



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Volume 22, Issue 8

December 2012/January 2013

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA

Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015

ASMFC Approves Atlantic Menhaden Amendment 2

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has approved Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. The Amendment establishes a 170,800 MT total allowable catch (TAC) beginning in 2013 and continuing until completion of, and Board action on, the next benchmark stock assessment scheduled for 2014. The TAC represents a 20% reduction from the average of landings from 2009-2011 and an approximately 25% reduction from 2011 levels. The Board also adopted new biological reference points for biomass based on maximum spawning potential (MSP), with the goal of increasing abundance, spawning stock biomass, and menhaden availability as a forage species. States from Maine through North Carolina conducted a total of 13 public hearings and the Commission received more than 128,000 comments on Draft Amendment 2, the most received to date on any Commission action.



Schooling Atlantic menhaden. Photo © ASMFC.

“Through the selection of the MSP-based reference points, beginning with adoption of Addendum V in 2011 and continuing today, the Board has made a conscious decision to address the ecosystem services provided by Atlantic menhaden,” stated Board Chair Louis Daniel of North Carolina. “Given the stock is experiencing overfishing and is most likely overfished based on the newly adopted reference points, it was incumbent upon the Board to reduce landings in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the resource and the fisheries that depend on it.”

The Amendment allocates the TAC on a state-by-state basis based on landings history of the fishery from 2009-2011; allocation will be revisited three years after implementation. Further, it reduces the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery harvest cap by 20% (this is an adjustment of cap which was in place since 2006). States will be required to close their fisheries when the state-specific portion of the TAC has been reached; any overages must be paid back the following year. The Amendment includes provisions to allow for the transfer of quota between states and a bycatch allowance of 6,000 pounds for non-directed fisheries that are operating after a state TAC has been landed. The Amendment also establishes requirements for timely reporting and improved biological monitoring. State implementation plans are due by April 15, 2013, with final implementation to occur by July 1, 2013.

Inside This Issue

Species Profile: Atlantic Sturgeon
Page 4

Northern Shrimp Actions Page 6

Black Drum Developments
Page 7

ACCSP Coordinating Council Approves 2013 Funding Priorities
Page 8

ASMFC Comings & Goings Page 8

Black Sea Bass Draft Addendum XXIII Approved for Public Comment
Page 9

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 a 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

Paul J. Diodati (MA), Chair
Dr. Louis B. Daniel, III (NC), Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal, Executive Director
Patrick A. Campfield, Science Director
Toni Kerns, Acting ISFMP Director
Laura C. Leach, Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor
tberger@asmfc.org

703.842.0740 Phone • 703.842.0741 Fax
www.asmfc.org

Upcoming Meetings

1/8 - 10:

ASMFC American Lobster Stock Assessment Data Workshop, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, 1213 Purchase Street, Third Floor, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

1/10 & 11:

Atlantic Coast Fisheries Communications Group Social Media Workshop, 1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200A-N, Arlington, Virginia.

1/22 (begins at 12:30 PM) & 23 (ends at 1 PM):

Gillnet Bycatch Workshop, Clarion Resort Fountainbleau Hotel, 10100 Coastal Highway Ocean City, Maryland.

1/28 (begins at 1 PM) - 2/1 (ends at 1 PM):

ASMFC Introduction to Stock Assessment Workshop, The Hotel at Arundel Preserve, 7795 Arundel Mills Boulevard Hanover, Maryland.

1/29 - 31:

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

2/12 - 14:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Embassy Suites Hampton Roads, 1700 Coliseum Drive, Hampton, Virginia.

2/18 - 21:

ASMFC Winter Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; 703.683.6000.

3/12 - 14:

ASMFC American Lobster Stock Assessment Modeling Workshop, location to be determined.

4/1 - 5:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

4/9 - 11:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Embassy Suites Raleigh Crabtree, 4700 Creedmoor Road, Raleigh, North Carolina.

4/15 - 19:

ASMFC Black Drum Data Workshop, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, 217 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, South Carolina.

4/23 - 25:

New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton, Mystic, Connecticut.

The Commission at its Best

If you missed the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Atlantic Menhaden Management Board meeting on December 14th, you missed the Commission at its best. During this meeting, the Commission made final decisions on an 18-month, high profile, emotional, and politically charged process to rewrite the Atlantic menhaden management program. Each state brought its concerns to the table while also listening to the concerns and needs of its sister states. They thoughtfully and respectfully deliberated the options before them and ultimately made a decision that balanced menhaden's ecosystem functions with its human use needs.

The 2010 Atlantic Menhaden Benchmark Stock Assessment Peer Review Panel noted menhaden population abundance had declined steadily and recruitment had been low since the last peak observed in the early 1980s. In November 2011, the Board responded to these findings and adopted new fishing mortality reference points via Addendum V. The new reference points are more conservative than the previous to account for the following: (1) the declining number of fish in the population, (2) the species importance as both a directed fishery and prey for other species, and (3) recent science that suggests conserving a larger percentage of the spawning stock is an important consideration for forage species such as menhaden.

The Board initiated Amendment 2 to establish a management program to achieve these new reference points. It tasked the Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee (TC) with concurrently updating the 2010 assessment to incorporate recent fishery survey and landings data. While the TC agreed overfishing was occurring and recruitment remained at low levels, the assessment update resulted in considerable uncertainty regarding the estimates of fishing mortality and stock size. The TC warned additional analyses need to be conducted to resolve the assessment model structure and performance issues.

The Board members found themselves in a difficult situation, with considerable uncertainty in the assessment advice and a commitment to reach the new biological reference points to address the ecological services provided by menhaden. The Board wisely chose to continue the development of Amendment 2 and included alternate approaches to establishing harvest controls when faced with uncertain advice.

The Board entered the December 14th meeting facing significant differences of opinion on how to move forward with menhaden management. The Board had to make decisions at this meeting if the 2013 fishing season was going

to be constrained through the provisions of Amendment 2. This is the point in the management process where the Commission was at its best. During the next eight hours, the Board would discuss, debate, and compromise to come up with a reasonable, stable, fair, and effective solution for the Amendment 2 dilemma.

Menhaden management is unique in that one state, Virginia, accounts for about 85% of the annual harvest; however, a total of 14 states sit on the Board. The 13 other states could have easily voted to reallocate the harvest resulting in the burden of Amendment 2 being only felt in Virginia. The Board did not do this. In fact, there were sincere and persuasive speeches on how placing the entire burden on one state would go against the long-standing underpinnings of the Commission.

Some of the highlights of the new menhaden management program are:

- A quota management system that limits the total harvest of menhaden and will allow the Board to be able to react to new assessment information.
- A 20% reduction in harvest (from 2009-2011 average landings) that balances the need for precaution and the needs of the reduction and bait fisheries.
- An allocation system based on the historical performance of the fishery.
- Improved catch monitoring to allow for the timely management of state quotas.
- Improved biological and catch/effort monitoring to support improved assessments.
- Commitment to conduct a new benchmark assessment and peer review in 2014.
- Commitment to develop ecological-based reference points to quantitatively account for predator-prey relationships with marine species that rely on menhaden for forage.
- Commitment to revisit the quota and allocation system as the fishery evolves and the distribution and demand for menhaden changes over time.

While some stakeholder groups were seeking a different outcome from the December 14th meeting, the Commission process worked. The Atlantic coastal states came together and developed a fair and reasonable outcome that focused on the needs of the resource more than the needs of individual jurisdictions.

On behalf of our Commissioners and staff, I would like to wish you all a happy and healthy New Year!

Species Profile: Atlantic Sturgeon

Management of an Endangered Species

Introduction

Since 1988, the 15 Atlantic coast states through the Commission, have sought to effectively manage Atlantic sturgeon throughout their range. With the approval of Amendment I in 1998, which implemented a 40-year coastwide moratorium on harvest, states further committed to protecting this ancient species. Additionally, states have invested considerable resources to increase understanding of sturgeon biology and life history. Despite these efforts, in February 2012 the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced Atlantic sturgeon was added to the Endangered Species List. In response, the Commission has initiated a coastwide stock assessment to evaluate stock status, stock delineation, and bycatch.

Life History

Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) are ancient fish, dating back at least 150 million years, and can be found along the entire Atlantic coast from Labrador, Canada to St. Johns River, Florida. They have been recorded to live up to 60 years, grow to lengths of 14 feet and weights of 800 pounds. Atlantic sturgeon are also known to undergo extensive coastal migrations, which take them from the ocean into coastal estuaries and rivers to spawn once every two to five years.

Typically sturgeon in the southern part of the species range mature faster and grow larger than those in the northern part of the range. Females reach sexual maturity between the ages of seven and 30, and males between the ages of five and 24. The number of eggs that a female produces increases with age and size, which means that older and larger females are more valuable to the population because they produce more eggs (up to eight millions eggs per spawning event) than younger, smaller females (estimated 400,000 eggs per spawning event). The oldest known sturgeon was estimated to be 60 years old.

Atlantic sturgeon are an anadromous fish. Most juveniles remain in the freshwater rivers from one to six years before migrating back out to the ocean. Little is known about the movements of Atlantic sturgeon when they are at sea. As mature adults, they return to their natal streams to spawn.

As juveniles, Atlantic sturgeon feed on flies, worms, shrimps, and small mollusks and crustaceans. As adults, they are opportunistic feeders and prey mainly on mollusks, snails, worms, shrimps and benthic fish. Very little is known about their natural predators.

Commercial Fisheries

Since colonial times, Atlantic sturgeon have supported commercial fisheries of varying magnitude. The fishery was once considered second in value only to lobster. There are reports from Maine and Massachusetts from as early as the 1600s that cite sturgeon as an important fishery in those states. While sturgeon were mainly being harvested for their flesh and eggs, other parts had commercial value as well. Sturgeon skin was made into leather for clothes

Atlantic Sturgeon



Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus

ASMFC Management Area:
ME - FL

Interesting Facts:

- * Sturgeon fossils date back more than 150 million years and are referred to as living fossils.
- * There are 24 different species of sturgeon; all occur in the Northern Hemisphere. Only two species occur on the US East Coast - Atlantic sturgeon and shortnose sturgeon.
- * Sturgeon do not have teeth and swallow their prey whole.
- * Sturgeon are known to leap out of water and sometimes land in boats. It is not known why they do this. Always remember to wear your life jacket!

Age/Length at Maturity: For the Northeast population, 50% are mature by 20-25 years at ~ 6.5 feet in length.

Largest Recorded: 14 feet long and 811 pounds, Canada.

Oldest Recorded: 60 years old, captured from the St. Lawrence River.

Stock Status: Overfished.



Atlantic sturgeon being measured as part of a Cooperative Federal/State/Industry Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch Reduction Survey. Photo © ASMFC.

and bookbinding. The swim bladder was used to make a gelatin that served as a clarifying agent in jellies, wine, beer, or glue. Swim bladders were also fashioned into windows for carriages.

In 1888, the U.S. Fish Commission reported that there was 7.3 million pounds of sturgeon caught on the East Coast. From 1950 through the mid-1990s, landings had declined to between 100,000 and 250,000 pounds annually. By 1998, a coastwide moratorium on the harvest of wild Atlantic sturgeon stocks was implemented by the Commission, although many states had already closed their fisheries.

Stock Status

Very little is known about the stock status of Atlantic sturgeon. Reliable data is difficult to obtain because many river systems have so few fish, and rivers with more fish are often not easily sampled. In 1998, the Commission completed a peer-reviewed coastwide assessment of the population, examining each river system where Atlantic sturgeon were historically found.

The assessment concluded that all systems held significantly less sturgeon than they did in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and very few signs of recovery were detected. As a result of the assessment, the Commission established a 40+ year coastwide moratorium through Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Sturgeon Fishery Management Plan. The accompanying graphs depict catch per unit effort (CPUE) for fishery-independent surveys conducted by North Carolina and New York. Both surveys have experienced significant fluctuations in recent years. However, in 2012, North Carolina's CPUE is the second highest value in the past ten years (Figure 1). Further, the spike of juveniles seen in New York's survey in 2012 is believed to be a direct result of the New York's moratorium in 1997 and the concomitant increase of spawning fish in the Hudson River (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Fishery-independent Catch Rates of Juvenile Atlantic Sturgeon in Albemarle Sound
Source: NC Division of Marine Fisheries, 2012

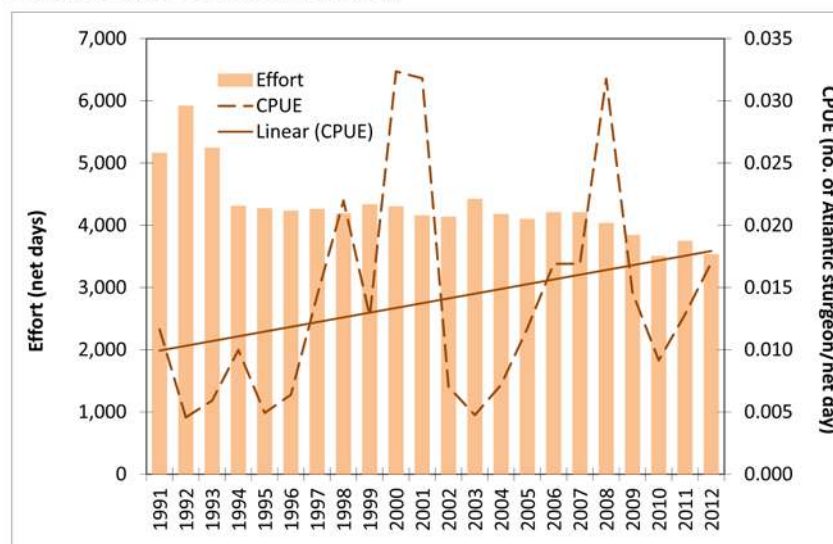
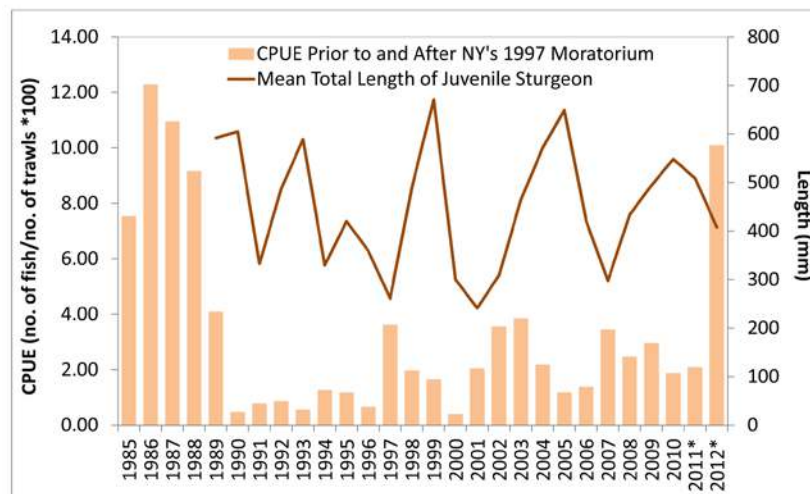


Figure 2. Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) of Juvenile Atlantic Sturgeon in the Hudson River
Source: NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation Survey Data Collected by Normandeau Associates, Inc., 2012



*2011-2012 values are estimated

What Happens Now that Atlantic Sturgeon are Listed Under the ESA?

1. Permitting Process - Once a species is listed as endangered any form of "take" becomes illegal. Take means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. However, NMFS issues permits to allow some interactions to occur for scientific purposes or for other lawful activities that incidentally encounter Atlantic sturgeon. Stranded Atlantic sturgeon should be reported to Lynn Lankshear, 978.282.8473, for the Northeast Region (ME - VA) and Kelly Shotts, 727.551.5603, for the Southeast Region (NC - FL).

2. Designation of Critical Habitat - Within one year of the listing NMFS must consider the designation of critical habitat for Atlantic sturgeon. Critical habitat includes essential areas within or outside the species range at the time of listing. Critical habitat designations must be based on the best scientific information available, with consideration given to economic impacts, national security, and other relevant impacts.

3. Development of a Recovery Plan - NMFS must develop a recovery plan for the survival and recovery of Atlantic sturgeon. The plan must include a description of site-specific management actions necessary to achieve recovery of the species; objective, measurable criteria which, when met, would allow the species to be removed from the list; and estimates of the time and costs required to achieve the plan's goal. The public has an opportunity to provide input in the recovery planning process.

continued on page 9

Northern Shrimp Actions

Addendum I Approved to Refine Annual Specification Process

In November, the Commission's Northern Shrimp Section has approved Addendum I to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp. The Addendum provides flexibility and transparency in the annual specification process with the goal of maximizing benefits to the fishery while ensuring stock rebuilding.

Specifically, the Addendum includes provisions to (1) set an annual hard total allowable catch (TAC) that may range between the fishing mortality target and threshold values, inclusive; (2) allocate 87% of the TAC to the trawl fishery and 13% to the trap fishery; and (3) close each fishery when a certain percentage of the TAC is projected to be reached. The exact percent, ranging between 80 and 95%, would be established by the Section during the annual specification process.

The Addendum also provides flexibly to (1) transfer unused TAC between gear types; (2) set aside a portion of the TAC for research purposes; and (3) allow for the optional use of a size sorting grate system (compound grate or double Nordmore) to minimize the retention of small shrimp.

The Addendum responds to recent trends in the fishery and the resource that jeopardize the stability of the northern shrimp resource. For the past three fishing seasons, late and incomplete catch reporting and continued fluctuations in participation have led to overharvest of the TAC. These overages coupled with a recent poor recruitment resulted in an overfished and overfishing stock status. The Addendum refines the annual speci-



Northern shrimp, *Pandalus borealis* (top), and two species of striped shrimp, *P. montagui* and *Dichelopandalus leptocerus* (bottom). Photo by Cinamon Moffett, University of Maine.

fication process to better control annual harvest and minimize risks to the resource as it rebuilds.

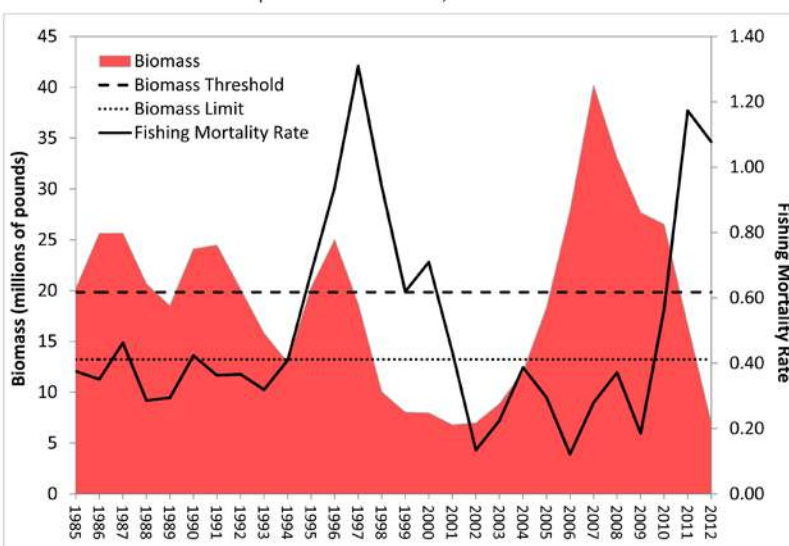
The Section is also committed to continuing to explore longer term management options, such as limited entry programs, through a future addendum or amendment.

2013 Northern Shrimp Fishery Specifications Set

In December, the Commission's Northern Shrimp Section approved a total allowable catch (TAC) of 625 mt, representing a 72% reduction from last year's quota. The TAC is further subdivided into a research set aside of 5.44 mt, a trawl fishery TAC of 539.01 mt, and a trap fishery TAC of 80.54 mt. Each fishery will close when 85% of its TAC is projected to be reached and a 4-day advance notice will be issued prior to the closure of each fishery. The trawl fishery will begin on January 22, 2013, with two landing days (Monday and Wednesday) and no trip limit. The trap fishery will begin on February 5, 2013, with six landing days (everyday but Sunday) and an 800 pound trip limit.

Gulf of Maine northern shrimp total stock biomass and fishing mortality.

Source: ASMFC Northern Shrimp Technical Committee, 2012



The Section considered several factors in setting the specifications for the 2013 fishery. These include (1) the northern shrimp stock is overfished and overfishing has been occurring for the last three years; (2) all abundance surveys are exhibiting a downward trend (since 2008 biomass has steadily declined and is currently at its lowest level); (3) biomass has shown a similar declining trend and has also reached its lowest level; and (4) poor recruitment (the number of shrimp surviving to age 1.5) in 2011 and 2012. Northern shrimp recruitment is related to both spawning biomass and ocean temperatures, with higher spawning biomass and colder temperatures producing stronger recruitment. Ocean temperatures in the western Gulf of Maine shrimp habitat have been increasing in recent years and have reached or approached unprecedented highs in the past three years. This suggests an increasingly inhospitable environment for northern shrimp and indicates the critical need for protecting spawning biomass.

Black Drum Developments

Black Drum FMP Available for Public Comment: States to Conduct Public Hearings in Early 2013

The Commission's South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board has approved the Draft Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Black Drum for public comment. The Draft FMP solicits comment on a range of issues, including management goals and objectives; recreational and commercial management measures; flexibility to react to new assessment information; *de minimis* levels and exemptions; monitoring requirements and recommendations; and recommended measures for implementation by NOAA Fisheries in federal waters.

The FMP was initiated in response to concern regarding significant increases in harvest in recent years and the fact that the fishery primarily targets juveniles. Further, the lack of consistent coastwide regulations or management goals may negatively impact the black drum population as fishing pressures shift from other stocks.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft FMP either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. The Draft FMP is available on the Commission website (www.asmfc.org) under *Breaking News*. Public comment will be accepted until 5 PM EST on April 5, 2013 and should be forwarded to Toni Kerns, ISFMP Acting Director, 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or tkerns@asmfc.org (Subject line: Black Drum FMP). It is anticipated the majority of South Atlantic states will be conducting hearings in early 2013; the details of those hearings will be released once they are finalized. The FMP is scheduled for final approval during the Commission's 2013 Spring Meeting.

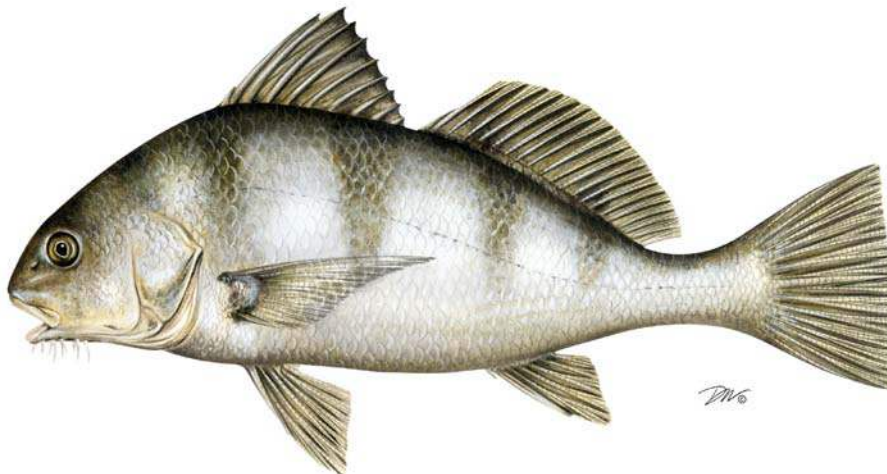
For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Acting ISFMP Director, at 703.842.0740 or tkerns@asmfc.org.

ASMFC Initiates First Coastwide Stock Assessment of Black Drum Data Sought for Assessment

The Commission has begun work on the first coastwide stock assessment of black drum. The assessment will evaluate the health of the black drum stock and will be used to inform fishery management activities. The Commission's stock assessment process and meetings are open to the public (with the exception of discussion of confidential data). The Commission welcomes the submission of data sets that can be used in the assessment. This includes, but is not limited to growth, maturation, migration, genetics, tagging, recruitment, natural mortality (including environmental data), indices of abundance, biosample, and catch data. For data sets to be considered at the Data Workshop, the data must be sent in the required format, with accompanying methods description, to the Commission at least one month prior to the Data Workshop.

The Data Workshop will take place April 15-19, 2013 at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, 217 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, South Carolina. All available data will be reviewed and vetted by the Black Drum Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee for possible use in the Assessment Workshop. The Assessment Workshop will occur at a date and location to be determined following the Data Workshop.

For those interested in submitting data and/or attending the black drum data workshop (space is limited), please contact Jeff Kipp, ASMFC Stock Assessment Scientist, at jkipp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0746. The deadline for data submission is March 15, 2013. There is the possibility of additional Data/Assessment Workshops if the Black Drum Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee deem it necessary. Additional workshops will be announced through the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org.



ACCSP Coordinating Council Approves 2013 Funding Priorities

Each spring the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) distributes a request for proposals for data collection projects to its program partners. For fiscal year 2013 the priorities, as outlined in the Funding Decision Document, for data collection projects include:

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

This past summer the ACCSP received 16 proposals for funding support in 2013. The proposals, which totalled an estimated \$4.2 million, were reviewed by the ACCSP Operations and Advisory Committees in a rigorous and robust ranking process (total available funds for projects in 2013 were approximately \$3.35 million). In October, the ACCSP Coordinating Council reviewed and acted upon the committees joint recommendations. The projects approved for funding are listed in the accompanying table. For more information on the ACCSP funding process, please contact Ann McElhatton, Program Manager, at ann.mcelhatton@accsp.org.

PROPOSAL TITLE	PARTNER
Administrative Grant	ACCSP
Continue Trip-Level Reporting for All Massachusetts Commercial Permit Holders	MA Division of Marine Fisheries
FY13: Managing Mandatory Dealer Reporting in Maine	ME Department of Marine Resources
Increase At-sea Sampling Levels for the Recreational Headboat Fishery on the Atlantic Coast (New Hampshire through Florida)	ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee
ACCSP Data Reporting from South Carolina's Commercial Fisheries 1) 100% Trip-Level Catch and Effort Data Collection 2) Biological Sampling for Hard Part/Aging of Offshore Species	SC Department Natural Resources
FY13: Maintenance and Coordination of Fisheries Dependent Data Feeds to ACCSP from the State of Rhode Island	RI Division of Fish and Wildlife
Improving Timeliness and Reporting Accuracy in Maryland: Expansion on Online Reporting for Maryland Commercial Fisheries	MD Department Natural Resources
Continued Dealer Reporting, Trip Level Reporting, and Biological Sampling for Commercial Fisheries in New Jersey	NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife
Portside Commercial Catch Sampling and Comparative Bycatch Sampling for Atlantic Herring, Atlantic Mackerel, and Atlantic Menhaden	ME Department of Marine Resources
Observer Program for Mid-Atlantic (New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia) and Rhode Island Small Mesh Otter Trawls	ASMFC
Development and Testing of Hand Held SAFIS Data Entry	ACCSP/RI Division of Fish and Wildlife
Continued Processing and Ageing of Biological Samples Collected from U.S. South Atlantic Commercial and Recreational Fisheries in Response to ACCSP Bio-sample Targets	NOAA Fisheries – Southeast Fisheries Science Center

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Staff

Christopher Ford - In early December, Christopher Ford left the Commission to pursue other career opportunities. Since March 2012, he served as Executive Assistant, providing support to the Executive Director on policy and legislative issues. We wish Christopher the very best in all his future endeavors.

Melissa Yuen - In November, Melissa Yuen joined the Commission staff as its newest Fishery Management Plan Coordinator. She will be coordinating the fishery management programs for tautog and winter flounder. Melissa comes to us from a recently completed fellowship on federal fisheries policy at the Pew Environment Group. Prior work experience also includes four years with the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, where she coordinated wildlife management and conservation programs. Melissa has a Master of Advanced Studies in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation from Scripps Institute of Oceanography and a Bachelor of Science in Zoology from the University of Maryland, College Park. Welcome aboard Melissa!



Black Sea Bass Draft Addendum XXIII Approved for Public Comment: Addendum to Address 2013 Recreational Fishery

In December, the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved two actions with regards to the 2013 recreational black sea bass fishery. Specifically, it approved opening the black sea bass recreational fishery for January and February with a 15 fish bag limit and a 12.5 inch minimum size limit and released Draft Addendum XXIII to the Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes the use of state-by-state or regional measures to manage the 2013 black sea bass recreational fishery.

The management plan for black sea bass does not provide an opportunity to craft recreational measures by regions or state, it only allows for a coastwide measure. Due to the wide geographic range of this species, the application of coastwide minimum size, possession limit, and season restrictions may not affect every area involved in the fishery the same way. States were concerned the coastwide regulations

disproportionately impact states within the management unit; therefore, they approved Addendum XXI and XXII which allowed for state-by-state measures in 2011 and 2012 for state waters only. Because Addendum XXII expires at the end of 2012 and the Board continues to have the same concerns for the 2013 fishing season, the Board initiated Draft Addendum XXIII. The Draft Addendum is intended to provide the necessary management flexibility to mitigate potential disproportionate impacts on states that can result from coastwide measures for 2013.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum, which can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org



Young angler with black sea bass. Photo by Steve Witthuhn.

asmfc.org under Breaking News. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on February 6, 2013 and should be forwarded to Toni Kerns, Acting ISFMP Director, 1050 N. Highland Street, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at tkerns@asmfc.org (Subject line: Black Sea Bass).

Species Profile: Atlantic Sturgeon (continued from page 5)

The Commission has initiated a coastwide benchmark stock assessment to begin in early 2013 with completion scheduled by the end of 2014.

Endangered Species Listing

Undertaken concurrently with the Commission stock assessment in 1998, NMFS investigated the status of the species with regard to listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). That status review concluded that listing was not warranted at the time. Then, in 2005, NMFS initiated a second status review to re-evaluate whether this species required protection under the ESA. The Status Review found that the coastwide Atlantic sturgeon population should be broken down into five distinct population segments (DPS): (1) Gulf of Maine, (2) New York Bight, (3)

Chesapeake Bay, (4) Carolina, and (5) South Atlantic.

The Status Review determined that the most significant threats to all of the DPSs are bycatch mortality, poor water quality, lack of adequate state and/or federal regulatory mechanisms, and dredging activities. Additional stressors unique to some DPSs include habitat impediments and ship strikes. The report concluded the Carolina, Chesapeake Bay, and New York Bight DPSs were likely (>50% chance) to become endangered in the next 20 years and the South Atlantic and Gulf of Maine DPSs have a moderate risk (<50% chance) of becoming endangered in the next 20 years.

In 2009, the National Resources Defense Council petitioned NMFS to list Atlantic

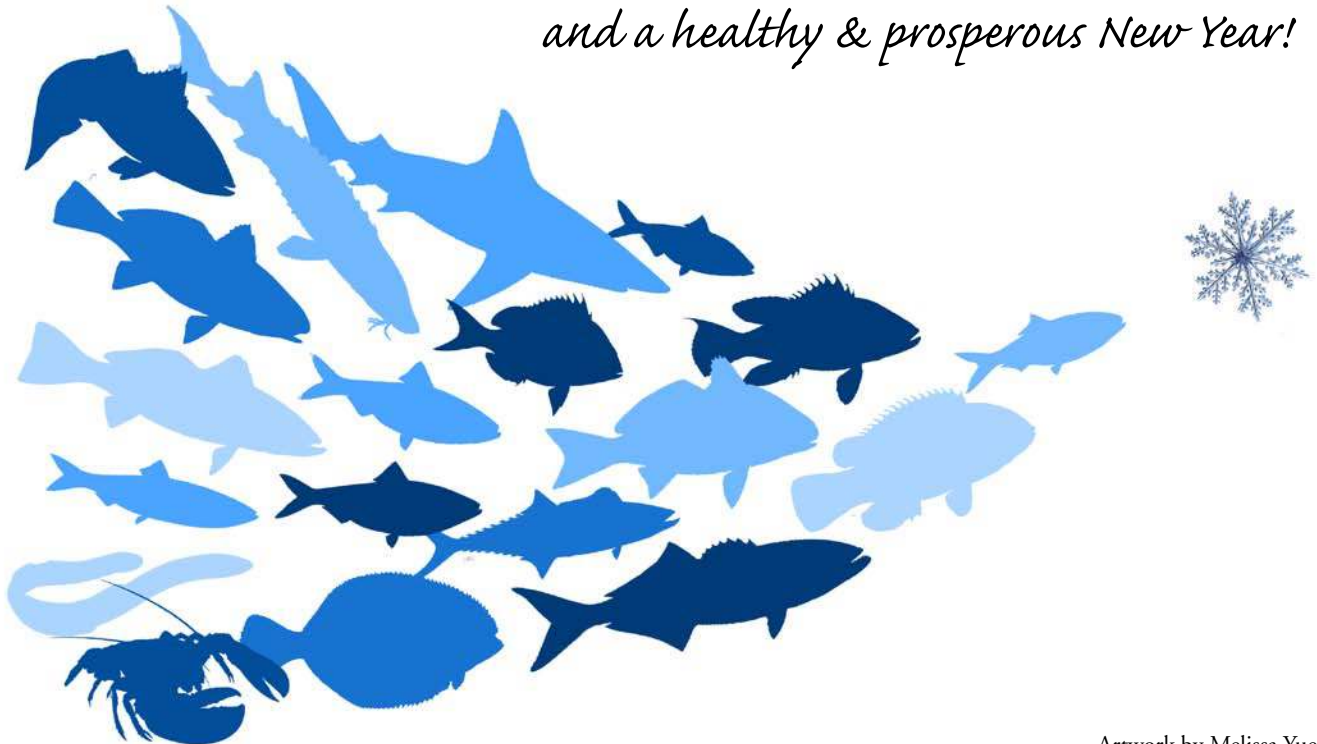
sturgeon under the ESA based on the Status Review. In January 2010, NMFS reported that the petition action may be warranted. After further review, NMFS published a proposed rule in October 2010 to list the Gulf of Maine DPS as threatened and the remaining DPSs as endangered. Over 400 public comments were submitted to NMFS on the proposed rule. NMFS published the final rule in February 2012, declaring the Gulf of Maine DPS as threatened and the remaining four DPSs as endangered (effective April 2012). NMFS is currently considering protective regulations (referred to as a 4(d) rule) for the threatened Gulf of Maine DPS which would essentially provide the same protection as an endangered listing. For more information, please contact Kate Taylor, FMP Coordinator, at ktaylor@asmfc.org.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200A-N
Arlington, VA 22201-2196

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE PAID
WASHINGTON, DC
PERMIT NO. 710

Return Service Requested

*The staff of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission wishes you the happiest of holidays
and a healthy & prosperous New Year!*



Artwork by Melissa Yuen