



ASMFC

# Fisheries *focus*

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

## A SMFC Begins Search for New Executive Director John H. Dunnigan Leaves for NMFS January 28

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is searching for a new Executive Director. The position will become vacant when Jack Dunnigan leaves on January 28, 2002, to become the Director of the Office of Sustainable Fisheries for the National Marine Fisheries Service.

"I am leaving with a wonderful sense of accomplishment for the past eleven years," Mr. Dunnigan said. "I will always cherish the memories of the wonderful people I had the opportunity to work with. The states and their ASMFC Commissioners have led the way in developing cooperative approaches to coastal fishery conservation, and I'm very fortunate to have been here to help them work through it. And the chance to build and work with this wonderful staff is one of the great experiences of my career."

"We are looking for a strong, visionary leader," said Commission Chair, Susan Shipman of Georgia. "We need someone who can help the states continue to achieve all that they can by working together in a spirit of mutual cooperation for marine fisheries."

Over the last decade the Commission's program has grown significantly in response to the needs of the states for greater coordination among their various programs. There is greater cooperation among the states today in fisheries regulatory planning, supported by the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. The Commission's budget and staffing have increased to meet this demand, and the ASMFC is focused on meeting the goals and objectives of a comprehensive strategic plan. The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program is about to "go live," and the states are playing a much stronger role in fisheries research.

"In our institution, the Executive Director is the force that brings us together, and energizes us to find creative solutions to problems that meet the needs of all the states," said Ms. Shipman. She added, "The Executive Director is also our representative to the community at large – to Congress, the Administration and the regional fishery management councils; as well as to major fisheries constituencies. So this is a unique challenge."

### A SMFC Milestones

The Commission has come along way since Jack came on the scene as the New ASMFC Executive Director in April 1991. Following are some of the major milestones that the states have accomplished under his remarkable leadership and guidance.

**ACFCMA** -- In December 1993, Congress passed the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA), recognizing in full the states mutual interdependence and what can be achieved through this powerful cooperative partnership. Since its passage, the Commission's staff has grown from six to 25 people, and it's budget has increased from \$650,000 to four million dollars. Examples of fisheries management successes under this program include striped bass, weakfish and summer flounder fisheries.

**ACCSP** -- In 1994, the idea of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program was conceived and championed by four forward-thinking individuals, including Jack Dunnigan. Now, with coastwide data collection standards in place for fishery catch and effort, the Program is poised to become the premier resource for Atlantic coastal fisheries data.

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

*Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission*

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## Upcoming Meetings

*Year 2002*

1/23 & 24:

ASMFC Operations Committee, Watergate Hotel, 2650 Virginia Ave., NW, Washington, D.C.

1/23 (10 AM - 5 PM) & 14 (8:30 AM - 3:00 PM):

ASMFC Striped Bass Plan Development Team, Holiday Inn BWI, 890 Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, Maryland; (410) 859-8400. For more information, please contact Robert Beal at rbeal@asmfc.org.

1/29 - 31:

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

1/30 & 31:

ASMFC Ad-Hoc Aquaculture Review Committee, Holiday Inn BWI, 890 Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, Maryland; (410) 859-8400. For more information, please contact Jeff Brust at jbrust@asmfc.org.

2/4:

ASMFC Red Drum Technical Committee and Plan Development Team, Clarion Hotel Conference Center, 2101 Dixie Clipper Road, Jacksonville, Florida; (904) 741-1997. For more information, please contact Dr. Joseph Desfosse at jdesfosse@asmfc.org.

2/7 (9:00 AM - 5:00 PM):

ASMFC Technical Committee Evaluation Subcommittee, Holiday Inn BWI, 890 Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, Maryland; (410) 859-8400. For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline at lkline@asmfc.org.

2/18 - 21:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Watergate Swissotel, 2650 Virginia Avenue, N.W., Washington DC. (see preliminary agenda on pages 7 & 8).

2/26:

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Ferncroft, Danvers, Massachusetts.

2/28 - 3/2:

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

3/12 - 14:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Ramada East End, Riverhead, New York.

Well, 2001 had its good points. On the negative side, for most of us the anxiety over the status of our retirement savings accounts was only exceeded by – “dwarfed by,” really – the events of September 11. But I know that we can all point to successes, business and personal. There is one thing sure about 2001 – it is over.

January is time for resolutions and looking forward. I would like to suggest a few “big picture” items that will play out for all of us who care about marine fisheries in 2002 and beyond. The first one I would mention is developing the next fisheries policy paradigm. In 1996 Congress passed the Sustainable Fisheries Act, the most comprehensive and sweeping reform of the federal fisheries management process since it was initiated in 1976. The success of implementing the law has been mixed. A reemphasized commitment to fisheries conservation is being implemented by the Regional Councils and the National Marine Fisheries Service, demanded by segments of our fisheries constituencies, and enforced by the courts. And we can certainly see visible signs of success in many marine fish stocks, supporting the proposition that the states have believed for a long time: if you do conservation right, it works. It works for the resources. It works for the people who depend upon and care about them.

The concern ought to be whether we are going about this in a way that it likely to secure these benefits for the long term. A really effective, ongoing, successful marine fishery conservation and management program needs more “buy-in” than we have today – from the states and from fishermen. We will not be successful if the program demands consistent involvement from the courts and the Congress to maintain its speed and direction. Winds of change alter their course; and if we are only propelled by those winds, we will lack consistent direction. The experience of the states attests to the fact that marine fishery conservation and management is most effective when it involves partners in a meaningful way, and avoids command-and-control methods. So the next iteration in the development of federal fisheries policy needs to focus on ways to develop processes to solidify and extend the effectiveness of the conservation priorities contained in the Sustainable Fisheries Act. It needs to focus more on partnerships, especially partnerships with the states for marine fisheries policy formulation, implementation and enforcement.

A second “big picture” trend that we ought to look forward to is the further development and application of new information technologies. The Commission does a pretty good job of implementing new technology for conducting our business; much better, I believe, than many of our state members. But even the Commission has not evolved very far beyond technologies that were available in the early 1990s. Imagine, for a moment, all of the technologies that have been brought to bear during the last twenty-five years. Now imagine the same leap in technology over where we are today – but happening in just the next ten years. Technologies relating to energy and materials, among others, will greatly affect fishing. But it is the information technologies that are likeliest to affect how state marine fisheries agencies do business. The business-related excesses of the dot-com economy do not detract from the genuine creativity that leads to new technology breakthroughs, and their inevitable application. There are federal agencies that are now seriously talking about “virtual rulemaking.” Today’s teleconferencing technologies are at a state of development similar to personal computers in the early 1980s. Nanotechnology and quantum computing may still be “Buck Rogers” stuff, but they have led us to consider a world of possibilities rather than a world of limits. In 2001, the Commission made much better use of phone conferencing than in the past; and comprehensive videoconferencing is clearly in our foreseeable future.

The third item I would mention that we should look forward to is the possibility of an El Nino in 2002. It has been a number of years since the last significant ENSO event, but NOAA reported observations within the past few weeks that give cause for consideration. Notice that I did not say “cause for concern.” El Nino happens. It is important to remember that our understanding of this and other global processes is barely two decades old. But this time we need to be ready – ready to carefully monitor the event and its effects, especially on marine fisheries. There has been a lot of conjecture and hypothesis put forward about the effects of global processes on marine fisheries. After being fully aware of the last three cycles, it is time for

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## From the Executive Director's Desk (continued from page 3)

us to test our ability to make predictions and show that we really understand what is going on.

Last year at this time I wrote about my wish/resolution for the next 12 months; and I find that it is just as relevant today: *Let us resolve to proceed through 2002 with grace and mutual respect; to recognize and promote our common interest; to witness to our mutual interdependence; and to commit to each other's success.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Major life changes are always something to look forward to. Thank goodness they do not come around every year! But they do eventually come, and among the items we have to look forward to in the coming months is a leadership change at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. As you have no doubt heard, on January 28, 2002, I will become the Director of the Office of Sustainable Fisheries for the National Marine Fisheries Service. This is a great privilege, but one that brings no little sense of regret at leaving behind eleven glorious years at ASMFC. I will have the advantage next month of writing a last column with some closing thoughts about the great honor of serving the states, and working with this wonderful staff.

Peace and Blessings to all in the New Year!

## A SMFC Begins Search for New Executive Director (continued from page 1)

Ms. Shipman indicated that the Commission would be looking for a person who is strongly committed to the mutual success of the states in carrying out their cooperative marine fisheries programs. "All of the states are interested in protecting our marine fisheries, and we know that we have to work effectively with each other if we are going to be successful," she said. "The ability to help us identify our mutual interests, and then to project them to the fisheries community at large will be very important."



## A SMFC Milestones (continued from page 1)

**ASMFC Strategic Planning** -- In 1998, the Commission undertook the challenging task of developing a five-year strategic planning document for the Commission's programs. This effort represented the first time in over 50 years that the states collectively formalized their near- and long-term goals for fisheries management, research & statistics, habitat conservation, sport fish restoration and law enforcement coordination. The document also included strategies to achieve the goals and ways to monitor progress. With the first strategic plan ending in 2003, it is likely that one of the first things for the new Executive Director to tackle will be the development of the next five-year Strategic Plan.

**Full Commissioner Participation** -- Since 1942 state membership to the Commission has always included three representatives -- an Administrative Commissioner with the state marine fishery agency, a State Legislator and a Governor's Appointee. But it was not until recently that all

three Commissioners were given equal standing in the Commission's fisheries management decision-making processes. In 1999, the Commission instituted a one-year pilot program for full integration of State Legislators and Governor's Appointees on the various species management boards. What this meant is that each state Commissioner served jointly with his/her fellow Commissioners on the species management board. Each state delegation was allowed to cast a single vote determined through the caucus of the three Commissioners in attendance. At the end of the year, the pilot program was deemed a success and was formally established as a standard operating procedure for the Interstate Fisheries Management Program.

**Habitat Program** -- The Commission's Habitat Program began in earnest in the early 1990s with the appointment of the Habitat Committee. Since that time the program

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# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission February 2002 Meeting Week

February 18 - 21, 2002

The Watergate Swissotel  
2650 Virginia Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC  
(202)965-2300

## Preliminary Agenda\*

\*Dates and times are subject to change up to the times meetings are held

### Monday, February 18, 2002

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM Tautog Management Board

- Review public comments on Addendum III
- Board action on Addendum III

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM Legislators & Governors' Appointees

- Review recommendations of LGA/Advisory Committee Workgroup on improving the Commission's advisory panel process

### Tuesday, February 19, 2002

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council

- Review and discuss ACCSP Strategic Plan
- Review and approve Technical Source Document V on Biological Release, Discard & Protected Species Interactions Modules
- Elect Vice-Chair

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM Committee on Economics & Social Sciences

- ISFMP activities: review draft of Northern Shrimp, Red Drum and Striped Bass Draft Amendments, discuss initial development of FMP author guidelines, plan for Commissioner seminars
- ACCSP activities: discuss socioeconomic pilot study, discuss fishing community development, report on North Carolina ex-vessel data collection, review 2002 Committee tasks

10:00 AM - Noon Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board

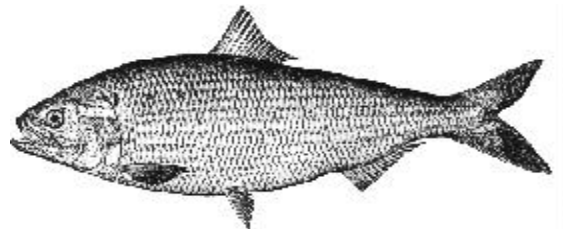
- Review status of state compliance
- Approve FMP Review

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Review Technical Committee Report on multispecies assessment and response to Board requests
- Review Advisory Panel Report

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Shad & River Herring Management Board

- Review state compliance
- Approve FMP Review
- Review state plans to reduce fishing effort in ocean intercept fisheries
- Discuss state habitat restoration efforts
- Review Stock Assessment Subcommittee recommendations
- Review Technical Committee report on microgeochemistry analysis
- Elect Vice-Chair



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# ASMFC February 2002 Meeting Week Preliminary Agenda (continued from page 6)

## Tuesday, February 19, 2002 (continued)

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM ACCSP Launch

## Wednesday, February 20, 2002

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Commissioner Technical Workshop: Biological Reference Points and Control Rules

10:00 AM - Noon South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board

- Review public comment on Draft Amendment 2
- Adopt final management measures for Amendment 2
- Review Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee report
- SEAMAP update

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM American Lobster Management Board

- Review public comment on Addendum III
- Board action on Addendum III

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel

- Review Amendment 6 Public Hearing Draft

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Weakfish Management Board

- Presentation of stock assessment
- Approve Public Information Document

## Thursday, February 21, 2002

7:30 AM - 9:00 AM Commissioner Workshop

- New Executive Director update
- Protected/endangered species issues
- Compliance efficiency

9:00 AM - 12:30 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Approve Amendment 6 Public Hearing Draft

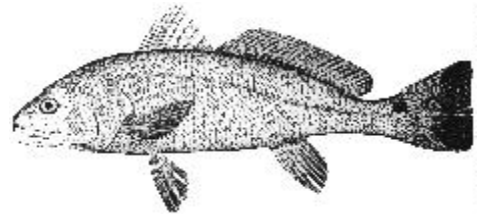
1:30 PM - 6:00 PM Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board\*

- Review and approve Addendum V to the Scup FMP
- Review and approve Addendum VI to the Black Sea Bass FMP
- Review and approve Addendum VII to the Scup FMP
- Review and approve state conservation equivalency proposals for summer flounder

\* may meet jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Demersal Committee



# A SMFC Releases Draft Red Drum Amendment 2 for Public Comment



Throughout January and into February Atlantic coastal states from Virginia through Florida have conducted or will be conducting public meetings in order to gather public comment and input on the recently released Draft Amendment 2 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Red Drum. Below are those meetings that are still scheduled to occur. Please note that Florida is intending on conducting a hearing as well, although at press time the details of that meeting were not available. For more information, please contact Ken Haddad at (727) 896-8626.

## January 28, 2002: 7:00 PM

Virginia Marine Resources Commission  
Washington Avenue, Fourth Floor  
Newport News, Virginia  
Contact: Jack Travelstead at (757) 247-2247

## January 31, 2002: 7:00 PM

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources 2600  
Marine Resource Center  
217 Fort Johnson Road  
Charleston, South Carolina  
Contact: David Cupka at (843) 762-5010

## February 4, 2002: 7:00 PM

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries  
North Carolina Aquarium  
Airport Road  
Manteo, North Carolina  
Contact: Dr. Louis Daniel at (252) 726-7021

## February 5, 2002: 7:00 PM

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries  
North Carolina State University  
303 College Circle  
Morehead City, North Carolina  
Contact: Dr. Louis Daniel at (252) 726-7021

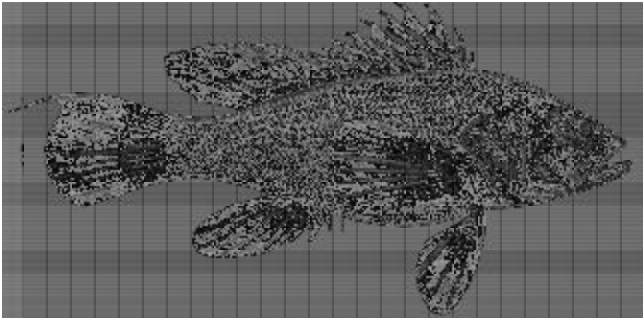
## February 7, 2002: 7:00 PM

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries  
North Carolina Dept. of Environment & Natural Resources  
Center for Marine Science and Technology Building  
127 Cardinal Drive Extension (off of Highway 17)  
Wilmington, North Carolina  
Contact: Dr. Louis Daniel at (252) 726-7021

Currently, the states manage red drum under Amendment 1. While the management measures implemented under the plan led to an increase in the escapement rates of juvenile red drum, the overall population remains overfished in both the northern and southern regions. The management program established by Amendment 1 was intended to be an intermediate step in a phased in approach to recovering the red drum population. Since its adoption in 1994, Atlantic coastal states from Florida through New Jersey have implemented measures to modify harvest regulations and/or commercial quotas to increase escapement of subadult red drum. Under these regulations, Amendment 1's interim management goal appears to have been met and exceeded to some degree in each region. It was anticipated that additional harvest restrictions would be required in some areas to meet the ultimate goal of the original FMP.

Amendment 2 proposes to address the next steps for rebuilding the red drum population, as well as updating the FMP to meet the standards for Commission FMPs under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA 1993). Proposed measures include more restrictive bag and size limits for recreational and for-hire fishermen, a coastwide 27-inch total length (TL) or less maximum size limit and a payback provision for any commercial fisheries that exceed their current landings cap. In addition to these measures within the management unit, Amendment 2 proposes that states outside the management unit (New York through Maine) implement complementary measures to protect the red drum resource. Specifically, those states are asked to implement a provision to prohibit the harvest, possession and sale of red drum greater than 27 inches TL.

The Commission's South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board will meet during February meeting week to review public comment and choose the final management measures for Amendment 2. Amendment 2 adoption is currently scheduled for this spring, with full implementation slated for late fall 2002. Copies of the Draft Amendment can be obtained by contacting Vanessa Jones, Administrative Assistant, at (202) 289-6400 or <vjones@asmfc.org>, or via the Commission's website at [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org). Written public comment will be accepted until February 8, 2002 and should be forwarded to Dr. Joseph Desfosse, FMP Coordinator, 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 289-6051 (fax) or <jdesfosse@asmfc.org>.



## A SMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board Prepares for Action on Addenda V, VI & VII

**T**his past December, in a joint meeting with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved an Emergency Rule for Quarter I of the 2002 black sea bass fishery. This action sets the daily possession limit for black sea bass at 7,000 pounds for the duration of Quarter I, which extends from January 1 through March 31.

In setting regulations for Quarter I, the Emergency Rule also allowed for the final development of Addendum VI to the Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The purpose of Addendum VI is to provide the Management Board with a mechanism to establish trip limits and, if necessary, triggers and adjusted weekly or daily trip limits for each quarter through the normal specification setting process. Creating a more permanent system of this kind will afford the Board flexibility in setting trip limits, while eliminating the administrative burden of implementing an emergency rule each year.

Two additional addenda have also been developed for the scup fishery and are available for public comment in late January and early February. Addendum V to the Scup FMP seeks to establish state-specific allocations for the commercial summer period quota and provides series of options for public comment. The summer quota period extends from the beginning of May through the end of October each year. From 1999 to 2001 the Management Board approved three separate Emergency Rules to establish state quota shares that differ from Addendum I to the Scup FMP. The Emergency Rule that was in effect for the summer 2001

fishery expired on October 6, 2001. In the absence of a new addendum or emergency rule, the summer period scup management program will revert back to that detailed in Addendum I to the Scup FMP.

The second scup addendum, Addendum VII, is designed to provide the states with a set of management options for the 2002 recreational scup fishery. Over the last couple of years scup recreational landings have substantially exceeded the harvest limit. The Board is developing Addendum VII with the intent of designing and implementing a program that will limit recreational harvest to the targets established by the FMP. In the Draft Addendum for public comment, the Board is considering the development of a coastwide management measure, the separation of the coast into regions, and the development of a state-specific management program for the recreational scup fishery. In addition, states may be given the option of developing a separate management program for the charter and party boat sector. The Board will be voting to approve this Addendum for public hearing in late January.

Upon approval of Addendum VII, the three addenda will be the subject of a series of public hearings to be held in late January and early February. All three addenda are slated for final Board review and approval on February 21, 2002.

While summer flounder, scup and black sea bass are managed jointly by the Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, these recent actions have been taken by the states for state water management only.

Copies of the Emergency Rule and the addenda can be obtained by contacting Vanessa Jones, Administrative Assistant, at (202)289-6400 or

<vjones@asmfc.org>, or via the Commission's website at [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org). Written public comment will be accepted until February 13, 2002 and should be forwarded to Michael Lewis, FMP Coordinator, 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 289-6051 (fax) or <mlewis@asmfc.org>.

## A SMFC Seeks Nominations for 2002 AAE Awards

Nominations are requested for the 2002 ASMFC Annual Awards of Excellence (AAE). Awards will be presented in four categories, and the criteria for the AAE are as follows:

An individual or individuals who has (have) made highly significant contributions to the management and conservation of Atlantic coastal fisheries in the areas of: Scientific/Technical/Advisory, Congressional/Legislative, Law Enforcement, and Management/Policy. Such contributions must be for work on conservation issues of interstate, i.e. regional or Atlantic coastwide importance.

If you know of a worthy candidate who should be nominated, please forward that nomination to Laura Leach at the Commission no later than February 8, 2002. The nomination letter should include the following information: name of nominee, name of nominator, award category for which they are being nominated, narrative description of their contribution (not to exceed 2 pages)

The Annual Awards of Excellence will be presented at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May. For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance & Administration, at (202)289-6400 or <lleach@asmfc.org>.

# The ACCSP Develops Socioeconomic Data Collection Program

Fisheries resource managers have always struggled to conserve healthy stocks without threatening the livelihood of the citizens that harvest our seafood.

While data on environmental factors are routinely collected, little information is available on the social and economic impact of management plans on fishermen. Sufficient fisheries-specific data necessary for management are not altogether available through the U.S. Census Bureau or any other agency, nor have they been routinely collected in a standardized way.

To assist resource managers along the entire Atlantic coast, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northeast Regional Office are testing methods of collecting these kinds of data. When these studies are completed, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), a state-federal coastal fisheries data collection and data management program, will have a better understanding of methodologies for collecting socioeconomic information.

The Georgia pilot study, which began in

1999, is being conducted by the GADNR through the cooperation of the 40 blue crab harvesters who volunteered their time and attention to the project. The State is experimenting with telephone and in-person interviews to determine the most cost-effective way to collect this information. Data collection for the Georgia study will be completed this spring. The ACCSP's Coordinating Council approved an allocation of \$76,755 in October to analyze data from the study. The final analysis will be completed later this year.

The NMFS Northeast Regional Office's study, also a three-year pilot, has been underway for one year. While the Georgia study collected data from a relatively small, homogenous group of fishermen, the northeast regional study currently has over 150 participants from most northeast states, various fisheries, and using a variety of gear types. The Northeast Region's data collection will continue until the second quarter of 2004.

Lessons learned from both studies will give the ACCSP's partners the tools necessary for collecting similar data regionally and at the state-level. Armed with



these data, resource managers can give greater consideration to the social, cultural and economic impacts of their decisions.

## About the ACCSP

The ACCSP's partners are the ASMFC, the 15 Atlantic states' natural resource management agencies, the three regional fisheries management councils, the District of Columbia Fisheries and Wildlife Division, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, NMFS and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Together these resource managers have developed a plan to cooperatively collect, manage and disseminate fishery statistical data for the Atlantic coast, and to support the development and operation of a national program. For more information, please contact Abbey Compton, ACCSP Outreach Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or [abbey.compton@accsp.org](mailto:abbey.compton@accsp.org).

## ASMFC Milestones (continued from page 4)

continues to focus on outreach and education, although more recently it has begun to be recognized as an important player in the development of habitat policy, particularly with regards to submerged aquatic vegetation. Another important aspect of the program has been the integration of habitat sections within the Commission fishery management plans.

**Outreach & Public Participation** -- Another Commission program that gained momentum in the early 1990s was the Commission's outreach and public participation efforts. Much of this momentum was spurred by ACFCMA and its mandates for formalizing the Commission's public participation processes. This formalization included the establishment of an advisory panel process and a governing Char-

ter and a detailed public input process for the development of fishery management plans and amendments. Today, the Commission has 18 species advisory panels, involving over 240 recreational and commercial fishermen, and dealers and other interest groups. Over the last 11 years, the Commission has also significantly expanded its efforts to reach out to fishing constituencies and the media through Fisheries Focus, press releases and its website at [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org).

All in all, an exciting and busy 11 years...who knows what the next 11 years will hold.

# Making the Commission's Advisory Panel Process The Best It Can Be

About a year ago, the Commission's Legislators and Governor's Appointees (LGAs) committed themselves to improving the Commission's advisory panel (AP) process. This past December, a subset of both the LGAs and the Advisory Committee, which is composed of the various advisory panel chairs, took this commitment further by sitting down with ASMFC staff and a facilitator for a frank assessment of the Commission's AP process. What came out of this two-day session was a thorough review of the strengths and weaknesses of the process, as well as a clear, shared vision of what a truly successful AP process would look like.

This vision included a process that incorporated high quality stakeholder input, satisfied stakeholders who felt like their input was being heard and respected, effective communication among all involved parties (managers, scientists, stakeholders

and staff), and a clear articulation of everyone's roles and responsibilities and a commitment to these responsibilities. And, above all, a process that engendered trust and was equally valued by all those involved.

From this vision, the workgroup identified a list of over 40 ways in which the process could be improved. These actions were further prioritized to highlight the top 10 actions that would move us toward our vision of a successful AP process in both the short and long-term. A report of the results of this two-day session and the recommendations for improving the process will be presented to the LGAs on February 18, 2002, for their consideration and endorsement. To receive a copy of the report or for more information, please contact Tina Berger, Public Affairs Specialist, at (202)289-6400 or <tberger@asmfc.org>.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1444 Eye Street, N.W., 6th Floor  
Washington D.C. 20005

*Return Service Requested*