



ASMFC

Fisheries *focus*

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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1444 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C.

Developing a Cooperative Nearshore Fisheries-Independent Trawl Survey for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic

Over the last year, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has been coordinating the development of a cooperative, near shore, fisheries independent trawl survey in the mid-Atlantic and northeast region. The development of this survey was initiated after the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board passed a resolution in October 1997 identifying several areas of concern with existing Atlantic coastal trawl surveys, including:

- Large areas of Atlantic coastal waters (less than 90 feet) that are not covered, or receive less than adequate coverage by trawl surveys, including the Gulf of Maine, and much of the Mid-Atlantic Bight;
- Little coordination of surveys among state and federal agencies, in terms of geographic and temporal coverage, sampling design, and survey procedures; and
- Uncertainty as to the continued availability of currently utilized sampling vessels.

In June 1998, a workshop was held to develop recommendations for survey development and implementation, and other issues. Workshop participants also began development of a survey design. A report containing the recommendations can be obtained by calling Jeff Brust at (202) 289-6400.

The Near Shore Trawl Survey Subcommittee, a subcommittee of the Management and Science Committee, has recommended that a survey proposal be developed before the Commission's Spring Meeting in 1999. Issues and tasks that were identified during the June 1998 workshop will be addressed by several workgroups over the next few months. Each of the four workgroups will address issues on one of the following topics.

- Program structure and support
- Survey design
- Data management
- Vessel and gear acquisition

The program structure and survey design workgroups are scheduled to meet in Providence, Rhode Island on December 14-15 and December 16-17, respectively. The data management and vessel/gear acquisition workgroups will meet in early 1999. Recommendations from each workgroup will be compiled into a finalized survey proposal to be presented to the Commission's Policy Board and Executive Committee at the 1999 Spring Meeting.

For more information or to obtain a report from the 1998 June Workshop, please contact Jeff Brust, Statistics Specialist, at (202) 289-6400, or jbrust@asmfc.org.

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 anadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

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Upcoming Meetings

12/8:

Joint ASMFC/Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Demersal Species Committee, Holiday Inn, Essington, Pennsylvania.

12/9:

ASMFC Tautog Technical Committee, Providence Biltmore, Providence, Rhode Island; (401)421-0700.

12/9 & 10:

New England Fishery Management Council, Colonial Hilton, Wakefield, Massachusetts.

12/10 - 11:

"Pfiesteria and the Environment: Convergence of Science and Policy." Prominent discussants from academia, government, business and the environmental community. Georgetown University Conference Center, Washington, D.C.; (202)964-6400.

12/14 & 15:

ACCSP Coordinating Council, Radisson Hotel Philadelphia Airport, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; (610)521-5900.

12/14 & 15:

ASMFC Nearshore Trawl Survey Program Support Workgroup, Providence Biltmore, Providence, Rhode Island; (401)421-0700.

12/15 - 17:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Radisson Hotel, Philadelphia Airport, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; (610)521-5900.

12/16:

Joint ASMFC/Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Summer Flounder, Scup and Back Sea Bass Management Board, Radisson Hotel Philadelphia Airport, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; (610)521-5900.

12/16 & 17:

ASMFC Nearshore Trawl Survey Design Workgroup, Providence Biltmore, Providence, Rhode Island; (401)421-0700.

1999

1/11 - 14:

ASMFC Meeting Week (American Eel Management Board; American Lobster Management Board; Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Intercept Committee; Atlantic Herring Section; Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Committee and Management Board; Striped Bass Management Board; Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board; Tautog Management Board; Weakfish Advisory Panel and Management Board; Winter Flounder Advisory Panel and Management Board), Ramada Plaza Hotel, Alexandria, Virginia; (703)683-6000.

'Twas the night before Christmas, and . . .

The Atlantic coast this year is being massaged in a late autumn full of sun and warmth. Having spent more than just a few Holiday seasons in Florida and California, the Dunnigans know what it is like to have Holiday season without a brisk early winter nip in the air. But alas, we realize that some of you may not be able to handle the spirit of "Mele Kalikimaka." And so, as an early Holiday guide, let me highlight some presents that lie under our tree this year.

For another year, the wisdom of a conservative management program for Atlantic striped bass has been confirmed. 1998 was a spectacular year for striped bass fisheries along the Atlantic coast. Healthy resource levels are being experienced in all areas. We are learning a whole new process of managing for abundance, rather than managing for restoration. We are looking for ways to define and carry out programs to maintain healthy fisheries, rather than just recover from years of overfishing and habitat degradation. This presents whole new challenges, such as understanding the role and place of a species in the ecosystem and interspecies dynamics, and determining use of the resource that is most consistent with the public's needs. This is what "fisheries management" is really supposed to be all about.

More success is on the horizon, if not already here. Weakfish. The tough measures that the states have asked fishermen to take are bringing results all along the coast. Virtually every state with a weakfish fishery has seen greatly increased catches, and much larger fish. Our collective experience is confirming what the Stock Assessment Workshop told us at the beginning of 1998 – that the management program is working. Just based upon what fishermen are seeing, we should expect to see a dramatic decrease in estimates of fishing mortality when the numbers are totaled up early next year.

And let us not forget some other little packages all wrapped up under the tree. The new Horse-shoe Crab Fishery Management Plan, the result of extraordinary contributions from some of our partners. The amendments for shad and river herring, bluefish, Atlantic herring, summer flounder, scup and black sea bass. The new Artificial Reef Plan. The guidelines for incorporating habitat concerns into Commission fishery management plans. There is lots under the tree this year.

The pretty little gold and silver box off to the right is the new Strategic Plan. This is a box that we need to open right away, get the parts assembled, and begin using it. There's more in here than I had in my first erector set. Let's get started building something that works.

Over here in the corner is a present that looks better every year – the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. More than two long years of planning have gone into constructing a program that will meet all of the partners' needs, and bring all of the state and federal agencies together in a unified activity. It is time to move from planning to doing. The opportunity is in this box, waiting to be opened.

When you think about it, these are all wonderful presents. But really, Virginia, there is no Santa Claus. The states and their federal partners, along with all of the help of the fisheries constituencies, put these presents under the tree this year. The best presents are always the ones that are hardest to give. It was lots of good work that makes this Christmas one that we can all be proud of.

Happy Holidays!

Updates on ACCSP and RecFIN/ComFIN

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Coordinating Council will be meeting on December 14-15, 1998 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The Coordinating Council will be adopting the Program Design for the ACCSP, which includes the details of the recreational and commercial catch/effort data collection programs, social/economic data collection program, at-sea observer program, and data management activities. The Coordinating Council will also be assisting the ACCSP Operations Committee in the development of a process for prioritizing future ACCSP funds and determination of relevant projects and proposals to further implementation of the program among all program partners. The Council will also be assisting in the development of an implementation strategy to begin during 1999, whereby the Operations Committee will facilitate meetings within and among program partners to determine what is needed for each partner to fully implement the ACCSP within their jurisdictions.

RecFIN and ComFIN Programs

The Fisheries Information Network (FIN), which includes the RecFIN and ComFIN programs, met in Tampa, Florida on November 11-13, 1998. RecFIN and ComFIN are programs in the Southeast Region developed to improve recreational and commercial data collection and management programs in the region. These programs are similar in scope and goals as the ACCSP. RecFIN is currently developing methods for collection of data on non-rod and reel fisheries and fishing tournament activities. The program will also be coordinating with the ACCSP in evaluating recreational quota monitoring programs and developing recommendations for future quota monitoring activities. The RecFIN Committee reviewed the Texas recreational survey in comparison to the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey and determined that the information collected by these two surveys are compatible. The RecFIN Committee is also developing marine recreational fisheries surveys for the Caribbean, evaluating methods for collection and compilation of metadata, and evaluating methods to collect more accurate data on night fishing activities and at private access sites. The RecFIN program is currently conducting an evaluation study to determine the most appropriate method for collection of for-hire data in the Gulf region. The results of this evaluation will be coordinated with activities being conducted by the ACCSP.

The ComFIN program recently held a port samplers meeting in the Southeast Atlantic to discuss sampling procedures and ensure compatibility of data collection and management activities among program partners. These meetings will continue to be coordinated under the ComFIN program as a means of improving biological sampling procedures in the region. The committee is continuing to develop the catch/effort, discard, and social/economic modules for the ComFIN program. Much of these activities are being coordinated with the ACCSP. The committee is also developing standard data collection procedures for all regional data collection activities.

Under the umbrella FIN program, the FIN committee is developing a data collection plan which will prioritize data collection activities for major priority species, including target sampling levels. This is a mechanism to link data collection and stock assessment activities. An adhoc working group compared the program design for the FIN program with the ACCSP and found no major discrepancies in program design. Both programs have been working very closely so as to ensure full compatibility of all data collection and data management activities.

In Loving Memory

On November 20, 1998, John "Stan" Blum passed away in the presence of his two loving daughters. Since January 1996, Stan served as the State of Florida's Governor's Appointee to the Commission. Over his two year tenure, Stan was an active participant in the Commission, serving on the Legislators and Governors' Appointees Committee and the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board.

Stan dedicated his life to the protection and enhancement of Atlantic coastal fishery resources for both commercial and recreational fishermen. Stan's career in fisheries began back in the 1930s as a charterboat operator and commercial fisherman. For over 60 years, Stan was in the forefront of efforts in the State of Florida and coastwide to save and protect fishery resources. As an ASMFC Commissioner, Stan strived to bring his extensive fisheries knowledge to the table in order to improve Atlantic coastal fisheries.

Stan was an important part of the Commission. His contributions and the passion with which he cared for Atlantic coastal resources will be missed by us all.

A memorial in Stan's honor will be held on December 10th in Fort Pierce, Florida. His ashes will be scattered over an artificial reef he helped developed. Condolences can be sent to the family at: 2314 Oak Drive, Fort Pierce, Florida 34949.

Habitat Compliance Criteria and EFH Approved in New ASMFC Plans

This fall the Commission advanced its goal of furthering habitat integration into the fishery management process. Four new fishery management plans (FMPs) and amendments adopted at the Commission Annual Meeting included either essential fish habitat (EFH) designations or habitat related compliance criteria. These actions are indicative of the growing national concern about conserving important marine and anadromous fish habitat.

The Commission's FMP for Horseshoe Crabs was adopted in October 1998. It is one of the few FMPs to include habitat related compliance criteria. Under the Atlantic Coastal Fishery Cooperative Management Act, any state that does not implement compliance criteria is subject to a fishery closure instituted by the Secretary of Commerce. The Horseshoe Crab FMP requires that each state identify potential horseshoe crab habitat within its jurisdiction by December 31, 1999. Affected states include: Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. The only other habitat compliance criteria ever included in a Commission FMP required that states participating under the Addendum 2 to the Winter Flounder FMP communicate with sister state agencies regarding dredging related impacts to winter flounder.

Amendments approved to the Amendment 1 to the Bluefish FMP, Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Herring FMP, and Amendment 12 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass FMP all contained EFH designations. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management & Conservation Act, FMPs for federally managed species (i.e. species managed by federal fishery management councils or Secretarial FMPs) must be amended to identify habitat essential to the managed species. Although this requirement does not apply to Commission managed species, the Commission chose to adopt EFH designations for all species it manages jointly with fishery management councils. The Commission manages bluefish and summer flounder, scup and black sea bass jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, while it manages Atlantic herring in conjunction with the New England Council. The EFH designations were developed by the councils, with significant participation by Commission member states.

In addition to the adoption of guidelines for developing FMP habitat sections last spring, these new achievements emphasize the Commission's commitment to habitat conservation. The Commission will continue to progress in its integrated approach to conserving important habitat for marine and anadromous species. For further information, please contact Dianne Stephan, Habitat Coordinator at 978/281-9397 or dianne.stephan@noaa.gov.

Essential Fish Habitat Designations Complete

The three Atlantic coast fishery management councils have submitted essential fish habitat (EFH) designations to the Secretary of Commerce for review and approval. The 1996 amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Act required that EFH be identified for all federally managed species. These requirements also apply to species managed by Secretarial fishery management plans (FMPs), for which the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has completed EFH designations. All EFH designations were submitted to the Secretary in the form of FMPs or FMP amendments.

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has submitted four amendments (bluefish, surf clam/ocean quahog, squid/mackerel/butterfish, and summer flounder/scup/black sea bass) for Secretarial review and approval. Once NMFS accepts the documents, it will publish a "Notice of Availability" in the *Federal Register* to advise the public that the amendment is being reviewed. The public will have a total of 60 days to comment on the document, after which NMFS will have 30 days to complete its review and either approve, disapprove or partially approve the amendment or FMP. The council recently held public hearings on a draft spiny dogfish FMP, including EFH designations, for which comments were due November 9.

The New England Fishery Management Council submitted an omnibus EFH amendment for Secretarial review, which will apply to all its FMPs (sea scallops, multispecies, Atlantic salmon). This document also includes EFH designations for herring and monkfish, which will be managed by FMPs currently under development. EFH designations for offshore hake will be included in the whiting amendment (Amendment 12) to the multispecies FMP, which is also under development. The document was accepted for review on November 20, and a *Notice of Availability* for this amendment will be published by November 25, 1998.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has also submitted an omnibus EFH amendment which applies to all its FMPs (shrimp, red drum, snapper/grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, spiny lobster, coral, and golden crab). The omnibus amendment is expected to be accepted for Secretarial review shortly. The Council is also in the final stages of developing a FMP for pelagic sargassum, which is expected to be adopted in early December, and submitted for Secretarial review shortly thereafter.

The Secretarial FMP for Atlantic billfishes is also being amended with EFH designations. The FMP for highly migratory species

continued on page 6

Essential Fish Habitat Designations Complete (continued from page 5)

(sharks, swordfish & tuna) which is under development includes EFH designations as well. Both plans are undergoing Secretarial review, and are available for public comment. Written comments must be provided by January 7, 1999 for billfish and January 25, 1999 for highly migratory species. To obtain a copy of the FMPs, contact Rebecca Lent at 301/713- 2347 or email Rebecca.Lent@NOAA.gov.

NMFS Releases Status of Marine Fisheries

In its second report to Congress on the status of marine fish stocks, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reported that of the 844 species reviewed 100 species were determined to be overfished or approaching an overfished condition, while 100 species were determined not to be overfished. Overfished status for the remaining 544 is unknown. Data from the report will be used by national and regional fishery managers as they finalize plans to end overfishing and rebuild depleted fisheries.

The report and marine fish stock rebuilding efforts are required under the amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) passed in 1996. The regional fishery management councils are required to reassess each fishery management plan (FMP) that are developed by the councils to manage fishery resources in federal waters – for compliance with overfishing provisions.

This year's report identifies eight additional species that are overfished, and one additional species that is approaching an overfished condition.. NMFS will now notify the regional councils that they may be required to submit measures to end overfishing and rebuild those stocks determined to be overfished. The councils have until October 9, 1999, to submit updated or prepare new FMPs for review and approval.

“The second annual report gives us an updated picture of the health of marine stocks, and demonstrates that we are learning more about their status,” Said Terry Garcia, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Deputy Administrator for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “However, as I said last year, these ‘overfished’ numbers will continue to rise, as definitions in fishery management plans are amended to conform to new, more stringent requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.”

This is the last year stock levels will be evaluated under the old definitions of overfishing, which only assess the status of juvenile fish populations. Future assessments will use the new Magnuson-Stevens Act definition of overfishing that requires measures to ensure maximum sustainable yield for each species on a continuing basis. The new definition has the effect of raising the bar by requiring that rebuilding plans focus on returning the entire stock to its most productive level. These new definitions are now in the process of being included in amendments to existing FMPs and will be included in all new FMPs submitted by the councils for review and approval.

This year's report to Congress on the status of fisheries and identification of overfished stocks listed 90 species as overfished, 200 species as not overfished, and 10 species as approaching an overfished condition. For 544 species, their overfished status is unknown. The report includes an additional 122 species that were not included in the 1997 report.

The annual report to Congress is an ongoing examination of the status of the nation's marine fisheries and takes into account both improvements and declines in fish stocks. Last year's report identified 86 species as overfished, 183 species as not overfished, and 10 species as approaching overfished condition. For 448 species, the status was unknown. Since then, the status of four species in that report has been reevaluated; three species have been removed from the list of overfished species and once species has been removed from the list of species that are approaching an overfished condition. The councils are no longer required to take measures to either end overfishing or prevent imminent overfishing of those four species.

Based on last year's report, and including the above changes in stock status, councils are submitting amendments to FMPs to end overfishing and rebuild 73 overfished stocks, and to prevent overfishing from occurring for the nine stocks that are overfished but not covered by FMPs.

Rebuilding programs must be as short as possible, but not to exceed 10 years, except in cases where the biology of the stock, or environmental conditions, or management measures under an international agreement in which the U.S. participates dictate otherwise.

The full report is available on the Internet at <http://kingfish.ssp.nmfs.gov/sfa>. For more information, please contact: Susan Weaver at (202)482-2610 or Susan.A.Weaver@noaa.gov.

ASMFC Crossword*

48. Spanish gold
50. Flightless bird
51. Creator of this puzzle
53. January 1

DOWN

1. Cool
2. Competition
3. Winter greeting
4. Comparative suffix
5. Prefix meaning again
6. Falling water
7. Equals
8. State that held our Annual mtg.
10. Jerk
11. Long distance phone company
13. Fish are covered in these
15. Atlantic and Pacific, eg.
16. Cold-blooded
18. Zodiac sign
20. Short greeting
21. *Alosa sapidissima*
22. Visual organ
25. Not new
26. How many FMP's were approved at our annual meeting?
27. Santa sounds
28. Sound of relief
29. Half of a child's spinning toy
32. Atlantic and Pacific anadromous species
33. Indicates origin
34. Popular rock band
37. State to hold our Spring mtg.
39. Cat sound
40. Veil fabric
41. Rods, reels and trawls, eg.
42. Total
46. Business boss
47. Place to get ale
49. Prefix meaning anew
52. Committee that provides scientific advise to Board

* prepared by Heidi Timer

ACROSS

3. *Clupea harengus harengus*
9. ASMFC Legislative Hammer
12. There are 7 Lobster Conservation Management _____
14. Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program
16. Our wonderful receptionist
17. Strategy
19. Old English for you
20. *Limulus polyphemus*
23. Way out
24. *Pomatomus saltatrix*
28. _____ matey!
30. Accomplish
31. Exists
32. Beach
33. Type of Poem
34. Measure of acidity
35. Today's fashion
36. Reflection of sound
38. Restrict
43. "___ the season..."
44. East Carolina University
45. *Stenotomus chrysops*



**The Staff of the Atlantic States Marine
Fisheries Commission joins in wishing you the
happiest of holidays and a healthy and
prosperous New Year!**



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Address Correction Requested