of these revisions for use in management.

The peer review is open to the public, except for the Peer Review Panel's final deliberations, when the public and all other workshop participants will be asked to exit the webinar. The link to the webinar follows: <https://www.gotomeet.me/ASMFCStaff2/horseshoe-crab-arm-review>. Please note

participants do not need to register in advance of the meeting, simply click on the webinar link the day of the meeting. The peer review agenda can be found at [http://www.asmfc.org/files/Meetings/HSC\\_ARM\\_ReviewWorkshopAgenda\\_Nov2021.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/files/Meetings/HSC_ARM_ReviewWorkshopAgenda_Nov2021.pdf).

It's anticipated that the revised ARM Framework and peer review report will be considered by the Horseshoe Crab Management Board in January 2022. For more information, please contact Patrick Campfield, Fisheries Science Director, at [pcampfield@asmfc.org](mailto:pcampfield@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

## David Cupka Awarded South Carolina's Highest Civilian Honor

Congratulations to past ASMFC Commissioner David Cupka for receiving South Carolina's highest civilian honor, the Order of the Palmetto, this September. David remains one of ASMFC's longest serving members, having represented South Carolina on the Commission for nearly 30 years. He is also the recipient of the Commission's most prestigious award: the Captain David H. Hart Award for his contributions to the conservation and management of Atlantic coastal fisheries. Following is more about Mr. Cupka receiving the Order of the Palmetto.

On September 14th, David Michael Cupka returned to the halls of the state's Marine Resources Center in Charleston. Cupka was one of the division's very first employees in 1970, and he went on to serve as its Director of Fisheries Management and play a pioneering role in the study and protection of fish, shellfish and other marine life in South Carolina and beyond.

It was in recognition of this work that Cupka was awarded the state's highest civilian honor: the Order of the Palmetto. Presented in honor of a lifetime of extraordinary achievement or service to South Carolina, the award has been granted to outstanding citizens by the Governor's Office since 1971.

"His contributions have made South Carolina a recognized leader among the coastal states in the area of marine fisheries conservation and management," wrote South Carolina Senator Sandy Senn in her nomination letter for Cupka. His nomination also included letters from present and past directors of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) and the regional fishery groups on which he served. David Cupka in the early days of the Marine Resources Division.

"David has been a stalwart champion for our marine resources – a pioneer in cooperation and stewardship across state lines," said SCDNR director Robert Boyles at the award ceremony.

Born in Charleston in 1945, David Cupka studied marine science first at the College of Charleston and then at Florida State University. In 1970, he returned home to join South Carolina's



Left to right: SCDNR Board member Duane Swyger, David Cupka, and SCDNR Director Robert Boyles (c) E. Weeks/SNDNR

newly created Marine Resources Division, whose first director was tasked with developing a world-class marine research center for a growing team of biologists.

Cupka worked on a wide array of species and projects over his 35-year tenure with the Marine Resources Division, overseeing work on everything from dolphins to artificial reefs to shrimp. He founded several of the Division's longest-lived and best-known programs, including the Artificial

Reef Program and the Marine Gamefish Tagging Program. He served on nearly 20 regional and national fisheries committees over his career, cementing South Carolina's status as a key player in regional marine science and policy.

After retiring from SCDNR in 2005, Cupka continued to advocate for sound fisheries science and management as an at-large member of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. He similarly represented South Carolina on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission for 22 years.

Even today, wrote former SCDNR director Dr. Paul Sandifer, "David is undoubtedly one of the most knowledgeable people around with regard to fisheries management processes and the involvement of the public in these processes."

Fish are never far from Cupka's mind, but these days he stays busy as a purveyor of rare and out-of-print books on South Carolina's history through Palmetto Books, a side business he's operated for several decades. David and his late wife, Kay Cupka, met at SCDNR, where she worked in administration for 32 years before retiring. Today, Cupka enjoys spending time with his daughter and granddaughter, traveling, horseback riding and bowling.

"David Cupka is one of those all too rare and precious gems of a person," said Dr. Sandifer. "He has dedicated the entirety of his professional life over four and a half decades to the management of South Carolina's wealth of marine resources."



## Ed Martino

For the third quarter of 2021, Ed Martino, IT Manager and Software Developer, was awarded Employee of the Quarter for his contributions to the development, operations, and maintenance of the Commission's and ACCSP's information technology systems.

During 2021, Ed adeptly handled several large projects for ACCSP, including leading the external review of ACCSP's compliance with the Federal Information Security Act and continuously monitoring security over the course of the lengthy review. He performed major Oracle upgrades for the ACCSP databases, expanded development and support of ACCSP mobile application programming interfaces (APIs), and worked to address partner needs regarding application programming and data challenges. Ed picked up on additional tasks and skills while the software team has been short-handed, and helped balance priorities across projects.



A 9-year veteran to the Commission, Ed has consistently epitomized the qualities and values of Employee of the Quarter. He demonstrates his commitment to teamwork by sharing his knowledge and successes with others. He takes responsibility for the availability and quality of ACCSP products. He unassumingly initiates and completes IT projects with a high quality of work to keep the data flowing for the Commission, state and federal partners, and data users. All of this with done with a calm, positive, can-do attitude, even under high pressure situations. Without the techno-acronyms, Ed has applied highly technical skillsets to maintain and improve the IT functionality of the Commission and ACCSP. As Employee of the Quarter, Ed received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in his personal record. In addition, his name is on a plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Ed!



## ASMFC PUBLICATIONS ARE GOING DIGITAL

In a continuing effort to reduce our carbon footprint and save on printing and mailing costs, as of January 1, 2022, this newsletter and *Habitat Hotline Atlantic* will no longer be paper printed! We will be delivering these publications directly to your email inbox.

To help make this transition as seamless as possible, we would appreciate it if you would make sure we have your valid email address.

Requests to be placed on the distribution list for future editions of the *Fisheries Focus* may be sent to [info@asmfc.org](mailto:info@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Subscribe FF).



## 2022 NATIONAL SALTWATER RECREATIONAL FISHERIES SUMMIT

SAVE THE DATE

Please save-the-date for the fourth National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit on March 29-30, 2022, in Arlington, Virginia. At this time, we are planning for an in-person Summit, and will make an announcement in January if this plan changes. The theme for the 2022 Summit is *Recreational Fisheries in a Time of Change*. The Summit is being organized by NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, in collaboration with a Steering Committee of marine recreational fishery representatives throughout the coastal U.S. The Summit is supported by a facilitation team led by Tidal Bay Consulting. The Summit is still in the planning stages, but as it develops more information can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/2022-national-saltwater-recreational-fisheries-summit>

## SAFIS eTRIPS: One Application, One Report

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has been working with partners on a One Stop Reporting (OSR) project that defined the requirements for submission of a single electronic report to satisfy reporting requirements of multiple federal permits. Staff actively coordinated with NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Region (GARFO), Highly Migratory Species Division (HMS), Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) and the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) to refine the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) eTRIPS software to dynamically ask the right questions, at the right time, across a vessel's active federal permits.

The OSR project recognizes that when a vessel operates under a single permit, there are many available solutions to electronic reporting. Yet, when a vessel holds permits for commercial and/or for-hire fisheries that may be issued by one or more federal regions, the One Stop Report minimizes the reporting burden on industry.

### Why Use SAFIS eTRIPS?

Using SAFIS eTRIPS relieves the burden on industry of using multiple reporting applications or pathways to submit a report. It is currently the only reporting application that is OSR compliant, meaning it will fulfill the reporting requirements for vessels with multiple federal permits

The SAFIS eTRIPS application is compliant with permit reporting requirements for GARFO commercial and for-hire permits, SERO Coastal Fisheries Logbook Program, HMS commercial logbooks and for-hire permits; and Southeast For-Hire Permits (SEFHIER).

In addition to the new OSR compliance, SAFIS eTRIPS has a number of features that have always made it flexible and user friendly

regardless of the number of permits. These include availability on Apple and Android phones and tablets, and Windows 10 (PC); a 24/7 Help Desk Support; and an informational webpage with tutorial videos, maps, brochures, and other resources.

### Reporting Requirements

GARFO-permitted commercial fishing vessels are now required to report electronically. Fishers will need an electronic vessel trip report (eVTR) for each trip and must submit completed reports within 48 hours of the end of a trip.

Vessels issued for-hire permits for New England Fishery Management Council-managed fisheries will also be required to use eVTR and report within 48 hours of the end of a trip. Vessels issued a for-hire permit for a Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council species or a private recreational vessel tilefish permit already submit vessel trip reports electronically.

These reporting requirements do not apply to vessels holding only a permit for American lobster.

**WHY USE SAFIS ETRIPS FOR FEDERAL REPORTING?**

- Industry tested interface
- Available for Windows 10, Android, iOS, and online
- 24/7 Help Desk support

**COMMERCIAL PERMITS**

- GARFO
- SEFSC \*
- HMS \*

**ONE APPLICATION ONE REPORT**

**FOR-HIRE PERMITS**

- GARFO (eVTR)
- SERO (SEFHIER)
- HMS

\*AVAILABLE BY NOV 10

### SAFIS eTRIPS Resources

For more on the eTRIPS application visit the ACCSP website <https://www.accsp.org/what-we-do/safis/etrips-mobile-instructions/>

SAFIS 24/7 Helpdesk Information

- 1.800.984.0810
- [mobile\\_support@accsp.org](mailto:mobile_support@accsp.org)



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](http://www.accsp.org).

# On the Legislative Front: FY22 Appropriations Legislation for NOAA

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Appropriations Committee released its Fiscal Year 22 (FY22) Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill. The legislation contains funding and instructions to NOAA on numerous issues relevant to Atlantic fisheries:

- \$650,000 for collection of Atlantic menhaden abundance data in the Chesapeake Bay
- \$10 million for states to mitigate costs to lobster and Jonah crab harvesters to comply with NOAA Fisheries North Atlantic right whale protection rules, \$1 million for innovative (ropeless) gear research
- Directs NOAA Fisheries to continue the Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey
- Full funding for the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program's (NEAMAP) Maine-New Hampshire and Mid-Atlantic Inshore Trawl Surveys
- \$1.4 million for cooperative offshore lobster enforcement
- \$18.5 million to address fisheries needs related to offshore wind energy projects
- \$18.5 million for cooperative enforcement agreements with states

The House Appropriations Committee approved its FY22 CJS Appropriations bill (H.R. 4505) by a vote of 33-26 on July 15, 2021.

Notable funding and instructions to NOAA in H.R. 4505:

- \$16.9 million for research and monitoring of North Atlantic right whales, including up to \$3.5 million to address state/industry fishery data gaps to inform future regulatory changes
- Directs NOAA Fisheries to continue the Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey
- \$20.38 million for NOAA Fisheries' initiatives in support of wind energy

FY22 marks the end of a ten-year moratorium on Congressional earmarks, referred to as 'Special Projects' in the Senate and 'Community Projects' in the House. The Senate's FY22 CJS Appropriations bill includes \$64,034,000 for NOAA Special Projects. The House's FY22 CJS Appropriations bill includes \$23,980,000 for NOAA Community Projects. A full list of instructions to NOAA and Special/Community Projects can be found in the Senate's Explanatory Statement and the House's Committee Report.

The federal government is operating under an extension of FY21 funding levels until December 3, 2021. The next step for Congress is likely an Omnibus Appropriations bill for FY22 that combines several (or all) House and Senate FY22 Appropriations bills. This could happen by the December 3 deadline or get delayed by another temporary extension of FY21 funding.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (in \$ thousands)				
	Increase to FY21 amount, Decrease to FY21 amount, >10% change			
	FY21 Enacted	FY22 President	FY22 House	FY22 Senate
<b>Protected Resources Science and Management</b>				
Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles & Other Species	125,164	142,957	146,500	154,250
Species Recovery Grants	7,000	17,012	7,500	8,000
Atlantic Salmon	6,500	6,733	6,500	6,733
Pacific Salmon	67,000	70,425	70,500	70,000
<b>Total, Protected Resources Science and Management</b>	205,664	237,127	231,000	238,983
<b>Fisheries Science and Management</b>				
Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services	146,927	170,603	162,000	167,255
Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments	175,927	197,645	192,500	201,515
Observers and Training	55,468	53,136	55,468	58,584
Fisheries Management Programs and Services	123,836	136,782	133,750	135,427
Aquaculture	17,500	17,878	17,500	20,000
Salmon Management Activities	62,050	62,447	66,000	66,205
Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions	41,500	42,902	43,000	43,000
Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants	3,365	3,372	3,372	3,500
<b>Total, Fisheries Science and Management</b>	626,573	684,765	673,590	695,486
<b>Enforcement</b>	75,000	77,731	78,500	79,481
<b>Habitat Conservation and Restoration</b>	57,625	77,731	61,500	60,000
<b>Total, National Marine Fisheries Service</b>	964,862	1,099,327	1,044,590	1,073,950
<b>Other Line Items of Interest</b>				
National Sea Grant College Program	75,000	115,694	85,000	90,000
Marine Aquaculture Program (Sea Grant)	13,000	13,124	14,500	15,000
Coastal Zone Management and Services	46,700	64,789	62,000	58,000
Coastal Zone Management Grants	78,500	108,500	82,500	88,500
National Coastal Resilience Fund (Title IX)	34,000	68,000	38,000	36,000
Coral Reef Program	33,000	43,193	38,000	40,000
Sanctuaries and Marine Protected Areas/National Marine Sanctuaries	56,500	84,503	61,500	66,000
National Estuarine Research Reserve System	28,500	42,500	30,500	34,000



## An Exploration into ASMFC's Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool & Policy

### Background

Risk and uncertainty are inherent to fisheries management. Uncertainty includes factors that are outside of management's control, such as temperature impacts on a stock, as well as dynamics that are beyond our current understanding, such as unknown factors contributing to natural mortality. Because of this inherent uncertainty, any fisheries management decision includes some level of risk. Successful fisheries management must take these factors into account.

One of the key components of accounting for risk in fisheries management is determining the management body's risk tolerance, in other words, how much risk is acceptable for a species or stock. An example of this is the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council's risk policy, which determines an acceptable level of risk, specifically the acceptable probability of overfishing, given a species' current biomass level.

In recent years, the Commission has been developing a Risk and Uncertainty Policy to better account for risk and uncertainty in its management decisions. Though the Commission has always taken these factors into account, these discussions have been on an ad hoc basis and have varied species to species. This policy aims to improve transparency and make the process consistent across species, while still allowing for flexibility.

The Risk and Uncertainty Work Group, in collaboration with species technical committees (TCs) and the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS), developed the Risk and Uncertainty Policy and its associated Decision Tool. The Decision Tool is a structured method for arriving at a recommended risk level based on Commission priorities and characteristics of the stock and fishery. While the policy addresses a similar need as the Council's risk policy, it incorporates a wider range of factors (e.g., socioeconomic considerations) and allows for more flexibility.

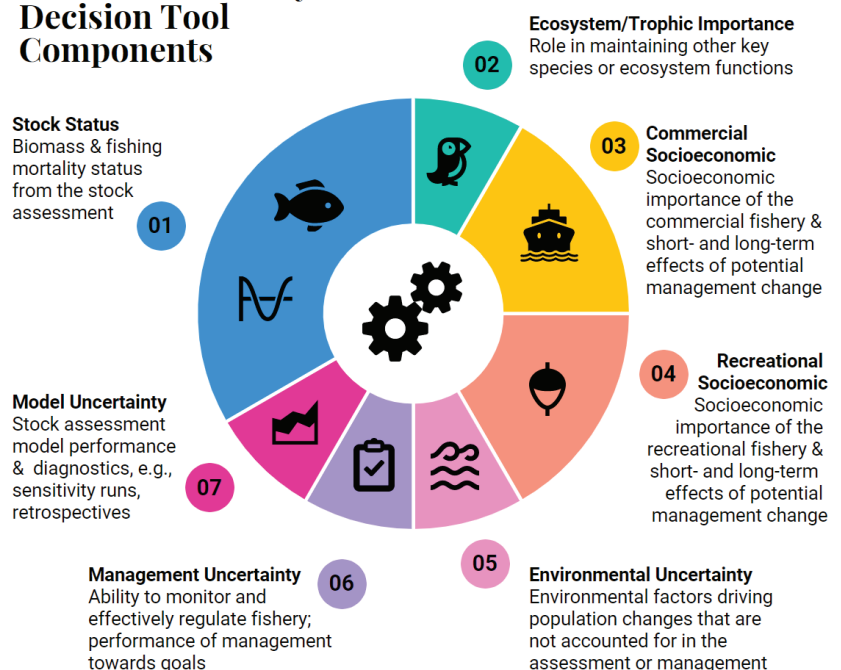
### The Decision Tool

The Decision Tool incorporates different information related to the risk and uncertainty for a species (technical inputs) and combines it with the relative importance of the information (weighting) to arrive at the recommended probability of achieving the reference points. Species-specific Decision Tools can be developed from the template Decision Tool, adapting the tool as needed to meet the specific characteristics of the fishery.

The Decision Tool's technical inputs capture characteristics of the stock's biology, stock assessment, management, and fishery. The components include: stock status, model uncertainty, management uncertainty, environmental uncertainty, ecosystem/trophic importance, and socioeconomic considerations (see accompanying graphic). Some inputs are quantitative, such as the probability that overfishing is occurring, while others are qualitative, such as the scoring for environmental uncertainty (from none to very high uncertainty). The species TC and CESS provide the technical inputs, with potential for input from the species Management Board and Advisory Panel.

The Decision Tool's weightings indicate how important a component is to management considerations relative to the other components. For example, if a management board thought that stock status was the most important factor in its risk considerations, the Board could weight it higher than all of the other components. The weightings are based on management board preferences.

### Risk & Uncertainty Decision Tool Components



*continued on next page*

The Decision Tool combines the technical inputs and weightings and produces a recommended probability of achieving the reference points. The risk and uncertainty process is iterative (as shown in the graphic to the right), allowing opportunities for feedback and adjustment along the way. Once the Board has approved the final recommended probability, the TC can identify management options that achieve that recommended probability in projections.

### Testing the Process

The Commission developed an example Striped Bass Decision Tool to further aid in the tool's development. The Risk and Uncertainty Work Group, Striped Bass TC, and CESS contributed to the development of the Decision Tool and technical input criteria and provided scoring for the example Striped Bass Decision Tool. While a useful exercise, this example did not follow the full process, e.g., the Striped Bass Board did provide weighting input, and would not be applied to management decisions.

To further test and refine the process, the Policy Board recommended conducting a pilot case with tautog. This pilot would follow the full process and have the potential to be used for management, though still allow for flexibility. Because of tautog's regional management and stock assessments, four Decision Tools were developed, one for each region.

The Tautog TC and CESS provided the technical inputs for the Tautog Decision Tools, which were sent to the Advisory Panel for feedback, while the Tautog Management Board provided input on the weightings. A Risk and Uncertainty Report detailing the components of the regional Tautog Decision Tools was presented to the Tautog Board at the 2021 Fall Meeting.

In the typical process, a Decision Tool would be reviewed and approved by the Board, after which the TC and CESS would produce the recommended probability. This probability would then be used to develop management options. However, in the case of tautog, the Board may not take management action at this time given the current stock status. To complete the tautog pilot case, the Board tasked the TC and CESS with producing hypothetical scenarios to illustrate how the Decision Tool could be used and improve understanding of the process. These hypothetical scenarios will be presented to the Tautog Board at the 2022 Winter Meeting.

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