

ASMFC

# FISHERIES *focus*

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

## Characterizing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries and Sea Turtle Interactions



Photo courtesy of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), NOAA Central Library.

Over the last decade, marine resource managers have become increasingly concerned over the growing number of marine protected species/fisheries interactions in Atlantic coastal state waters. Such interactions have ranged from right whales entangling in lobster traps in New England to sea turtles drowning in gillnets throughout the South Atlantic. In the past, efforts have been made to find solutions when problems arose but a broader and more deliberative method of protected species management is needed.

In order to take a more comprehensive look at sea turtle/fishery interactions, the ASMFC is working on a report characterizing Atlantic coastal state fisheries by gear type and level of sea turtle interaction.

The purpose of this work is to better understand what commercial and recreational fisheries in state waters are interacting with sea turtles and to provide information that can be used to prioritize fishery interaction concerns (see side-bar).

The ASMFC Fisheries Characterization Report will be organized by state with sections on each gear type that include gear characteristics, target species, temporal and spatial landings, effort data, level of participation in the fishery, and incidental sea turtle takes.

Currently, the project is in the data collection phase, which is being conducted by ASMFC staff, using state-specific data and landings/effort information from the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. Report drafting will begin shortly and drafts for some states should be completed in early summer of 2004.

We are looking for sources of data on incidental sea turtles takes and welcome your input. If you have any data that you would like to submit or have any further questions, please contact Elizabeth Griffin at (202)289-6400 or via email at [egriffin@asmfc.org](mailto:egriffin@asmfc.org).

### NMFS Sea Turtle Strategy

In 2001, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) approved a comprehensive strategy to address sea turtle interactions in state and federal fisheries operating in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. The goals of that strategy are to conserve and recover sea turtles, authorize fishery takes consistent with ESA mandates, increase effectiveness in management; and prioritize fishery interaction concerns. A first step in implementing the strategy is to specifically characterize fishing gears in order to understand where, when and to what level sea turtles may be affected by each gear type. This first step is well underway through concurrent fisheries characterization projects being conducted on the federal level by NOAA and on the state level by the ASMFC.

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**T**he 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, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

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## Upcoming Meetings

**2/11 & 12:**

ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Alternative Bait Workshop, Comfort Inn (BWI) Airport, 6921 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland.

**2/18 (10AM - 5PM):**

ASMFC Winter Flounder Technical Committee, Sheraton Providence Airport Hotel, 1850 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island.

**2/24:**

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Technical Committee, Providence Biltmore Hotel, Kennedy Plaza, Providence, Rhode Island.

**2/25 - 27:**

ASMFC Bluefish Technical Committee, Providence Biltmore Hotel, Kennedy Plaza, Providence, Rhode Island; (401)421-0700.

**3/1 - 5:**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sea Palms, 5445 Frederica Road, St. Simons Island, Georgia; (912)638-3351.

**3/4 - 6:**

Maine Fishermen's Forum, Samoset Resort, Rockport, Maine.

**3/8 - 11:**

ASMFC Meeting Week, Radisson Hotel Old Town Alexandria, 901 North Fairfax, Alexandria, Virginia (see preliminary agenda on pages 6 & 7).

**3/16 - 18:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Shell Island Oceanfront Suites, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina.

**3/23 - 25:**

New England Fishery Management Council, Tavern on Harbor, Gloucester, Massachusetts.

**4/7 - 8:**

ASMFC Habitat Committee, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, 6 Herndon Avenue, Annapolis, Maryland.

**4/12 - 16:**

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

**5/4 - 6:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Crowne Plaza Meadowlands, Secaucus, New Jersey

Following is a reprint of the Executive Director's Column that appeared in the October 2002 issue of *Fisheries Focus*. I believe the issues it addresses are as relevant now as they were then. I hope you will agree.

It strikes me that one of the great challenges in fisheries management is dealing with the sharp controversies that are inherent in this business. It does not matter whether we are talking about conservation strategies, state-by-state harvesting schemes or user group allocations, every step seems to be characterized by well-intentioned folks on both sides of an issue strongly promoting their views. In many cases, particularly with allocation, satisfying one side is by definition to deny the other side. As a result, emotions often run high, as does the volume of the rhetoric.

You have heard, and perhaps have been part of, the discussions. On conservation, we disagree on the status of the stock or the need to take action (especially if it means less fish for me in the short-term). On state harvesting, we disagree with the season dates or state-by-state quotas (particularly if it means my state does not get most of the fish). On sector allocation, we disagree with a commercial harvest or setting aside quota for the for-hire fleet (especially if it means limiting the number of fish I can take home). There seems to be no end to the controversies, claims and frustrations, complete with threats of boycotts, lawsuits or withdrawal from the process.

It seems to me the first step in trying to resolve our differences is to identify areas we can agree on. I am encouraged that all sides are making steady progress in placing the long-term health of the resource first. This is an obvious strategy, but the short-term pain of sacrifice occasionally causes some to waiver. I also see widespread, but not unanimous, acceptance of a basic Commission principle that the states have more to gain by operating cooperatively rather than independently. This requires participants to take a higher level view to do what is good for all versus best for one. I like the analogy of two people vying for the last orange in the store. The strongest person could get it or each person could get a half. But both solutions fall short of a more elegant one suggested by

understanding that one person wanted to use the peel in a recipe, while the other wanted the orange to eat. (Borrowed from "Getting to Yes," by Roger Fisher and William Ury.)

This leads to the issue of knowledge. We can blunt the sharpness of our differences by opening ourselves to receive a complete range of information on the issue. This includes knowledge of the life cycle of the species we manage, as well as the latest and most complete scientific information on stock status. What a pity it is to squander our political and emotional energy arguing over a management measure when one side has incomplete information and cannot understand the basic need to take action. Taking the knowledge concept to the next level suggests trying to understand the needs and interests of the other players. For a given fishery, are we using harvest strategies that maximize benefits to both the resource and to the associated user groups?

We on the staff recognize the important role we play in this process. Our job is to help provide this knowledge for all Commission-managed species. We need to help frame the issues to facilitate the decision-making process for our Commissioners. We must be totally objective, presenting all sides of these complex issues in a fair, clear and thorough manner. We also serve you, the public, keeping you informed about the elements of the problems, impacts of the measures and the benefits of the solutions.

As for me, I am committed to the principle of public debate. I see my job as ensuring that we provide the proper information and a forum for both the public and our Commissioners to discuss the issues. At the end of the day, when I measure success, it will not be to ask if you got exactly what you wanted. Instead, I will ask, did you understand the issue, did you have access to all the available information, and were you given the opportunity to express your views? If the answers to all of these questions are yes, then we as a staff have done our part. As for the outcome, credit for that rests with the collective wisdom and judgment of our Commissioners, who, I am convinced, are committed to doing the right thing. I hope that is something we can all agree on.



## Species Profile: American Lobster Managers Strive to Maintain Valuable Resource

### Introduction

With an ex-vessel value of nearly \$290 million in 2002, American lobster, *Homarus americanus*, ranks as one of the top commercial fisheries along the Atlantic coast. Over the last ten years coastwide landings have increased substantially, rising from 62 million pounds in 1990 to 81 million pounds in 2002. Despite these overall increases, landings in Long Island Sound and the waters off of Rhode Island and southern Massachusetts have been declining over the past several years.

Scientific assessment of the lobster population suggests the lobster resource is being over-harvested. State and federal fisheries managers, and lobstermen are continually working on ways to provide for the continued health of this valuable resource. The Commission is committed to ensuring effective and complementary management measures both in state and federal waters.

### Life History

American lobster is a bottom-dwelling crustacean, widely distributed over the continental shelf of North America. In the inshore waters of the U.S., it is most abundant from Maine through New Jersey, with abundance declining from northern to southern areas. Offshore, it occurs from Maine through North Carolina.

Lobsters are solitary and territorial, living in a variety of habitats as long as there is a burrow or crevice in which they can take cover. Females hatch their eggs from mid-May to mid-June. Larvae transition through five stages. For the first four stages larvae are planktonic, swimming at or near the water surface. At the fifth larval stage, juvenile lobsters sink to the ocean floor where they remain for the rest of their lifetime. Lobsters reach market size in about five to seven years, depending on water temperature.

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

The lobster fishery has seen incredible expansion in effort and landings since the late 1940s and early 1950s, when landings varied around 25 million pounds. The last ten years alone have seen dramatic increases in lobster landings, rising from 62 million pounds in 1990 to 81 million pounds in 2002. In 1999, commercial landings reached an historic high of 89 million pounds, with ex-vessel prices totaling 330 million dollars. Of this catch, approximately 80 percent are caught in state waters, which extend from zero to three miles from shore.

Lobster pots are the predominant commercial gear. Lobster is also taken recreationally with pots and by hand while SCUBA diving.

### Stock Status

The last lobster stock assessment, conducted in 2000 with data through 1998, indicates overfishing is occurring. Over the last few years, there has been growing concern regarding some localized

### *Homarus americanus*

#### Interesting Fish Facts:

- Lobsters smell food with small hairs covering their body and 4 small antennae

- Lobsters come in many colors - all, with the exception of the white ones, turn red when they are cooked

- In the first year of life, lobsters molt 10 times to reach a length of 1 to 1 1/2"

- It takes about six years for a lobster to reach one pound

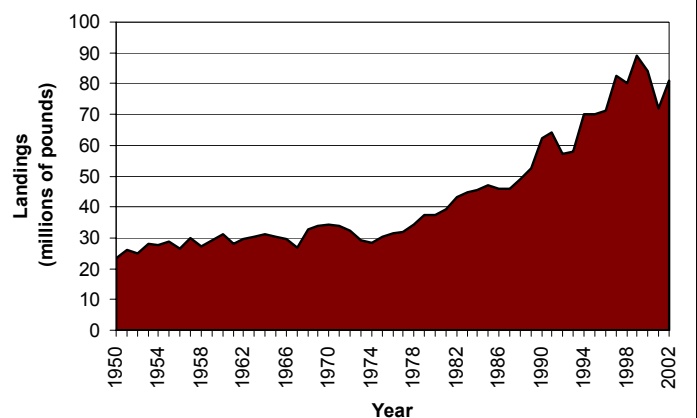
**Largest Recorded: 44 lbs**

**Stock Status: overfishing is occurring**

**Sources: Lobster Institute  
RI Sea Grant Fact Sheet**

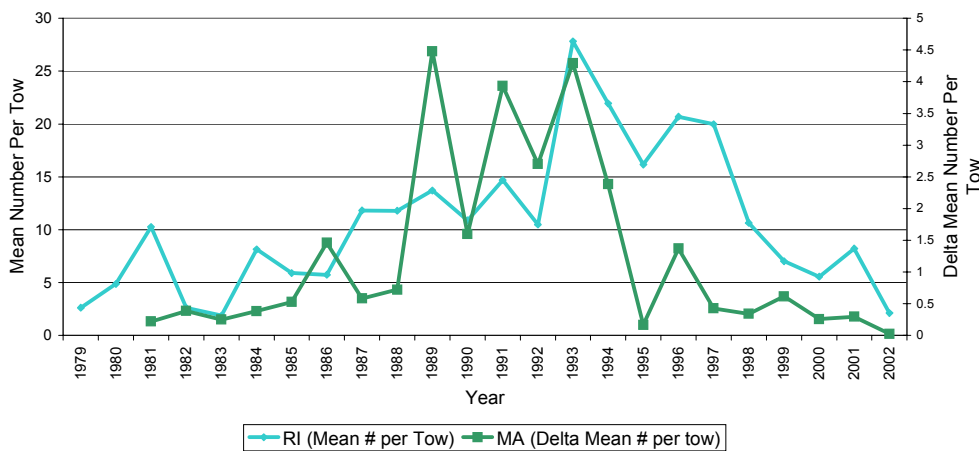
**Figure 1. American Lobster Commercial Landings**

Source: National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics and Economics Division, 2003



populations as well. Recent stock information indicates lobster abundance in Area 2 (waters off of Rhode Island and Southern Massachusetts) has dropped substantially from the late 1980s and early 1990s, with 2002 abundance significantly below the 20-year average for all sizes of lobsters (see Figure 2). In 2001, total landings were 26% and 29% below the time series mean for Massachusetts and Rhode Island, respectively. The incidence of shell disease has also been found to be steadily increasing.

**Figure 2. Area 2 Trawl Survey Abundance Trends for American Lobster (Sexes combined, all sizes)**  
Source: ASMFC American Lobster Technical Committee, 2003



In the late 1990s, a massive lobster die-off in Long Island Sound had serious consequences for the lobster fishery in that area. In response to the die-off, a consortium of groups, including Connecticut and New York Sea Grant, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, NOAA Fisheries' Northeast Fisheries Science Center and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, established the Long Island Sound Lobster Research Initiative. Overseen by a committee appointed by the Commission's Lobster Board, the Initiative funds and coordinates research focused on identifying the cause of the die-off and monitoring stock recovery. Specific research includes immunology, endocrinology, pesticides, physical/chemical environment, shell disease, paramoeba, and monitoring. A July 2000 congressional allocation of \$6.6 million has played an important role in funding much of this research.

Throughout 2004, the Commission will be conducting a peer reviewed stock assessment for American lobster. The assessment will consider new modeling approaches and input parameters such as natural mortality. A new lobster database, containing all of the fishery dependent and independent data collected on the Atlantic coast, will assist those conducting the assessment. This assessment will provide the Commission with updated and more complete information for management decisions.

### Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

American lobster is managed under Amendment 3 to the Interstate FMP for American Lobster. Its major provisions include: 3 ¼-inch minimum carapace length (larger minimum lengths in most areas); prohibition on the possession of berried lobsters; prohibition on possession of lobster meat and lobster parts; mandatory escape panels and vents on pots to allow lobsters to escape from old, lost pots; prohibition on spearing lobsters; prohibition on possession of female v-notched lobsters; limits on landings with non-trap gear; and maximum trap sizes.

Amendment 3 establishes seven lobster management areas. These areas include the: Inshore Gulf of Maine (Area 1), Inshore Southern New England (Area 2), Offshore Waters (Area 3), Inshore Northern Mid-Atlantic (Area 4), Inshore Southern Mid-Atlantic (Area 5), New York and Connecticut State Waters (Area 6), and Outer Cape Cod. Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs), composed of industry representatives, were formed for each management area. The LCMTs are charged with advising

the Lobster Board and recommending changes to the management plan within their areas.

Amendment 3 also provides the flexibility to respond to current conditions of the resource and fishery by making changes to the management program through addenda. Addendum I, approved in August 1999, establishes trap limits in each lobster management area. Addendum II, which was adopted in February 2001, addresses Amendment 3's goal of increasing egg production through a variety of LCMT proposed management measures including, but not limited to, increased minimum gauge sizes in Areas 2, 3, 4, 5, and the Outer Cape. In Addendum III, which was approved in February 2002, all seven LCMTs further refined their recommended management measures in order to meet the revised egg-rebuilding schedule outlined in Addendum II.

Based on concerns regarding significant stock declines in Area 2, Addendum IV outlined new management measures for this area including gauge increases and an effort control program designed to gradually reduce traps through permit and trap transfers. In addition, this Addendum institutes a trap transferability program for Area 3. For more information, please contact Carrie Selberg, American Lobster Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or [cselberg@asmfc.org](mailto:cselberg@asmfc.org).

# **ASMFC March 2004 Meeting Week**

## **March 8 - 11, 2004**

**Radisson Hotel, Old Town Alexandria**  
**901 North Fairfax**  
**Alexandria, VA 22314**  
**(703) 683-6000**

### **PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE**

#### Monday, March 8, 2004

**10:00 AM – Noon Atlantic Herring Section**

- Review Public Comment
- Provide Direction on the Development of Draft Amendment 2
- Review the PRT's Compliance Report

**1:00 PM – 3:30 PM Winter Flounder Management Board**

- Technical Committee Report
- Review and Consider Approval of Draft Amendment 1 for Public Comment

**3:30 PM – 5:30 PM American Lobster Management Board**

- Addendum V - Area 3 Management Measures
- Lobster Stock Assessment - Terms of Reference and Timeline
- Lobster Database Update

#### Tuesday, March 9, 2004

**8:00 AM – 11:00 AM ACCSP Coordinating Council**

- Review/approval of FY05 Biological Sampling Targets
- Review/approval of FY05 Bycatch Priority Fisheries
- Review/approval of 2004-2008 ACCSP Implementation Plan
- Status Reports on FY04 Funding Decisions, SAFIS Implementation, MRFSS For-Hire Survey, and MRFSS - State Conduct

**11:00 AM – 12:30 PM Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board**

- Elect Board Chair and Vice Chair
- State Compliance/FMP Review
- Decide on New York Stocking Proposal
- Technical Committee Report - AFS Symposium Update and Status Workshop Update

**1:30 PM – 3:30 PM American Eel Management Board**

- Technical Committee Report
- Consideration of Changes to the American Eel Management

**3:30 PM – 6:30 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

- New Jersey Recreational Proposal
- Delaware Recreational Proposal
- Maryland's Proposal to Change the Baywide F Estimation
- Technical Committee Report
- Discussion on an Addendum; NMFS Update on Reopening the EEZ

#### Wednesday, March 10, 2004

**7:30 AM – 10:30 AM Horseshoe Crab Management Board**

- Stock Assessment Report - Virginia Tech Update
- Technical Committee Report

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

7:30 AM – 10:30 AM      Horseshoe Crab Management Board (continued)

- Advisory Panel Report
- Addendum III Public Comment Summary
- Consideration of Approval of Addendum III
- Alternative Bait Workshop Report
- Delaware Bay Tagging Update

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM      ISFMP Policy Board

- Review White Paper on Consistency
- Review White Paper on Appeal Process
- Update on Non-native Oyster Activities
- Consideration of Noncompliance Recommendations (if necessary)

1:30 PM – 4:00 PM      Commissioner Workshop: *Improving Meeting Effectiveness – Part I*

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM      Update on Federal Fisheries Issues  
-Steve Williams, Director, USFWS (tentative)

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM      Business Session

- Consideration of Approval of Amendment 1 to the Northern Shrimp FMP
- Consideration of Noncompliance Recommendations (if necessary)

Thursday, March 11, 2004

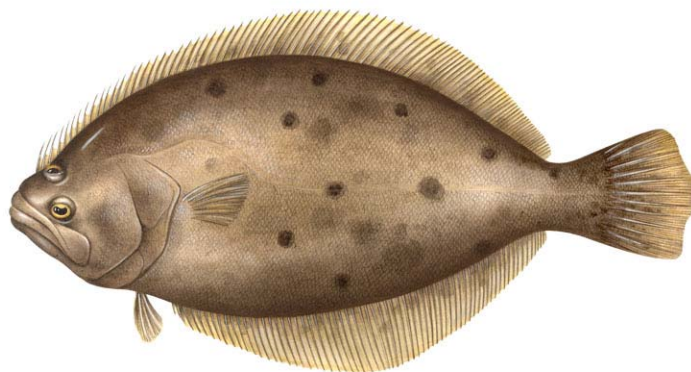
7:30 AM – 10:00 AM      Commissioner Workshop: *Improving Meeting Effectiveness – Part II*

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM      Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Review Technical Committee Report on Charges Delivered at the December meeting
- Review 2003 Stock Assessment
- Discuss Management Implications from 2003 Stock Assessment Report
- Review 2003 FMP Review
- Review 2003 Compliance Reports
- Update on Multispecies Model

2:00 PM – 6:00 PM      Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board

- Review and Approve Summer Flounder and Scup State Recreational Proposals
- Black Sea Bass Commercial Allocation
- Massachusetts Recreational Black Sea Bass Compliance
- Update on Scup and Black Sea Bass Stock Assessments
- FMP Reviews for all 3 Species



# **ASMFC Releases Draft Lobster Addendum V for Public Comment: State Hearings to be Held in NH, MA & RI**

The Commission's American Lobster Management Board has approved Draft Addendum V to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for public review and comment. The Draft Addendum solicits additional public input on the maximum trap cap component of the Area 3 transferable trap program.

In December, the American Lobster Board approved Addendum IV. Among other things, the Addendum includes a transferable trap program for Area 3 (off-shore waters). This program allows Area 3 lobstermen to transfer trap tags to other lobstermen, and establishes an overall trap cap and conservation taxes for transferring traps.

The public hearing document for Draft Addendum IV outlined an overall trap cap of 2600 traps and a two-tiered tax system that would institute a higher tax when the purchaser owned 2100 traps or more. In response to concerns raised at public hearings that a 2600 trap cap

may be too high, the Area 3 Lobster Conservation Management Team amended its original proposal. This new proposal includes a cap of 2200 traps, with a higher tax imposed when the purchaser owns 1800 to 2200 traps. Through Draft Addendum V, the Board seeks public comment on both the original and amended proposals.

Hearings have been scheduled in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island; the details of these hearings are below.

## **New Hampshire Fish and Game**

*February 19, 2004; 9:00 AM*  
225 Main Street  
Durham, New Hampshire  
Contact: John Nelson at (603)868-1095

## **Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries**

*February 18, 2004; 8:30 PM*  
Holiday Inn - Dedham  
55 Ariadne Road  
Dedham, Massachusetts  
Contact: Melanie Griffin at (617)626-1528

**Rhode Island Div. of Fish & Wildlife**  
*February 17, 2004; 6:00 PM*  
URI Narragansett Bay Campus, Corless Auditorium  
South Ferry Road  
Narragansett, Rhode Island  
Contact: Tom Angell at (401)423-1931

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum, either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies of the Draft Addendum can be obtained from the Commission's website at [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org) under the Breaking News page or by contacting the Commission office at (202)289-6400. **Public comment will be accepted until March 3, 2004**, and should be forwarded to Carrie Selberg, American Lobster Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC, 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax); or [cselberg@asmfc.org](mailto:cselberg@asmfc.org). For more information, please contact Carrie Selberg at (202)289-6400.



## **ASMFC Comings & Goings**

**Patrick Kilduff** -- In January, Patrick Kilduff joined the Commission as a Fisheries Research Specialist. In this position, he will be working on stock assessment activities, including coordinating the Stock Assessment Committee, assisting in multispecies assessments, and providing staff support to the peer review process.

Patrick received a B.S. in Biology from the University of West Florida and an M.S. in Marine Science from the College of William and Mary, Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). He last worked at VIMS in its Marine Fish Aquaculture Program, where he conducted research and demonstration projects on spot and cobia aquaculture in recirculating systems.

We are excited to have Patrick join our staff and we all look forward to working with him. Welcome aboard, Patrick!



# MSC Addresses Peer Review Process, Interstate Tagging and More...

In December, the Management and Science Committee (MSC) met to discuss a number of issues, including the schedule for ASMFC stock assessments and peer reviews, interstate tagging, multispecies assessments, and conservation equivalency. Following is a summary of those discussions.

## Stock Assessments and Peer Reviews

The committee developed the schedule for 2004 benchmark assessments and peer reviews, which includes American lobster, Atlantic croaker, black sea bass, bluefish, horseshoe crab, scup and weakfish. Stock assessments for American lobster, black sea bass, bluefish, scup and weakfish will be reviewed through the National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Fisheries Science Center Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) process. The peer review for horseshoe crab will be conducted as an external Commission peer review and will focus on new assessment methodologies for assessing this species. The Atlantic croaker stock assessment will be updated in 2004 based on advice from the Southeast Data and Assessment Review (SEDAR) peer review conducted in October 2003. The timing of a follow-up review has not yet been determined.

## Interstate Tagging

The MSC reviewed and approved an issues paper developed by the Interstate Tagging Committee on Atlantic coast tagging activities. This paper provides information on tagging activities for Commission-managed species within the coastal range from Maine to Florida, provides an evaluation of angler-based tagging programs including benefits and shortfalls, and provides criteria for evaluation of certification applications. The MSC and ISFMP Policy Board approved a certification program for Atlantic coast tagging activities, which will be implemented in 2004. The certification program is not intended to promote or en-

courage additional citizen-based tagging activities. Rather, the goal is to direct anglers' efforts to tag within the law and improve the quality of data from those activities for use by fishery scientists and managers. The MSC also recommended that the information on species-specific tagging programs be forwarded to individual species Technical Committees for additional evaluation of appropriate sample sizes.

## Multispecies Assessments

The MSC reviewed Commission activities regarding multispecies assessments. The Commission's Multispecies Virtual Population Analysis (MS-VPA) will be undergoing a formal internal review through the Commission's Stock Assessment Committee in 2004. In 2005, the model will be further reviewed through the SAW-SARC process. The Commission, in coordination with the University of Miami, is also developing a spatial model in order to evaluate environmental influences on key Commission-managed species. The MSC approved the proceedings of the workshop conducted in October 2002 on Linking Results of Multispecies Assessments to Single Species Management. This report, to be published in early 2004, provides a generic plan to assist fisheries management agencies in using multispecies assessment results as additional information in current management processes. A subcommittee of the MSC is currently developing an implementation plan specific to Commission activities on multispecies issues. This plan will provide guidance to species management boards and the ISFMP Policy Board on use of results of the MS-VPA in the Commission's single species management structure.

## Conservation Equivalency

A subcommittee of the MSC is developing standards and protocols to guide the use of conservation equivalency in

Commission fishery management plans. A draft document is currently being developed and will be forwarded to the MSC and ISFMP Policy Board at the 2004 Spring Meeting for review.

## Funding in Support of Research

The MSC discussed concerns regarding state and federal funding for research to support fisheries management. The committee will be compiling detailed information on current funding levels and recent declines for presentation to the ISFMP Policy Board at the 2004 spring meeting. For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline, Director of Research & Statistics at [lkline@asmfc.org](mailto:lkline@asmfc.org).





## First Six Months of New Charterboat and Party/headboat Survey Completed

Biologists and statisticians with the National Marine Fisheries Service are analyzing data collected in the first six months of the For-Hire Survey to develop estimates of catch and effort resulting from charterboat and party/headboat fishing on the Atlantic coast.

The For-hire Survey, a new standard adopted by the state and federal partners of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), is intended to improve fishery statistics for charterboats and party/headboats, or the “for-hire sector.” The survey began on the Atlantic coast in June of 2003.

### Effort Data

Fishing effort information, such as number of anglers on each trip and area fished, is collected through weekly telephone sampling of captains. Effort sampling draws on a directory of over ten thousand charterboats and party/headboats fishing the Atlantic coast.

The For-Hire Survey also allows captains selected for sampling to complete the effort surveys in other ways. Captains have the option of faxing their effort information for the sampling week to the survey administrators. While most of the captains still prefer telephone interviews, about five percent have taken advantage of the fax option in the first six months. Survey administrators have also tested an online form to collect effort for the captains who prefer electronic reporting. The online form will be available later in 2004.

### Validation Data

To validate reported effort, field samplers are periodically checking docks to directly observe vessel activity. Sampler observations are compared to reported effort to correct for reporting errors.

### Catch and Bycatch Data

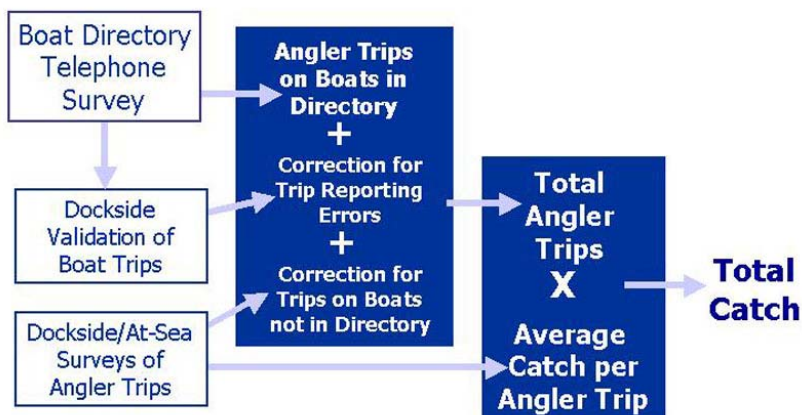
While catch and other biological information is collected through dockside

interviews of for-hire anglers, Atlantic coast headboats are also carrying at-sea observers to collect this information. State partners in Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Georgia are conducting the catch sampling and adding additional samples for more precise estimates. The ACCSP has also supplied funds to increase catch sampling in the Northeast region in recent years.

### About the ACCSP

The ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program to design, implement, and conduct marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and to integrate those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. For further information, please visit [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org).

Data collected through the For-Hire Survey’s effort, validation and catch surveys are combined for estimates of total catch.



## The ACCSP Says Good-bye

Barry Brasseaux, the ACCSP’s Information Systems Developer, is leaving the Program to take a federal position in March. Mr. Brasseaux has been an integral part of the success of the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System, and will be missed by his fellow staff and the ACCSP’s committee members.

# 17<sup>th</sup> Annual SEAMAP Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise

The 2004 Southeast Area Monitoring Assessment Program's (SEAMAP) Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise took place in January aboard the R/V Cape Hatteras. The science party included representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, East Carolina University, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administra-

tion, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

While cruising the offshore waters of North Carolina, a total of 2,724 striped bass were captured, tagged and released. In addition to tagging the fish, scale samples and length measurements were obtained. 3,385 spiny dogfish were tagged and released, and even more were measured and sexed. During the eight-day cruise, lengths were obtained from horseshoe crabs, monkfish, summer flounder, weakfish, Atlantic croaker, and hundreds of clearnose skates.

Two horseshoe crabs, one Atlantic sturgeon, and seven red drum were also tagged and released. Specimens of striped bass, Atlantic croaker, and American shad were retained for aging.

All of the information collected during the Cooperative Tagging Cruise will aid in the development and implementation of fisheries regulations by state and federal fishery management agencies, the three East Coast Fishery Management Councils, and the Commission. Rewards for striped bass and Atlantic



Striped bass is not the only fish caught on the SEAMAP Cruise. ASMFC FMP Coordinator, Lydia Munger proudly displays one of the species she manages -- American shad.

sturgeon tag returns are offered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maryland Fisheries Resource Office, as part of the coast wide tagging program for these two species. East Carolina University distributes rewards for spiny dogfish tag returns.

For more information, please contact Bill Cole, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, at (252)726-7021 or [Bill\\_Cole@fws.gov](mailto:Bill_Cole@fws.gov).



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*Return Service Requested*