



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

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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.

Fisheries-Independent Data A Vital Component of Stock Assessments

Fisheries-independent data are collected through scientific surveys and are a critical component of fishery stock assessments. This data, combined with fishery-dependent data (fishermen catch, landings and effort), provide a more accurate picture of stock status. Since the data are not influenced by specific management measures (e.g., size and bag limits, season closures, mesh sizes) or socioeconomic and environmental factors, they present an unbiased accounting of stock health. Fishery-independent surveys gather information on recruitment, juvenile and adult abundance, habitat characteristics, and environmental factors. They also provide an excellent platform for gear studies to aid in bycatch reduction efforts. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is actively involved in two fisheries-independent data collection programs -- the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) and the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP).

SEAMAP is a state-federal program in the Southeast Region to coordinate the collection and management of fisheries-independent data in order to improve its usefulness in the fisheries management process. The organizational structure of the program includes three operational components: SEAMAP-Gulf of Mexico, which began in 1981, SEAMAP-South Atlantic, implemented in 1983, and SEAMAP-Caribbean, formed in 1988. The Commission provides oversight for SEAMAP-South Atlantic, which includes all states from North Carolina to Florida, the NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Fisheries



Science Center, and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

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SEAMAP has been collecting fisheries-independent data since 1983. Specific program activities include:

- A shallow-water trawl survey to provide abundance information on priority marine species;
- Collection of length, age and other biological information on priority marine species;
- Coordination of activities involving shellfish and crustaceans, including shrimp and blue crabs; and
- Development of protocols and habitat maps for compilation of bottom habitat information in the Southeast Region.

NEAMAP is a new state-federal program in the Northeast Region (Maine through North Carolina) to coordinate the collection and management of fisheries-independent data. The initial focus of NEAMAP is on nearshore trawl surveys, which provide important information for many Commission stock assessments. There

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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

John I. Nelson, Jr. (NH), Chair
Preston Pate, Jr. (NC), Vice-Chair

John V. O'Shea, Executive Director
Robert E. Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries
Management Program
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

7/12 (9:30 AM - 1:30 PM):

Joint NEFMC/ASMFC Herring Advisory Panel Meeting, Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, Maine.

12 (3:00 PM - 6:30 PM):

Joint NEFMC's Herring Oversight Committee/ASMFC Herring Section Meeting, Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, Maine.

7/13 (1PM - 5:30 PM) - 14 (8:30 AM - Noon):

American Lobster Technical Committee, 10th floor of the Key Bank Building, One Canal Plaza, Portland, Maine.

7/14 - 16:

ASMFC Multispecies VPA Review Panel, Radisson Hotel Norfolk, 700 Monticello Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia.

7/14 (1PM - 5:30 PM) - 15 (8:30 AM - Noon):

American Lobster Technical Committee, Stock Assessment Subcommittee and Model Development Subcommittee, 10th floor of the Key Bank Building, One Canal Plaza, Portland, Maine.

7/15 (1PM - 5:30 PM) - 16 (8:30 AM - 1 PM):

American Lobster Stock Assessment Subcommittee and Model Development Subcommittee, 10th floor of the Key Bank Building, One Canal Plaza, Portland, Maine.

7/20 - 21:

ASMFC NEAMAP Trawl Technical Committee, Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel, 777 Waterside Drive, Norfolk, Virginia.

7/26 (1:00 PM - 6:00 PM) & 27 (9:00 AM - 6:00 PM):

ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Tagging Subcommittee, Four Points Sheraton BWI, 7032 Elm Road, Baltimore, Maryland.

7/27 & 28:

ASMFC American Shad Ageing Workshop, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, 1208 Great Road, Gloucester, Virginia.

7/28 (9:00 AM - 5:00 PM) & 29 (9:00 AM - 5:00 PM):

ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass VPA Indices Workshop, Four Points Sheraton BWI, 7032 Elm Road, Baltimore, Maryland.

8/5 (9:30 AM - 4:00 PM):

Getting the Word Out: Workshop on NOAA Fisheries' Proactive Conservation Program, Marriott Providence, One Orms Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

8/9 - 12:

ASMFC Weakfish Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Radisson Lord Baltimore, 20 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

Most would agree that good data and sound science are the cornerstones of effective fisheries management. Scientists use fisheries data to provide advice about fish populations and fishing mortality rates. Fisheries managers use this advice and data to set harvest quotas, determine the regulations and ensure catches stay within sustainable limits. Here's an overview of where the data come from.

Fisheries-independent data are collected through methodical sampling, using standardized survey procedures to facilitate trend analysis. These survey data are a critical input for the stock assessment models used by federal and state scientists. The Northeast Trawl Survey is the East Coast benchmark. Since the early 60s, survey cruises have sampled the EEZ from Cape Hatteras to Canada.

In addition, the states conduct surveys in their own waters. These are important because they cover near-shore areas not sampled by NOAA Fisheries and contribute information about spawning and nursery areas. State surveys also help to corroborate the federal survey. For example, during the ALBATROSS IV trawl cable controversy, some felt scientists underestimated stock abundance due to faulty data. The Commission was asked to liberalize regulations on summer flounder. We resisted because data from state surveys were consistent with the advice coming out of the Northeast Trawl Survey. Since then, independent scientists have validated the integrity of the Northeast Trawl Survey. The states also sample for fish not captured by trawl gear. For example, Maryland's annual young-of-the-year index is used to predict trends in striped bass abundance.

Fisheries-dependent data come from commercial and recreational harvesting activities. These data are important to scientists because they indicate removals from a population as landed catch or discards. Federal and state managers use the data to open and close quota-based fisheries such as summer flounder and black sea bass. Unfortunately, the commercial reporting system is not comprehensive and lack timeliness at the state level. Improvements are on the horizon with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), a partnership of 23 federal and state entities. The partners have committed to warehousing all fisheries-dependent data in a central location in a standardized format.

Recreational landings are captured by NOAA's Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). It uses scientifically defensible methodology and is sta-

tistically sound. MRFSS produces coastwide harvest estimates with an error factor of less than five percent for striped bass and summer flounder. Timeliness of MRFSS data is sufficient to support current Commission fishery management plans.

But MRFSS also has its critics. They feel MRFSS data lack the precision needed to regulate fisheries at the state level. The program lacks acceptance by the public. Some of this is due to the lack of visibility and understanding of the sampling programs. Public acceptance of MRFSS is also related to the nature of the news coming out of the survey, especially when it results in more restrictive rules, like shorter seasons and smaller bag limits.

Although the current data systems are sufficient to support sound science and responsible management, improvements could be made. The establishment of the Northeast Trawl Advisory Committee, consisting of fishermen and scientists and chaired by a commercial fisherman, is helping to bridge the gap between scientists and fishermen regarding the Northeast Trawl Survey.

Reporting of commercial landings needs to be mandatory and timely. Recent implementation of electronic reporting in the Northeast Region is an important positive step. More observer coverage is needed for both commercial and recreational fisheries to accurately estimate discards. Continued implementation of ACCSP will help with these issues.

MRFSS precision can be improved with more intercepts. Some of our states are using their funds to increase sampling. They report a high level of acceptance of the MRFSS data by their anglers. The Commission supports an oversight/advisory role for recreational harvesters allowing them to review MRFSS data. This could improve quality and expand stakeholder confidence in the results.

Obviously, our fisheries data collection systems could be better. However, we should not use that fact as a reason to ignore existing information or to avoid reducing mortality on stocks that are in trouble. Fortunately, Congressional fisheries policy makers are interested in these data issues and are committed to finding ways to help. I know we are all committed to sustainable fisheries management; better data collection systems and better use of the existing systems will help us get there. I hope that is something we can all agree with. Best wishes for a great summer on or near the water.

Species Profile: Spotted Seatrout Management of Popular Southeast Gamefish Hindered by Data Deficiencies

Introduction

Spotted seatrout support significant recreational fisheries throughout the Southeast, with over four million fish harvested and released in 2002. In Florida in particular, spotted seatrout are the most accessible and exploited gamefish, with surveys showing that it is the fish most sought by Floridians. One of the biggest challenges for this species is that its life cycle depends on the same coastal areas humans find most attractive for living and recreating. Increased coastal development and resultant loss of habitat, and heavy fishing pressure have impacted spotted seatrout populations, though the extent of the impact is unclear. There is no coastwide stock assessment for the species, and local assessments vary by state. Luckily, seatrout have a built-in fail-safe trait to help restore the fishery -- the ability to reproduce prolifically.

The Commission cooperatively manages spotted seatrout with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Under the management program, all six states with an interest in this species (Maryland to Florida) have established a minimum size limit of at least 12 inches. In addition, each state has either initiated spotted seatrout data collection programs or modified other programs to gather the necessary information for a coastwide stock assessment.

Life History

On the Atlantic coast, spotted seatrout occur from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to the Florida Keys, but are most abundant from the Chesapeake Bay southward. They are found primarily in estuaries, but move into nearshore ocean waters during cold periods. In general, spotted seatrout appear to be non-migratory and spend their entire life within five to ten miles of their natal estuary, although fish in the northernmost part of the range have been known to migrate seasonally (south in the fall, north in the spring). Estuaries are critically important throughout the seatrout's life history. Small tidal marsh creeks and shallow grass beds are the most important nursery grounds for the young, while larger juveniles are widely distributed in estuarine areas and along coastal beaches. Adults frequent grass beds, live oyster beds, creek mouths, drop-offs, and structures such as jetties, stumps, pilings, and wrecks, where they primarily feed on shrimp and fish. They are most abundant in depths of less than ten feet, and prefer a temperature between 60 to 80° F. Water temperatures below 45° F appear to cause large-scale mortalities. They tolerate a range of salinities, but adults appear to be most numerous in waters with salinities approaching that of seawater.

Spotted seatrout spawn from April to September around inlets. They mature at the age of one year; when males are about 10 inches long and females are about 11 inches. Depending on the size of the female, they produce anywhere from 10,000 to millions of oceanic eggs. At any given age, females are larger than males, and they also attain a greater maximum age and size. They may live as long as 18 years, but individuals over five years of age are rare. The fry gather in schools during their first summer and tend to travel together until they are four or five years old.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Commercial landings of spotted seatrout along the



Spotted Seatrout *Cynoscion nebulosus*

Common Names: spotted weakfish, speckled seatrout, gator trout, spotted squeteague

Interesting Facts:
* It has one of the longest spawning seasons of any marine fish (6 months) and is reproductively prolific (10,000 - millions of eggs)

* It is not member of the real "trout" family, which include salmon, but a member of the family Sciaenidae (drum), which include red drum, croaker and weakfish

Largest Recorded: 15 lbs, 8 oz

Maximum Age: 18 years

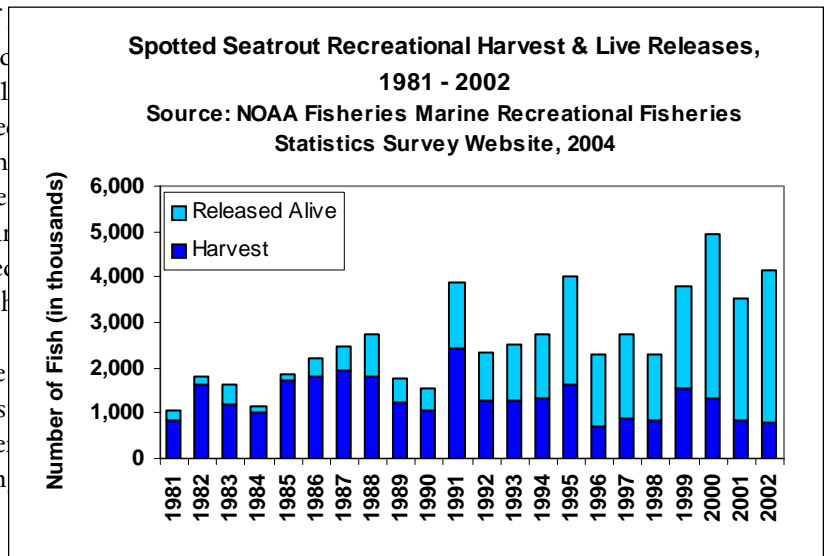
Age/Length at Maturity: 1 year/ males @ 10" and females @ 11"

Stock Status: Unknown coastwide; local stocks assessed by the Southeast states

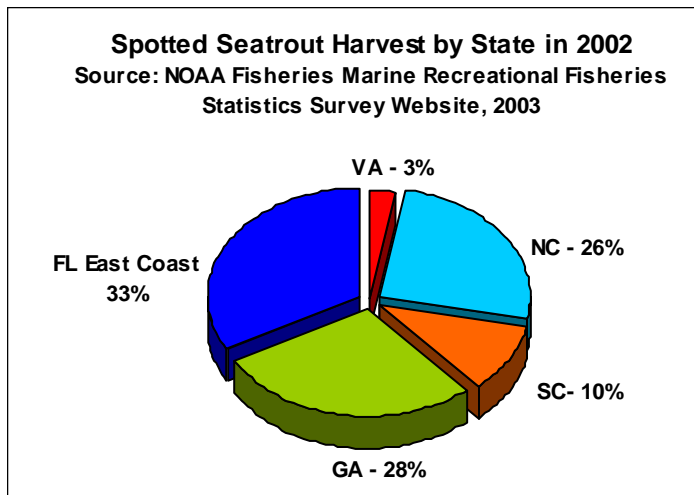


Photo courtesy of Captain Mark Zorn

Atlantic coast historically came from the East Coast of Virginia and North Carolina, with Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia accounting for a small portion of the total. From 1976 to 1995, commercial landings of spotted seatrout ranged from 2.3 million pounds in 1952, to 733,900 pounds in 1995. Commercial landings have declined since then due to increased regulation and possible declines in abundance. In June 1987, the South Carolina legislature designated spotted seatrout as a game fish, prohibiting commercial landings. Florida's East Coast landings were taken primarily with hook-and-line fishing. However, the use of haul seines and gill nets has been prohibited in Florida's waters since 1995. Commercial landings in 2002 were 242,624 pounds, with the majority (72.5%) coming from North Carolina.



Over the last 20 years the recreational catch of spotted seatrout has greatly exceeded commercial landings over the species range. Catch has ranged from 1.1 million fish in 1981 to 4.8 million fish in 2000; however, the majority of these fish are caught and released. Of the 4.1 million fish caught in 2002, 82 percent were released alive. See figure below for a breakdown of recreational harvest by state in 2002.



Recreational catches are generally made with rod and reel, but some are taken by recreational nets and by gigging, where these methods are permitted. Most recreational fishing is conducted from private boats and more than two-thirds of the catch is taken in estuarine waters.

Stock Status

A formal coastwide stock assessment of spotted seatrout has not been conducted given the biology and population dynamics of this species, and the lack of sufficient data throughout its range. Georgia and Florida have performed virtual population analyses on local stocks of spotted seatrout. North Carolina has scheduled a stock assessment on its local stocks to be completed in conjunction with the state's FMP process in 2006. The results of the 2002 Georgia assessment were

highly questionable due to substantial data limitations. Florida conducted assessments for its entire East Coast populations in 1993 and 1995, then for separate northern and southern Florida East Coast populations in 1997, 1999 and 2003. The regional extent of recent assessments in Florida is supported by preliminary genetic work from Florida's East Coast. However, the northern extent of the spotted seatrout stock in northeast Florida remains unknown and genetics information appear to show a separate stock in extreme south-east Florida (Biscayne Bay).

Spotted seatrout life history information and fisheries data have generally been localized and conducted at different levels of population abundance. Detailed information on incidental bycatch, release mortality, and the size and age structure of releases has become a more important component of assessments of the condition of spotted seatrout populations.

Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

Atlantic coastal states from Maryland through Florida manage spotted seatrout under Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan (1991). Specific management measures include a minimum size limit of 12 inches in total length for both commercial and recreational fisheries and the collection of improved catch and effort data from the commercial and recreational fisheries, including size and composition of the catch, along with socioeconomic data. The Plan also recognizes the possibility that additional measures, such as creel limits, catch quotas, area closures, and gear restrictions may be needed in the future.

A major problem addressed in the Plan is the lack of stock assessment data for effective management of the resource. At the time of the Plan's adoption, little was known about the status and population structure of spotted seatrout along the Atlantic coast. Basic data requirements included information

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ASMFC August 2004 Meeting Week

August 16 - 19, 2004

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

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

(This is only a preliminary schedule and you should anticipate there may be changes)

Monday, August 16, 2004

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM **Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Committee**

- Run ADAPT VPA with updated 2003 survey indices

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM **Winter Flounder Advisory Panel**

- Review Public Comment on Draft Amendment 1
- Develop Recommendations for Board Consideration

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM **Advisory Panel Oversight Committee**

- Review 2004 Action Plan Tasks
- Review Survey Results from Weakfish Pilot Program and ISFMP SOPPS for Communicating with Active & Inactive Panels
- Identify Key Advisory Panels for 2004 Attention
- Discuss Pros and Cons of Current AP Process
- Review & Discuss AP Composition, including NGO Representation and Appointment

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM **Tautog Management Board**

- Select Peer Review Process for 2005 Benchmark Assessment
- Review FMP Review and Report on State Compliance

4:00 PM – 6:00 PM **Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board**

- Review Public Comment on Addenda XII and XIII
- Consider Approval of Addenda XII and XIII
- Review FMP Reviews
- Discussion of Bycatch Workshop Report

Tuesday, August 17, 2004

8:00 AM – 11:00 AM **Winter Flounder Management Board**

- Review Public Comment and Consider Approval of Amendment 1

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM **Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Committee (continued)**

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM **American Eel Management Board**

- Review and Consider Approval of Public Information Document

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM **Atlantic Menhaden Management Board**

- Technical Committee Report
- Review Public Comment and Consider Approval of Addendum I to Amendment 1

4:00 PM – 6:00 PM **American Lobster Management Board**

- Trap Transferability Program Details
- Plan Review Team Report
- FMP Review
- Stock Assessment Update

Wednesday, August 18, 2004

8:00 AM – 11:00 AM South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

- Presentation of Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment
- Discuss Future Atlantic Croaker Management
- Discuss Red Drum Management Authority Transfer
- Discuss South Atlantic Ecosystem Partnership

8:00 AM – 1:00 PM Habitat Committee

- Approve Diadromous Fish Habitat Source Document
- Discuss Living Shorelines
- Review Species Fact Sheets
- Discuss Shellfish Bed Habitat Paper

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Committee
(continued)

11:00 AM – Noon Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board

- Presentation of Findings from the Atlantic Sturgeon Workshop

1:00 PM – 6:00 PM Recreational Fisheries Data Meeting with Dr. Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries

Thursday, August 19, 2004

8:00 AM – Noon ISFMP Policy Board

- Discuss and Consider Action on Appeal Process White Paper
- Habitat Committee Report
- Review Non-Compliance Recommendations (if necessary)
- APOC Report
- Update on Non-Native Oyster Activities
- Discuss and Consider Action on Diadromous Fish Source Document
- Review New Jersey's Striped Bass Regulations

Noon – 1:00 PM Business Session

- Review Non-Compliance Recommendations (if necessary)



Species Profile: Spotted Seatrout (continued from page 5)

on recruitment, age, size, and sex composition, and variations in these characteristics over time and space. Since 1984, much more information has been collected on spotted seatrout, especially in the Southeast. Current data needs include more accurate catch and effort statistics for both recreational and commercial fisheries in order to assess the impact of fishing activities on spotted seatrout stocks. Fluctuations in commercial and recreational spotted seatrout landings have varied considerably during the last 20 years, but since most of the reported landings have had no meaningful effort data associated with them, they have not been useful as indicators of the status of stocks. Some states have begun to accumulate catch and effort data, especially in regards to the recreational fisheries. This should provide insight into the status of the stocks over time.

For more information, please contact Nancy Wallace, Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at <nwallace@asmfc.org>.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Staff

Nancy Bell -- After working for the Commission the past 10 months as an Executive Assistant, Nancy will be leaving to relocate closer to her ailing grandparents and to concentrate on her long term goal of pursuing her doctorate degree. During her time here, Nancy reworked the Legislative Tracking Sheets, developed a comprehensive procedures manual regarding the roles and responsibilities of an Executive Assistant, wrote several articles for *Fisheries Focus* and aided in editing and updating the Commission's history, as well as assisting Vince O'Shea in his duties as Executive Director. We wish Nancy the very best!

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ACCSP Technical Committee to Help Continue SAFIS Improvements

State and federal partners of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) are working with industry users to identify improvements that developers should make to SAFIS, a real-time web-based reporting system for seafood dealers.

To specifically address these issues, the ACCSP formed the Electronic Reporting Technical Committee. This committee will include both developers and industry representatives who will examine various data collection systems and make recommendations on possible improvements.



The ACCSP is looking into merging the Electronic Reporting Technical Committee and the Computer Technical Committee, which makes recommenda-

tions on the ACCSP's data management needs.

"SAFIS is a fixture for the ACCSP and will impact all aspects of fisheries data collection and data management, so it's probably appropriate for the members of the Computer Tech and Electronic Reporting Tech Committees to work as one unit," says Maury Osborn, ACCSP Director.

Since SAFIS was implemented in May for federally permitted dealers in the Northeast, about 60% of them have successfully logged-in and entered reports.

NOAA Fisheries' Northeast Region staff is working with the remaining dealers to determine why reports are not being entered and to help address any technical problems.

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 coastwide, 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 and Wildlife Service. For further information please visit www.accsp.org or call Abbey Compton at (202)216-5690.

and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, 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 and Wildlife Service. For further information please visit www.accsp.org or call Abbey Compton at (202)216-5690.

Congress Hears Testimony on Fishery Data Collection

Maury Osborn, ACCSP Director, testified with the Executive Directors of the three Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions and Michael Sissenwine, of NOAA Fisheries, before the House Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans at a June 16th oversight hearing on the importance of fishery data collection programs. The full testimony of all the witnesses is available online at http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/archives/108/fcwo/06_16_04.htm.

The ACCSP Welcomes New Assistant Program Coordinator

Jennifer Lowery joined the ACCSP staff as Assistant Program Coordinator in June to assist the other staff with coordination of technical committee activities and to support partner implementation of ACCSP standards.

Ms. Lowery has experience working in fisheries and aquatic biology. As a contractor with the NOAA Fisheries' Office of Habitat Conservation, she assisted with a variety of habitat issues, including shellfish beds, anadromous fish, hydropower,

and submerged aquatic vegetation. As a Biological Technician with the U.S. Geological Survey at Padre Island National Seashore, Ms. Lowery worked with Kemp's ridley sea turtles.

Ms. Lowery earned her Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science, Wildlife Resources and Conservation at the University of Maryland, College Park, in May 2002. While in college, she interned with NOAA Fisheries, Office of Protected Resources and worked in marine biology labs on campus. Currently, she is pursuing a certificate in

geographic information systems at Montgomery College.



ASMFC Forwards New York Noncompliance Finding to the Secretaries of Commerce & the Interior for Action

On June 17, 2004, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has notified the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior of its finding that the State of New York is out-of-compliance with the provisions of the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This action is taken pursuant to the provisions of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act of 1993.

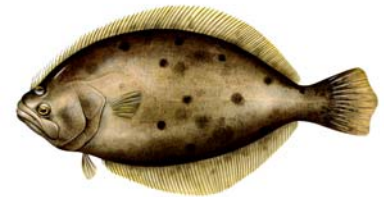
Specifically, New York has not implemented the required measures to achieve a 48.5% reduction in recreational landings. The required reduction is neces-

sary to control fishing mortality and maintain the rebuilding schedule contained in the FMP. In order to come back into compliance, New York must implement a recreational management program that achieves a 48.5% reduction in landings (in number) relative to its 2003 landings.

Under the Act, the Commission must notify the State, the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of the Interior once it has made a noncompliance determination. Upon notification, the Secretary of Commerce has 30 days to re-

view the recommendation and determine appropriate action, which, under the Act, may include a federal moratorium on fishing for the affected species.

For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program, at (202) 289-6400.



ASMFC Comings & Goings (continued from page 7)



Lindsay Fullenkamp -- In June, Lindsay Fullenkamp joined the Commission staff as a Fisheries Research Specialist, working to characterize Atlantic coast fisheries in state waters and document sea turtle interactions. She will be continuing the work that Elizabeth Griffin started last October, while Elizabeth shifts her focus to fisheries-independent data collection programs such as NEAMAP and SEAMAP. Elizabeth has also taken over coordination of the Commission's Protected Species Program, as well as the activities of the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences.

Lindsay earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Dayton, and a Master of Environmental Management from Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment. Most recently, she completed a Coastal Management Fellowship with the North Carolina Sea Grant Program, working within its Coastal Community Development Program. Specifically, she wrote a guide for local government officials in coastal counties interested in pursuing traditional types of growth in their communities. The guide includes grant and technical assistance opportunities for waterfront revitalization, environmental protection, historic preservation, and recreational opportunities. Welcome aboard, Lindsay!

Commissioners

Everett A. Petronio, Jr., Esq. -- This June, Everett Petronio Jr., Esq. became Rhode Island's Governor's Appointee to the Commission, replacing Gil Pope. Mr. Petronio practices business and banking law in Johnston, Rhode Island. He lives in Cranston with his wife, Ann and children, Mary and Christopher. Mr. Petronio is also an avid recreational angler, who holds two world records for bluefin tuna on a fly-rod and is a member to numerous fishing organizations, including the International Game Fish Association, American Littoral Society and NMFS Cooperative Game Fish Tagging Program. Welcome, aboard Mr. Petronio!

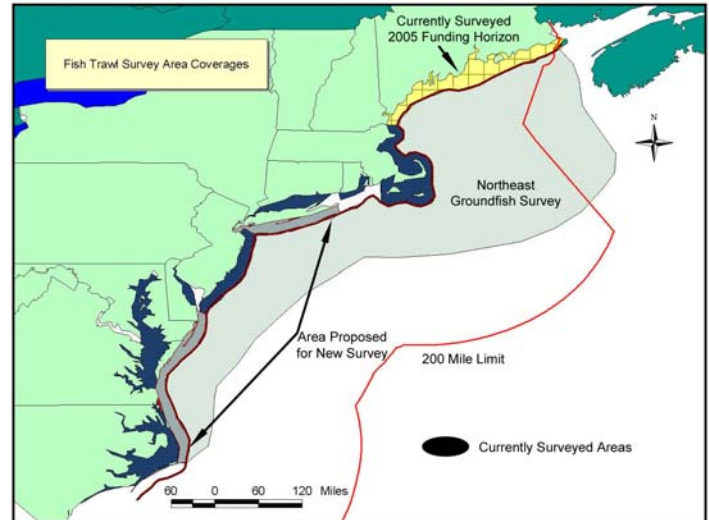
Gil Pope -- For over 10 years, Gil Pope has been an active participant in the Commission's programs. His involvement first began as a member to the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel, where he passionately represented the interests of Rhode Island's fishing industry. For the last 6 years, Mr. Pope served as Rhode Island's Governor's Appointee to the Commission. Over that time, he was dedicated to improving the Commission's advisory panel process and ensuring effective representation of his state's fishing constituents. His hard work and long-standing commitment will be missed.

Fisheries-Independent Data: A Vital Component of Stock Assessments (continued from page 1)

are currently several states that conduct long-term trawl surveys in nearshore areas, and the National Marine Fisheries Service conducts a bottom trawl survey in federal waters. However, there is a major gap in sampling in the Mid-Atlantic region, which may limit interpretation of stock status for those species residing in this region (e.g., scup, black sea bass, bluefish). The proposed NEAMAP nearshore trawl survey would fill the data gaps that exist between Montauk, New York and Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Improvements in the collection of fisheries-independent data and linkage of these data to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program datasets will provide long-term improvements in Atlantic coast fisheries management.

Both fishery-dependent and independent data must be available in order to have a realistic picture of stock status and to develop effective management strategies. With the help of the NEAMAP and SEAMAP programs, the Commission and our partner agencies are constantly working to improve the quality of fisheries-independent data used in the management of Atlantic coast fisheries.

For more information on SEAMAP and NEAMAP, please contact Elizabeth Griffin, Fisheries Research Specialist, at (202)289-6400 or egriffin@asmfc.org.



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

Return Service Requested