



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Volume 17, Issue 4
May/June 2008

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 Seeks Input on Draft Strategic Plan for 2009 - 2013 Public Comment Accepted until June 15, 2008

The Commission is in the process of updating its next five-year Strategic Plan (2009 – 2013) and seeks the public's comment on the first draft of the Plan. The Draft Plan affirms the Commission's long-term Vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015," and proposes eight major goals and related strategies to pursue this Vision. The Strategic Plan will guide the Commission's activities over the next five years and will be implemented through Annual Action Plans.

Below are the eight goals proposed by the Plan:

1. Rebuild and restore depleted Atlantic coastal fisheries, and maintain and fairly allocate recovered fisheries through cooperative regulatory planning
2. Strengthen cooperative research, data collection capabilities, and the scientific basis for stock assessments and fisheries management actions
3. Improve stakeholder compliance with Commission fishery management plans
4. Work through partnerships to protect, restore, and enhance fish habitat and ecosystem health
5. Strengthen congressional, stakeholder, and public support for the Commission's Mission, Vision, and actions
6. Represent member states collective interests at regional and national levels
7. Strengthen human resource management and enhance learning and growth within the Commission
8. Provide efficient administration of the Commission's business affairs and ensure the Commission's financial stability

Copies of the Draft Plan can be obtained by contacting the Commission office at (202)289-6400 or via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org (under Breaking News). Public comment must be received by **June 15, 2008, 5:00 PM EST** and should be forwarded to Tina Berger, Public Affairs Specialist, at 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax) or comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Strategic Plan). The Commission is scheduled to take action on the final Plan in October at its Annual Meeting in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

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

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Upcoming Meetings

6/3 - 5:

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

6/4 - 5:

ASMFC Fishing Gear Technology Work Group, Radisson Plaza Lord Baltimore, 20 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

6/10 - 12:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Atlantic City Convention Center Hotel, Two Miss America Way, Atlantic City, New Jersey; 609-344-3535.

6/17 (7:00 PM):

American Shad PID Hearing, New Hampshire Fish and Game, Portsmouth Public Library, Hilton Garden Inn Meeting Room, 175 Parrott Avenue, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

6/17 (6:00 PM):

American Shad PID Hearing, Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife, URI Narragansett Bay Campus, Corless Auditorium, 215 South Ferry Road, Narragansett, Rhode Island.

6/23 (6:30 PM):

American Shad PID Hearing, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, Annisquam River Marine Fisheries Station, 30 Emerson Avenue, Gloucester, Massachusetts.

6/23 - 27:

ASMFC Technical Meeting Week, Radisson Hotel Manchester, 700 Elm Street, Manchester, New Hampshire (visit <http://www.asmfc.org/meetings.htm> to view the meeting schedule).

7/1 (6:00 PM):

American Shad PID Hearing, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, 2600 Washington Avenue, 4th floor, Newport News, Virginia.

7/8 - 10:

ASMFC River Herring Data Workshop, Hotel Providence, 311 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

7/14 - 17:

ASMFC Weakfish Data Workshop, Hotel Providence, 311 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

8/12 - 14:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Renaissance Philadelphia Hotel Airport, 500 Stevens Drive, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 610-521-5900.

A Tail of Four Fisheries

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Among Commission species, the recovery of Atlantic striped bass is another well-known and important exception. In 1984, the states moved to take decisive action in response to clear signs stocks were in trouble. At that time recreational and commercial landings were 1.3 and 2.9 million pounds respectively, levels that were not sustainable due to the depressed biomass. Multi-year moratoria were imposed on all harvesters, enabling a full recovery. In 2006 the recreational and commercial harvests were 29 and 6.6 million pounds respectively – levels scientists currently feel are sustainable.

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

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

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

Species Profile: Spiny Dogfish

Stock Rebuilding Hinges on Robust Spawning Stock

Introduction

The life history of spiny dogfish combined with a commercial fishery that targets mostly females has set the stage for one of the most contentious fisheries on the Atlantic coast. Commercial fishermen were encouraged to target the bountiful stocks of spiny dogfish in the 1980s and 1990s as stocks of other commercially valuable fish in the Northeast declined. Then in 1998, the National Marine Fisheries Service determined that spiny dogfish were overfished and implemented stringent harvest restrictions to allow the stock to rebound.

Fishermen continue to express skepticism regarding the appropriateness of the new management measures given frequent encounters with large schools of dogfish that often interfere with their fishing activities for other species. Federal and state water trawl surveys have encountered few pups and a declining number of large mature females. Scientists believe fishermen primarily encounter immature dogfish rather than large mature females, which are the necessary spawning stock biomass component for recovering the East Coast spiny dogfish population.

Life History

Spiny dogfish can be found on both sides of the North Atlantic and North Pacific Oceans, mostly in the temperate and subarctic areas. In the Northwest Atlantic, the stock ranges from Labrador to Florida, and are most abundant from Nova Scotia to Cape Hatteras. Spiny dogfish migrate north in the spring and summer and south in the fall and winter. In the winter and spring, they congregate primarily in Mid-Atlantic waters but also extend onto the shelf break of southern Georges Bank. In the summer, they are located farther north in Canadian waters and move inshore into bays and estuaries. By autumn, dogfish have migrated north with high concentrations in Southern New England, on Georges Bank, and in the Gulf of Maine. They remain in northern waters throughout the autumn until water temperatures begin to cool and then return to the Mid-Atlantic.

Immature spiny dogfish school by size until reaching sexual maturity when they school by both size and sex. Female dogfish reach sexual maturity at about 29.5 inches or twelve years, while males reach sexual maturity at 23.6 inches or six years. Mating occurs in the winter months and the pups are delivered on the offshore wintering grounds. Dogfish litters range from two to 15 pups. While carrying one litter, the female will begin developing eggs for the fertilization of her next litter. After an 18 to 24 month gestation period, the pups are released live and fully formed at about 14 inches.

Whales, dolphins, silver hake, white hake, weakfish, goosefish, Atlantic cod, bluefish, striped bass and other large predatory species feed on dogfish. Spiny dogfish are opportunistic feeders, feeding on several commercially important species such as Atlantic herring, Atlantic mackerel, *Loligo* and *Illex* squid, and to a lesser extent cod and haddock.



Spiny Dogfish *Squalus acanthias*

Uses: Fish & chips, hide for leather, pet food, liver oil for lighting and vitamin A, specimens for dissection, cancer research (squalamine)

Interesting Fact: Longest gestation period of any vertebrate (18 - 24 months), gives birth every two years with litters from 2 - 15 pups, but on average 6 pups.

Oldest Recorded: 100 years

Age/Length at Maturity:
Females = 12 years/ 29.5 - 31.5"
Males = 6 years/23.6"

Age/Length at Full Recruitment:
Females = 10 - 13 years/32.3 - 34.3"
Males = 15 - 18 years/29.1 - 30.7"

Stock Status: Not overfished and overfishing is not occurring

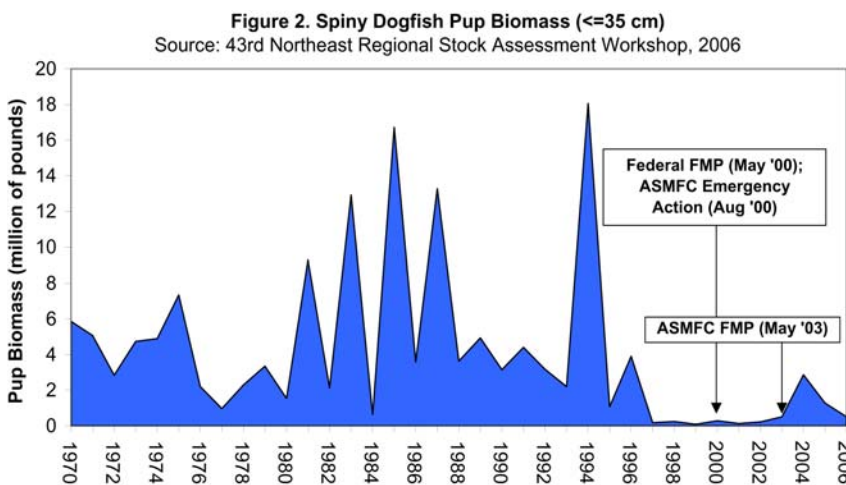
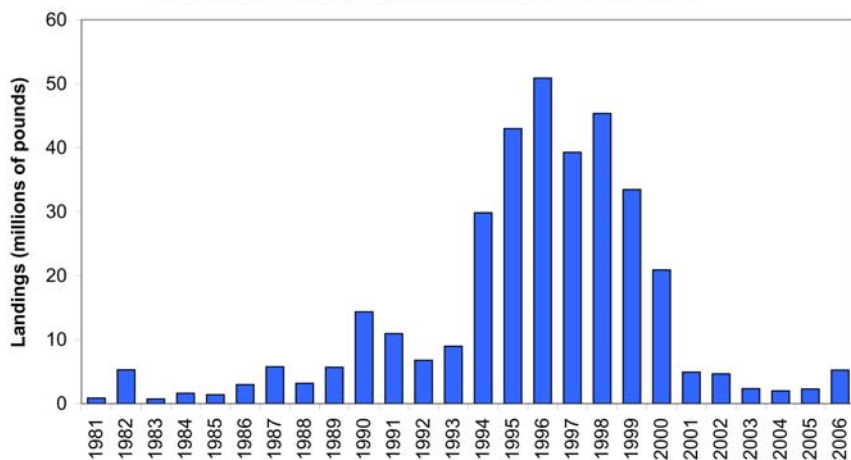
Commercial Fisheries

Commercial fishermen harvest spiny dogfish using longlines, trawls, and purse seines. Fishermen prefer to target female dogfish because the females grow larger than males and school together. The commercial fishery supplies the European food fish markets that use 'belly flaps' as fish and chips in England and as a popular beer garden snack called shillerlocken in Germany.

Foreign fleets caught the majority of dogfish in U.S. waters prior to the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 that regulated foreign fishing in U.S. waters for the first time. U.S. fishermen have had uncontested access ever since.

Landings were approximately 29.8 million pounds in 1994 gradually increasing to a peak of about 51 million pounds in 1996. Landings declined to an average of around 33.5 million pounds in the late 1990s. After federal and state regulations were implemented, landings significantly declined ranging between two and six million pounds since 2001 (see Figure 1). Commercial landings continue to mostly consist of female dogfish, with female landings comprising about 98 percent of the total commercial catch in 2003 and 2004.

Figure 1. Spiny Dogfish Commercial Landings, 1981 - 2006
Source: NMFS Fisheries Statistics and Economics Division, 2008



The current composition of the dogfish population has created difficulties for both fishermen and managers. Fishermen often encounter large numbers of dogfish. Unfortunately, these fish are generally not the large spawning females necessary to ensure stock rebuilding. The life history of the spiny dogfish requires a large female spawning stock for the population to be sustainable -- a large biomass of males or immature females does not equate to a sustainable stock. Furthermore, while pup biomass has shown a slight resurgence over the last couple of years, it still remains at very low levels (see Figure 2) and continues to be a significant concern for managers.

Stock Status

The 2006 benchmark stock assessment was peer-reviewed by the 43rd Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop/Stock Assessment Review Committee (SAW/SARC). The SAW/SARC approved the assessment methodology and adopted the updated the fishing mortality threshold ($F_{\text{Threshold}}$) of 0.39 (previously 0.11) and the rebuilding target (F_{rebuild}) of 0.11 (previously .03).

In 2007, the assessment was updated using the methodology that was approved by the 2006 peer review. The assessment update, which includes data from the 2007 spring bottom trawl survey, indicates that spiny dogfish biomass has continued to increase, with the 2006 spawning stock biomass (SSB) estimated at 312 million pounds (see Figure 3). Though the stock has not rebuilt to its SSB target of 368 million pounds, spiny dogfish are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The estimated fishing mortality rate in 2006 (0.11) was found to be well below the $F_{\text{Threshold}}$ of 0.39.

Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

Spiny dogfish are managed in federal and state waters using a fishing mortality rate to derive an annual quota. The annual quota is divided between two seasonal periods, with 57.9% of the quota harvested from May 1 to October 31 and 42.1% harvested from November 1 to April 30. Trip limits are used to control the catch rate and may be set differently for different

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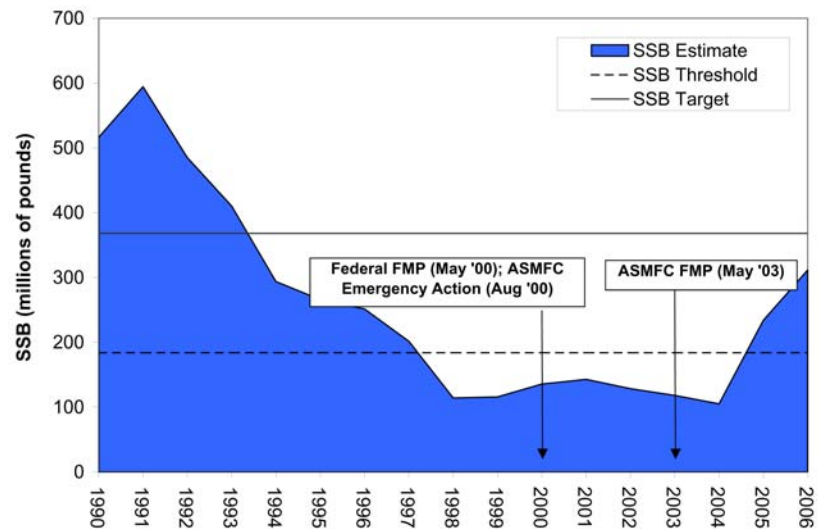
Species Profile: Spiny Dogfish (continued from page 5)

periods. Quota and trip limits can be set for up to five years with the flexibility to revisit them as necessary. The 2008/2009 quota for state waters is eight million pounds with trip limits of up to 3,000 pounds.

The National Marine Fisheries Service declared spiny dogfish overfished in 1998 and initiated the development of a joint fishery management plan (FMP) between the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils in 1999. Under the federal FMP, a quota is established annually based on maintaining a constant fishing mortality rate of 0.03 and allocated between two seasonal periods. With federal regulations in place (for the EEZ only) for the 2000 - 2001 fishing year, the Commission approved an emergency rule to close the state waters fishery when the federal quota was harvested while it began the development of an interstate FMP to complement the federal plan.

The Interstate FMP was approved in late 2003 and was implemented for the 2003-2004 fishing year. While the Commission's plan matches the federal plan in many ways, it differs in that it includes paybacks for quota overages, provides for a five percent rollover once the stock is rebuilt, and allows for up to 1,000 spiny dogfish to be harvested for biomedical supply. The interstate program also includes a regional allocation system that divides the quota between a

Figure 3. Spiny Dogfish Female Spawning Stock Biomass (>=80 cm)
Source: NEFSC Spiny Dogfish Stock Assessment Update, 2007



northern and southern region, with 58% allocated to the northern states (ME – CT) and 42% allocated to the southern states (NY-NC).

Since approval of the interstate FMP, the Commission's Spiny Dogfish Management Board has approved one addendum to the plan. Addendum I, adopted in February 2005, provides the Board the ability to set the annual quotas and trip limits for up to five years. Its goal is to streamline the annual

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ASMFC Comings & Goings

Commissioners:

Thomas O'Connell -- This April, Tom O'Connell joined the Commission as Maryland's Administrative Commissioner. Recently appointed as Fisheries Director for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR), Mr. O'Connell is no stranger to the Commission nor MD DNR. Mr. O'Connell served as the first Fishery Management Plan Coordinator for Horseshoe Crab, coordinating the development of the interstate plan for that species. A 15-year veteran with MD DNR, Mr. O'Connell has worked on striped bass monitoring and management, legislation, Atlantic coastal bays fisheries management issues, and oyster restoration, including an investigation into the introduction of nonnative Asian oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. Most recently, he served as the Assistant Director for MD DNR's Estuarine and Marine Fisheries Division. Mr. O'Connell holds a B.S. from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Mr. O'Connell brings to the Commission a passion for protecting marine resources, along with extensive scientific and management experience. He believes in managing natural resources sustainably with increasing opportunities for their enjoyment and appreciation by all. Welcome aboard Mr. O'Connell!



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ASMFC Shad Board Releases American Shad PID for Public Comment and Review

The Commission's Shad & River Herring Management Board has released the Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Shad and River Herring for public review and comment. As the first step in the development of an amendment, the PID presents a broad overview of the issues affecting American shad. It provides the public with the opportunity to tell the Commission about changes observed in the fishery; things that should or should not be done in terms of management, regulation, enforcement, research, development, and enhancement; and any other concerns about the resource or the fishery. It is anticipated that several of coastal states will be conducting public meetings on the PID; information on currently scheduled meetings can be found on page 2.

The PID and subsequent amendment are being developed in response to the findings of the 2007 benchmark stock assessment for



American shad, which indicates that American shad stocks are currently at all-time lows and do not appear to be recovering. Specific issues addressed in the PID are (1) incorporating the biological reference points and stock restoration goals identified in the 2007 benchmark stock assessment; (2) not increasing directed fisheries for American shad; and (3) restricting fisheries operating on stocks where total mortality is increasing and relative abundance is decreasing. The PID has been developed to address these issues by seeking public comment on the restoration of American shad fisheries and American shad fisheries management.

Following the initial phase of information-gathering and public comment, the Commission will evaluate potential management alternatives and develop a draft amendment for public review. Following that review and public comment, the Commission will specify the management measures to be included in the final amendment. A tentative schedule for the completion of the Amendment 3 is included in PID.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the PID, either through attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400 or via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM on July 25, 2008 and should be forwarded to Erika Robbins, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 289-6051 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: American Shad).

Shad Board Revises AP Membership

At its meeting in May 2008, the Commission's Shad and River Herring Management Board approved a new slate of stakeholders to its Advisory Panel. With over ten years having past since the establishment of the first panel and its involvement in the development of Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Shad and River Herring, the Board felt it was important to ensure panel membership reflected the current needs and interests of its shad and river herring stakeholders. The newly composed panel is comprised of a total of 25 stakeholders, representing the interests of commercial and recreational fishermen, seafood processors, bait dealers, fish passage experts, habitat conservationists, and environmental organizations. Over the next two years, the panel will be relied upon to provide guidance on the development of Amendments 2 (river herring) and 3 (American shad) to the FMP. The revised panel membership follows:

Richard Anderson, ME
Deborah Wilson, ME
Dennis L. Smith, ME
James E. Pollard, NH
George M. Loring, MA
Michael Blanchard, MA
David Ellenton, MA
Byron Young, NY
Richard Fasanello, NJ
Jeffrey Reichle, NJ
Michael J. Burton, PA
Richard A. St. Pierre, PA
William Richkus, MD
Patricia A. Jackson, VA
Ernest L. Bowden, VA
Willard W. Cole, Jr., NC
Louis Ray Brown, Jr., NC
Michelle Hollowell, NC
Spike Simmons, SC
Fulton Love, GA

Thomas Larry Crowder, Jr., PRFC
Kevin L. Gladhill, PRFC
Joe Fletcher, DC

Pam Lyons Gromen, National Coalition of Marine Conservation
Alison A. Bowden, The Nature Conservancy

ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence

Dr. David Pierce, Dr. Gary Nelson, and Sergeant Frances Ethier were presented the Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence at its Spring Meeting in Alexandria, Virginia for their contributions to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. They received awards for their efforts in the areas of management and policy, scientific; technical, and advisory; and the law enforcement, respectively.

"Every year a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence recognize outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries," said ASMFC Chair, George D. Lapointe, of Maine. "Today, we honor three outstanding individuals for their contributions to the management and conservation of Atlantic coast fisheries."

Management and Policy

Dr. David Pierce, a biologist and manager for more than thirty years with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, received the award for work in the area of management and policy. Dr. Pierce has played a prominent role in fisheries management at local, state, interstate, federal, and international levels. At the interstate and regional levels, he is renowned for his tireless devotion to effective management, with his contributions being a critical component in the success of the current management regimes for Atlantic herring, fluke, scup, black sea bass, dogfish, tautog, and others. He brings to the table a unique combination of skills, blending science, policy, and decades of fisheries management knowledge. Always insightful in his approach to resolving complex fisheries management problems, Dr. Pierce has never been afraid to think outside the box and provide novel approaches to difficult challenges. His ability to bridge the gap between stakeholders and the complex and often convoluted fishery management processes has made him an indispensable asset to his state and its fishing constituents.

Scientific, Technical, and Advisory

Dr. Gary Nelson's unfailing and innovative work in stock assessment and fish biology has been a credit not only to his state and the Commission but also to the field of fisheries biology in general. As the lead for Massachusetts Division of

Marine Fisheries analysis and statistical modeling group, as well as the Commission's Striped Bass Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Dr. Nelson has put forth an extraordinary effort to improve the ability to assess striped bass stocks coastwide. As Commission's Striped Bass Stock Assessment Subcommittee Chair, he oversaw the completion of the 2007 striped bass stock assessment, guiding it through the arduous Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop and Review Committee process with very positive reviews. He has implemented several new approaches that seek to solve many of the known problems with the current striped bass assessment.

Dr. Nelson also places great emphasis on sharing his knowledge and expertise with his colleagues along the coast and

with up and coming fisheries scientists. Last spring, he contributed to the Commission's Advanced Stock Assessment Training Series, and also now serves as Adjunct Faculty to the Department of Natural Resources Conservation at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He continues to teach a number of short courses on statistics, biological data analysis, and sampling design to a variety of audiences. Overall,

Dr. Nelson has made major contributions to the understanding of the biology and management of several Commission species through his research, writing, leadership, and teaching.

Law Enforcement

Sergeant Frances Ethier's interest in marine law enforcement began over twenty years ago, while working during her summers as a deckhand on a lobster boat to help pay for her college tuition. It was not long after that she decided to dedicate herself to the protection of marine resources through conservation law enforcement. In 1989, she completed her formal education with a Masters degree in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island and began to work for the State of Rhode Island.

During her time with the state, Sergeant Ethier has consistently demonstrated leadership in marine law enforcement. Well respected by her peers both at home and along the coast,



From Left: ASMFC Executive Director, John V. O'Shea, AAE Recipients, Dr. Gary Nelson, Dr. David Pierce, Sergeant Ethier, and ASMFC Chair, George Lapointe (ME)

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Science Highlight: NEAMAP Completes 1st Full Scale Nearshore Trawl Survey in Fall 2007

Between September 25 and October 20, 2007 a crew from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, working aboard the *FV Darana R* owned and operated by Captain Jimmy Ruhle completed the first full cruise of the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) Mid-Atlantic Trawl Survey. Successful tows were conducted at 150 locations (the target number of tows) between Gay Head, MA and Cape Hatteras, NC.

This begins the time series of a new fisheries-independent bottom trawl survey operating in the near coastal waters of the Mid-Atlantic region. The main objective of the survey is the estimation of biomass, length and age structures, various other assessment related parameters, and diet compositions of select finfish inhabiting the area. The survey is an element of NEAMAP and is designed to sample fish and invertebrates from coastal waters bounded by the 20 ft. and 60 ft. depth contours between Montauk, NY and Cape Hatteras, NC and waters between the 60 ft. and 120 ft. depth contours in Rhode Island Sound (RIS) and Block Island Sound (BIS) using a bottom trawl. The development of this NEAMAP survey was in response to the lack of adequate survey coverage and coordination in coastal waters of the Middle Atlantic Bight. The expansion of the survey to RIS and BIS from the original range of the pilot survey was supported by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), as the *FV Darana R* has the capability to sample inshore waters in this area that cannot be accessed with the larger draft of the new sampling platform (*R/V Bigelow*) of the NEFSC's long-term groundfish survey.

In the fall 2007 survey, approximately 119,050 pounds of fish and crustaceans, representing 1.07 million individual specimens, were captured. About 130 species were represented. On average, each tow contained 772 pounds (range 16.3 – 15,212 pounds) and 7,100 fish (range 74 – 151,600) representing about 20 species. Overall, 73,600 specimens were measured, totaling 7.1 miles of fish! Lab processing is proceeding on the 5,150 otoliths and 3,905 stomach samples, which were collected (2,433 otoliths and 1,930 stomachs have been fully processed as of the date of this report). Catch of scup was the highest number caught of a given species (276,234). Other priority species with catches in at least the tens of thousands

were butterfish, weakfish, Atlantic croaker, and spot. Hundreds of thousands of bay anchovy, striped anchovy and *Loligo* squid were also caught.

As was the case during the fall 2006 pilot survey, the fishing gear performed with extraordinary consistency. Prior to the cruise, the trawl doors had been modified to accept door spread and symmetry sensors and some adjustments were made so that the target fishing dimensions were again achieved. No gear hangs occurred and a very small number of minor mesh tears were experienced.

Additionally, VIMS staff members who lead this survey, Chris Bonzek, Jim Gartland, and David “Wolf” Lange,



Photo courtesy of Chris Bonzek, Virginia Institute of Marine Science

made arrangements for NEAMAP outreach efforts at stops in Montauk, NY and Cape May, NJ (as well as the vessel's home port of Hampton, VA). During these stops, about 20 different individuals from both the commercial and recreational fishing communities viewed typical catches and observed the scientific workup process. These interactions were well received and more of these important opportunities are expected in 2008 and 2009. The first spring NEAMAP survey will take place in mid-April 2008.

For more information on this survey and NEAMAP, please go to www.neamap.net or contact Melissa Paine, NEAMAP Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or mpaine@asmfc.org.



***Our People:* Rita Campbell, ACCSP Industry Advisor**

A self-proclaimed “landlubber from Kentucky,” Rita Campbell was first exposed to the world of fisheries after she married and moved to Maryland. Her husband, who has been around water since he was a teen, is a manager for Southern Seafood Connection, a southern Maryland seafood company that specializes in crabs and high quality fish. After coming to Maryland, Ms. Campbell began inputting fisheries landings data for the company.

Joining ACCSP

Ms. Campbell’s involvement with the Atlantic Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) began in 2005, when Maryland implemented the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), a relatively low-cost, real-time web-based data entry system for commercial landings on the Atlantic coast. As a real-world end-user of the application, ACCSP’s SAFIS software developers asked Ms. Campbell to join the SAFIS development committee. She believes her input was especially valued because it was specific and real. Today, Ms. Campbell is a commercial industry advisor to ACCSP, as well as a member of ACCSP committees that drive the program’s outreach efforts and standards development for commercial marine fisheries information.

Thoughts on SAFIS

As an industry user, Ms. Campbell still sees ways the tool could work better for her. For example, it would be a “huge help” to be able to use SAFIS on more than one computer. Because the application requires internet and a one-time installation of specific software before using it, she finds it difficult to switch computers to work off of. Nevertheless, Ms. Campbell feels that SAFIS has come a long way since it was first launched. In its early stages, SAFIS used to be “down a lot.” Today, “it works when users need it to work,” and “it has been fine-tuned and the program asks for the information that is needed.” She also feels it is easier to use in general.

Building Partnerships and Looking Forward

Beyond needing SAFIS for data entry at Southern Connection Seafood, Ms. Campbell sees ACCSP as an opportunity to improve relationships between the commercial and recreational industries. ACCSP’s Data Warehouse is built to house both commercial and recreational data. As the Data Warehouse is populated with data, the statistics from both industries will be available in the same way, for everyone to see the information similarly. Ms. Campbell is optimistic that a lot of the distrust that exists between the two groups will dissipate as that transparency improves.

Looking forward, Ms. Campbell hopes the data available through ACCSP will continue to make improvements in timeliness, because they ultimately affect fishing quotas and bans. As the data coming in is more up-to-date, she will feel better about the management decisions being made with that data.

ASMFC Comings & Goings (continued from page 6)

Staff:

Emily Greene --This April, Emily Greene joined the Commission staff as Coordinator for the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP). The Partnership, established in 2007 under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, is a coastwide collaborative effort involving state and federal agencies, regional and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and private citizens to protect and restore fish habitat along the Atlantic seaboard. Emily will be coordinating the development of an assessment of existing information on Atlantic coastal fish habitat and a habitat-species matrix. Both will be used by the Partnership as it develops a comprehensive strategy to facilitate the implementation of projects designed to protect, restore, or enhance key coastal fish habitats from Maine to Florida. Emily holds a Master of Environmental Management from the Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences at Duke University and a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Environmental Science from the College of William and Mary. Welcome aboard, Emily!



Dr. Genny Nesslage Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

Since joining the Commission staff more than a year ago as its Senior Stock Assessment Specialist, Dr. Genny Nesslage has quickly established herself as the go-to person for all things related to fish population dynamics and stock assessments. Her involvement in various stock assessments and database development has provided important contributions to the Commission's Vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." In recognition of her accomplishments, Genny was named Employee of the Quarter for the second quarter of 2008. The award is intended to recognize contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.



Over the last 16 months, Genny has lent her expertise to several important Commission projects. She has worked with the Commission's American Lobster Technical Committee and ACCSP staff to update and revise the American lobster database, which will be used in the upcoming benchmark stock assessment for that species. She has led the Commission's Interstate Tagging Committee in revising a coastwide tagging certification process that provides standards for conducting angler-based tagging programs. Genny has also worked closely with the Commission's Multispecies Technical Committee to update the multispecies virtual population assessment, an assessment methodology that looks at the interrelationships of several key predator/prey species, such as striped bass, weakfish, bluefish, and Atlantic menhaden. Last but not least, Genny conducted two very successful stock assessment training workshops -- one for Commissioners and the other for Commission and Council staff, skillfully presenting highly complex technical material in an understandable, useful, and memorable format.

Genny's easygoing personality, strong intellect, and unwavering work ethic has earned her the respect of state and federal scientists, Commissioners, and staff, and has been an inspiration to everyone she has worked with. She has a Ph.D. in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University, an M.S. in Wildlife Biology and Management from SUNY-ESF at Syracuse, and a B.S. in Biology from Cornell University. As an Employee of the Quarter, she received a \$500 cash award, a small gift, and a letter of appreciation to be placed in her personnel record. In addition, her name is on the Employee of the Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Genny!

ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Board Approves Draft Addendum V for Public Comment

The Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board has approved Draft Addendum V for public comment and review. Addendum IV is due to expire on September 30, 2008. Draft Addendum V was initiated to continue horseshoe crab management in Delaware Bay.

Based on the most recent surveys of horseshoe crabs, it appears that management measures in Addendum IV and previous management plans are resulting in increased horseshoe crab abundance. A horseshoe crab trawl survey administered by Virginia Tech shows increases over the past four to five years of male and female horseshoe crabs in

ocean waters near the Delaware Bay. A survey of spawning crabs on the beaches of Delaware Bay indicate stable female spawning activity and increased male spawning over the past nine years.

However, horseshoe crab management is a multispecies issue. Despite the positive signs in population growth of horseshoe crabs around Delaware Bay, red knots, one of many shorebird species that feed on horseshoe crab eggs, show no sign of recovery. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Shorebird Technical Committee will again examine shorebird survey data from this spring to determine the latest trends.

The Draft Addendum will contain all the current provisions of Addendum IV as options. These include a delayed, male-only harvest in New Jersey and Delaware; a delayed harvest in Maryland; and a prohibition on landing of horseshoe crabs in Virginia from federal waters from January 1 through June 7. Further, the Draft Addendum proposes that no more than forty percent of Virginia's quota may be landed from ocean waters and those landings must be comprised of a minimum male to female ratio of 2:1. Copies of the Draft Addendum will be made available by June 13, 2008 via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org.

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Annual Awards of Excellence (continued from page 8)

she is often sought out for her interpretation of current laws and fishery trends, as well as her knowledge of the fishing community. She has also shown firm commitment to working closely with other jurisdictions.

Recently, Sergeant Ethier successfully spearheaded an investigation into monkfish and spiny dogfish violations in cooperation with NOAA special agents and the Connecticut Environmental Conservation Police. This operation led to the seizure of several gillnets and lobster traps, and the issuance of three separate Notices of Violation and Assessment in the amount of \$1.2 million. Sergeant Ethier is a true professional, recognized coastwide by colleagues and fishermen alike as an honest, dedicated, and fair officer.

The Commission established the Annual Awards of Excellence in 1998 to recognize the important contributions of individuals to the success of the organization. The awards are given in the areas of law enforcement, legislation, management & policy, and scientific, technical & advisory contributions. Each year, the Commission honors the very best contributions in those areas.

Species Profile: Spiny Dogfish (continued from page 6)

specification process for spiny dogfish, thereby, reducing administrative costs while also providing fishermen with the ability to set long-term business plans and goals for their fishery operations.

In May 2008, the Board initiated the development of two separate addenda (II & III). Draft Addendum II will propose eliminating the current seasonal allocation system while maintaining the Commission's regional allocation system. To ensure that the regions stay within their allocation of the annual quota and maintain the conservation goals of the plan, the addendum will propose that regions be required to payback quota overages in the following year. It is the Board's intent that this addendum will ensure southern states receive 42% of the annual quota while Addendum III is developed.

Draft Addendum III will propose options for the establishment of a state-by-state allocation system, including a provision that would allow quota transfers between states. The Board has requested that the states submit issues and ideas for inclusion in the draft addendum. Both addenda are being developed for consideration by the Board during the Commission's the 2008 Summer Meeting this August.