



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Volume 18, Issue 5

July 2009

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

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

ASMFC Summer Meeting August 17 - 20, 2009

**Crowne Plaza Hotel Old Town
901 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia
(703) 683-6000**

Preliminary Agenda

The preliminary agenda is subject to change. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

August 17, 2009

2:00 PM - 5:00 PM American Lobster Management Board

August 18, 2009

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Atlantic Herring Section

10:15 AM - 11:45 AM Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Management Board

1:00 PM - 3:30 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

3:45 PM - 5:15 PM Horseshoe Crab Management Board

August 19, 2009

8:00 AM - 10:30 AM Weakfish Management Board

10:45 AM - 1:15 PM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

2:15 PM - 6:15 PM ISFMP Policy Board

August 20, 2009

8:00 AM - 9:30 AM South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board

9:45 AM - 11:45 AM Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Shark Management Board

12:15 PM - 2:45 PM Shad & River Herring Management Board

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM ISFMP Policy Board

4:00 PM - 4:30 PM Business Session

Inside This Issue

Species Profile: River Herring
Page 4

Comings & Goings Page 6

Science Highlight: Slow Year for the Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise
Page 7

ACCSP Update Page 8

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

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

George D. Lapointe (ME), Chair
Robert H. Boyles, Jr., (SC), Vice-Chair

John V. O'Shea, Executive Director
Robert E. Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program
Patrick A. Campfield, Science Director
Laura C. Leach, Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor
tberger@asmfc.org

(202)289-6400 Phone • (202)289-6051 Fax
www.asmfc.org

Upcoming Meetings

7/20 - 24 (begins at 1 PM on the 20th and ends at Noon on the 24th):

Atlantic Croaker Data Workshop, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Downtown Richmond, 555 E. Canal Street, Richmond, Virginia.

7/28 - 29:

ACCSP Operations Committee, Hotel Providence, 139 Mathewson Street, Providence, Rhode Island; (401) 861-8000.

7/28 - 29:

ACCSP Standard Codes Subcommittee, Eastland Park Hotel, 157 High Street, Portland, Maine; (207) 775-5411.

8/3 & 4:

Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) Annual Meeting, Francis Marion Hotel, 387 King Street, Charleston, South Carolina.

8/4 - 6:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Embassy Suite Alexandria, 1900 Diagonal Road, Alexandria, Virginia; (703) 684-5900.

8/17 - 20:

ASMFC Summer Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; (800) 333-3333 (see preliminary agenda on page 1).

8/24 - 28 (begins at 1:00 PM) - 28 (ends at Noon):

Red Drum SEDAR 18 Review Workshop, Doubletree Atlanta Buckhead, 3342 Peachtree Road NE, Atlanta, Georgia; (404) 231-1234 or (800) 222-TREE.

9/14 - 18:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Charleston Marriott Hotel, 170 Lockwood Boulevard, Charleston, South Carolina; (800) 968-3569.

9/14 - 18:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

9/22 - 24:

New England Fishery Management Council, Radisson Hotel, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

10/13 - 15:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Princess Royale, 9100 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, Maryland; (410) 524-7777.

A Tail of Four Fisheries

Most would readily agree that there are great economic and social benefits to be had from healthy and abundant fish stocks. In cases where a stock has failed or is failing, the scientific advice of what to do is usually pretty clear. However managers often find it difficult to take effective action, usually out of concern about doing harm to fishermen.

To be effective, most conservation measures need to restrict harvest in a substantial way, to either protect young fish long enough to get them into the spawning stock, or to protect what is left of the spawning stock. Often it is necessary to do both.

Commercial and recreational fishermen often oppose regulations to reduce their catch, citing the economic and social burdens such measures would place on them and related businesses. Their arguments take different forms, but their position is grounded in the belief that restrictive regulations will permanently put fishermen out of business.

Fishery managers are then given the false choice of whether to save the fish or save the fishermen, a dilemma most find incredibly difficult to resolve. In some cases, the first response is to postpone action while more data are collected. Managers are understandably reluctant to impose economic hardships to solve a problem that might not exist. If the additional data confirm the negative stock trend, then often the second response is to implement partial measures in hopes of helping the stock, while limiting the impact to fishermen.

Unfortunately, while the strategy of delay and partial measures is responsive to the political pressure generated by fishermen, it has not been very effective in restoring stocks. Often this generates poor results and the need for more drastic action. As the cycle continues, stocks spiral down towards depletion and sometimes beyond recovery. This well-intentioned approach saves neither fish nor fishermen.

However, there are noteworthy exceptions where managers have taken action before stocks collapsed. In the case of Atlantic sea scallops, a series of unpopular and painful regulations, including extensive area closures and effort reduction measures, were implemented starting in 1994 in response to declining stocks. While a number of boats went out of business, the measures have led to a tenfold increase in scallop biomass since its low point in 1993.

In less than 10 years since being declared overfished in 1997, the sea scallop fishery has become one of the most valuable fisheries on the East Coast, with recent landings exceeding \$400 million. Counting the general category permits, there are now more boats scalloping than any other time in the history of the fishery. In fact, new boats are now being built to replace old ones, a clear sign of the prosperity that has come with stock recovery.

Among Commission species, the recovery of Atlantic striped bass is another well-known and important exception. In 1984, the states moved to take decisive action in response to clear signs stocks were in trouble. At that time recreational and commercial landings were 1.3 and 2.9 million pounds respectively, levels that were not sustainable due to the depressed biomass. Multi-year moratoria were imposed on all harvesters, enabling a full recovery. In 2007 the recreational and commercial harvests were 22.6 and 7.2 million pounds respectively – levels scientists currently feel are sustainable.

There are now more recreational striped bass fishermen than there were before the recovery. In addition, rebuilding has generated a booming business for charter boats, tournaments, fishing tackle, and guide services. Moreover, most states with a commercial striped bass fishery report the ranks of their commercial fishermen have grown. Clearly, the regulations to restore scallops and striped bass did not destroy the fishery. In fact, they have had the opposite effect; they have brought great benefits to fishermen, fishing related businesses, and coastal communities.

We don't see Atlantic sturgeon or Atlantic halibut fishermen these days, even though these were both multi-million pound fisheries. At the time landings peaked, the stocks were thought to be inexhaustible. These were long-lived fish, growing to great size, with few predators. By the early 1900s they were all but wiped out, along with the fishermen and businesses that depended on them. The lack of conservation rules did not save the fish or the fishermen.

These examples remind us of the irreversible consequences that can occur when fishery managers fail to act, and the dramatic and sustainable benefits that can result when they do. With the right decisions we can have both abundant stocks *and* prosperous fishermen. Hopefully, these are goals with which we can all agree.

Alewife
Alosa pseudoharengus



Also Known As: Sawbelly, Grayback, and Bigeye, Freshwater and Spring Herring

General Characteristics:

- * Adults average 10-11" in length; 8 - 9 oz. in weight
- * Range from Nova Scotia to South Carolina
- * Primarily feed on plankton
- * Congregate in large schools, numbering in the thousands
- * Excellent food fish, marketed both fresh and salted

Interesting Fact:

- * The origin of the name alewife is a reference to the large belly of the fish, which reminded New England fishermen of alehouse wives.
- * The Latin name pseudoharengus means "false herring."

Blueback Herring
Alosa aestivalis



Also Known As: Summer Herring and Blackbelly

General Characteristics:

- * Adults average 11" in length; 7 oz. in weight
- * Range from Nova Scotia to Northern Florida
- * Primarily feed on plankton
- * Name derived from dark blue/bluish gray coloring on back

Interesting Fact:

- * Blueback herring have teeth on the roof of their mouths, while alewife do not. The teeth disappear with age.

Stock Status: Unknown for both alewife and blueback herring

Both species are classified as a Species of Concern by NMFS

Species Profile: River Herring States and Jurisdictions Work to Develop Sustainable Fisheries Plans for River Herring Management

Introduction

Each spring is marked by the return of river herring in many Atlantic coastal streams. These small, silvery fish travel up to hundreds of miles from ocean waters to freshwater streams to spawn. As a forage fish, their appearance also brings striped bass and other predators who feed on them. In some coastal communities festivals are held to celebrate the arrival of river herring. At many local fishways volunteers count river herring as they swim upstream in order to estimate population size.

Historically, they spawned in virtually every accessible river and tributary along the coast during the spring. However, the blockage of spawning rivers by dams and other impediments, combined with the degradation of water quality, has severely depleted the amount of suitable spawning habitat. River herring once supported important commercial and recreational fisheries along the Atlantic coast. Today, these fisheries are just a fraction of what they were due to riverine habitat loss and fishing pressure.

At the Commission's Spring Meeting this year, the Shad and River Herring Management Board approved Amendment 2 to the Shad and River Herring FMP. In an effort to aid in the recovery of depleted or declining stocks, Amendment 2 prohibits state waters commercial and recreational fisheries beginning January 1, 2012. States or jurisdictions have the option of developing a management plan that establishes the sustainability of its fisheries. The plan must outline sustainability targets which will have to be maintained in order to prevent closure of the fishery.

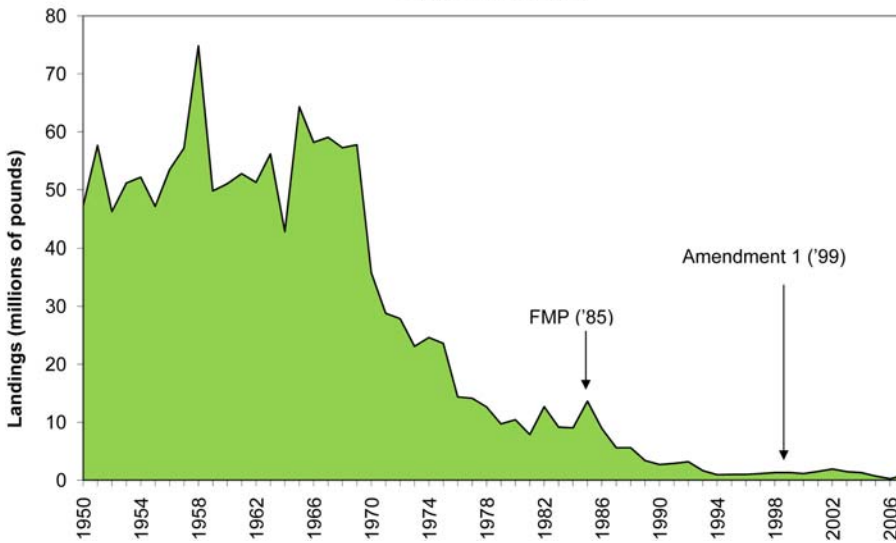
Life History

River herring, which is the collective term for alewife and blueback herring, are an anadromous fish that spend the majority of their adult lives at sea, but return to freshwater areas to spawn in the spring. Alewife spawn in rivers, lakes, and tributaries from northeastern Newfoundland to South Carolina, but are most abundant in the Mid-Atlantic and the Northeast. Blueback herring prefer to spawn in swift flowing rivers and tributaries from Nova Scotia to northern Florida, but are most numerous in waters from Chesapeake Bay south. Mature alewife (ages three to eight) and blueback herring (ages three to six) migrate rapidly downstream after spawning. Juveniles remain in tidal freshwater nursery areas in spring and early summer, but may also move upstream with the encroachment of saline water. As water temperatures decline in the fall, juveniles move downstream to more saline waters. Little information is available on the life history of juvenile and adult river herring after they emigrate to the sea and before they mature and return to freshwater to spawn.

Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

River herring formerly supported significant commercial and recreational fisheries throughout their range. Fisheries were traditionally executed in rivers, estuaries, and coastal waters using weirs, traps, dip nets and gill nets. Although recreational harvest data are scarce, most harvest is believed to come from the commercial industry.

River Herring Commercial Landings along the Atlantic Coast
Source: Personal communication from NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division,
Silver Spring, MD, 2008



Commercial landings for all these species have declined dramatically from historic highs. Commercial landings by domestic and foreign fleets peaked at 140 million pounds in 1969. Since 2000 domestic landings totaled less than two million pounds in any given year, with a historic low of 273,000 pounds occurring in 2006. Landings in 2007 were estimated at 902,494 pounds. The decline in domestic landings has occurred in all states with commercial fisheries. In response to severe declines in population abundance, five states — Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Virginia, and North Carolina — have implemented moratoria on the harvest of river herring. Virginia's moratorium is only for waters that flow into North Carolina.

Stock Status

The River Herring Stock Assessment Subcommittee recently completed the “2008 River Herring Stock Status Report,” which is a precursor to the next benchmark assessment. Results from the report indicate that commercial landings are at historic lows. Recent trends in stock size were inconsistent; however, stocks in some river systems appear to have suffered declines. On a coastwide basis, decreases in the mean length and age of river herring were observed. The next benchmark stock assessment for river herring is scheduled to be completed in 2012.

Atlantic Coastal Management

In 2009, in response to concerns regarding declining river herring populations, the Shad & River Herring Management Board approved Amendment 2 to the Interstate FMP. Affected states and jurisdictions include all 15 Atlantic coastal states from Maine through Florida, as well as the District of Columbia and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. The Amendment prohibits state waters commercial and recreational fisheries beginning January 1, 2012, unless a state or jurisdiction develops and submits for approval a sustainable management plan by January 1, 2010. A sustainable fishery is defined as “a commercial and/or recreational fishery that will not diminish the potential future stock reproduction and recruitment.” States or jurisdictions can develop a sustainable management plan, which will describe sustainability targets that must be maintained to prevent closure of the fishery. Amendment 2 also requires states to implement fisheries-dependent and independent monitoring programs and contains recommendations to member states and jurisdictions to conserve, restore, and protect critical river herring habitat.

Reflections from the Past & Present

“Prior to European settlement, there was probably no stream from Cape Cod (MA) to Cape Sable (FL) that did not have an annual river herring run unless it was barred by impassable falls.”

– Bigelow and Schroeder, *Fishes of the Gulf of Maine*

“Fishing for river herring is a long-standing tradition in northeastern North Carolina. For most participants, the primary importance of the fisheries is social and cultural than it is economic.” – NC DMF 2007 River Herring FMP

While oversight of river herring management in state waters lies with the Commission, river herring can be encountered in ocean fisheries beyond the states' jurisdiction. Bycatch of river herring in small mesh fisheries continues to be a significant concern. Preliminary analyses indicate that, in some years, the total bycatch of river herring by the Atlantic herring fleet alone could be equal to the total landings from the entire in-river directed fishery on the East Coast. Based on the Board's request, the Commission has sent a letter to the Secretary of Commerce supporting efforts underway by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils to effectively monitor bycatch of river herring in small mesh fisheries, and encouraging additional resources to support the cooperative efforts to better manage anadromous fisheries. The Commission specifically requested that the Secretary of Commerce take emergency action with regard to implementing the bycatch monitoring measures recently under discussion with the New England Council.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Commissioners:

Assemblyman Nelson Albano - Assemblyman Nelson Albano has joined the Commission as New Jersey's Legislative Commissioner. He has served the New Jersey General Assembly since 2006 representing the 1st Legislative District which includes Buena, Buena Vista and Somers Point in Atlantic County; Vineland in Cumberland County; and all of Cape May County. He serves as Chair of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and as Vice-Chair on the Law and Public Safety Committee. He has co-sponsored a bill to toughen the financial penalties against illegal ocean dumping, particularly medical waste. Assemblyman Albano attended Sacred Heart High School in Vineland and received a Journeyman in Electrical Trades from the Cumberland County Vocational Technical School. Assemblyman Albano was named the Outstanding Legislator from the New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts. Welcome aboard, Assemblyman Albano!



Dr. Eugene Kray - Dr. Gene Kray has ended his three-year term as Pennsylvania's Governor Appointee to the Commission. An avid recreational angler and passionate fisheries conservationist, Dr. Kray served on numerous species management boards and chaired the Shad & River Herring Management Board from 2005 - 2007. From 2002 - 2006, Dr. Kray served as Rep. Curt Schroder's proxy to the Commission. Currently serving his second term on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Dr. Kray will no doubt stay involved in the Commission's fisheries management programs.

Mr. Loren W. Lustig - Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell has appointed Mr. Loren W. Lustig as the state's Governor Appointee to the Commission. Mr. Lustig currently serves as Outreach Education Specialist for the Carroll County, Maryland Department of Recreation & Parks where he brings environmental, conservation, history and cultural programs to schools, senior centers, churches, and scout groups.



Mr. Lustig holds a M.S. in Nature Interpretation from the University of Maryland and a B.S. in Biology and History

from Wheaton College in Pennsylvania. He also has an Advanced Graduate Specialist Certificate in Environmental Education from the University of Maryland.

Mr. Lustig has a lifelong interest in nature and conservation and enjoys fishing, hiking and camping. He served as Chief Petty Officer, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve in Maryland from 1967-1998. He received the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Commendation Medal, National Defense Medal, Unit Commendation Medal and Coxswain Insignia. Welcome aboard, Mr. Lustig!

Mr. Roy Miller - This June with his retirement from the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife (DE F&W), Roy Miller stepped down as proxy for Delaware's Administrative Commissioner Patrick Emory. Since 2002, Mr. Miller has represented DE F&W on 14 species management boards. He chaired the Horseshoe Crab and Weakfish Management Boards, providing sound leadership to both boards as they worked through controversial management issues. Prior to his policy-level involvement, Mr. Miller was a long-standing member of the Atlantic Striped Bass, Shad & River Herring, and American Eel Technical Committees. While Mr. Miller's 30+ year career in fisheries management

may have come to a close, he will still be active in the Commission, having been recently appointed as Delaware's Governor Appointee. We wish Roy and his wife Diane a healthy and happy retirement and we look forward to continuing to work with him in his new capacity as Governor Appointee!



Dr. Timothy Targett - Dr. Timothy Targett has ended his long-term tenure as Delaware's Governor Appointee to the Commission, having served since 1986. While Dr. Targett will no longer be directly involved with the Commission, as Professor of Marine Biosciences at the University of Delaware, Graduate College of Marine Studies he will continue to advance the field of fisheries science and management through his teaching, his mentoring of graduate students, and his research on fish biology and fisheries ecology. We thank him for his long-standing participation in the Commission's activities and wish him the very best!

Science Highlight: Slow Year for the Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise

The 2009 Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise took place January 28th to February 7th, aboard the National Science Foundation R/V CAPE HATTERAS. The 13 person scientific party included representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, Delaware State University, East Carolina State University, North Carolina State University, and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The R/V CAPE HATTERAS, a 135-foot stern trawler, set out from the Duke University Marine Laboratory in Beaufort, North Carolina, for a ten-day research trip. Cruising the offshore waters of North Carolina and Virginia, the vessel towed one 65-foot bottom trawl, and the scientific party processed approximately 6,433 fish and invertebrates representing 33 different species. Processing included counting and measuring most species; occasionally weighing, tagging, sexing, and/or sampling for some species; and implantation of acoustic transmitters in appropriately-sized Atlantic sturgeon and spiny dogfish. The catch included the following fish species: alewife, American shad, Atlantic croaker, Atlantic striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, blueback herring, clearnose skate, hickory shad, kingfish, little skate, monkfish, southern flounder, spiny dogfish, spot, spotted seatrout, summer flounder, weakfish, and winter skate.

During its 22-year history, the Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruises have collectively tagged 43,593 striped bass. A total of 146 Atlantic striped bass were tagged on this trip, a number well below the long-term annual average for striped bass tagged (21-year annual average of 2,124). The 2009 cruise ranks 22nd (dead last) overall in numbers of striped



bass tagged and released for the time series. There were no recaptures this year of striped bass tagged by other researchers. Unfortunately, few striped bass were encountered in the nearshore areas where they have traditionally been captured in the past. The highest numbers of striped bass were encountered near the end of the cruise, some 20 nautical miles off the coast of Virginia. At this time we do not know if the apparent paucity was

due to fewer numbers of organisms, or to some variation in the way the net was fishing.

In addition to the primary goal of tagging migratory striped bass, this year's cruise included work for other scientific projects. Matthew Breese, from Delaware State University, surgically implanted acoustic transmitters in 13 Atlantic sturgeon for his thesis research project focused in Delaware Bay. Jennifer Cudney-Burch, from East Carolina University, also surgically implanted acoustic transmitters in 50 individuals of her focus species, spiny dogfish. Furthermore, samples of many other species were retained for otolith, tissue, and other analyses to be conducted at various universities and state agencies.

The information collected during this cruise will aid in the development and implementation of fisheries regulations by state and federal fishery management agencies and the Commission. Rewards for striped bass and Atlantic sturgeon tag returns are offered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maryland Fisheries Resource Office, as part of the coastwide tagging program for these two species. Additionally, East Carolina University distributes rewards for spiny dogfish tag returns. For more information, please contact Wilson Laney, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, at (919)515-5019, or wilson_laney@fws.gov.

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

Return Service Requested

ACCSP Update

ACCSP Seeks Committee Representatives

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) is seeking nominations to the ACCSP Advisory Committee from the ACCSP Operations Committee (see table to the right for vacancies by state and user group). To contact the Operations Committee, visit <http://www.accsp.org/committees.htm>.

State	Commercial	Recreational
NH		Seeking
RI	Seeking	
CT	Seeking	Seeking
NY	Seeking	Seeking
NJ	Seeking	Seeking
PA	Seeking	Seeking
MD		Seeking
VA		Seeking
NC	Seeking	
SC	Seeking	Seeking
FL	Seeking	



Comings and Goings

ACCSP is pleased to announce that Timothy Sartwell has joined the staff as the Maryland State Coordinator. He is responsible for providing information technology support for Maryland data collection, storage, and transfer. This position is funded through the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. Mr. Sartwell is a recent graduate of Duke University where he received a Master's in Coastal Environmental Management degree. His previous work experience includes internships with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, NOAA Fisheries Service, and the North Carolina Aquarium.

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. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coast wide, including the Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the DC Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For more information please visit www.accsp.org or call (202) 216-5690.