



ASMFC

# FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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## ASMFC Presents 2025 Annual Awards of Excellence

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented its Annual Awards of Excellence to a number of individuals for their outstanding contributions to the management, legislative, scientific, outreach, and law enforcement efforts along the Atlantic coast.

“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 Awards Committee Chair Spud Woodward of Georgia. “I am humbled by the breadth and extent of accomplishments of the recipients and am grateful for their dedication to Atlantic coast fisheries.”

### Management and Policy Contributions

#### *Megan Ware, Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR)*

Megan Ware’s dedication, expertise, and collaborative spirit have made a significant and lasting positive impact on the management and sustainability of Maine’s marine resources, and by extension, the health of the broader Atlantic coast ecosystem.

Since 2019, Ms. Ware has served as Pat Keliher’s (and now Carl Wilson’s) ongoing proxy, participating on several management boards, including those for American eel, Atlantic menhaden, and as current Chair for Atlantic striped bass. Her contributions to the development of interstate FMPs, Maine’s regulations, and collaboration with fishermen have been instrumental in maintaining healthy and sustainable stocks, while ensuring the long-term viability of these fisheries.

A highly effective collaborator and leader, Ms. Ware has the remarkable ability to build consensus among diverse stakeholders, facilitate productive discussions, and communicate complex scientific information clearly and effectively. Her work as Chair of the Striped Bass Board is a testament to her ability to bring together different perspectives, achieve shared goals, and foster a sense of shared responsibility for the management of marine resources. Ms. Ware’s approach to being board chair has truly raised the bar for others who are or will be in this role. She works closely with staff to ensure she fully understands the relevant information and can accurately communicate that information at Board meetings. She not only attends Maine’s public hearings but those of other states as well, with the intent of absorbing the complexity of issues along the coast. Dedicated to a strong collaborative process, Ms. Ware works with Board members in between meetings to understand their divergent viewpoints so that she can effectively guide the Board during very difficult conversations.

Ms. Ware’s contributions extend beyond immediate management needs. She is also dedicated to long-term planning, research initiatives, education, and outreach. Her work in this area will have a lasting positive impact on the future of Maine’s marine resources. Ms. Ware’s dedication to science-based management, her commitment to collaboration, and her passion for marine conservation make her a true asset to ME DMR and the broader Atlantic fisheries community.

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## Upcoming Meetings

*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 the deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.*

### Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Geoff White,  
ACCSP Director

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#### **June 2 (9 -11 AM)**

[Sector Separation Plan Development Team/Fishery Management Action Team](#)

#### **June 2 (11 AM - 12:30 PM)**

[Red Drum Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee](#)

#### **June 3 - 5**

[Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#), Hilton Garden Inn Virginia Beach Oceanfront, 3315 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA

#### **June 9 - 13**

[South Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#), Radisson Resort at the Port: 8701 Astronaut Boulevard, Cape Canaveral, FL

#### **June 12 (4 - 5:30 PM)**

[Bluefish Advisory Panel](#)

#### **June 17 (1 - 5 PM)**

[Atlantic Menhaden ERP Work Group](#)

#### **June 18 (9 AM - Noon)**

[Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee](#)

#### **June 24 - 26**

[New England Fishery Management Council](#), Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport, ME

#### **June 26 (9 AM -12 PM)**

[Sector Separation Plan Development Team/Fishery Management Action Team](#)

#### **June 30 (3 - 6 PM)**

[Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel](#)

#### **July 9 (1 - 5 PM)**

[Atlantic Menhaden ERP Work Group](#)

#### **July 11 (9 AM - 1 PM)**

[Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee](#)

#### **July 29 (1 - 4 PM)**

[Bluefish Technical and Monitoring Committee](#)

#### **July 31 (10 AM - 4 PM)**

[Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Technical and Monitoring Committee](#)

#### **August 5 - 7**

[ASMFC Summer Meeting](#), Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA

#### **August 11 - 14**

[Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#), The Westin Annapolis, 100 Westgate Circle, Annapolis, MD

#### **August 15- 19**

[South Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#), North Charleston Marriott: 4770 Goer Drive, North Charleston, SC

#### **September 23 - 25**

[New England Fishery Management Council](#), Beauport Hotel, Gloucester, MA

## Stock Assessment Update Shows Signs of Improvement for Coastwide Population and Mixed Results at the Distinct Population Segment Level

### Introduction

For more than three decades, the 15 Atlantic coastal states have worked together to effectively manage Atlantic sturgeon throughout their range from Maine to Florida. Recognizing both the importance of this ancient species and the dire status of the population, the states implemented a 40-year coastwide moratorium on harvest through Amendment I to the Atlantic Sturgeon Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1998 with the goal of restoring the population of this once thriving fishery. Since then, the states have invested considerable resources to research the species' biology and life history. Despite the strong conservation efforts taken, Atlantic sturgeon was added to the Endangered Species List in February 2012. A stock assessment update completed by the Commission in 2024 concluded that while the coastwide population remains depleted relative to historic levels, there are signs of improvement with a significant positive trend since 1998.

### Life History

Atlantic sturgeon are ancient fish, dating back to at least the late Cretaceous Period (66-100 million years ago). Historically, they have been found along the entire Atlantic coast from Labrador, Canada to St. Johns River, Florida. Atlantic sturgeon are anadromous fish, living their adult lives in the ocean and migrating into coastal estuaries and rivers to spawn once every two to five years. There are five distinct population segments (DPSs) of Atlantic sturgeon: Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, Chesapeake Bay, Carolina, and South Atlantic.

Atlantic sturgeon are one of the largest and longest-lived anadromous fish in North America, although individual growth rates and maturity schedules vary widely along the coast. Typically, populations in the southern part of the species range mature faster and grow larger than those in the northern part of the range. Females reach sexual maturity between the ages of 7 and 30, and males between the ages of 5 and 24. The number of eggs a female produces increases with age and size, which means older and larger females are more valuable to the population because they produce more eggs (up to eight million eggs per spawning event) than younger, smaller females (estimated 400,000 eggs per spawning event). Most juveniles remain in freshwater rivers for one to six years before migrating out to the ocean. As mature adults, they return to their natal streams to spawn.

Sturgeon do not have teeth. Instead, they suck up prey using their downward projecting vacuumlike mouth. As juveniles, Atlantic sturgeon feed on flies, worms, shrimp, and small mollusks and crustaceans. As adults, they are opportunistic feeders and prey mainly on mollusks, snails, worms, shrimp and benthic fish. Very little is known about their natural predators.

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Atlantic sturgeon have been taken for food by humans in North America for at least 3,000-4,000 years and have supported commercial fisheries of varying magnitude since colonial times. There are reports from Maine and Massachusetts from as early as the 1600s that cite sturgeon as an important fishery in those states. Atlantic sturgeon eggs were valued as high-quality caviar both in the US and in Europe, attracting a large number of harvesters and placing a huge strain on the population. Other parts of the sturgeon

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### Species Snapshot



#### Atlantic Sturgeon

*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*

**Management Unit:** Maine to Florida

#### Interesting Facts

- The species name '*oxyrinchus*' means sharp snout.
- Sturgeon were a key food source for US settlers along the Atlantic coast.
- In the late 1800s, fishing for sturgeon eggs (to sell as caviar) attracted so many people, the trend was referred to as the "Black Gold Rush."
- Atlantic sturgeon are river-specific, returning to their natal rivers to spawn.
- Rather than having true scales, Atlantic sturgeon have five rows of bony plates known as scutes
- When sturgeon wash up on beaches, many people mistake them for dinosaurs or sea monsters. In fact, sturgeon were around throughout the Cretaceous Period when dinosaurs roamed the earth.
- Young sturgeon are known to travel widely at sea, along the whole East Coast and as far north as Iceland.

**Maximum Size:** 14 feet and 811 pounds (Canada)

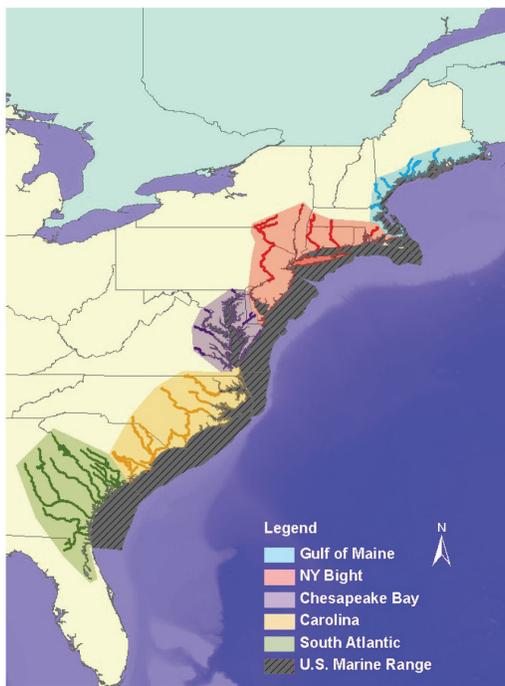
**Maximum Age:** 60 years old, captured from the St. Lawrence River

**Stock Status:** Depleted on a coastwide basis, and not experiencing overfishing



Archival photo of Atlantic sturgeon (c) NOAA Fisheries

**Figure 1. Map of Atlantic Sturgeon’s Five Distinct Population Segments (DPS)**



were used for a variety of products. Sturgeon skin was made into leather for clothes and bookbinding. The swim bladder was used to make a gelatin that served as a clarifying agent in jellies, wine, beer, and glue, and was also fashioned into windows for carriages.

The fishery was once considered second in value only to lobster. In 1888, the US Fish Commission reported that there were 7.3 million pounds of sturgeon caught on the US Atlantic coast. Landings declined significantly from 1950 through the mid-1990s to between 100,000 and 250,000 pounds, annually. In 1998, the Commission implemented a coastwide moratorium on the harvest of wild Atlantic sturgeon stocks, although many states had already closed their fisheries.

### Stock Status

In 1998, a benchmark stock assessment conducted by the Commission concluded that Atlantic sturgeon populations throughout the species’ range were either extirpated or at historically low abundances. In response to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing, the Board initiated the development of another coastwide benchmark stock assessment to evaluate stock status, stock delineation, and bycatch. The Board approved the benchmark stock assessment and peer review for management use in October 2017, and a stock assessment update was completed in August 2024.

Overall, stock status in the 2024 assessment update was similar to the 2017 benchmark assessment. At the coastwide level, while Atlantic sturgeon remain depleted relative to historic levels, the population has shown signs of improvement with a significant positive trend over the time series and a high probability that abundance in 2022 was greater than abundance in 1998 at the start of the moratorium. Total mortality was low and had a low probability of exceeding the Z50%SPR reference point (see Table 1). The “depleted” status was used instead of “overfished” because many factors (such as bycatch, habitat loss and ship strikes), not just directed historical fishing, have contributed to the continued low abundance of Atlantic sturgeon.

At the individual DPS level, results were more mixed. Most indices showed either a positive trend or no significant trend over the time series.

The average probability that the New York Bight and Carolina DPSs indices were greater than the reference year was high, meaning it was likely that abundance in 2022 was higher than it was at the start of the moratorium. For the Gulf of Maine, Chesapeake Bay, and South Atlantic DPSs, the average probability was lower – less than 50% for all three DPSs – meaning that it was unlikely that abundance in 2022 was greater than it was at the start of the moratorium. Total mortality estimates for each DPS were higher than for the full coastwide population and the probability of exceeding the Z50%SPR reference point was higher, partly due to the smaller sample size and higher uncertainty in the tagging model at the DPS level than at the coastwide level. There was a greater than 50% chance that total mortality for the Gulf of Maine DPS exceeded the Z50%SPR reference point, but total mortality on the other DPSs was lower and had a less than 50% chance of exceeding the reference point.

Efforts to assess the status of Atlantic sturgeon are still hampered by a lack of data. Atlantic sturgeon are not well monitored by existing fishery-independent data collection and bycatch observer programs, and landings information is nonexistent after 1998 due to implementation of the coastwide moratorium. Better information on population trends, especially at the DPS level, is a high priority. More work is needed to identify key areas where sturgeon are found along the coast throughout the year, including the use of offshore habitat, particularly in areas where offshore energy development and mineral removal are planned or occurring. Observer programs should be expanded to include more estuarine waters and increase the number of trips and gears

**Table 1. Stock status determination for the coastwide stock and DPSs based on mortality estimates and biomass/abundance status relative to historic levels, and the terminal year (i.e., the last year of available data) of indices relative to the start of the moratorium.**

Population	Mortality Status		Biomass/Abundance Status	
	Probability that Z is greater than the Z Reference Point	Relative to Historical Levels	NOAA Designation	Average probability that relative abundance in 2022 was greater than relative abundance in the reference year*
<b>Coastwide</b>	2%	Depleted		100%
<b>Gulf of Maine</b>	56%	Depleted	Threatened	45%
<b>New York Bight</b>	20%	Depleted	Endangered	59%
<b>Chesapeake Bay</b>	14%	Depleted	Endangered	27%
<b>Carolina</b>	18%	Depleted	Endangered	77%
<b>South Atlantic</b>	27%	Depleted	Endangered	31%

\*Reference year is 1998, or the first year of the survey for indices that started after 1998

covered to improve bycatch estimates. In addition, ship strikes may be a significant source of mortality for some DPSs. More data are needed to quantify the degree to which vessel strikes in specific rivers and estuaries may be impacting populations which spawn in other locations and evaluate strategies to reduce or mitigate mortalities from ship strikes. Tagging data provide important information on current mortality rates, and it is critical to maintain and support current networks of acoustic receivers and acoustic tagging programs and expand the programs in underrepresented DPSs to improve the estimates of total mortality.

### Atlantic Coastal Management

Despite the genetic differences between Atlantic sturgeon in each of the five DPSs, the Commission manages the species as a single coastwide population. Atlantic sturgeon is managed through Amendment 1 to the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Sturgeon (July 1998) and its subsequent addenda (Addendum I – IV). The primary measure of Amendment 1 is the implementation of a coastwide moratorium, prohibiting the take, harvest, possession, harassment and/ or other actions that may cause the species harm. Exemptions to the moratorium on possession may be obtained for scientific research and educational display, and several facilities culture Atlantic sturgeon for research and potential stocking efforts.

In response to a Biological Opinion from

May 2021 that found potential adverse effects on Atlantic sturgeon through the authorization of several FMPs, including spiny dogfish, NOAA Fisheries developed an Action Plan with recommendations to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in federal large-mesh gillnet fisheries by 2024. The New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils used the Action Plan recommendations to develop measures for the monkfish and spiny dogfish fisheries, leading to Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6, which recommended prohibiting overnight gillnet soaks for federal spiny dogfish permit holders within certain spatial and temporal hotspots of sturgeon bycatch. The Final Rule approving the Framework Adjustment was published on December 18th, 2024, with the measures implemented on May 1, 2025.

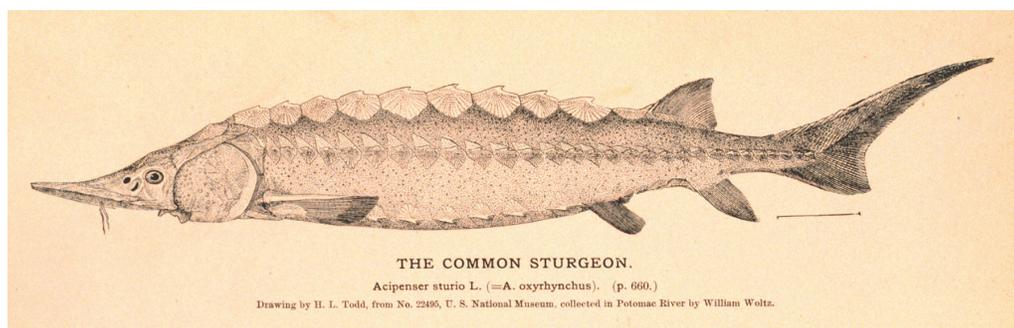
In February 2025, the Commission's Spiny Dogfish Management Board approved Addendum VII to the Interstate FMP to implement corresponding time and area gear restrictions for state spiny dogfish permit holders.

### Endangered Species Listing

NOAA Fisheries investigated whether Atlantic sturgeon should be listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) several times after the Commission instituted a moratorium on the species in 1998. The first three status reviews, in 1998, 2005, and 2007, all concluded that listing was not warranted, with the 2007 review

identifying the five DPSs recognized today. It was not until the 2009 status review that the Gulf of Maine DPS was declared as threatened and the remaining four DPSs (New York Bight, Chesapeake Bay, Carolina and South Atlantic) were declared as endangered (the ESA listing became effective in April 2012). In December 2013, NOAA Fisheries published an Interim Final 4(d) Rule for the threatened Gulf of Maine DPS, which provides essentially the same protection as an endangered listing. In August 2017, NOAA Fisheries designated critical habitat for Atlantic sturgeon. This is required for any species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA and indicates areas within the species' range that have physical or biological features necessary to the species' that may require additional management considerations. 3,968 miles of coastal river habitat was included in the critical habitat designation. With this action, federal agencies funding or conducting activities that may affect the critical habitat are now required to consult NOAA Fisheries on how to best minimize impacts before starting those projects. The most recent 5-year status reviews identified many similar threats between the DPSs, including bycatch mortality, vessel strikes, loss of habitat quality or access, and dredging activities.

For more information, please contact James Boyle, FMP Coordinator, at [jboyle@asmfc.org](mailto:jboyle@asmfc.org).



## Congressional & Legislative Contributions

### Alexander Law, ASMFC Legislative Program Coordinator

In his two and a half years with the Commission, Alexander Law has strengthened the Commission's presence on Capitol Hill. With his prior experience working on Congressional and legislative issues, Mr. Law has been instrumental in facilitating meetings between Commissioners and Congressional offices during our quarterly meetings and has built important relationships with the offices that are critical to furthering the Commission's mission.

Mr. Law has focused on conveying the Commission's appropriations priorities to NOAA Fisheries and Congressional offices. This process involves submitting the priorities to numerous offices and following up with dozens of meetings. Mr. Law's efforts, when combined with those of the states, have resulted in strong financial support for Commission priorities over the past few years.

Mr. Law has revitalized the Commission's Legislative Committee, which now regularly meets to develop positions on pending legislation and develop strategies for engaging Capitol Hill on issues important to the

Commission. He has excelled at developing partnerships to advance Commission priorities by working the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the other Interstate Fisheries Commissions to engage in the reauthorization of the Sportfish Restoration Act. This partnership has resulted in draft language that would increase support for the Commission and the states as contributions to the Sportfish Restoration fund grow.

Throughout the first 100 days of the new Administration, Mr. Law has been tracking their priorities and actions and developing relationships with the 119th Congress. We are hopeful that Alexander's Hill experience and appropriations messaging will yield positive results for the Commission and the states in this and future budget cycles.

## Scientific & Technical Contributions

### Dr. Joey Ballenger, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Over the years, Joey Ballenger has earned the reputation of being a highly valued member of several Commission technical committees, stock assessment subcommittees, and science committees, with his efforts widely respected by his colleagues, fisheries scientists external to the Commission process, and fisheries managers. He currently serves on the Assessment Science

Committee, of which he is the current chair, and represents South Carolina on the Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee and Red Drum Stock Assessment Subcommittee.

Dr. Ballenger's most notable work, however, has been as Chair of Red Drum Stock Assessment Subcommittee for the past two assessments. Throughout the long process, he effectively kept the Subcommittee engaged and productive and even brought in two external contributors to the process to develop fishery selectivity estimates and tag-recapture mortality estimates for use in the assessment. He exhibited innovation and creativity by introducing a new Stock Synthesis model to the red drum stock assessment, which was used to determine a spawning stock biomass threshold and target for the first time. During the peer review workshop, Dr. Ballenger met with peer reviewers after hours to get training on reanalyzing data with new spatiotemporal methods recommended by reviewers to include in the stock assessment sensitivity analyses. Dr. Ballenger also provided outreach on assessment data, methods, and results to local South Carolina stakeholders, in addition to presentations to the Sciaenids Management Board.

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Award Recipients from left: Chris Baker, Andrew Alexander, Megan Ware, Joey Ballenger, Alexander Law, Julie Simpson, Julia Byrd, Kathy Knowlton, and Brandi Salmon

Dr. Ballenger's knowledge and expertise of sciaenids and other inshore species, the fishing industry that targets these species, and the statistical models used to assess them, have been of great benefit to the Commission and South Carolina's management of the most popular and economically important gamefish.

## Outreach & Advocacy Contributions

*SciFish Core Development Team members: Julia Byrd and Meg Withers, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Brandi Salmon, Ami Staples and Stephanie McInerney, North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries; Kathy Knowlton, Georgia Coastal Resources Division; Mike Bucko, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management; Lauren Dolinger-Few and Dr. Andrew Cathey, NOAA Fisheries; and Julie DeFilippi Simpson, Atlantic Coastal Statistics Program*

There are numerous citizen science projects along the Atlantic coast that contribute valuable data and knowledge to our stock assessments, but data standardization and access can be a challenge. The SciFish team developed an innovative app which standardizes the collection of citizen science data from Atlantic coast fisheries by providing a single platform for multiple data collection projects. They designed it so that researchers can create new data collection projects with no IT development and storage costs – allowing projects to focus on the project goals and participating anglers.

For more than three years, a series of surveys, workshops, and public meetings were conducted by the Team to determine which data fields are most important to end users, scientists, managers, and other stakeholders to ensure that the SciFish platform met everyone's needs. In addition, the Team developed (1) the mobile SciFish application and project builder, (2) an application process consisting of pre- and full applications so only those projects that meet the project requirements and use sound citizen science practices are approved, and (3) an overall

policy document approved by the ACCSP Coordinating Council.

The Team launched SciFish in 2024 and is already approving new projects and receiving national interest from additional partners at the state and federal level. The app is being considered by the Marine Recreational Information Program and received interest from the Pacific States Marine Fisheries

## Law Enforcement Contributions

*Private First Class (PFC) Andrew Alexander, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources*

As a Saltwater Enforcement Unit Officer with the Beaufort Unit within SC DNR Law Enforcement Region 4, PFC Alexander is responsible for enforcing recreational and commercial saltwater activities, including the training of new hires assigned to his unit. A dedicated officer, who is widely recognized for his knowledge of the waterways in his area of operation, has a reputation for being the go-to officer for Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEAs) not just in his unit but across the state, with over 100 hours of JEA patrol time in 2025.

PFC Alexander has made multiple commercial saltwater fisheries cases including license violations, harvesting shellfish in closed areas, commercial crabbing violations, and illegal shrimp trawling activity. He is also responsible for numerous recreational saltwater cases to include creel and size limit cases for saltwater gamefish, and numerous commercial crabbing cases. He has multiple JEA case packets including closed season snapper/grouper species, undersized fish, and gear violations. Known by fellow officers as "Turbo," PFC Alexander was the lead officer in a two-month long investigation, resulting in 17 cases of undersized saltwater sheepshead; a commercial crabbing investigation that resulted in 11 cases; 2 JEA case packets (one for 5 times the amount of undersized black sea bass and possession of red porgy out-of-season, and one for gag grouper out-of-season). Lastly, he observed a shrimp trawler dragging inside closed waters without commercial decals resulting in over \$4,000 in fines and seized catch.

PFC Alexander is a hardworking officer willing to go above and beyond to protect SC's natural resources. He has a phenomenal work ethic and maintains a positive working relationship with outside agencies as well, at the local, state, and federal levels. He coordinates offshore and inshore JEA patrols as well as state fishery enforcement patrols within his assigned unit. PFC Alexander is one of the most productive fishery enforcement officers within the South Atlantic fishery law enforcement community.

## *Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Chris Baker, Massachusetts Environmental Police*

LTC Baker, with the MA Environmental Police, began his career in the USCG, where he gained invaluable experience in maritime law enforcement and environmental conservation. Building on this foundation, he earned his Juris Doctorate, further strengthening his expertise in legal matters related to environmental and fisheries law. His intrinsic understanding of conservation law and legal issues has been a defining asset throughout his career, allowing him to navigate complex regulatory frameworks, interpret legislation with precision, and apply enforcement strategies effectively.

His deep interest in marine fisheries enforcement has been a driving force in his professional journey. From his early days aboard an offshore patrol vessel, LTC Baker quickly distinguished himself through his work ethic, sound judgment, and leadership capabilities. This led to a steady rise through the ranks in agency leadership. Over the years, he has held key supervisory positions, overseeing enforcement teams, directing large-scale regulatory operations, and mentoring officers in best practices for fisheries enforcement. His tenure in the Coastal Bureau was particularly impactful, where he played a pivotal role in enforcing commercial and recreational fishery regulations, fostering strong relationships with industry stakeholders, and ensuring regulatory compliance through strategic enforcement initiatives. His ability to balance enforcement with industry engagement has made him a trusted leader within the agency and beyond.

# Fishery Management Actions

## American Lobster

The American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum XXXII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Addendum repeals all gauge and escape vent size measures from Addendum XXVII. Measures related to the v-notch possession definition and the issuance of trap tags are maintained.

In October 2023, under Addendum XXVII a series of changes to the current gauge and escape vent sizes in Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 1 (Gulf of Maine), 3 (federal waters), and Outer Cape Cod was triggered based on observed declines in recruit abundance indices. The Board postponed the implementation of Addendum XXVII to January 1, 2025 to allow the Gulf of Maine states the opportunity to coordinate with Canada regarding possible trade implications and give the industry and gauge makers additional time to prepare for these changes. In October 2024, the Board further delayed implementation of the gauge and vent size measures, and v-notch possession definition of Addendum XXVII to July 1, 2025.

Addendum XXXII responds to industry concerns about the potential economic impacts of an increase to the minimum gauge size in the Gulf of Maine. By repealing the gauge and vent size measures, the Gulf of Maine states will have the opportunity to engage with the lobster industry, including the Area 1 Lobster Conservation Management Area Team, to identify alternative conservation measures to protect the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock. Maine and New Hampshire reported to the Board that they have already begun convening

stakeholder meetings to discuss the state of the fishery and potential management approaches.

Addendum XXXII is available at <https://asmfc.org/resources/management/management-plan/american-lobster-addendum-xxxii-repealing-addendum-xxvii-gauge-and-vent-size-measures/>. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org).

## Horseshoe Crab

The Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved Addendum IX to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Horseshoe Crabs. The Addendum allows the Board to set specifications for male-only harvest. It also establishes a method for managing male-only harvest limits during multi-year specifications periods, reestablishes seasonal harvest restrictions, and clarifies policy related to harvest caps for Maryland and Virginia.

Addendum IX responds to recommendations from the July 2024 Horseshoe Crab Management Objectives Workshop, which convened a group of stakeholders to explore management objectives for the Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crab fishery. Workshop participants recommended the Board establish an interim solution to maintain male-only harvest while changes to the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework are explored to better align the model with stakeholder values.

The Addendum allows the Board to set multi-year specifications for up to three years until 2031 based on the ARM Framework. In interim years when the ARM is

not used, the Board will manage maximum male harvest limits based on Delaware Bay region spawning survey data. Addendum IX also reestablishes a harvest closure for the Delaware Bay region states from January 1 through June 7. Lastly, the Addendum clarifies the policy included in Addenda VII and VIII for applying Maryland and Virginia harvest caps; these caps further restrict harvest for Maryland and Virginia when female harvest is implemented in the Delaware Bay region.

Addendum IX will be available at <https://asmfc.org/resources/management/management-plan/horseshoe-crab-addendum-ix/>. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org).

## Northern Shrimp

The Commission approved Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Northern Shrimp. In response to the continued poor condition of the northern shrimp stock, Amendment 4 modifies the first objective of the FMP to recognize the influence of environmental conditions on stock productivity and lengthens the amount of time the Northern Shrimp Section can set a moratorium from one year to up to five years. The Section can call a meeting at any time to review information relative to the fishery and the resource and initiate management action if necessary.

Amendment 4 also adds management triggers to the FMP as part of the annual stock monitoring process. Management triggers include recruitment and temperature

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Northern shrimp (c) ASMFC

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triggers that signal potential improvement in stock conditions. The recruitment trigger will be achieved when the stock experiences non-failed recruitment for three consecutive years. If achieved, a stock assessment update will be conducted. If the recruitment trigger is not achieved, but non-failed recruitment occurs in two out of three years, the Section will consider conducting a winter sampling program without the use of size-sorting grates. This program will allow the Northern Shrimp Technical Committee to evaluate stage and length frequencies, and year class persistence before initiating a full assessment update. The temperature trigger will be considered reached when two out of three consecutive years of winter surface temperature and spring bottom temperature in the Gulf of Maine fall below the 80th percentile of the reference period. If achieved, the Section will consider a winter sampling program. These triggers are intended to help the Section identify if the stock is viable enough to support a fishery.

Finally, Amendment 4 adds the specifications setting timeline and management triggers to measures subject to change through adaptive management, allow-

ing these management measures to be changed in the future via an addendum rather than an amendment.

All provisions of Amendment 4 are considered effective immediately. Amendment 4 is available at <https://asmfc.org/resources/management/management-plan/amendment-4-to-the-interstate-fishery-management-plan-for-northern-shrimp/>. For more information, please contact Chelsea Tuohy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [ctuohy@asmfc.org](mailto:ctuohy@asmfc.org).

### Red Drum

The Sciaenids Management Board initiated Draft Addendum II to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Red Drum. The Draft Addendum will consider a number of changes to the management programs for the southern (South Carolina to Florida) and northern (New Jersey to North Carolina) stocks of red drum in response to the findings of the 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report.

The Draft Addendum will consider modifying Amendment 2 reference points for the southern stock as well as the process to set management measures to achieve the reference points. The recent assessment

found the red drum southern stock to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. These proposed modifications to Amendment 2 will allow the southern stock states to propose changes to their current red drum management measures to achieve the new reference points. Although the northern stock is not overfished, nor experiencing overfishing, the Board expressed concern with an increasing trend in fishing mortality observed in the northern stock. As a result, the Draft Addendum will propose changes to the states' recreational bag limits and slot limits for the northern stock, as well as provide the northern stock states the opportunity to align their differing regulations, particularly in the Chesapeake Bay.

The Board will consider approval of Draft Addendum II for public comment in August, with public hearings held in the late summer/early fall. More information on the development of the addendum, can be found on the [Red Drum Action Tracker page](#).

For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [tbauer@asmfc.org](mailto:tbauer@asmfc.org).

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## Non-Traditional Stakeholders Sought for Participation in ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel

The Horseshoe Crab Management Board is in process of re-configuring its Advisory Panel (AP). As part of that process, the Board is seeking nominations for non-traditional stakeholders. Examples of such stakeholders include, but are not limited to, environmental organizations, grassroots organizations, and individuals/groups with an interest in shorebirds or horseshoe crab conservation.

The intent of this action is to broaden the scope of public input to the Horseshoe Crab Management Board (Board) as it considers possible changes to the management program for the Delaware Bay region commercial horseshoe crab fishery. In July 2024, responding to substantial public input regarding the Adaptive Resource Management Framework Revision, the Commission convened a multi-stakeholder workshop to explore potential future objectives and management approaches for the Delaware Bay horseshoe crab fishery. One of the consensus recommendations from the workshop was to evaluate the Horseshoe Crab AP to determine if it has adequate representation across stakeholder groups, including fishing, biomedical, and environmental conservation interests. The Commission believes that input from non-traditional stakeholders will strengthen its efforts in successfully managing horseshoe crab. The Board has not determined the makeup of the revised AP but has committed to expanding the non-traditional stakeholder participation on the panel.

Interested stakeholders can fill-in and submit a [nomination form](#) by **11:59 PM on June 27, 2025** to [info@asmfc.org](mailto:info@asmfc.org) (subject line: HSC AP nomination). Submitted nominations will be reviewed by a subgroup of the Board, which is also tasked with reviewing the AP's composition and membership and providing recommendations to the Board for consideration.

## SciFish Welcomes New Project

ACCSP is excited to announce a new project that will be sending data to SciFish! The Collection of Recreational Fishing Data from Citizen Science Sources project aims to address significant gaps in recreational fishing data, particularly regarding discard rates, by leveraging citizen scientists who use AnglerCatch<sup>1</sup>. The goal is to improve the accuracy of recreational fishing estimates, particularly for short-term or pulse fisheries like Atlantic cod and tautog. Additionally, by engaging anglers as citizen scientists and providing them with tools to contribute data, the project aims to foster trust and confidence in the data collected, ultimately enhancing collaboration between stakeholders and fisheries managers. Data for this project are collected using the AnglerCatch application and are sent to ACCSP using the SciFish application programming interface (API). Collaborators on the project include Scott Travers (RISAA President), John Lake (Supervising Biologist, RI DMF), and Fran Karp (Harbor Light Software).

SciFish, powered by ACCSP, is a free mobile application that allows the public to participate in scientific research by collecting, storing, and sharing data on Atlantic coast fisheries. This app standardizes the collection of citizen science data from Atlantic coast fisheries by providing a single platform for multiple data collection projects. The project builder allows researchers to create new data collection projects with minimal resources for data collection and storage, allowing citizen science projects to focus on angler engagement. Approved projects that currently use existing applications can send their standardized data via API to the SciFish database. Projects developed in SciFish will focus on collecting data for marine and/or diadromous fisheries along the Atlantic coast. This will help address current data gaps and research needs, clearly explain how collected data will be used in management and stock assessments, and encourage collaboration between scientists and fishermen.

Projects developed in the SciFish platform must have an ACCSP partner as a principal investigator (PI) or be sponsored by an ACCSP partner. Partner sponsors must provide a letter of support explaining the project's value, how the collected data will be used, and a plan to monitor progress. Sponsorship allows partners to endorse a SciFish project that contributes to fisheries management. Whether PIs are from an ACCSP partner or sponsored by one, all must submit applications to develop a citizen science project within the SciFish platform and are responsible for acquiring funding for their project administration. Project approval provides access to the SciFish platform but does not include monetary support from ACCSP.

The SciFish application process has multiple steps, including pre- and full application submissions and reviews. More information, including the full policy document that has templates for pre- and full applications can be found on the [SciFish page](#) of the ACCSP website.

<sup>1</sup> AnglerCatch is a highly rated private fishing app for saltwater fishing, providing an easy to use fisherman's logbook, with tools that inform you of local tides, weather, solunar, and buoy information.

*ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and the integration of those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. For further information please visit [accsp.org](http://accsp.org).*



CITIZEN SCIENCE POWERED BY ACCSP



## Comings & Goings

### COMMISSIONERS

#### REPRESENTATIVE BRIAN TURNER

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, Representative Brian Turner was appointed to serve as North Carolina's Legislative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Representative Turner is a Democratic member of the North Carolina House of Representatives, representing the 116<sup>th</sup> district (including constituents in western Buncombe County) from 2015 to 2023 and again since 2025. He currently serves as Vice Chair for the Wildlife Resources Committee and is a member of a number of committees including the Appropriations Committee (covering general issues; agriculture, natural and economic resources; and information technology), Education, Environment, Marine Resources & Aquaculture, and Homeland Security, Military & Veterans Affairs Committees. Before his election to public office, Representative Turner worked as a television producer at MTV, as an executive at his family's manufacturing company, and as Vice Chancellor at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. He currently works as a commercial real estate agent. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Northwestern University in 1996 and a Master of Business Administration from the Babcock Graduate School of Management at Wake Forest University in 2010. Please join us in welcoming Representative Turner to the Commission!



#### MICHAEL WRAY

On May 12<sup>th</sup>, Michael Wray was appointed to serve as North Carolina's Governor Appointee to the ASMFC. Prior to this appointment, Michael was the state's Legislative Commissioner,



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## Jamal Oudiden Named Employee of the Quarter

Jamal Oudiden, a Programmer with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), was named Employee of the Quarter (EOQ) for the second quarter of 2025. In his three years at the Commission, Jamal has played an important behind the scenes role in ensuring that the software and applications that support Atlantic coast data collection run efficiently and meet program partner needs.

His most notable work of late, and the one that he is being recognized for, was his development work on software that plays a pivotal role in the SciFish project, a citizen science-based initiative. Specifically, Jamal developed software used to transfer SciFish project information and end-user data from mobile apps to the SAFIS database. Additionally, he developed SciFish administration tools that simplify account management of both SAFIS and non-SAFIS user accounts.

SciFish is an application that builds other online applications and centralizes data collection and management of citizen science data from Atlantic coast fisheries by providing a single platform for multiple data collection projects. SciFish is designed so that researchers can create new data collection projects with no additional IT development and storage costs – allowing projects to focus on the project goals and participating anglers. SciFish has growing interest within ACCSP partners, with several opportunities to share and extend the platform with the Pacific and Gulf Fisheries Information Networks.

Jamal's recognition as EOQ highlights his dedication to projects essential to the success of ACCSP and fisheries data collection along the Atlantic coast. His commitment to the SciFish project was exemplary, as he continued to support successful project implementation while he was out on paternity leave. His collaboration with other staff and their collective responses to SAFIS support issues means that partners are better able to manage their respective fisheries.

As the EOQ recipient, Jamal received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in his personal record. In addition, his name is on the EOQ plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Jamal!



*COMINGS & GOINGS, continued from page 10*

having served his community and state for over 34 years including ten terms as a member of the North Carolina House of Representatives, representing the counties of Halifax, Northampton, and Warren. During his tenure as state legislator, Michael played significant roles during his tenure, including Deputy Minority Leader and Minority Whip. His legislative service included leadership on committees such as Appropriations, Finance, Rules, Natural and Economic Resources, Insurance, Small Business, and Wildlife Resources, underlining his diverse interests and commitment to public service.

Michael's dedication to community service began early in his life. His political journey started in 1991 when he was elected Town Commissioner for Gaston, a position he held until 1995. He later served on the North Carolina Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners and the State Economic Development Board.

An active member of various organizations, Michael has been involved with Rotary International, the Gaston Lions Club, the Northeastern Action Wildlife Club, Ducks Unlimited, and the National Wild Turkey Federation, among others. Please join us in welcoming Michael back to the Commission!

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### ASMFC 2026 Quarterly Meeting Dates

*Winter: February 2 - 5*

*Spring: May 4 - 7*

*Summer: August 3 - 6*