

ASMFC

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

Working Towards a Solution in State/Federal Summer Flounder Management

In mid-May, concerned stakeholders and state, regional and federal fisheries managers involved in summer flounder management met for two and a half days to begin the process of developing a workable, mutually agreed upon long-term management program for summer flounder.

The Summer Flounder Roundtable was conducted by the H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics and the Environment (Heinz Center), under the sponsorship of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Dr. William T. Hogarth, Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, brought the parties together and encouraged open communication and cooperation.

“This roundtable was an important first step in the development of a workable, long-term conservation and management program for summer flounder,” stated John H. Dunnigan ASMFC Executive Director. “What this first roundtable did was provide an opportunity for all concerned and interested parties to sit down and openly air their

concerns about summer flounder management. We cannot begin to develop solutions until we all agree on what the problems are.”

Over 50 individuals participated in the facilitated roundtable, representing the states, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), NMFS, recreational and commercial fishing groups, and the environmental community. The roundtable came upon the heels of an agreement by the states to match the federal total allowable landings limit of 17.91 million pounds for the 2001 fishing season (see the April 2001 issue of *Fisheries Focus*). The purpose of the roundtable was to facilitate communication between stakeholders and decision-makers on the future of summer flounder management.

Mr. Dunnigan continued, “While the states and the federal government were finally able to agree to the same TAL for the 2001 fishing season, the compromise offers only a one year fix and does not remedy the broader, longer-term problems of cooperative state/federal management of summer flounder.

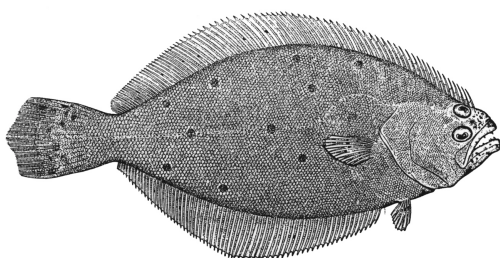
This roundtable is just the first of many meetings that will need to occur to resolve stakeholder issues and craft a long-term solution to summer flounder management.”

The stated goals of the roundtable were to reach a common under-

standing of how the current management program works and identify possible improvements to the program, as well as strategies to understand and resolve differences. Five basic areas were addressed at the roundtable and these were (1) goals, (2) targets, data and science, (3) allocation, (4) management and compliance, and (5) governance.

Although roundtable participants were not able to come up with a consolidated set of options for the 2002 fishing season and beyond, all involved walked away with a much better understanding of each others concerns and the overarching issues shared by all. What's next in the short term planning horizon is a re-estimation of the biological reference points by the Commission's Technical Committee. This will be followed by a peer review by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee in mid to late summer.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Hogarth emphasized NMFS' commitment to following up on the roundtable. The staff at the Heinz Center will prepare a summary as well as white papers on the subjects covered. There may be one or more follow-up meetings for the roundtable.



The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

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Upcoming Meetings

6/18 & 19:

ASMFC Striped Bass Tagging Committee, Ramada Inn BWI, 7253 Parkway Drive, Hanover, Maryland; (410) 712-4300.

6/18 - 20:

CoastGIS 2001: Managing the Interfaces, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada; <http://agc.bio.ns.ca/coastgis2001/>

6/18 - 22:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Radisson Ponce de Leon, 4000 US Highway 1 North, St. Augustine, Florida; (800)333-3333.

6/19 & 20:

ASMFC American Lobster Technical Committee, New Hampshire Fish and Game, 225 Main Street, Durham, New Hampshire; (603) 868-1096.

6/21 (9:00 AM - 5:00 PM):

ASMFC Tautog Technical Committee, Ramada Inn BWI, 7253 Parkway Drive, Hanover, Maryland; (410) 712-4300.

6/21 (1:00 PM - 5:00 PM):

ASMFC Tautog Advisory Panel, Ramada Inn BWI, 7253 Parkway Drive, Hanover, Maryland; (410) 712-4300.

6/26:

ASMFC Red Drum Advisory Panel, Clarion Hotel, 2101 Dixie Clipper Road, Jacksonville, Florida.

6/26 - 28:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Radisson Hotel Hampton, 700 Settlers Landing Road, Hampton, Virginia; (757)727-9700.

7/8 - 13:

Fourth International Symposium on Sturgeon, Park Plaza International Hotel and Convention Center, Oshkosh, Wisconsin. For more information, please contact bruchr@dnr.state.wi.us or visit website at <http://sturgeonsymposium.org>

7/15 - 19:

Coastal Zone 01, Cleveland, Ohio; www.csc.noaa.gov/cz2001/ or contact: Jan Kucklick at the NOAA Coastal Services Center (phone 843-740-1279); email: Jan.Kucklick@noaa.gov

7/16 - 19:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Quality Hotel & Conference Center, 1200 North Courthouse Road, Arlington, Virginia; (703)524-4000 (see preliminary agenda on page 5).

For almost 40 years, the states and the federal government have worked together to carry out a partnership in marine fisheries that has served each of us well. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was proud to be in forefront of establishing this partnership. As its Chair, Captain David H. Hart, took the lead in the early 1960s in lobbying the Congress to support the original Commercial Fisheries Research and Development Act, P.L. 88-309. A major revision was taken with the enactment of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986, which changed the focus from commercial fisheries, to fisheries that are shared by states, or by states with the federal government.

Today, under this legislation, state agencies across the country are carrying out the full range of fisheries conservation activities for the most important species we have, including many that are managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils) under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Many important federal fishery conservation programs rely on the state activities that are funded under the interjurisdictional fisheries program.

The Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986 was well-designed to meet the challenges of the mid-1980s. But much has changed in the world of fisheries conservation and management in the past fifteen years. We are now more aware than ever of the critical need for good fishery and fishery resource information to support regulatory decisions. The critical nexus between productive fisheries and their habitat is better and more broadly understood. The marine fisheries constituency has broadened, with greater participation from recreational fishing and environmental interests, in addition to the traditional commercial fisheries community. We now hear as much, if not more, about controlling fishing capacity as providing for fishery development. New technologies, such as advances in analytical and communications capabilities, are dramatically increasing our capability to understand and share information. And the roles and capabilities of the state and federal institutions have continued to evolve, each with their relative strengths. With all of these changes, it is time to consider updating our approach to interjurisdictional fisheries cooperation. What is needed today is nothing short of a revitalization of and a recommitment to the state-federal partnership in marine fisheries.

The U. S. House of Representatives started down this road last year when it overwhelmingly passed H.R. 701, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), which recognized the need to reinvest in state programs for fisheries, wildlife, and conservation. The failure of CARA to be enacted in the closing days of the 106th Congress does not mean that the important needs that it would have addressed are any less pressing now than they were a year ago.

The Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of is now fifteen years old, and has not been significantly revised since 1986, despite the major changes that have occurred in coastal and marine fisheries. A recharged Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act should contain a clear and concise recognition of and commitment to the special relationship that exists between the states and the federal government in marine fisheries. A good place to start, for example, is with fisheries statistics. All across the country, the states and NMFS have been moving toward a set of fully integrated, cooperative fishery statistics programs. It is important for NMFS to play a national coordinating, policy, and standard setting role. The states bring strengths to the table in the operational sense of data collection and management. We need a national commitment to a series of regional statistics programs that takes advantage of the strengths that each of the partners can bring to the table.

This is also true for cooperative fisheries regulatory planning. In addition to the responsibilities of NMFS and the Councils under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), the federal government has a significant concern over the stewardship of coastal fishery resources that do not come under the regulatory purview of the MSFCMA. The need for the states to step forward and address these resources of national interest has never been greater.

The same could be said for responsibilities for habitat and for fisheries research. As a result of the Sustainable Fisheries Act, there is a new emphasis on essential fish habitat. And more attention is being paid to interspecies fishery dynamics, including

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

ecosystems analysis and management with its tremendous data and analytical demands. We have to remember that 95 percent of federally managed fisheries spend critical parts of their lives in fisheries habitat that is included within state waters. Only by working closely with the states and investing in state capabilities can the federal government reach its fisheries habitat protection and restoration objectives. With regard to fisheries research, states have long been a source of cooperative assistance for the federal government. Today, a new emphasis is being placed upon cooperative efforts with fishermen and other nontraditional sources of data and information. States are closer to individual fishing areas and constituencies, and uniquely positioned to help craft cooperative research that uses fisherman capabilities to meet the scientific needs of fishery managers.

The states are also in a position to contribute significantly to the effectiveness of marine fisheries law enforcement. Last year, Congress appropriated \$15 million for cooperative state law enforcement agreements. We are finding that state and federal law enforcement personnel each have different areas where they can operate most effectively, in a mutual and cooperative effort.

A newly revitalized "Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act for the 21st Century" ought to address the critical state-federal areas of mutual interest. It should unequivocally articulate the commitment of the federal government to work closely with the states wherever possible to get the job done. It should also devote the fiscal resources necessary to carry out this essential partnership program. Let me be clear: what I am suggesting is a major commit-

ment and investment in state-federal partnership programs. The need is there, and the opportunity is there. For example, H.R. 701, CARA, will set aside \$500 million for the states for coastal conservation and impact assistance. Coastal and marine fisheries issues are enumerated in the bill as a primary use for this funding. It is not hard to imagine that under these provisions \$150 million or \$200 million could be devoted to state fisheries programs. This is, frankly, the type of commitment that the state-federal partnership in marine fisheries deserves.

The Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act will not compete with CARA. Quite the opposite. The earliest enactment of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act is essential; and much of what I am suggesting would be addressed by a properly funded CARA. The substantive ideas that a revitalized commitment to interjurisdictional fisheries would provide would provide a blueprint for the Congress and the states in the development and implementation of coastal fisheries conservation programs under CARA.

The basic principles are simple. The states are not just another constituency for federal policy makers. The states and the federal government share, in a unique way, the public trust responsibilities to safeguard the people's interests in marine fisheries resources. We must continually work together in the important areas of statistics, fisheries management, habitat, research and law enforcement. We must each strive wherever possible to achieve mutual success. We can succeed together, or we can fail separately. The choice belongs to all of us.

Don't Miss the Next Stock Assessment Workshop for Commissioners!

The Commission will continue its series of stock assessment seminars for Commissioners and other interested parties during its July meeting week in Arlington, Virginia (July 16-19, 2001). The intent of these seminars is to introduce Commissioners to the basic concepts and principles of population dynamics and stock assessment methods, including data needs, analysis methods, and interpretation of results. Some of the topics that have been presented at previous meeting weeks include estimation of mortality, yield per recruit and spawning stock biomass per recruit models, surplus production models.

At the July meeting, Dr. Joseph DeAlteris from the University of Rhode Island will present a conceptual overview of virtual population analysis and other size and age based models, using examples from recent species stock assessments. The seminar is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, July 18 from 10:00 AM to Noon. All interested parties are invited to attend.

For more information on this seminar or others in the series, please contact Jeffrey Brust, Fisheries Specialist, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 308.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
July 2001 Meeting Week
July 16 - 19, 2001

Quality Hotel and Conference Center
1200 North Courthouse Road
Arlington, Virginia
703-524-4000

Preliminary Schedule

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

Monday, July 16, 2001

10:00 AM - Noon Weakfish Management Board

- Approve Public Information Document

1:00 PM – 6:00 PM Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Coordinating Council

- Strategic Planning Workshop for Council Members

Tuesday, July 17, 2001

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM ACCSP Coordinating Council (continued)

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board

- Review public comment for Red Drum Public Information Document; Advisory Panel Report; Discuss/select management options for Draft Amendment 2; Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program update

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

- Review for approval Lobster Conservation Management Team proposals; Review for approval Public Hearing Draft of Amendment 4; Review of state compliance

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Technical Committee Report: Status of the stock and the fishery; Advisory Panel Report; Review for approval 2001 FMP Review

Wednesday, July 18, 2001

8:00 AM – 10:00 AM Spiny Dogfish and Atlantic Coastal Shark Management Board

- Update on Council actions; Review Emergency Action compliance

10:00 AM - Noon Stock Assessment Training Seminar — An Overview of Virtual Population Analysis & Other Age and Size Based Models (Presenter: Joseph DeAlteris)

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM ISFMP Policy Board (and full Commission if necessary)

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Striped Bass Management Board

- Review progress on Draft Amendment 6

Thursday, April 26, 2001

8:00 AM – 10:00 AM Striped Bass Management Board (continued)

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM Habitat Committee

- SAV State Conservation Plans: review and approve RI example; approve standard outline for state plans; SAV brochure approval; Initial planning session for 2002 Habitat Program activities; Oyster Reefs — discussion and approval of definition of this habitat type; Beach nourishment — approval of outline for white paper

ACCSP Testing For-Hire Waters in South Carolina

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), a collective data collection and data management program of the state, regional and federal fishery management agencies along the Atlantic coast, has made great strides over the last several years to improve data collection coastwide. In its most recent effort to improve data collection, ACCSP partners with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have focused its efforts on an ongoing For-Hire Pilot Study in South Carolina.

SCDNR, NMFS' Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey and NMFS's Headboat Survey personnel are working to determine the best methodology for collecting catch/effort data from for-hire fisheries.

"The ACCSP For-Hire Pilot Study will provide the Coordinating Council with a recommendation on the most effective methods to collect and verify data from the for-hire fisheries on the Atlantic coast," says Joe Moran, the ACCSP Program Manager.

The three methodologies tested in the pilot study were (1) South Carolina's mandatory charter vessel and headboat trip reports, (2) the standard MRFSS charter boat mode, including headboats, and (3) weekly phone surveys to a rotating panel of charter and headboat captains, randomly stratified by vessel length. The captains were asked to provide effort data from their past week's trips. Following is a brief overview of each survey and the its progress to date.

South Carolina's Mandatory Charter Vessel and Headboat Trip Reports

SCDNR conducted its ongoing mandatory logbook reporting system. It also had port agents make dockside visits to verify whether vessels were away from the docks on a given day. South Carolina maintained an active for-hire vessel

directory frame, which was transmitted to MRFSS and reviewed by both MRFSS and SCDNR staffs bi-weekly. The vessel frame was utilized for the rotating panel telephone survey. All data was entered, edited and transmitted to the MRFSS staff for compilation.

NMFS Charterboat/Headboat Survey

NMFS Headboat Survey staff collected and entered the headboat trip reports. Staff also verified reported catches via routine agent visits to ports of landing. All logbook data was coded on standard forms, entered, edited and transmitted to the MRFSS staff for compilation.

MRFSS Weekly Telephone Survey

The MRFSS, through the NMFS contractor, conducted the MRFSS charter vessel mode in South Carolina. The mode, which incorporates intercepts and phone surveys, was expanded to include headboats. The single addition of vessel name assisted linking South Carolina logbook trip reports and the MRFSS interviews. The contractor also conducted weekly phone surveys to the rotating panel of charter and headboat captains to collect effort data from their past week's trips.

The ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee began designing a pilot to test alternative methods for collection and verification of data from the for-hire fisheries in 1998. Principals from Partner agencies, as well as others with specific expertise in for-hire fisheries, formed the For-Hire Subcommittee. Efforts stalled in late-1998, partially due to insufficient funding for the scope of the recommended study, but in May of 1999, the For-Hire Subcommittee reconvened in Charleston, South Carolina, and the pilot study was initiated.

Data collection began on March 1, 2000 and ended on February 28, 2001. The Subcommittee and the full ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee provided general guidance. The data is now be-

ing finalized and summarized for evaluation of the three methodologies. An independent panel, comprised of members of the American Fisheries Society's Marine Fisheries Section, will review the data in early fall 2001 and make recommendations on the ACCSP's data collection methodology from the for-hire sector.

The For-Hire Pilot Study was funded through a funding proposal to the ACCSP Coordinating Council. The Council is now accepting proposals for fiscal year 2002. The deadline is August 1, 2001. For more information, please contact the ACCSP staff below at 202-289-6400 or by email at:

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States to Develop SAV Conservation Plans

During its Spring Meeting, Commission member states agreed to begin developing state-specific Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Conservation Plans on a voluntary basis. The impetus for the recommendation and state action stemmed from a recently released Commission report which outlined the impacts of fishing gear on SAV habitat. While there are many other activities that impact SAV, the report focused on those activities for which the state fishery management agencies have control over, namely, fishing gear impacts. The report, which was developed by the Commission's Habitat Committee, pro-

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States Implement Recreational Measures for 2001 Summer Flounder Fishery

Throughout May, states from Massachusetts through North Carolina finalized and began implementing their recreational management measures for the 2001 summer flounder fishery (see table below). Collectively, the states are working to reduce recreational landings by 41% from 1999/2000 landings. Individually, states have implemented state-specific measures to meet their required reductions.

“Now, more than ever the states are committed to ensuring the proper conservation and management of summer flounder resource. That includes not only ensuring that commercial harvests meet the management targets, but that recreational fishery also stay within the limits set for that fishery, stated John H. Dunnigan.

In early April 2001, the states agreed to implement a 17.91 million pound total allowable landings (TAL) limit for 2001 summer flounder commercial and recreational fisheries combined. As defined in the fishery management plan, 40 per-

cent of the TAL is allocated to recreational fisheries, with the remaining 60 percent being allocated to commercial fisheries. Based on the 2001 TAL, the commercial and recreational harvests are set at 10.75 million pounds and 7.16 million pounds, respectively.

These reductions were necessary because the estimated 2000 recreational landings far exceeded the recreational harvest limit. This year, states have used a combination of increased minimum size limits, decreased possession limits and shortened seasons to ensure the 2001 recreational harvest limit is not exceeded.

Summer flounder is jointly managed by the Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council through the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). For more information, please contact Michael Lewis, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400.

2001 Recreational Management Measures for Summer Flounder by State

STATE	MINIMUM SIZE (inches)	POSSESSION LIMIT	OPEN SEASON
Massachusetts	16.5	7 fish	May 26 – September 5
Rhode Island	17.5	6 fish	May 26 – September 2
Connecticut	17.5	6 fish	Open all year
New York	17	7 fish	May 2 – October 31
New Jersey	16	8 fish	May 12 – September 11
Delaware	17.5	4 fish	Open all year
Maryland	17	8 fish	April 25 – July 24; August 7 – December 31
PRFC*	TBD	TBD	TBD
Virginia	15.5	8 fish	March 29 – July 24; August 8 – December 31
North Carolina	15.5	8 fish	Open all year with the exception of May 1 – May 14

* The Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC) will be meeting on June 15 to finalize its recreational summer flounder regulations. It is looking at two potential options: (1) implement the same regulations as the State of Maryland or (2) establish a 16" minimum size limit and an 8 fish possession limit to be prosecuted July 13 - December 31.

States to Develop SAV Conservation Plans (continued from page 6)

vided a suite of options to address fishing gear impacts to SAV, including best management practices, improved mapping and State SAV Plans.

After significant public input, the Habitat Committee recommended that State SAV Plans were the best way to begin to identify and address the issue. Since each state has different SAV species, gear types, jurisdictional issues, and current SAV policies, and the individualized plans would allow the States to take all of these things into account.

There will be five main components to these plans including:

1. **Public education** - How is the state educating people about the importance of SAV and ways gear impacts SAV?
2. **Identification of SAV** - How is the state identifying where SAV is within its waters?
3. **Identification of gear** - What gear used within state waters causes impacts of concern to SAV?
4. **Steps taken to address interactions between SAV and gear** – What steps is the state taking to minimize the interaction between SAV and fishing gear?
5. **Recommendations for the ASMFC** – What can the ASMFC do to assist each state in improving SAV protection policies and efforts?

At this time the Habitat Committee is developing a detailed outline as well as a sample plan to assist the states in writing their SAV Conservation Plans. For more information, please contact Carrie Selberg, Habitat Specialist, at (202)289-6400, ext. 332.

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