



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Volume 19, Issue 5

June 2010

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 Striped Bass Board Approves Draft Addendum II for Public Comment: States to Conduct Hearings This Summer

In May, the Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board approved Draft Addendum II to Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes two changes to the striped bass management program: (1) an increase in the coastal commercial quota, and (2) revising the definition of recruitment failure based on Technical Committee advice.

The proposal to increase the coastal commercial quota is intended to improve equality between the commercial and recreational fishery sectors. Although Amendment 6 established management programs for both fisheries based on the same target fishing mortality rate, the implementation of state-specific quotas for coastal commercial harvest (and not for recreational harvest) has prevented the commercial and recreational fisheries from responding equally to changes in striped bass population size. Since 2003, coastal commercial harvest has decreased by 3.6 percent, while recreational harvest has increased by 13.7 percent. Under the option, the Board would select a percent increase to be applied to the coastal commercial allocations assigned in Amendment 6.



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The Management Board voted to include a second issue in the Draft Addendum based on information presented at the meeting. As part of its review of the juvenile abundance indices, the Striped Bass Technical Committee recommended to the Management Board a revision to how striped bass recruitment failure is defined. Juvenile abundance indices are an important component of the striped bass monitoring program and are used to determine periods of recruitment failure which can trigger management action under Amendment 6. Adopting the proposed recommendation would result in a fixed value to determine recruitment failure in each surveyed area rather than a value that changes from year to year. Use of either the Amendment 6 definition or the Technical Committee recommendation for recruitment failure does not result in any necessary changes to the current management program.

The majority of states from Maine through North Carolina will be conducting hearings throughout the summer and early fall (see the full list of hearings on page 8). Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum, either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. The Draft Addendum can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on October 1, 2010 and should be forwarded to Nichola Meserve, FMP Coordinator, 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; or at nmeserve@asmfc.org (Subject line: Striped Bass Addendum II).

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 diadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

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Upcoming Meetings

6/22 - 24:

New England Fishery Management Council, Eastland Park Hotel, Portland, Maine.

6/28 & 29:

SEAMAP Coastal Survey and Crustacean Workgroups, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, 217 Ft. Johnson Road, Charleston, South Carolina.

6/29 (6:30 PM):

ASMFC Area 2 LCMT, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, 235 Promenade Street, 3rd Floor Cafeteria (Room 390), Providence, Rhode Island. Contact Thomas E. Angell at 401/423-1931 for more information.

7/7 (10 AM):

ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section (Days Out Meeting), Urban Forestry Center, 45 Elwyn Road, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

7/9 (10 AM):

ASMFC Tautog Advisory Panel conference call. Contact Chris Vonderweidt at 202/289-6400 for more information.

7/22 (10 AM- 5 PM):

ASMFC American Lobster Management Board, Crowne Plaza at the Crossings, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, Rhode Island; 401/732-6000.

8/2 - 5:

ASMFC Summer Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; 703/683-6000.

8/9 - 11:

SEAMAP Annual Meeting, The Buccaneer Hotel, St. Croix, US Virgin Islands.

8/17 - 19:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn Historic District Philadelphia, 400 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 215/923-8660.

9/13 - 17:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Charleston Marriot Hotel, 170 Lockwood Boulevard, Charleston, South Carolina.

9/27 - 10/1:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

Moving Forward Together

Provisions of the 2006 Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act (MSRA) are coming due this year, with important implications for our state-federal partnerships. As most know, the Commission's fisheries management process is framed by the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act and differs from the federal system. It is designed to produce results by incorporating three important principles: balance of power, timeliness of action, and stakeholder buy-in. Here's how...

Balance of Power

Natural resource management seeks to strike a balance between professional management and stakeholder involvement. Decision-making processes heavily grounded in stakeholder input often include inherent conflicts of interest, disputes regarding scientific advice, and reluctance to make short-term sacrifices to achieve long-term goals. Fishermen membership on the regional fishery councils has been an ongoing issue of debate and criticism with some groups.

In the Commission process, state directors have a strong presence; their actions reflect their professional training as natural resource managers. In addition, Legislative and Governor-appointed Commissioners provide stakeholders with a greater voice than they might have in a system exclusively run by professional managers. The one state/one vote concept drives the delegations to address the stakeholder-resource balance at the state level. Stakeholders participate in and contribute to the process but, under our structure, rarely dominate it.

Timeliness of Action

Intuitively, natural resource management is a balance between time and consequences. An action taken too quickly can lead to unforeseen impacts, while excessive analysis of potential consequences can render a proposed action moot. Under the federal process, multiple layers of review, stemming from different mandates, contribute to a cumbersome analysis of impacts. Delays can be caused by (or result in) outdated scientific information. Also, litigation can result in changing policies, adding further delay and uncertainty to the federal management process.

The Commission's process can bring fishery management plans and amendments on line significantly faster than the federal system, provided the political will to act exists. Through the adaptive management process, addenda to fishery management plans can be

developed and implemented within months. Thus, Commission action can be based on current information making it highly responsive to emerging issues. Specific examples in recent years include action to quickly increase quotas upon receipt of new scientific information.

Stakeholder Buy-in

Stakeholders enhance natural resource management processes through their active participation and input. The Commission holds public hearings in states affected by a proposed action. These hearings promote two-way communication by providing a forum for our professional staff to explain the proposed action as well as solicit public comment. Our advisory panels also provide input based on the perspective of diverse stakeholder groups. When the Commission does act, it often allows states the flexibility to craft rules to accommodate regional differences in the fishery and stakeholder needs, i.e., measures that are conservationally equivalent.

State-Federal Partnerships

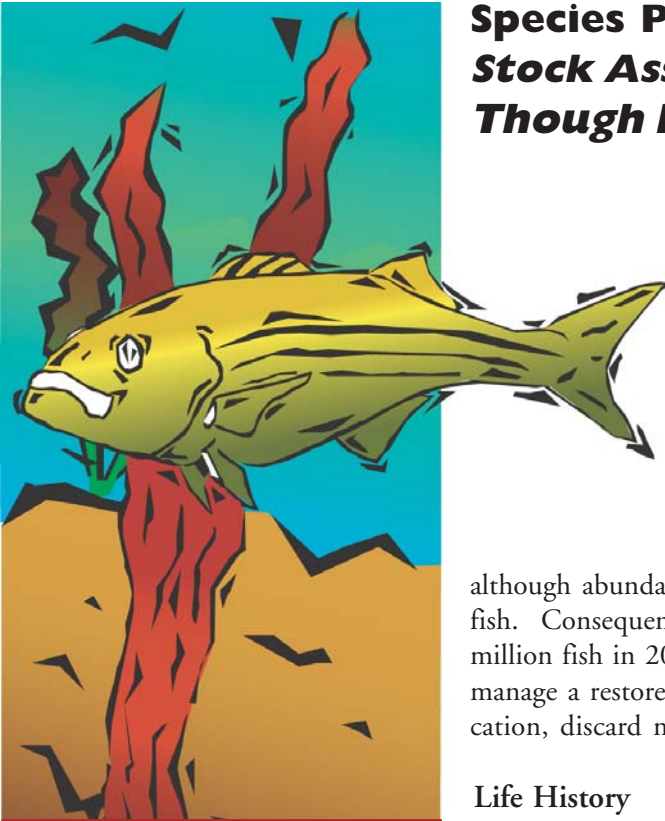
Overarching these principles is the concept of state/federal cooperation, an essential element of successful fisheries management. The federal government provides resources and guidelines through the Congress, and manages fisheries in the EEZ. Shoreward of the EEZ, states retain sovereign authority over coastal resources, activities, and habitat. The following are essential to a strong state-federal partnership:

- Ensuring that federal and Commission actions are complementary to achieve the common goal of responsible resource stewardship
- Dividing responsibilities based on effectiveness and efficiency
- Operating in a climate of trust, while recognizing the constraints of both the federal and state processes

New provisions in the MSRA, including requirements for annual catch limits, greater accountability, and the rebuilding of stocks go into effect this year. They will put greater pressure on the federal system to produce results. This will present new opportunities and challenges for our state-federal partnership. Making that partnership work has the potential to create great benefits for all. Ultimately, putting more fish in the water for everyone to catch, eat, and enjoy on a sustainable basis is what the Commission and our federal partners are all about. Hopefully, that is something we can all agree to work together to accomplish.

Species Profile: Atlantic Striped Bass

Stock Assessment Indicates Healthy Stock Though Management Challenges Remain



Atlantic Striped Bass *Morone saxatilis*

Interesting Facts:

- * Species' decline in the '30s was a principal reason behind the states forming the ASMFC
- * Peak growing time: April - October
- * Striped bass tagged and released in Chesapeake Bay have been recaptured as far away as the Bay of Fundy
- * Regulations date back to pre-Colonial times (c. 1640), when striped bass were prohibited from being used as fertilizer.

Largest Recorded: 125 lb. female (NC, 1891)

Age at Maturity:

- * Females - 50% at age 6 (25 - 26"); 100% mature at age 9 (32")
- * Males - 100% mature at age 3 (18")

Age at Recruitment:

- * Chesapeake Bay Fishery = age 4 (18")
- * Coastal Fishery = age 8 (28")

Stock Status: Not overfished and overfishing not occurring

Introduction

Since being declared rebuilt in 1995, Atlantic striped bass has served as a poster child for successful fisheries management. The 2009 update stock assessment concluded that striped bass are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, further supporting this distinction. Female spawning stock biomass is estimated to be 148% of the target level and 185% of the threshold level, while regulations have kept fishing mortality rates well within designated limits. The management program has allowed the number of fish in the population to increase from less than ten million fish in 1982 to nearly 53 million fish in 2008, although abundance is estimated to have peaked in 2004 at more than 70 million fish. Consequently, total coastwide landings declined from an unprecedented 3.8 million fish in 2006 to 3.2 million fish in 2008. The Commission's focus now is to manage a restored stock and address existing and emerging challenges such as allocation, discard mortality, poaching, disease, and species interactions.

Life History

On the Atlantic coast, striped bass range from the St. Lawrence River in Canada to the St. John's River in Florida. Migratory populations under Commission management range from Maine through North Carolina. A long-lived species (at least up to 30 years of age), striped bass typically spend the majority of their adult life in estuaries or the ocean, migrating north and south seasonally and ascending to rivers to spawn in the spring. Mature females (age four and older) produce large quantities of eggs (in the millions), which are fertilized by mature males (age two and older) as they are released into riverine spawning areas. The fertilized eggs drift downstream while developing and eventually hatch into larvae, which begin feeding on microscopic animals. After their arrival in the nursery areas, located in river deltas and the inland portions of coastal sounds and estuaries, they mature into juveniles. They remain in coastal sounds and estuaries for two to four years, with most fish joining the coastal migratory population in the Atlantic Ocean. In the ocean, fish tend to move north during the summer and south during the winter. Important wintering grounds for the mixed stocks are located from offshore New Jersey to North Carolina. With warming water temperatures in the spring, the mature adult fish migrate to the spawning areas to complete their life cycle. In general, Chesapeake Bay spawning areas produce the majority of coastal migratory striped bass.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

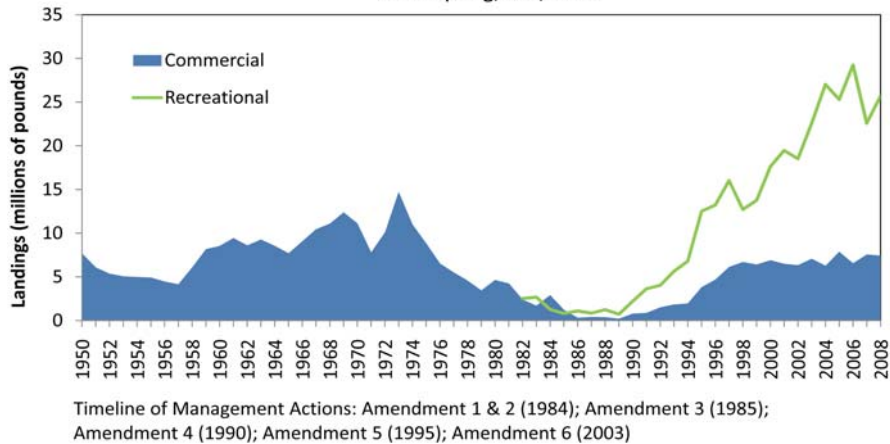
Striped bass has been one of the most important fisheries on the Atlantic coast for centuries. Currently, commercial fisheries operate in eight jurisdictions regulated by the Commission, while recreational fisheries operate in 14. Commercial fishermen harvest



Photo courtesy of John McMurray, www.nyflyfishing.com

Figure 1. Annual Coastwide Striped Bass Landings

Source: Personal communication, NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, Silver Spring, MD, 2010



striped bass with a variety of gears including gillnets, pound nets, haul seines, trawls, and hook and line, while recreational fishermen use hook and line almost exclusively. Commercial landings peaked at almost 15 million pounds in 1973 before declining to below two million pounds in 1983 (Figure 1). During the mid- to late 1980s, a number of states closed their striped bass fisheries in order to initiate rebuilding of the stocks. The commercial fishery grew slowly under a partial reopening of state waters in the early 1990s, with coastwide landings rising from about 800,000 pounds in 1990 to two million pounds in 1994. Under Amendment 5, striped bass harvest grew from 3.8 million pounds in 1995 to 6.3 million pounds in 2002. Under Amendment 6, commercial harvest has averaged over seven million pounds (2003-2008). Commercial landings in 2008 (7.45 million pounds) were dominated by Chesapeake Bay fisheries, which made up nearly 65 percent of the total commercial landings.

During 1982-1989, recreational anglers landed an annual average of 1.4 million pounds due to a combination of low stock size and strict regulations (Figure 1). Under Amendment 4, recreational landings grew from 2.2 million pounds in 1990 to 6.8 million pounds in 1994. With the declaration of restored status, landings increased from 12.5 million pounds in 1995 to a record 29.2 million pounds in 2006. The growing popularity of saltwater recreational fishing and the lack of recreational harvest caps in most states have allowed this large increase. Of the 25.7 million pounds landed recreationally in 2008, New York anglers took 27 percent, followed by Massachusetts (21 percent), New Jersey (18 percent), and Maryland (10 percent), with the remaining states each taking seven percent or less. Anglers continue to release the majority of striped bass they catch, between 85 and 90 percent coastwide in recent years.

Striped bass discard mortality for 2008 was estimated in the most recent assessment, allowing the total removals per year (in numbers of fish) to be broken down into four fishery components: recreational harvest and discards, and commercial harvest and discards. Landings accounted for 68 percent of the overall fishery removals in 2008, while dead discards accounted for the remaining 32 percent. Figure 2 (page 8) shows the breakdown in more detail.

Emergency Striped Bass Study Lays Foundation for Successful Management

When the striped bass stock began to collapse in the 1970s, limited information was available to monitor the population and assess the cause of decline. Spurred on by concerns expressed by the fishing public, Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island sponsored an amendment to the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act which addressed the data shortfall. Passed by Congress in 1979, the Amendment authorized the Emergency Striped Bass Study, providing funding and oversight for a coordinated research program.

Funding from the study, originally \$4.7 million for three years, would support an expansion of juvenile abundance surveys into new areas, provide for continuous spawning stock surveys, increase fishery-dependent biological sampling levels to enable characterization of the landings, and support tagging studies, life history research, and water quality monitoring. Results of the various research activities would be reported to Congress annually.

A key aim of the initial research was to test three hypotheses put forward to explain the decline of the Chesapeake Bay stock: habitat degradation, changes in ecological interactions, and overfishing. Testing the hypotheses would prove difficult given that the decline had already occurred and historical data for comparison were largely unavailable. Regardless, the 1980 Emergency Study report offered likely causes of the decline, a combination of fishing mortality and water quality. Excessive fishing pressure probably depleted the spawning stock, and water quality problems probably reduced survival of eggs and larvae. Regardless of the cause, the report stated, major reductions in fishing mortality were required if the species was to recover.

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States Schedule Hearings on Horseshoe Crab Draft Addendum VI: Draft Addendum Explores Management Options for Delaware Bay Region

New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia have scheduled their hearings to gather public comment on Draft Addendum VI to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Horseshoe Crabs. The dates, times, and locations of the scheduled meetings follow:

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

July 1, 2010; 6:30 PM

Assunpink Wildlife Management Area Conservation Center (several hundred yards up from Central Region Office)
1 Eldgridge Road
Upper Freehold Township, New Jersey
Contact: Amanda Dey at (609) 259-6967

Delaware Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

July 28, 2010; 7:00 PM

Richardson and Robbins Building Auditorium
89 Kings Highway
Dover, Delaware
Contact: Stew Michels at (302) 735-2970

Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

July 21, 2010; 6:30 PM

Ocean Pines Library
11107 Cathell Road
Berlin, Maryland
Contact: Steve Doctor at (410) 213-1531

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

July 7, 2010; 6:00 PM

2600 Washington Avenue
4th Floor
Newport News, Virginia
Contact: Jack Travelstead at (757) 247-2247

In February, the Horseshoe Crab Management Board initiated development of Draft Addendum VI in response to several factors. These include the impending expiration of Addendum V's provisions on October 31, 2010; the findings of the recent benchmark stock assessment for horseshoe crab and its as-

sociated Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) framework; and continued public concern regarding the horseshoe population and its ecological role in the Delaware Bay, specifically its connection to the red knot population.

The Draft Addendum proposes a number of options for management of horseshoe crab in the Delaware Bay Region (coastal and bay waters of New Jersey and Delaware, and coastal waters only of Maryland and Virginia). These range from an extension of the current management measures under Addendum V to several alternatives generated from the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) framework. The ARM framework provides the Board with a tool to manage horseshoe crab harvest explicitly taking into account multispecies interactions with shorebirds (mainly the red knot).

The 2009 Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment concluded that crab abundance in the Southeast and Delaware Bay Regions has increased, while abundance in the New York and New England Regions has decreased over the respective time series. Since the 2008 fishing season, New York and Massachusetts adjusted their state regulations to provide further protection to the horseshoe crab resource and maintain a sustainable fishery.

While horseshoe crab abundance in the Delaware Bay Region continues to rebuild, the red knot (*rufa* subspecies), one of many shorebird species that feed on horseshoe crab eggs, is at low population levels. Red knots have shown no sign of recovery despite a nearly 80% reduction in horseshoe crab landings since 1998. Technical advisors recommend continued precautionary management of the Delaware Bay horseshoe crab population.

The Board is scheduled to meet in August during the Commission's Summer Meeting to review public comment and consider taking final action on the Draft Addendum. Fishermen, shorebird advocacy groups, and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum, either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. The Draft Addendum can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmf.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM (EST) on July 29, 2010** and should be forwarded to Braddock Spear, Senior FMP Coordinator for Policy, 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 289-6051 (FAX) or at bspear@asmfc.org (Subject line: HSC Addendum VI).



Striped Bass Draft Addendum II Public Hearings Schedule

Maine Department of Marine Resources

September 14, 2010; 6:00 PM

Town of Yarmouth Log Cabin

196 Main Street

Yarmouth, Maine

Contact: Terry Stockwell at (207) 624-6553

New Hampshire Fish and Game

September 13, 2010; 7:00 PM

Urban Forestry Center

45 Elwyn Road

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Contact: Doug Grout at (603) 868-1095

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

August 16, 2010; 6:00 PM

Holiday Inn

55 Ariadne Road

Dedham, Massachusetts

Contact: Jared Silva at (617) 626-1534

Rhode Island Division of Fish & Wildlife

August 17, 2010; 6:00 PM

URI, Narragansett Bay Campus, Corless Auditorium

215 South Ferry Road

Narragansett, Rhode Island

Contact: Mark Gibson at (401) 423-1935

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

July 13, 2010; 7:00 PM

Fayerweather Yacht Club

51 Brewster Street

Bridgeport, Connecticut

Contact: David Simpson at (860) 434-6043

July 14, 2010; 7:00 PM

Marine Headquarters

333 Ferry Road

Old Lyme, Connecticut

Contact: David Simpson at (860) 434-6043

New York Department of Environmental Conservation

July 21, 2010; 7:00 PM

Marine Resources Headquarters

205 North Belle Mead Road, Suite 1

East Setauket, New York

Contact: Steve Heins at (631) 444-0436

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

July 22; 7:00 PM

Toms River Township Clerk's Office

L. Manuel Hirshblond Room

33 Washington Street

Toms River, New Jersey

Contact: Brandon Muffley at (609) 748-2020

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

July 20, 2010; 6:30 PM

Pennsbury Manor, Visitor's Center Auditorium

400 Pennsbury Memorial Road

Morrisville, Pennsylvania

Contact: Leroy Young at (814) 359-5177

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

June 16, 2010; 7:30 PM

Richardson and Robbins Building Auditorium

89 Kings Highway

Dover, Delaware

Contact: Craig Shirey at (302) 739-9914

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

June 17, 2010; 7:00 PM

Ocean Pines Library

11107 Cathell Road

Berlin, Maryland

Contact: Carrie Kennedy at (410) 260-8295

July 19, 2010; 6:00 PM

Tawes State Office Building, C1 Conf. Room

580 Taylor Avenue

Annapolis, Maryland

Contact: Carrie Kennedy at (410) 260-8295

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

June 28, 2010; 6:00 PM

2600 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor

Newport News, Virginia

Contact: Jack Travelstead at (757) 247-2247

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

June 29, 2010; 6:00 PM

Roanoke Island Festival Park, Small Auditorium

One Festival Park

Manteo, North Carolina

Contact: Michelle Duval at (252) 808-8011

July 7, 2010; 6:00 PM

NC Division of Marine Fisheries

Central District Office

5285 Highway 70 West

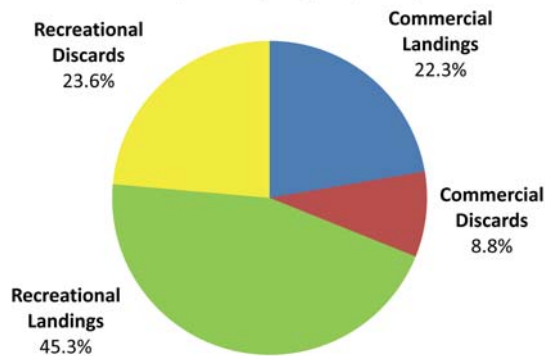
Morehead City, North Carolina

Contact: Michelle Duval at (252) 808-8011

Species Profile: Atlantic Striped Bass (continued from page 5)

Figure 2. Striped Bass Fishery Removals by Sector, 2008

(Source: 2009 ASMFC Striped Bass Stock Assessment; Personal communication, NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, Silver Spring, MD, 2009)



Stock Status

Based on the results of the 2009 update stock assessment, Atlantic coast striped bass are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The statistical catch-at-age (SCA) model estimates that the resource remains at a high level with female spawning stock biomass (SSB) at 122 million pounds, well above the SSB target and threshold levels of 82.7 million pounds and 66.2 million pounds, respectively (Figure 3). Estimates of recruitment (age-1 abundance) in 2005-2007 decreased from the all time high in 2004 and were below the average for the post-recovery time period (1995-present), although the 2008 recruitment estimate is above that average. The SCA model estimated the 2008 fishing mortality rate (F) on age 8-11 fish to be

$F=0.21$, which is well below the fishing mortality threshold and target levels of 0.34 and 0.30, respectively. Tag-based estimates of fishing mortality were all 0.20 or less in 2008. While biomass (total weight fish) estimates have remained relatively stable from the continued growth of previous strong cohorts, stock abundance (total number of fish) has declined since

2004, although there was a small increase from 2007 to 2008. The decline, as reflected by landings, is more prevalent in areas largely dependent on the Chesapeake stock than areas dominated by the Hudson stock.

Atlantic Coastal Management

Before the Interstate FMP for Striped Bass (1981), states independently promulgated regulations to constrain the fishing mortality on the Atlantic coast striped bass population. However, it was not until the 1984 Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, the precursor to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, that the Atlantic coastal states gained the necessary tools to cooperatively and more effectively

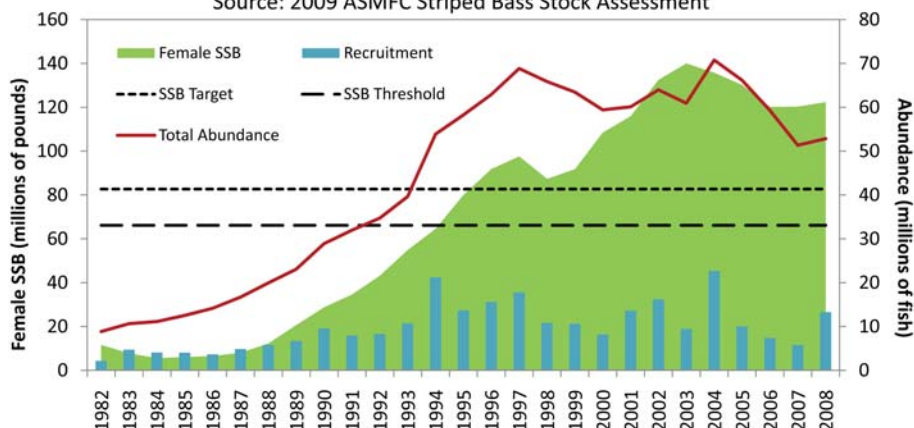
conserve and manage striped bass stocks. Through a stringent management program begun in 1985, the population began to rebuild, such that in 1995 the Commission declared Atlantic coastal striped bass stocks fully recovered.

Since Amendment 4, the foundation of the striped bass management program has been to maintain harvest below a target fishing mortality rate (F). Amendment 6, approved in 2003, modified the F targets and thresholds, and also introduced a new set of biological reference points based on female SSB. On a regular basis, SSB and F are estimated and compared to target and threshold levels. These reference points, as well as new management triggers, have enabled the Management Board to be more responsive to changes in the stock.

In addition to the control rule, Amendment 6 phased in new regulations for both the commercial and recreational fisheries. In 2003, the coastal commercial quotas for striped bass were restored to the states' historical average landings during the 1972-1979 base period, a 43 percent increase from the 2002 coastal commercial quotas. In the recreational fisheries, all states were required to implement a two fish bag limit with a minimum size limit of 28 inches, except for the Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle-Roanoke fisheries, and states with approved conservation equivalency proposals. The Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle-Roanoke regulatory programs differ from the coastal migratory stock because these programs are predicated on a more conservative F target than the coastal migratory stock. The independent F target allows these jurisdictions to implement separate seasons, harvest caps, and size and bag limits as long as they remain under that target.

In 2007, the Striped Bass Management Board approved Addendum I to Amendment 6, which established a bycatch

Figure 3. Estimated Female Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB), Total Abundance, and Recruitment (Age-1 Abundance)
Source: 2009 ASMFC Striped Bass Stock Assessment



Timeline of Management Actions: Amendment 1 & 2 (1984); Amendment 3 (1985); Amendment 4 (1990); Amendment 5 (1995); Amendment 6 (2003)

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Science Highlight: 2010 Cooperative Winter Tagging Survey Conducts its 23rd Cruise

The 2010 Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise took place February 18th – 25th aboard the National Science Foundation Research Vessel 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 in calm seas from the Duke University Marine Laboratory in Beaufort, North Carolina for the eight-day research trip. Cruising offshore of North Carolina and Virginia, the vessel towed one 65-foot bottom trawl. The trawl was deployed for 30 minutes at a time, with the scientific party working in six hour shifts around the clock.

The scientific party and crew were able to deploy the net 200 times, processing approximately 6,433 fish and invertebrates over the duration of the cruise. The trawl net was lost twice during the cruise, but both times it was quickly retrieved by Captain Murphy. The processing of the catch brought on board included counting and/or measuring almost all species; occasionally weighing, tagging, sexing, and collecting samples from specific species; and implanting acoustic transmitters in appropriately-sized Atlantic sturgeon. The catch included alewife, American shad, Atlantic cod, Atlantic herring, Atlantic menhaden, Atlantic striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, blueback herring, hickory shad, horseshoe crab, and spiny dogfish, as well as various types of flounders, skates, mackerel and crustaceans. The crew and scientific party were fortunate enough to view breaching humpback whales during the trip. Additionally pelicans, gannets and other seabirds were observed.

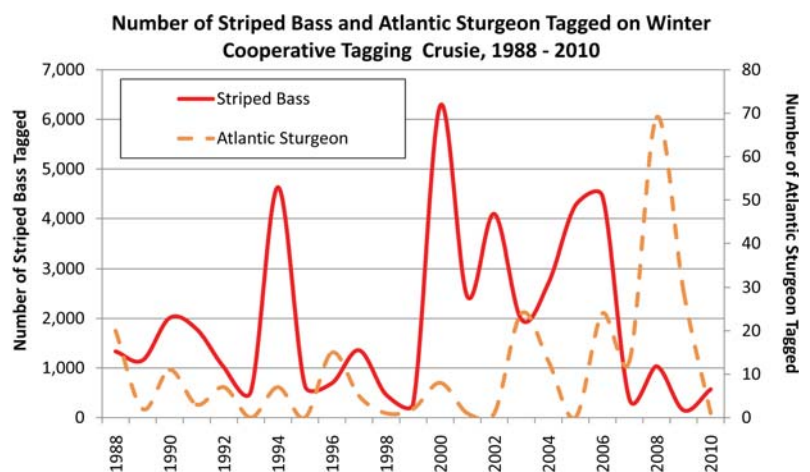
During its 23 year history, the Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruises have collectively tagged 44,231 striped bass, with a total of 569 Atlantic striped bass tagged this year. While this year's total is nearly four times as many striped bass tagged last year, it is still well below the annual average of 1,923 striped bass tagged -- the 2010 cruise ranks 18th overall in numbers of striped bass tagged for the time series (see accompanying figure). Tagged striped bass ranged from 19 – 43 inches and there was one striped bass recapture this year. Unfortunately, only a 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 in deep, offshore waters. 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 an acoustic transmitter in one Atlantic sturgeon, which will supplement information obtained from other tagged Atlantic sturgeon for his thesis research focused on Atlantic sturgeon spawning in the Delaware River. Acoustic listening stations set up along the coast have since tracked the sturgeon passing by Bethany Beach, DE in early May as the fish entered the Delaware Bay. Dr. Roger Rulifson collected reproductive samples and stomach contents from a subset of spiny dogfish caught to be used for ongoing



ASMFC FMP Coordinator, Kate Taylor, holds up the 1 sturgeon caught this year.

research at East Carolina University. Furthermore, samples of many other species were retained for otolith, tissue, and other analyses to be conducted at various universities and state/federal 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.





FUS Data Collection a Success for Partners

ACCSP Seeks Representatives for Advisory Committee

FUS Data Collection a Success for Partners

It seems once again the partners of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) are pleased to have the Atlantic coast fisheries data in the upcoming 2009 edition of Fisheries of the United States (FUS) be organized and streamlined by the staff of ACCSP. This annual publication by NOAA Fisheries provides timely answers to frequently asked questions on commercial and recreational fisheries of the United States. ACCSP has been collecting data from Maine to Virginia and providing them to NOAA Fisheries - Headquarters since 2007.

ACCSP provides the data from South Carolina and Georgia to NOAA Fisheries - Southeast Regional Office while the states of North Carolina and Florida provide data directly to NOAA Fisheries. The FUS report includes landings from the high seas, exclusive economic zone and the state waters. 2009 was the third year ACCSP gathered and presented the fisheries-dependent data for FUS from Maine through Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia.

Many program partners were able to prepare their data for FUS with minimal effort due to established submission processes that partner and ACCSP staff have collaboratively developed. By working with partners to develop the FUS dataset, ACCSP staff were able to populate the Data Warehouse at a finer resolution and support ACCSP's mission to "produce dependable and timely marine fishery statistics for Atlantic coast fisheries that are collected, processed and disseminated according to common ACCSP standards agreed upon by all program partners."

Partner staff often calls the process "very easy" which has allowed them to shift their workload and focus on other projects. Heidi Bray of Maine Department of Marine Resources says she previously had to double check that the data that went into CFDBS (Commercial Fisheries Database System) was entered correctly. Now she knows it is more automated on the ACCSP side, so there is less manipulation of the data and consequently less error. If you have a question about the FUS data collection process please e-mail support@accsp.org.

ACCSP Seeks Representatives for Advisory Committee

ACCSP is actively seeking nominations to the Advisory Committee. Nominations will be formally appointed by the ACCSP Coordinating Council, the governing body of ACCSP after a recommendation from a Operations Committee member. The ACCSP Coordinating Council members from each partner state designate one commercial and one recreational and/or for-hire representative to the Advisory Committee. As an aggregate, the Advisory Committee is expected to provide perspectives from a variety of fishing experiences.

Members evaluate technical recommendations and provide advice on developments and implementation of the Program. They also rank the following fiscal year's projects based on the funding decision process and provide recommendations to the Coordinating Council.

As of May 2010, the Advisory Committee is seeking at least one recreational representative each from Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia. Also, the Advisory Committee is seeking at least one commercial representative each from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. If you are an interested in becoming a member of the Advisory Committee, please send a letter of interest to your state's ACCSP Operations Committee member.

A list of ACCSP Operations Committee members can be found at <http://www.accsp.org/opercommittee.htm>. For more information, please contact Ann McElhatton, ACCSP Outreach Coordinator, at info@accsp.org or (202) 216-5690.

About ACCSP

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.

Species Profile: Atlantic Striped Bass (continued from page 8)

monitoring and research program to increase the accuracy of data on striped bass discards. In 2009, a draft addendum to allow unused coastal commercial quota to be rolled over to the subsequent year failed.

In February 2010, the Management Board initiated an addendum to consider increasing the state-specific coastal commercial quotas. In May, the Management Board approved Draft Addendum II for Public Comment, adding in another set of options to consider revising the definition of striped bass recruitment failure based on Technical Committee advice. Allowing more coastal commercial harvest is being considered because the commercial fishery has not had the same opportunity to respond to changes in the striped bass population as the non-quota managed recreational fishery. The other proposed change would result in a fixed value to determine recruitment failure in each area surveyed for juvenile abundance, rather than a value that changes

from year to year. Public hearings will be held in all states in the management unit (see page 7 for full list), and the public comment period will be open until October 1.

Two additional issues under review are mycobacteriosis and poaching. The Striped Bass Technical Committee and Management Board continue to monitor information on the prevalence and effect of mycobacteriosis, a disease caused by bacterial infection, on striped bass in the Chesapeake Bay and beyond. Due to continued reports of illegal harvest on the ocean overwintering grounds (and elsewhere), the Commission recently requested that the U.S. Coast Guard take action against the licenses of charter boat captains violating striped bass regulations and that the



Photo courtesy of John McMurray, www.nyflyfishing.com

National Marine Fisheries Service increase the civil penalties associated with illegally fishing for or harvesting striped bass from the exclusive economic zone. These requests are under review.

For more information, please contact Nichola Meserve, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or nmeserve@asmfc.org.

Emergency Striped Bass Study (continued from page 5)

The results of the research would have quick and lasting impact on the management of striped bass. At ASMFC's 39th Annual Meeting in 1980, administrators of the Emergency Study presented an update of the activities funded since its inception. The Commission responded by appointing a committee to draft striped bass management options for a fishery management plan (FMP) begun in 1978 with the aid of state/federal funds provided by NMFS. The plan had proven difficult to complete with the limited documentation and data available

prior to the Emergency Study. By 1981, the Commission would approve its first FMP, one for the restoration of striped bass.

While the last Emergency Study report was prepared in 1995, many of the monitoring programs initially supported by its funding continue. The result is a species with a rich data set, enabling advanced stock assessment modeling and informed management decisions.

Source: "A Case History of Effective

Fishery Management: Chesapeake Bay Striped Bass" by R. Anne Richards and Paul J. Rago, *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* 19:356-375, 1999.

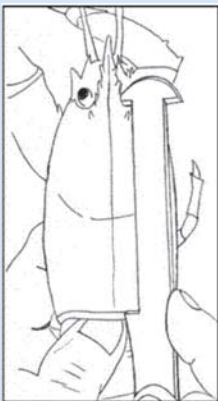


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Near Record Lobster Caught Off Race Point, MA

Paul Tasha, a commercial lobster diver, has been fishing for about 40 years had a big surprise. He was diving for lobster off of Race Point in Provincetown, MA, a part of the Outer Cape Cod (OCC) management area when he came across a 31-pound male lobster crawling along the bottom (at a depth of approximately 30 feet). The lobster's carapace was 231 mm or just over nine inches (the carapace length is measured from the extreme rear of the eye socket to the end of the body segment see figure below).



According to the Commission's American Lobster Technical Committee this is one of the largest lobster caught and recorded in recent times. The crusher claw was bigger than the average adult males head. Prior this capture, the largest lobster Tasha had caught was 22 pounds. Tasha had several offers to buy the lobster for over \$150, but he thought it was more important to return this large lobster to the ocean. A female lobster of this size will produce almost five times as many eggs as a 3 1/4" lobster. Since lobsters need mates similar in size, it was important to release this large male. The OCC is the only lobster management area where there is no maximum size so it would have been legal to keep the lobster. Derek Perry of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries tagged, measured, and weighted the lobster before Tasha released it.



Photo courtesy of MA Division of Marine Fisheries