

ASMFC

# Fisheries *focus*

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

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

## ASMFC Seeks Input on Draft Strategic Plan *Public Comment Accepted until November 19, 2003*

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has released the final draft of its Strategic Plan for 2004 – 2008 for public review and comment. The Plan affirms the Commission's long-term Vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015," and establishes nine major goals and related strategies to pursue this Vision. These goals and strategies will guide the Commission's activities over the next five years and will be implemented through Annual Action Plans.

While much of the Plan is similar to the first ASMFC Strategic Plan (1998 – 2003), emphasis has been added on improving education, outreach and stakeholder input, as well as supporting the needs of the states. Below are the nine goals proposed by the Plan.

1. Rebuild and restore depleted Atlantic coastal fisheries, and maintain and fairly allocate recovered fisheries through cooperative regulatory planning.

### Inside This Issue

Upcoming Meetings Page 2

Species Profile: Bluefish Page 4

ASMFC 62nd Annual Meeting Preliminary Agenda Page 6

Fisheries Habitat in Urban Environments Page 7

American Lobster Draft Addendum IV Public Hearings Scheduled Page 8

Scientists & Fishermen Join Forces to Improve Understanding of Black Sea Bass Resource Page 9

ACCSP: North Carolina DMF Provides New Solutions to Metadata Needs Page 10

ASMFC Employee of the Quarter Named Page 11

Upcoming Conference: Managing Our Nations Fisheries Page 11

ASMFC Comings & Goings Page 12

2. Strengthen cooperative research capabilities and improve the scientific basis for stock assessments and fisheries management actions.
3. Expand and fully utilize cooperative fisheries statistics programs.
4. Improve stakeholder compliance with Commission fishery management plans.
5. Enhance and cooperatively protect fisheries habitat.
6. Strengthen congressional, stakeholder, and public support for the Commission's Mission, Vision, and achievements.
7. Respond efficiently and effectively to member states needs.
8. Develop and advance strategies to enhance learning and growth within the Commission.
9. 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](http://www.asmfc.org). Public comment will be accepted until November 19, 2003 and should be forwarded to Geoffrey White, Fisheries Research Specialist, at 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax) or [comments@asmfc.org](mailto:comments@asmfc.org). The Commission will approve the final Plan in December at its Annual Meeting in New York City.

**T**he 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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Dr. Lisa L. Kline, Director of Research & Statistics  
Laura C. Leach, Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor  
tberger@asmfc.org

(202)289-6400 Phone • (202)289-6051 Fax  
www.asmfc.org

## Upcoming Meetings

**10/31 (10 AM - 5 PM):**

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel, Urban Forestry Center, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

**11/4-6**

New England Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn, Peabody, Massachusetts.

**11/6 & 7:**

ASMFC Blue Crab Workshop, Sheraton International Hotel BWI, 7032 Elm Road, Baltimore, Maryland (see page 12 for more details).

**11/12 (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM):**

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section, New Hampshire Urban Forestry Center, 45 Elwyn Street, Portsmouth, New Hampshire; 603/431-6774.

**11/13 -15:**

Managing Our Nation's Fisheries: Past, Present and Future, Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, DC; <http://www.managingfisheries.org/index.htm> (see page 11 for more details).

**11/17 & 18:**

ASMFC Power Plant Panel, Holiday Inn Brownstone, 1707 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, North Carolina.

**11/19:**

ASMFC American Lobster Advisory Panel, Comfort Inn Airport, 1940 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island; 401/732-0470.

**12/2 - 4:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Suites, 422 Delaware Avenue, Wilmington, Delaware.

**12/8- 12:**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Blockade Runner, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina.

**12/15 - 18:**

ASMFC 62nd Annual Meeting, Roosevelt Hotel, Madison Avenue at 45th, New York, New York (see pages 6 & 7 for preliminary agenda).

**2004**

**1/27 - 29:**

New England Fishery Management Council, Hotel Viking, Newport, Rhode Island.

"Do what is best for the fish stocks and be fair to each other." When I first read these words I was struck with how succinctly they described what the Commission is all about. Of course, we have the Mission and Vision statements in our Strategic Plan, and we have the original statement of purpose from the Compact approved in 1942. But in today's world of information overload and communication by sound bite, I would be hard-pressed to come up with a better quote.

First, for the folks who might be getting nervous, these words were offered in the context of sustainable fisheries management and included the concept of resource use. So, with that understanding, the strategy is to put the resource first. The obvious logic here is that without a resource there are no benefits to any stakeholders, be they recreational anglers, commercial harvesters, fish processors, seafood consumers or conservationists.

Doing what is best for the fish recognizes an inherent need to put constraints on stakeholders. This is almost never easy and is frequently controversial. The costs of such decisions are often reflected in the resultant challenges and criticisms to regulations by those most affected. Few people like cutbacks and some would argue that a management system that leaves stakeholders free to do as they please would be best. Unfortunately, such thinking ignores historical reality; when provided unlimited access to public resources, our collective, sad response has been to destroy those resources.

Doing what is best also implies a commitment to science. It suggests using a comprehensive and objective approach in trying to understand the size and range of fish populations. Sounds obvious and logical, but it is often difficult to do, especially when those results don't comport with our own (and sometimes limited) perceptions of fish abundance. This skepticism with the science frequently increases when advice indicates a need to reduce catch rates. Skepticism is fine, and indeed healthy. But our collective response should be to look out for the fish, while we work to improve the science.

Putting the fish first recognizes a responsibility to accept a stewardship role in our actions, even if not specifically required by the regulations. Editorials in sport fishing magazines extolling the virtues of circle hooks to reduce hook and release mortality reflect this ethic. Efforts by the commercial sector to develop and adopt gear modifications to reduce the impacts on non-targeted and juvenile fish also reflect a stewardship role. Hopefully, everyone can support the critical need to

improve data collection on effort, landings, and discards for both sectors. With all of these actions there is an implicit assumption and agreement that in doing what is best for the fish we potentially maximize stakeholder benefits.

Being fair to each other reflects the fundamental need to work together because the fish do not recognize state boundaries. Protecting foraging fish in some states is just as important as protecting spawning and nursery areas in other states. This means individual states can't harvest all the fish their fishermen are capable of taking. It suggests a process that seeks an outcome fair to all rather than best for one. Something that is easy to say, but much harder to define.

Being fair suggests a willingness to consider a range of alternatives and arguments. Think about the arguments you have heard. Historical landings best reflect a state or sector's dependence on the resource. Or, historical non-landings demonstrate sacrifices made to promote conservation. Some will seek credit for the amount of spawning area contained within a state, while others will point to the amount of time certain species spend in state waters. Sometimes seasonal quotas are promoted because they give some the advantage when fish are available to certain sectors or gear types. And then there are the arguments about size limits. Reduce the minimum size so more fish can be harvested in our waters; we never see the big fish. Increase the minimum size, so more fish make it to our state. Obviously, the list goes on, and with it the underlying challenge of deciding what is fair.

Fairness is probably easier to recognize than it is to define. I like the example of three partners trying to divide up the various and unequal tangible assets of their dissolved business. The partners draw straws to elect the person to divide the assets into three packages; that person also picks last. The other two draw to decide who picks first and second. In the absence of a conspiracy it would seem like the results would come pretty close to being fair. The rules drive at least one of the partners to treat the others as she would like to be treated. That seems like a pretty good description of fairness to me.

"Do what is right for the fish and be fair to each other." These aren't my words, but I wish they were. They came from one of our Commissioner proxies. I like these words and intend to use them again. I hope they reflect a value we can all agree with.



# Species Profile: Bluefish

## Joint Plan Seeks to Restore Premier Fighting Fish

### Introduction

Bluefish are one of the most sought after recreational species along the Atlantic coast. Its management reflects this demand by allocating over 80 percent of the annual catch to the recreational fishery. Bluefish are commonly known as choppers, tailors, elfs, and blues. In the late 1970s, potential markets for bluefish in Africa and South America stimulated tuna purse seiners to consider harvesting blues, thus prompting concerned anglers to petition the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to develop a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Bluefish.

Today, bluefish are jointly managed by the Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission). The Bluefish FMP, developed in the late 80s, is the first management plan to be jointly developed by an interstate commission and Regional Fishery Management Council. As a result of harvest restrictions imposed under Amendment 1, bluefish are rebuilding, with stock biomass in 2003 projected to exceed the biomass threshold of 118.5 million pounds for the first time since 1988.

### Life History

Bluefish are a migratory pelagic species found throughout the world in most temperate coastal regions, except the eastern Pacific. They follow an annual migration pattern keyed to the seasonal warming and cooling of coastal waters. Along the Atlantic coast, bluefish move northward in the spring and summer, southward in the fall and winter. During the summer, concentrations are found in waters from Maine to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina and during the winter they tend to be offshore between Cape Hatteras and Florida. Scientists believe that younger blues follow different migratory routes than mature fish. Bluefish tend to school by size. These schools cover tens of square miles of ocean, equivalent to around 10,000 football fields.

Bluefish feed voraciously on their prey, slaughtering almost anything they can catch and swallow. Over 70 species of fish have been found in their stomach contents including butterfish, mackerel, and lobster. Razor sharp teeth and a shearing jaw movement allow bluefish to ingest large parts of their prey, therefore increasing the maximum size of the prey the blue catches. Bluefish live for up to 12 years and may exceed lengths of 39 inches and weights of 31 pounds.

Bluefish become sexually mature at age two. There are two spawning areas – one in the South Atlantic region throughout the spring, summer and fall, and the other in the Mid-Atlantic during the summer. Fish from the two spawning areas mix extensively on the fishing grounds and probably comprise a single genetic stock.

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Bluefish are caught along the entire Atlantic coast. Recreational anglers from New England to the upper part of the South Atlantic pursue more blues than any other fish, no doubt due to the aggressive feeding habits and the spirited fight of the blue. According to the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey, between 1981 to 1993, recreational catch averaged 60 million pounds an-



Photo courtesy of NOAA/Dept. of Commerce

*Pomatomus saltatrix*

**Family:** Pomatomidae

**Common Names:**  
bluefish, snapper,  
baby blue, choppers,  
elfs, tailors

**Fish fact:** voracious  
foragers, traveling in  
large schools of  
similar size fish in  
pursuit of baitfish;  
cannibalistic

**Largest Recorded:** 31  
pounds, 12 ounces

**Oldest Recorded:** 12  
years

**Age at Maturity:** 2  
years (14.9 - 20.1")

**Age at Recruitment:**  
1 yr (9.3 - 11.1")

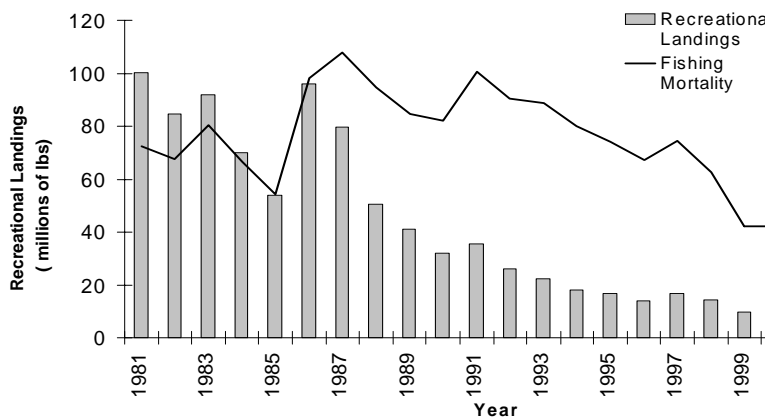
**Stock Status:**  
overfished, overfishing  
is not occurring

**FMP Rebuilding  
Goals:**  
Biomass threshold (1/2  
SSB max) = 118.5  
million lbs  
Biomass target = 237  
million lbs



**Figure 1. Bluefish Recreational Landings, with Estimated Fishing Mortality Rates, 1974 - 2002**

Source: Lee 2003 (ASMFC)



nually. Catch has declined from 93 million pounds in 1986 to 11 million in 2002. In 2002 recreational fishermen caught 15.2 million blues. Commercially, bluefish are harvested using a variety of fishing gear including trawls, gillnets, haul seines, and pound nets. The commercial fishery harvested over 9.5 million pounds in 2002, down from a high of 15.8 million pounds in 1981.

**Stock Status**

The most recent stock status information (Lazar 2002) indicates that bluefish are overfished but overfishing is not occurring. Fishing mortality peaked in 1987 at 0.718 (46% exploitation rate) and has steadily declined to 0.184 (15% exploitation rate) in 2002 (Figure 1). Stock biomass declined from a historic high of 271 million pounds in 1979 to 50 million pounds in 1995, a decrease of 82%. Total stock biomass has since risen to 99 million pounds in 2002, or 83% of the biomass threshold relative to Amendment 1's overfishing definition (Figure 2). It is projected that by 2003 biomass will exceed the plan's biomass threshold of 118.5 million pounds. A peer reviewed stock assessment will be conducted in 2004. This assessment will incorporate new data and explore alternative assessment models.

According to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's autumn inshore bottom survey (Cape Cod to Cape Hatteras), recruitment varied from 75 to 87 million fish during 1982-1984, but has declined substantially since then. Recently, the strongest year classes recruiting to the stock occurred in 1988 and 1989. Recruitment since 1989 has been below average, with the lowest levels occurring in 1993 and 1994.

**Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations**

The Commission and Council approved Amendment 1 to the FMP in 1998. The Amendment allocates the

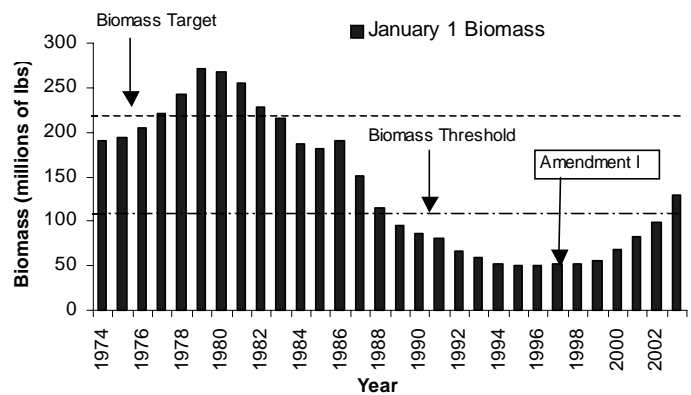
resource to recreational and commercial fisheries at 83 percent and 17 percent, respectively. However, the commercial quota can be increased to 10.5 million pounds if the recreational fishery is not anticipated to land its entire allocation for the upcoming year. The commercial fishery is controlled through state-by-state quotas based on historic landings from 1981-1989, while the recreational fishery is managed through a 15 fish bag limit.

Amendment 1 also established a rebuilding schedule to achieve a biomass that will support the maximum sustainable yield by year 2008, while providing the Commission and Council

with the flexibility to modify the management program based on changes in the fishery or the resource. The rebuilding schedule sets a target F-value. The F or fishing mortality is the measurement of the rate of removal of fish from a population by fishing. By setting an F-value it tells fisheries managers how much fish fishermen can harvest. For the first two years of the bluefish rebuilding schedule (1999-2000), F was set at 0.51, reduced to 0.41 in years 3-5 (2001-2003) and finally to 0.31 in years 6-9 (2004-2007). During the rebuilding period, the target F for the next fishing year will be set at the level specified in the schedule or the level estimated for the most recent year, whichever is lower. For example, the 2002 fishing mortality rate was estimated to be 0.184. Since this value is lower than the scheduled target of 0.41, it becomes the new target for the 2003 fishery. Over the past few years, this strategy has allowed for accelerated rebuilding of the resource. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, FMP Coordinator, at <tkerns@asmfc.org>.

**Figure 2. Estimated Bluefish Biomass, 1974 - 2003**

Source: Lee 2003 (ASMFC)



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission 62nd Annual Meeting December 15 - 18, 2003

Roosevelt Hotel  
45 East 45th Street  
New York, NY  
(888)833-3969

## Preliminary Schedule

**(Please note:** The meeting schedule has been modified for December 16 and December 19, 2003. The Horseshoe Crab Management Board will be meeting at 1:00 PM on December 16 and the ACCSP Coordinating Council has been moved from the morning of the 19th to 2:30 PM - 5:30 PM on December 16. There will be no meetings on December 19.)

### Sunday, December 14, 2003

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM Registration

### Monday, December 15, 2003

7:30 AM - 4:00 PM Registration

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Atlantic Herring Section

8:00 AM - Noon Habitat Committee

9:00 AM - 1:00 PM Spouse Tour

10:00 AM - Noon Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board

Noon - 1:00 PM Legislative Committee

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM Update on Federal Fisheries Issues  
-- Dr. William Hogarth

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Special Session: Fisheries Habitat in Urban Environments

6:00 PM - 7:30 PM Welcome Reception

### Tuesday, December 16, 2003

7:30 AM - 1:00 PM Registration

7:30 AM - 9:30 AM Action Plan Workshop

8:30 AM - 12:30 PM Law Enforcement Committee

9:30 AM - 1:30 PM Management & Science Committee

9:30 AM - Noon Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM Horseshoe Crab Management Board

2:30 PM - 5:30 PM ACCSP Coordinating Council

6:30 PM Annual Dinner



*continued on page 7*

### Wednesday, December 17, 2003

7:30 AM - 12:30 PM	American Lobster Management Board
8:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Law Enforcement Committee
8:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Management & Science Committee
12:45 PM - 2:00 PM	Captain David H. Hart Award Luncheon
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM	Atlantic Menhaden Management Board
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Shark Management Board

### Thursday, December 18, 2003

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Winter Flounder Management Board
8:00 AM - 10:00 AM	South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board
10:30 AM - Noon	Executive Committee
Noon - 5:30 PM	ISFMP Policy Board
5:30 PM - 6:00 PM	Business Session

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## Special Session on Fisheries Habitat in Urban Environments Planned for December

At the Commission's 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting in New York City, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and its estuary partners will conduct a session on the benefits of fisheries habitat in urban environments. Presentations will outline the importance of urban habitats to fisheries; describe significant threats to these environments, and what is being done to eliminate and mitigate these threats; and discuss how to achieve goals through partnerships with other agencies. Most importantly, the session will show that urban habitats are alive and in need of restoration and protection. The session will be held on December 15 from 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM and all are welcome to attend.

New York Harbor abounds with diverse natural resources, yet it is the heart of the most densely populated region of the nation. It provides a multitude of recreational opportunities including fishing, boating, and swimming to over 20 million residents, while also supporting a world class port for passen-

gers and cargo. The Hudson River estuary, which intersects with New York Harbor, is one of New York's outstanding natural resources, world-renowned for its history and scenery and a vital part of the Atlantic coast ecosystem. In the New York City area, NYSDEC is involved in three estuary planning and implementation efforts: the EPA-sponsored Harbor Estuary Program, the state-sponsored Hudson River Estuary Management Program and the NOAA-sponsored Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

Specific presentations during this session include:

- "Evolution of Fisheries Habitat in New York Harbor" by James Gilmore, NYSDEC
- "Harbor Estuary Program: Meeting Environmental Goals through Partnerships" by Robert Nyman, U.S. EPA

- "Tidal Wetland Loss in Jamaica Bay and the Marine District" by Fred Mushacke, NYSDEC
- "Habitat Restoration and Protection Efforts in New York Harbor" by Steve Zahn, NYSDEC
- "Hudson River Estuary Management Program and Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve: Fishery Habitat Initiatives" by Frances Dunwell and Betsy Blair, NYSDEC

For more information, please contact Karen Chytalo at (631)444-0430.



*Photo courtesy of James Gilmore, NYSDEC*

# States Schedule Public Hearings on Draft Addendum IV to the American Lobster FMP

Atlantic coastal states from Maine through New Jersey have scheduled the dates and times of their hearings to gather public comment on Draft Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for American Lobster. Following are the details of the scheduled hearings:

## Maine Department of Marine Resources

*October 28, 2003; 7:00 PM*

Rockland City Hall  
Council Chambers  
270 Pleasant Street  
Rockland, Maine  
Contact: Terry Stockwell at (207)633-9556

*October 30, 2003; 7:00 PM*

Ellsworth City Hall  
Council Chambers  
City Hall Plaza  
Ellsworth, Maine  
Contact: Terry Stockwell at (207)633-9556

*November 4, 2003; 7:00 PM*

Eastland Park Hotel  
157 High Street  
Portland, Maine  
Contact: Terry Stockwell at (207)633-9556

*November 5, 2003; 7:00 PM*

University of Maine at Machias  
Room 28, Torrey Hall  
9 O'Brien Avenue  
Machias, Maine  
Contact: Terry Stockwell at (207)633-9556

## New Hampshire Fish and Game

*October 27, 2003; 7:00 PM*

Urban Forestry Center  
45 Elwyn Road  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire  
Contact: John Nelson at (603)868-1096

## Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

*November 5, 2003; 7:00 PM*

Holiday Inn at Fairhaven  
110 Middle Street  
Fairhaven, Massachusetts  
Contact: Melanie Griffin at (617)626-1528

## Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife

*November 6, 2003; 6:00 PM*

URI Narragansett Bay Campus  
Corless Auditorium  
South Ferry Road  
Narragansett, Rhode Island  
Contact: Jason McNamee at (401)423-1943

## Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

*October 29, 2003; 7:00 PM*

Marine Headquarters  
333 Ferry Road  
Old Lyme, Connecticut  
Contact: David Simpson at (860)434-6043

## New York Department of Environmental Conservation

*October 30, 2003; 7:00 PM*

205 North Belle Mead Road, Suite 1  
East Setauket, New York  
Contact: Gordon Colvin at (631)444-0433

## New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

*November 12, 2003; 7:00 PM*

Court Room  
601 Main Street  
Belmar, New Jersey  
Contact: Bruce Freeman at (609)292-2083

In August, the Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum addresses stock declines in Area 2 (waters off of Rhode Island and Massachusetts), and includes changes to Area 3 management measures (offshore waters), some vent sizes, and the interpretation of the most restrictive rule.

Recent stock information indicates lobster abundance in Area 2 has dropped substantially from the late 1980s and early 1990s, with 2002 abundance significantly below the 20-year average for all sizes of lobsters. From 1999 to 2001, landings from inshore and offshore waters of Massachusetts and Rhode Island declined 26 and 29 percent below the ten-year average, respectively.

The Board will meet in December in New York City to take final action on this Addendum. Copies of the Draft Addendum can be obtained from the Commission's website at [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org) or by contacting the Commission office at (202)289-6400. Public comment will be accepted until **November 26, 2003**, and should be forwarded to Carrie Selberg, American Lobster Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC, 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax); or [cselberg@asmfc.org](mailto:cselberg@asmfc.org). For more information, please contact Carrie Selberg at (202)289-6400.





## Scientists and Fishermen Join Forces to Improve Understanding of Black Sea Bass Resource

Since the fall of 2002, state and federal fishery biologists, and the fishing industry have come together as part of a cooperative tagging effort to gather information on abundance, migration and exploitation of black sea bass. To date, more than 6,000 black sea bass, from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Cape Henry, Virginia, have been tagged and released. Starting this October, another 3,000 fish will be tagged.

Information from this project will help fishery biologists improve stock assessments used to manage the fishery, as well as provide information about black sea bass growth rates, migration and harvest rates in commercial and recreational fisheries. Very few studies observe the ecology of black sea bass; none have specifically examined population size or exploitation, as the tagging project will. By comparing data on where fish are originally tagged with information on where fish are recovered by fishermen, scientists will be better able to determine the species' seasonal inshore and offshore movements.

"This study would allow for more accurate data to be collected with the idea of getting a better handle on absolute abundance and mortality of black sea bass," says Gary Shepherd, NOAA

Fisheries biologist in charge of the project.

The project chose an internal-anchor tag to mark each fish. Tags are thin orange or red tubes that extend from the abdomen of the fish. Scientists insert the tag into the body cavity through a small incision on the ventral (bottom) side of the fish. Once the fish have adjusted to the new appendage, they are gently released back into the ocean. The biologists performing the incisions must be selective in placing the tag so no organs are damaged and minimal harm is brought to the animal.

It is then up to the commercial and recreational fishermen to report their encountered recaptures. Fishermen are encouraged to remove the tags and call the phone number on the tag to report the tag number, date, location of recapture (lat/long or Loran C preferred), fish total length, and the gear used. Fishermen are asked to avoid scraping tags encrusted with algae; scraping may remove the information printed on the tags. Returned tags earn the finder a hat for orange tags or \$100 for red tags.

"Fishermen have been very responsive to

the program, with nearly 600 tags being recovered since 2002," continues Gary Shepherd. "Their participation is essential since recovering tags is the key to our improved understanding of the black sea bass population. Valuable information is also gathered through speaking directly with fishermen and learning from their experiences."



*Photo courtesy of NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Fisheries Science Center*

The Black Sea Bass Tagging Study is one several collaborative projects being coordinated by NOAA Fisheries' Northeast Fisheries Science Center. These projects not only provide unique data and insights, but also promote better communication and understanding of how science relates to management decisions and the implementation of natural resource policy.

Projects like the black sea bass tagging study have been found to be a more efficient and effective way of collecting the data required to survey the condition of these increasingly important resources. While providing crucial data, they also provide a vital link of communication, promoting trust and cooperation between the public sector and related government agencies. For more information, visit the study's website at [www.nefsc.noaa.gov/read/popdy/blackseabass-tagging/](http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/read/popdy/blackseabass-tagging/)



*Photo courtesy of NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Fisheries Science Center*



As a partner in the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has developed a method for linking metadata directly with reported trip-level landings that may be used by other ACCSP partners in coming years.

Metadata, as defined by the ACCSP, are “Corollary or descriptive information, both numeric and non-numeric, which may qualify or explain primary data.” Metadata can include factors such as environmental or weather events; regulatory changes; economic and social issues, and technological advances.

The ACCSP provided the North Carolina DMF with a total of \$52,268 over three annual funding cycles to support development of a statutory and regulatory metadata application. The three-year process includes (1) development of procedures for compiling, storing, and reporting metadata events, (2) creating a method of linking metadata and reported trip-level landings, and (3) writing associated computer programs.

The DMF has just completed the second year of the project. In the first two years, DMF staff designed a simple user interface for entering data, wrote a users’ manual, entered regulatory and proclamation data, and developed SAS procedures to link metadata with trip-ticket records. DMF staff also developed data elements for the new metadata module including:

- Event code number – each event must have a unique identifier

## North Carolina DMF Provides New Solutions to Metadata Needs

- Category – rule, proclamation, weather, etc.
- Subcategory – bag limits, hurricane, etc.
- Description – a short synopsis of the event
- Text/Details – as complete a description of the event as possible
- Date/Time – beginning and end of the event
- Perceived accuracy of information
- Source of information
- Date of entry and name of data entry operator
- Date data are reviewed and name of reviewer

Codes for data elements can be linked to codes for species, water bodies, and gears, making metadata retrieval simple, which has been a tenet of the project since the beginning. The search screen utilizes drop-down menus and keyword search options.

In year three, the DMF staff intends to add as many additional metadata categories to the design as practicable, beyond regulation data. They also plan to make refinements to the system and improve the report functions.

“Metadata are extremely important for a complete understanding and interpretation of the data in the ACCSP warehouse,” says Maury Osborn, ACCSP Director. “Members of the fishing industry and fishery managers alike have requested that a comprehensive metadata set be available through our data management system, and we are grateful to North Carolina for making

this happen in such a cost-efficient way.”

### 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 further information please visit [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org).

### Upcoming ACCSP Meetings

#### Coordinating Council

December 16, 2003, 2:30 PM - 5:30 PM  
Roosevelt Hotel  
New York, NY

#### Biological Review Panel

January 6-7, 2004  
Times to be determined  
Location to be determined

#### Bycatch Prioritization Committee

January 7-8, 2004  
Times to be determined  
Location to be determined

#### Operations Committee

February 10-12, 2004  
Times to be determined  
Location to be determined

## Kristina Ballard Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

Since her arrival at the Commission 12 ½ years ago, Kristina A. Ballard has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to the success of the Commission and its financial health. This dedication was recently recognized by the ASMFC Directors in their selection of Kristina as the Commission's Employee of the Quarter (October - December 2003).

Kristina's steadfast pursuit of the core values for which the award was developed -- teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results -- is notable. She partners well with her colleagues in Finance and Administration, bringing to the table her enthusiasm and creativity to proactively address opportunities and challenges. She anticipates needs, takes initiative without direction, and produces timely and excellent work products. Kristina has helped maintain the integrity of the Commission's financial operations,

and has consistently received high praise from the Commission's CPA regarding the annual audit.

"It has been a real pleasure working with Kristina for the past 12 years," stated Laura Leach, Director of Finance and Administration. "I have watched her grow personally and professionally, making significant advances in both areas each and every year. The Commission is a better place because of her efforts and contributions."

When she is not at work, Kristina raises her two daughters -- Mason and Meredith -- with husband of 13 years, William Ballard.

As Employee of the Quarter, Kristina received a \$500 cash award,



an engraved pewter pencil cup, and a letter of appreciation for her personnel record. In addition, Kristina's name will be engraved on the Employee of Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby, alongside those of Edith Carr, Carrie Selberg and Geoffrey White. Congratulations, Kristina!



## Managing Our Nation's Fisheries - Past, Present, and Future

November 13 - 15, 2003

Washington, DC

Managing Our Nation's Fisheries - Past, Present,

and Future is sponsored by the eight Regional Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries. This conference aims to (1) educate the public, policy makers, and media on the marine fishery management process, successful management examples by region, and current management and research initiatives; (2) help bridge the gap between perception and reality regarding fisheries management; and (3) provide a forum for information exchange and to solicit a wide range of perspectives on future management and marine research directions.

The conference will feature keynote speakers, followed by regional perspectives from each Council/Region and workshop/panel discus-

sions on specific issue areas. Poster sessions and panel discussions will run concurrently with other activities.

The conference will be held November 13-15, 2003, at the Omni-Shoreham Hotel and Conference Center, 2500 Calvert Street, Washington, D.C. Everyone is invited to attend, from Congressional members and their staffs, to media, U.S. Ocean Commissioners, Pew Commissioners, fishing industry, environmental organizations, native/community interests, Regional Council members and staff, federal and state fisheries agencies, academia, researchers, and any interested members of the public.

The conference will open with a Fisheries Governance Panel that will

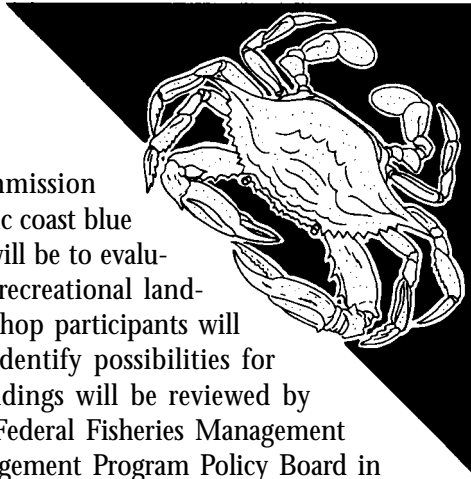
set the stage, and will include representatives from the U.S. Ocean Commission, Regional Councils, NOAA Fisheries, recreational and commercial fishing interests, and NGOs. This panel will focus not only on the perception gap in fisheries management, but will address basic fisheries governance issues, guided by specific questions.

The conference will conclude with a wrap-up panel focused on identifying issues and recommendations for future management improvements. This panel also will attempt to focus recommendations in the context of U.S. Ocean Commission recommendations and potential Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization. For more information, go to the conference website at <http://www.managingfisheries.org/index.htm>

## ASMFC Blue Crab Workshop Planned for November

On November 6 & 7, 2003, the Commission will be conducting a workshop on Atlantic coast blue crab stocks. The focus of the workshop will be to evaluate blue crab biology, commercial and recreational landings, and stock assessment issues. Workshop participants will also discuss common state issues and identify possibilities for future collaboration. The workshop findings will be reviewed by the Commission's South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board and the Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board in December.

For those interested in attending the workshop, it will be held at the Sheraton International Hotel BWI, 7032 Elm Road, Baltimore, Maryland. For more information, please contact Chris Van Maaren, Fisheries Research Specialist, at (202)289-6400 or <cvanmaaren@asmfc.org>.



## ASMFC Comings & Goings

Patrick J. Emory -- This September, with his appointment as Director of the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, Patrick J. Emory became the state's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Since 1995, Patrick has served the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control in several capacities. He has been an environmental program manager in the Division of Soil and Water Conservation; an environmental scientist with the Division of Water Resources; and an environmental protection officer with the Division of Air and Waste Management. The Commission is sure to benefit from Patrick's background in environmental management. Welcome aboard, Patrick!

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

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