



ASMFC

Fisheries *focus*

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



ASMFC Investigates the Use of Circle Hooks

For decades recreational anglers have practiced catch and release, driven by the desire to aid in species conservation and adhere to size and bag limits. While the conservation benefits of this practice are known, there is concern regarding the extent of release mortality in some fisheries. Research has shown that injuries to internal organs as a result of deep hooking or hooking in locations other than the mouth significantly increase release mortality. A fish that appears healthy after an angling battle may not necessarily survive. For example, the Commission's Striped Bass Technical Committee estimated that 1.3 million striped bass were lost due to recreational hook and line release mortality in 2000, more than the number landed by the commercial fishery that year.

Gear configuration, angler skill, enforcement issues and manufacturer concerns must all be taken into account when developing strategies to improve release mortality. One gear type

that holds promise is the use of circle hooks. Around for centuries, circle hooks are not a recent phenomenon. Pre-Columbian Indians in Latin America, early Japanese fishermen, and Pacific coast Native Americans each used hooks that looked and fished similarly to modern circle hooks.

To further explore issues related to circle hooks, the

Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board last fall called for an analysis of release mortality issues and the development of an enforceable definition of a circle hook. A Management and Science Committee (MSC) Workgroup comprised of hook manufacturers, ASMFC Commissioners, law enforcement representatives, recreational stakeholders, and technical personnel was formed to address these charges. Following is a brief summary of the issues identified by the Workgroup.

How Circle Hooks Work

When a fish swallows a baited circle hook and moves away, the movement pulls the hook from the throat. Since the hook point is pointing back at the hook shaft, it is less likely to puncture internal organs, decreasing the chance of gut hooking. As the hook shaft begins to exit the mouth, the shape of the hook causes the shaft to rotate towards the corner of the mouth, embedding the barb in the corner of the jaw. Some studies suggest that an angler's basic instinct to "set" a circle hook will render it useless, since actively jerking the rod tip may pull the hook completely out of the fish's mouth. Instead, anglers are encouraged to let the fish take the hook and move away, since the fish will hook itself as the line tightens.

Research

Research comparing catch rates between circle hooks and traditional "J" hooks suggest that more fish are caught on "J" hooks, but gut-hooking rates and associated release mortality are many times greater than those noted with circle hooks. Other studies show that release mortality increases when fish are hooked in locations other than the mouth. Some research suggests that hook size may be important when selecting a hook that offers the greatest conservation benefit for a particular species. If a hook is too small, the chance of gut-hooking larger fish may increase. Too large a hook may result in missed strikes or hooking smaller fish in areas other than the mouth. Compounding this issue is that no hook size

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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.

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Upcoming Meetings

5/21 (7 - 9 PM):

Joint ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section/NEFMC Atlantic Herring Oversight Committee and Advisory Panel, Kings Grant Hotel, Danvers, Massachusetts.

5/22 (10 AM - 5 PM) & 23 (8 AM- 2 PM):

ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee, Renaissance Airport Philadelphia Hotel, 500 Stevens Drive, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

5/28 (10 AM - 4 PM):

Area 2 Lobster Conservation Management Team, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, 235 Promenade Street, Room 390 (cafeteria), Providence, Rhode Island.

5/28 (10 AM - 4 PM):

ASMFC Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee, Sheraton International Hotel BWI, 7032 Elm Road, Baltimore, Maryland.

5/29 (10 AM - 5 PM) & 30 (9 AM - 3 PM):

ASMFC Striped Bass Technical Committee, Sheraton International Hotel BWI, 7032 Elm Road, Baltimore, Maryland.

6/9 - 12:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Doubletree Crystal City, 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia (see pages 7 & 8 for final agenda).

6/16 - 20:

37th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop/Stock Assessment Review Committee, National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

6/23 - 27:

ASMFC Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Workshop, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, 101 Pivers Island Road, Beaufort, North Carolina.

6/24 - 26:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Society Hill, One Dock Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

7/8 - 10:

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Workshop, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, 101 Pivers Island Road, Beaufort, North Carolina.

7/15 - 17:

New England Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland, Maine.

"Healthy, self sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration well in progress, by the year 2015." - *ASMFC Vision Statement*

Hopefully, you have seen these words before. They appear on the banner of *Fisheries Focus* and on the letterhead of our stationary. More importantly, they provide the standard by which we decide the priorities and measure the effectiveness of Commission activities. Good vision statements have two key qualities -- they are memorable and actionable. A vision is a destination and everyone associated with an organization should understand where they are going. Organizations are formed to do things, so a vision should reflect what is to be accomplished. The Commission's vision statement was written to meet both of these criteria.

If the vision statement is the destination, then the strategic plan is the broad road map describing how the organization is going to get there. A strategic plan reflects an organization's assessment of the current environment and its projection of what changes are likely. It should identify in broad terms actions needed within the changing environment to achieve the organization's vision. In the Commission's case, we use a five-year planning horizon for our strategic plan. It provides the framework for our annual action plans, describing tasks and goals for our staff and management boards. Since the current plan covers through 2003, we need to start on our next five-year plan.

We intend to do that at our upcoming June meeting. To get the most out of this process, it would be helpful for all of us, including Commissioners, staff, partner agencies, and you, the public we serve, to start thinking about how we should approach the next five years. We plan to ask this question in the context of our existing strategic plan. To help you get started in that direction, here are the intended outcomes of the plan, along with a short summary of the goals.

- Conserving Atlantic coast marine and estuarine resources for future generations
- Maintaining abundant self-sustaining fish stocks over time
- Preventing overfishing
- Achieving ecological sustainability over time

1. **Rebuild, restore and maintain Atlantic coastal fisheries through cooperative regulatory planning.** Speaks to the need for states to assess and react to fish populations in a cooperative effort, so the conservation efforts of one state are not undermined by another.

2. **Strengthen cooperative research capabilities.** Recognizes that the best fisheries management decisions are those based on sound science. It also reflects the reality of the limited resources of individual states, and the potential benefits of cooperation and sharing.
3. **Promote and coordinate cooperative fisheries statistics programs.** Addresses the fundamental need for timely and accurate data on fishing activity, including landings and discards. When adopted five years ago, this goal envisioned the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistic Program, now a reality.
4. **Expand cooperation in law enforcement.** Appreciates the need for enforcement to keep pace with the constantly expanding complexity of fisheries management in a climate of scarce fiscal and human resources.
5. **Enhance conservation, restoration and protection of fish habitat.** Supports the key role habitat plays in the life cycle of marine fish and its critical influence on the accomplishment of the Commission's vision.
6. **Promote responsible fisheries policies and represent the interests of the states in national and federal forums.** Seeks to educate outside interests, while advocating actions and policies that advance the Commission's vision.
7. **Strengthen the operations, management and administration of the Commission's business affairs.** Ensures the Commission retains a firm organizational footing to enable it to be a strong initiator and advocate for programs and activities that support and promote the states' fisheries interests.

These goals reflect our best thinking five years ago when we thought about what might lie ahead. Our collective work is best measured in the health of the stocks under our care (think vision statement). In many cases, we've done well, in others we need to do better. New challenges have emerged since 1998 and we need to start thinking of ways to respond to them. Stakeholder views are important, so I would encourage you to share your ideas with your Commissioners. We'll also be telling you of other ways you can participate in our planning process.

As a start, you can get detailed information about our current five-year strategic plan off the website or by calling us here at the Commission. We will be happy to mail you a copy. In closing, think of strategic planning not so much as an attempt to predict the future, but rather as a way to survive and thrive in it. I hope this is something we can all agree on.



Limulus polyphemus

Class: Merostomata

Common Names:
horseshoe crab; once called "horsefoot crabs" because of semblance to a horse's hoof

Interesting Facts: adult females can extrude up to 20,000 eggs per spawning episode; crabs can increase size by up to 25% after each molt

Uses: Bait for conch & American eel fisheries; provides important food source for migrating shorebirds, finfish and sea turtles; supports production of LAL, which is used to detect human pathogens in patients, drugs and intravenous devices

Age at Maturity/Life Span: 9 - 12 years/17 - 20 years

Species Profile: Horseshoe Crab

Management Plan Seeks to Conserve Resource for Multiple Uses

Introduction

Horseshoe crabs provide the backdrop for one of the most interesting marine resource management issues along the Atlantic coast. They play a vital ecological role in the migration of shorebirds along the entire Atlantic seaboard, as well as providing bait for commercial American eel and conch fisheries along the coast. Additionally, their unique blood is used by the biomedical industry to produce Limulus Amoebocyte Lysate (LAL), an important tool in the detection of contaminants in patients, drugs and other medical supplies. The challenge of fisheries managers is to ensure that horseshoe crabs are managed to meet all these diverse needs, while conserving the resource for its self-perpetuation.

Life History

Although they are called horseshoe "crabs," they are neither a decapod nor a crustacean but are in their own class that is more closely related to the arachnids (i.e. spiders). Horseshoe crabs have existed for more than 200 million years; however, some identify the evolutionary existence of horseshoe crabs to be over 400 million years.

Horseshoe crab distribution extends along the Atlantic coast from northern Maine to the Yucatan Peninsula and the Gulf of Mexico. Along the U.S. Atlantic coast, horseshoe crabs are most abundant between Virginia and New Jersey, with the Delaware Bay at the center of the species distribution and the location of the largest population. Horseshoe crabs are typically associated with estuarine habitats. Adults either remain in the estuary or migrate to the continental shelf during the winter months. Migrations resume in the spring when the horseshoe crabs move to beach areas to spawn. Juveniles hatch from the beach environment and spend the first two years in shallow, subtidal flats, near shore.

Spawning usually coincides with the high tide during the full and new moon. Breeding activity is consistently higher during the full moon than the new moon and is also greater during the night. Adults prefer sandy beach areas within bays and coves that are protected from surf. Eggs are laid in clusters or nest sites along the beach with females laying approximately 88,000 eggs per year in different egg clusters.

The eggs play an important ecological role in the food web for migrating shorebirds and finfish. The Delaware Bay Estuary is the largest staging area for shorebirds in the Atlantic Flyway and an estimated 425,000 to one million migratory shorebirds converge on the Delaware Bay to feed and rebuild energy reserves prior to completing their northward migration. Horseshoe crabs also provide an important food source for Atlantic loggerhead turtles.

Juvenile and adult horseshoe crabs feed mainly on mollusks, although they also prey on a variety of benthic organisms and vascular plants. The horseshoe crab must molt or shed its chitinous exoskeleton to grow and can increase size by up to 25 percent after each molt. Molting occurs several times during the first two to three years of a horseshoe crab's life. As it grows larger, more time occurs between molts. It usually takes 17 molts to reach sexual maturity (9 - 12 years).

Stock Status

The status of the stock is unknown largely due to the lack of long-term data sets for commercial landings and stock abundance. Currently, there is not enough information to establish biological reference points, fishing mortality rates, or recruitment estimates. As a result, in 2000, the Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved and implemented a conservative, risk-averse management program. This action was based on concerns regarding localized population declines, increased catch and effort, slow maturation, susceptibility of spawning crabs to harvest, population resiliency, and the need for a superabundance of horseshoe crab eggs in the Delaware Bay for migratory shorebirds.

Preliminary findings from beach spawning surveys conducted in the Delaware Bay region over the last four years suggest that spawning activity remains stable or has slightly declined. However, such findings should be viewed with caution given the short time series of the data and the species' slow rate of maturation. Additional information is being gathered from a Mid-Atlantic benthic trawl survey, which began in the Delaware Bay in 2001 and was expanded from New Jersey to Virginia in 2002. The Commission will update its horseshoe crab stock assessment in 2004.

Commercial Fisheries & Biomedical Harvest

From the 1850s to the 1920s, between 1.5 and four million horseshoe crabs were harvested annually for fertilizer and livestock feed. By the 1960s, only 42,000 horseshoe crabs were reported to be harvested annually.

Currently, horseshoe crabs are taken in substantial numbers to provide bait for American eel and conch fisheries. Preliminary coastwide commercial landings for bait in 2002 are 1.3 million horseshoe crabs, well below the coastwide quota of 2.3 million. Horseshoe crabs, particularly females, are cut up and placed in American eel pots as bait. The horseshoe crab fishery is unique in that crabs can be easily harvested during their spawning season and can be caught with minimal financial expense. Bait bags have been developed for use by commercial fishermen, allowing them to catch the same amount of eel or conch while using as little as a quarter of the bait.

Horseshoe crabs are also collected by the biomedical industry to support the production of LAL, a clotting agent that aids in the detection of human pathogens in patients, drugs, and intravenous devices. No other procedure has the same accuracy as the LAL test used. The current estimate of medical usage is between 200,000 and 250,000 horseshoe crabs per year on the Atlantic coast. While crabs are bled and released live generally within 72 hours of capture, approximately 10 percent do not survive the procedure.

Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

In 1998, the Commission approved the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Horseshoe Crabs. Prior to this FMP, states individually managed the species. The goal of the FMP is to conserve and protect the horseshoe crab resource to maintain sustainable levels of spawning stock biomass in order to ensure its continued role in the ecology of coastal ecosystems, while providing for continued use over time. The FMP maintained horseshoe crab harvest control measures put in place by New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland to protect horseshoe crab spawning within and adjacent to the Delaware Bay. It also directed the Horseshoe Crab Management Board to implement a cap on bait landings in 2000.

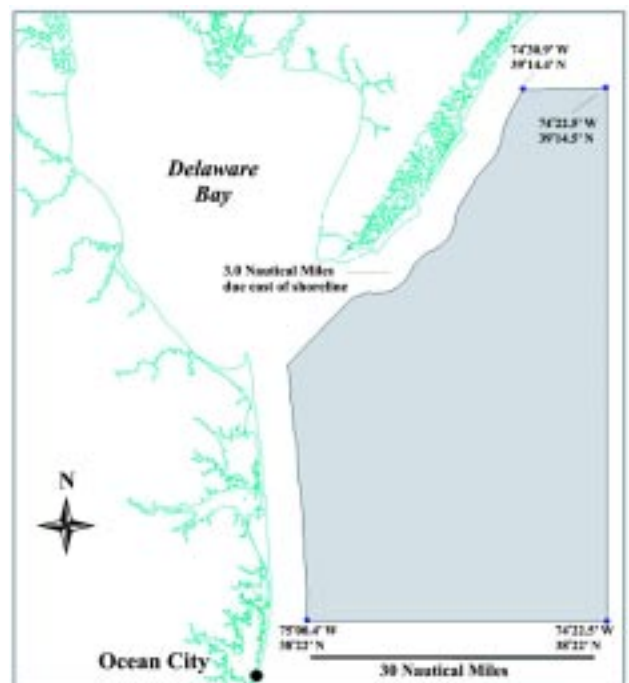
In order to improve our understanding of the resource and the demands placed upon it, the FMP also requires states to implement mandatory monthly reporting of commercial landings, conduct benthic sampling programs, and identify important habitat areas.

Addendum I to the FMP, approved in February 2000, established individual state caps on horseshoe crab bait landings at 25 percent below the reference period landings for states with horseshoe crab fisheries. States with more restrictive harvest levels were encouraged to maintain those restrictions to provide further protection to the population. As a result of these restrictions, Atlantic coastal horseshoe crab landings were reduced in 2002 by approximately 45 percent below the coastwide quota of 2.3 million crabs. The Addendum also recommended that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) prohibit the harvest of horseshoe crabs in federal waters off of Delaware. The Carl N. Shuster Jr. Horseshoe Crab

Reserve, encompassing nearly 1,500 square miles of federal waters off the mouth of the Delaware Bay, was established by the NMFS on March 7, 2001 (see map below).

In April 2001, the Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved Addendum II to provide for the voluntary transfer of harvest quotas between states to alleviate bait shortages on a biologically responsible basis. These voluntary quota transfers will require both Technical Committee review and Management Board approval. To date, no state or jurisdiction has requested a quota transfer under this Addendum.

Since 2001, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Shorebird Technical Committee has been investigating the migratory shorebird population of Delaware Bay and its ecological interaction with horseshoe crabs. This group has been tasked to produce a peer-reviewed report that synthesizes current literature and data on the status of shorebirds in the Delaware Bay and to determine their energetic dependency on horseshoe crab eggs. The report should be completed by this summer. Ultimately, the Committee will provide the Management Board with recommendations on horseshoe crab research and management activities as they pertain to the species' interactions with shorebirds.



Carl N. Shuster Jr. Horseshoe Crab Reserve

ASMFC Investigates the Use of Circle Hooks (continued from page 1)



standards exist in the fishing tackle industry, so a 5/0 hook made by one company may be the same size as another's 8/0 hook. Research suggests that the amount of "offset" may influence hooking location and associated mortality. (Offset is defined by looking at the barb from behind the hook shank. The greater the offset angle, the more the barb is visible -- i.e., the barb and the shank are not in the same plane.)

A growing body of scientific evidence suggests that circle hooks significantly reduce release mortality. Hook mortality studies have shown that compared to traditional "J" hooks, circle hooks significantly reduce release mortality in striped bass, red drum, billfish, bluefin and yellowfin tunas, salmon, and halibut. Selected studies are summarized in the table below (percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding).

Uses Along the Atlantic Coast

Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass, approved in February 2003, recommends that agencies encourage the use of circle hooks through development of public relations and/or educational campaigns. Many agencies have been actively involved in promoting circle hooks as a means to reduce release mortality, and have worked closely with

hook manufacturers, researchers, and tournaments to educate the public about the wise use and benefits of circle hooks.

On the Atlantic coast, only Maine (groundfish hook and line and halibut fisheries) and New Jersey (striped bass in spawning closure areas of the Delaware River) require the use of circle hooks. Though not mandated, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and the National Marine Fisheries Service endorse the use of circle hooks, and many have developed brochures and fact sheets on the conservation benefits offered by circle hooks. Several state Sea Grant Extension Services have produced and distributed circle hook brochures. In addition, several well-known conservation groups endorse circle hooks, including the International Game Fish Association, The Billfish Foundation, and The Recreational Fishing Alliance.

Many billfish tournaments utilize a catch and release format and many charter captains actively encourage or mandate the use of circle hooks on their vessels. The Yamaha Contender Miami Billfish Tournament was the first fishing tournament in the United States to adopt a circle hook format. In 2003,

North Carolina's "Big Rock" Billfish Tournament is awarding bonus points for releasing billfish caught on circle hooks.

Recommendations for Action

More detailed information on circle hooks can be found in a Draft White Paper and associated research summary, available on the Commission's website at (<http://www.asmfc.org>). As part of these documents the MSC Workgroup provided recommendations on (1) research to improve the scientific knowledge regarding hook and release mortality, (2) studies to evaluate the impact of alternative hook designs on release mortality, and (3) a standard definition of circle hooks. These recommendations will be reviewed for approval by the MSC and ISFMP Policy Board in June. For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline, Director of Research & Statistics, at (202)289-6400 or lkline@asmfc.org.

Author (yr)	Species Hook	Type	Hook Location			% Mortality
			Jaw/Mouth	Deep	Foul	
Caruso (00)	Striped Bass	Circle "J"	97%	2%	2%	3%
			60%	24%	16%	16%
Lukakovic (00)*	Striped Bass	Circle "J"	97%	3%		1%**
			83%	17%		9%**
Skomal et al. (02)	Bluefin Tuna	Circle "J"	94%	2%	2%	4%
			62%	34%	4%	28%
Aguilar et al. (02)	Red Drum	Circle "J"	96%	4%		0
			48%	52%		9%

* Corrected data as of 6/24/03

** Mortality data for air temperature <95 degrees Fahrenheit

ASMFC Spring 2003 Meeting Week
June 9 - 12, 2003
Doubletree Crystal City
300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia

Final Agenda

(Note: The schedule is subject to change up until the time meetings are held.)

Monday, June 9, 2003

8:30 AM - 11:30 AM Winter Flounder Management Board

- Review and take action on Draft Public Information Document

12:30 PM - 3:30 PM Summer Flounder, Scup & Black Sea Bass Management Board

- Review public comment and take action on Draft Addendum VIII
- Approve 2003 scup recreational management programs

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM Management & Science Committee

- Recommend priorities for Commission peer reviews
- Review recommendations from October 2002 Multispecies Workshop
- Review and approve Interstate Tagging Issues Paper
- Update on power plant assessments
- Review of Summer Flounder Regulatory Discards Report

3:30 PM - 6:00 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Review state implementation proposals for Amendment 6
- Discuss single size limit for the next addendum
- Discuss producer areas



Tuesday, June 10, 2003

8:00 AM - 1:00 PM American Lobster Management Board

- Massachusetts Conservation Equivalency Proposal for the Outer Cape Cod
- Plan Review Team Report on Annual Compliance, Trap Tags and FMP Review
- Review Area 2 Options Paper and follow-up to Emergency Rule
- Update from Subcommittee on Assistance to Area 2 Fishermen
- Discuss development of Addendum IV for Area 3
- Technical Committee Report on V-notching Model, Annual Survey Trends and Vent Selectivity
- Most Restrictive Rule Subcommittee Report
- Update on Sea Grant Long Island Sound Lobster Research

8:30 AM - 5:00 PM Management & Science Committee (continued)

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Shark Management Board

- Updates on U.S./Canadian Information Session on Spiny Dogfish and Bottlenose Dolphin TRT recommendations
- Technical Committee Report on Stock Status and Reevaluation of Annual Specifications Analyses
- Discuss compliance with regional quotas

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council

- FY04 Biological & Bycatch Sampling Targets
- Update on FY04 Request for Proposals
- For-hire implementation update
- Update on state conduct of MRFSS intercept survey

6:30 PM - 8:00 PM Annual Awards of Excellence Reception

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ASMFC Spring 2003 Meeting Week Final Agenda (continued from page 7)

Wednesday, June 11, 2003

8:00 AM - Noon

Strategic Planning

8:30 AM - 5:00 PM

Law Enforcement Committee

- Presentations by South Carolina and National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Law Enforcement on Joint Enforcement Agreements
- EEZ law enforcement discussions/formulation of an enforcement issues paper
- Presentation on At-sea Transfers: Identifying the Issues for Law Enforcement

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Commissioner Workshop: Sociocultural Considerations in Fishery Management Decision-making -- presented by Dr. Michael Orbach, Duke University

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Review findings of Population Structure/Genetic Analysis Study
- Reports of the Shorebird Technical Committee and Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee Report (stock assessment terms of reference)

Thursday, June 12, 2003

8:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Strategic Planning (continued)

Noon - 1:30 PM

Executive Committee

1:30 PM - 4:30 PM

ISFMP Policy Board

- Review paper on Priorities for Addressing Delayed Implementation
- Consideration of Massachusetts appeal on the black sea bass commercial allocation
- Discussion of ASMFC Appeals Process White Paper

4:30 PM - 5:00 PM

Business Session

ASMFC Power Plant Assessment Nears Completion

In 2001, the Commission initiated a project to evaluate the cumulative impacts of power plant impingement and entrainment on Atlantic menhaden. The assessment will focus on power plants from New York (Hudson River) to South Carolina, and will evaluate population level impacts through linking of power plant data to the virtual population analysis (VPA) for Atlantic menhaden.

Power plant impingement and entrainment data from all power plants has recently been compiled by ASA Communications under a contract with the Commission. Data are relatively scarce for the period being analyzed (1981 - present), therefore, the Panel is conduct-

ing a detailed evaluation to determine methods for possible extrapolation to stations with missing data.

The Panel will be conducting the assessment using three life stages (1) hatching to cover a two day period, (2) a larval period from days 3 to 93 (continental shelf larval period), and (3) a juvenile period from days 94 to 365 (estuarine juvenile period). A workshop was held in October 2002 to develop natural mortality estimates for each life stage in order to link the power plant data to the VPA. These estimates are currently being finalized by the Panel.

The Panel developed the following schedule for completion of this assessment.

Finalized Data Compilation

- By May 15, ASA Communications will compile additional impingement and entrainment data for inclusion in the final data compilation report.

Correlation Analyses

- By May 15, ASA Communications will conduct correlation analyses to evaluate possible methods for extrapolation of data to stations with missing data.

Finalize Mortality Estimates

- ASMFC Power Plant Panel members and staff will estimate natural mor-

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Newly Appointed Stock Assessment Committee Provides Input to ASMFC Assessment Process

Last fall, the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board approved the appointment of a Stock Assessment Committee to assist it in setting priorities and timelines for conducting Commission stock assessments in relation to current workloads. Specific roles and responsibilities of the Committee follow.

- Coordinate scheduling of species-specific stock assessments.
- Provide input on the type of species peer review required for specific species stock assessments -- external, Northeast Stock Assessment Review Committee, or Southeast Data and Assessment Review (SEDAR) -- upon referral from a management board.
- Provide input and advice to species stock assessment subcommittees during benchmark assessments, when a model change and/or a major revision of the data is conducted.
- Provide input on assessment modeling theory for annual assessments upon written request by a species stock assessment subcommittee.
- Provide guidance to species stock assessment subcommittees, technical committees, and management

boards on broad technical issues, such as stock assessment methods, biological reference points, and sampling targets.

- Provide technical input and review to the Commission's multispecies activities.
- Coordinate the Commission's Stock Assessment Training Program, including Commissioner's stock assessment training seminars, technical training for state biologists, and advanced training for state and federal stock assessment scientists.
- Provide input and advice to other Commission and state/federal programs, including the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), and the Southeast and Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Programs (SEAMAP and NEAMAP).

At its first meeting in April, the Stock Assessment Committee reviewed the assessment scheduled for 2003 and 2004. The Committee recommended that Commission staff develop a matrix of all Commission-managed species to assist in developing a realistic timeline for all benchmark assessments. The matrix and evaluation would be based on the as-

essment model used, data quality and availability, and management requirements. The Committee also discussed possible modifications to the Commission's process for conducting assessments, mainly in reference to the SEDAR process, which uses a series of three formal workshops, including a data workshop, an assessment workshop, and a review workshop.

Upon request of the Tautog Management Board, the Stock Assessment Committee provided input into use of catch curves for assessing regional tautog stocks. The Committee also appointed a Multispecies Technical Review Subcommittee to provide a formal scientific review of the Commission's Multispecies Virtual Population Analysis (MSVPA). This Subcommittee will be comprised of multispecies assessment scientists, as well as stock assessment scientists for menhaden, striped bass, weakfish and bluefish. The Committee also provided input to assessment issues raised through the ACCSP and NEAMAP.

For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline, Director of Research & Statistics, at (202)289-6400 or lkline@asmfc.org.

ASMFC Power Plant Assessment Nears Completion (continued from page 8)

tality rates by life stage from previously published estimates.

- Commission staff will finalize the October 2002 Early Life History Mortality Workshop Report.
- ASMFC Power Plant Panel will address fecundity and spawning stock biomass issues in relation to mortality estimates.
- Mortality estimates to be finalized by May 15, fecundity issues to be addressed by end of June.

ASMFC Power Plant Panel Approval of Methods

- By the end of June, the ASMFC Power Plant Panel will review and approve data extrapolation methods and natural mortality rates.

Update of VPA

- By July, the ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee will conduct an updated Atlantic menhaden stock assessment using the Murphy VPA.

Assessment Working Meeting

- By September, the ASMFC Power Plant Panel will conduct the power plant assessment.
- External peer review to be completed in late 2003.
- Presentation to Commission by early 2004.

For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Kline, Director of Research & Statistics, at (202)289-6400 or lkline@asmfc.org.



Maryland Turns to Web-based Quota Monitoring

Former Commission FMP Coordinator to Assist the State with Implementation

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and its seafood industry will welcome a more efficient quota-monitoring tool for commercial harvest beginning this summer with a web-based logbook built by the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), a state/federal partnership for coastal fisheries data collection and data management.

Quota monitoring for striped bass, black sea bass, and horse-shoe crab has been time consuming and costly with mandatory telephone reporting and mandatory logbooks. To expedite the collection of data for quota-managed species, the Maryland DNR designated some fish houses as “check stations” where harvesters were required to have catches for each trip weighed.

With SAFIS, a web-based data collection system built by the ACCSP’s information systems staff, check stations will submit landings as they occur from their own computers, and can access their data as submitted to the DNR. DNR staff will maintain quality control over the data before using it internally or releasing it to the ACCSP’s coastwide data set.



Former Commission Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, Mike Lewis has joined the ACCSP staff as the Maryland Coordinator, and is working out of Annapolis assisting the DNR. He will be individually contacting proprietors of check stations to assist them in using SAFIS. “It’s exciting to be part of this dynamic Program,” says Lewis. “SAFIS is the most innovative data collection tool available to fishery managers and I look

forward to introducing Maryland’s fishing industry to it.”

The ACCSP staff began working with the State of Rhode Island to build a web-based catch and effort reporting system for commercial fisheries last year. This web-based sys-

tem impressed the Maryland DNR staff, leading them to request that the system be modified for their use. Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New York are also reviewing SAFIS options for their data collections efforts.

Maryland took the lead in data management in 2001, as the first state to routinely feed its commercial blue crab, oyster, and clam landings data to the ACCSP data management system.

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 D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For more information, please contact Abbey Compton, ACCSP Outreach Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or visit the ACCSP website at www.accsp.org.

ACCSP Upcoming Meetings

6/17 - 19:

Northeast Partners Coordination Meeting, Providence, Rhode Island.

6/24 & 25:

ACCSP Outreach Committee, Washington, D.C.

7/8 & 9:

ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee, location to be determined.

9/8 & 9:

ACCSP Advisory Committee, location to be determined.

9/23 - 25:

ACCSP Operations Committee, location to be determined.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Commissioners

Ernie Beckwith -- In April, with his retirement from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Ernie Beckwith stepped down as the state's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. For over ten years, Ernie was an active participant in the Commission's programs. He chaired species management boards for striped bass and American lobster, as well as representing the Commission on Long Island lobster disease issues. Well liked by Commissioners and staff alike, Ernie will be missed by all. Ernie, we wish you health and happiness in your well-earned retirement.

William "Pete" Jensen -- No stranger to the Commission, Pete returns for his third time as Maryland's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. For over two decades, Pete has played an important role in the development of Commission policies and programs. He has provided strong leadership in chairing species management boards for striped bass, summer flounder, scup and black sea bass, and has been an active participant in the Commission's legislative activities, advisory panel process and protected species program. We welcome Pete's continued involvement in the Commission.

Representative Mitch Needelman -- This past April, Florida State Representative, Mitch Needelman joined the Commission as the state's Legislative Appointee to the ASMFC. He replaces Senator John Laurent, who served on the Commission for the last two years. With over 30 years experience in marine resource conservation and management, Representative Needelman will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to Commission proceedings. Prior his election to the Florida's legislature, Representative Needelman worked for there decades with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as a specialist in law enforcement/media and

public relations, as well as serving on the Florida marine patrol. Today, as state legislator, he serves on the Committees for Natural Resources, and Public Lands and Water Resources. Welcome, aboard Representative Needelman!

Representative Curt Schroder -- The second Legislative Appointee to join the Commission in the past couple of months, Representative Curt Schroder comes to us from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Actively involved in politics since 1984, Representative Schroder is serving his fifth term in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, where he is a member of the House Appropriations Committee and the House Republican Policy Committee. He brings to the Commission not only a long and distinguished career in public service but also a love of the ocean and fishing. He is an active surf fisherman, who frequents Hatteras and Delaware beaches. He also enjoys ocean and bay fishing in boats and gulf stream fishing. Welcome aboard, Representative Schroder.

Eric Schwaab -- Since 1999, Eric Schwaab served as Maryland's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Eric brought to the table a strong conservation ethic and was a motivating force behind the Commission exploring multispecies/ecosystem assessments as additional tools in Atlantic coastal fisheries management activities. This past February, Eric Schwaab left the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to pursue other fishery management opportunities along the coast. Currently, he is under contract with the National Marine Fisheries Service in Silver Spring and is considering several long-term options. We wish you the very best, Eric!

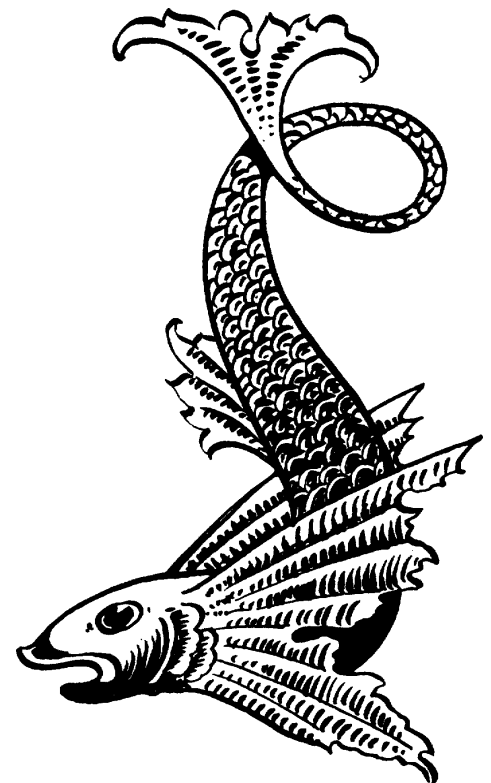
Eric Smith -- For over two decades, Eric Smith has been actively involved in the fisheries management activities of both the Commission and the New England

Fishery Management Council. Ernie's retirement from Connecticut DEP, Eric becomes the state's new Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. We are all looking forward to working with Eric.

Staff

Mike Lewis -- In April, Mike became ACCSP's newest employee as the Maryland Coordinator (see article opposite page). For the last two years, Mike has been responsible for coordinating the management activities of bluefish, northern shrimp, summer flounder, scup and black sea bass. We wish Mike the best of luck in his new position.

Leuвет Stevens -- For nearly nine years, Leuвет worked for the Commission in the position of Executive Secretary, at first for John H. Dunnigan and most recently for John V. O'Shea. In April, Leuвет left the Commission to further pursue her professional and personal interests, which include her own catering service for baked goods and her love of overseas travel. We wish Leuвет the very best and she will be missed.



Carrie D. Selberg Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

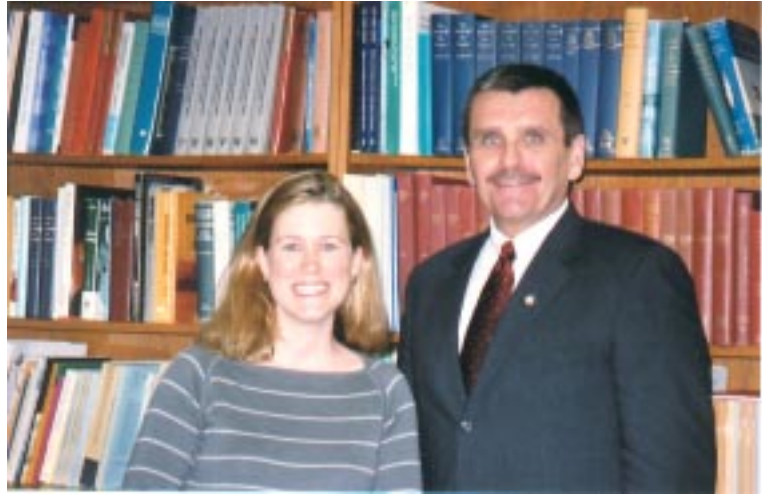
In recognition of her hard work and dedication to Atlantic coastal fishery conservation and management issues, Carrie D. Selberg became the second recipient of the Commission's Employee of the Quarter. Since her arrival at the Commission nearly three years ago, she has become a vital part of the interstate fisheries management program, initially responsible for the habitat program and then taking on the responsibilities of an FMP Coordinator for weakfish and horseshoe crab. Last year, Carrie volunteered to coordinate American lobster and has quickly come up to speed on one of the most complicated species under Commission management.

In selecting Carrie for the award, the Directors found that she exemplified the attributes for which the award was created -- teamwork, initiative, respon-

sibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results. These include her mentoring of new staff members; an ability to anticipate issues and develop strategies; maintaining a positive attitude despite difficult and demanding issues; and developing high quality products essential to the management of lobster, weakfish, horseshoe crab and habitat.

As an Employee of the Quarter, Carrie received a \$500 cash award, an engraved pewter

pencil cup, and a letter of appreciation for her personnel record. In addition, Carrie's name will be engraved on the Employee of Quarter plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Carrie!



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