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Atlantic Striped Bass Draft Addendum Approved for Public Comment

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board approved for public comment Draft Addendum III to Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass. The Draft Addendum considers management measures to support rebuilding the stock by 2029. The Draft Addendum will also address requirements for commercial tagging programs, a coastwide definition of total length for size limit regulations, and changes to the Maryland recreational season baseline.

The Board initiated the Draft Addendum in response to stock projections indicating a low probability of meeting the 2029 stock rebuilding deadline. The most recent stock projections estimate an increase in fishing mortality in 2025 due to the above average 2018 year-class entering the current recreational ocean slot limit. There is also concern about the lack of strong year-classes behind the 2018 year-class.

This proposed action is intended to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock by reducing fishery removals by 12% with management measures implemented in 2026. For the commercial fishery, the Draft Addendum proposes a commercial quota reduction. For the recreational fishery, the Draft Addendum considers season closures and/or size limit changes. For Maryland's Chesapeake Bay recreational fishery, the Draft Addendum also proposes changing the recreational baseline season to simplify Maryland's Chesapeake Bay regulations, which could improve compliance and enforcement, and to re-align fishing access based on stakeholder input and release mortality rates.

For commercial tagging, the FMP currently allows states to choose whether to tag commercially harvested fish at

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Upcoming Meetings

September 2 (1–3 PM)
Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee

September 2–5 (1–5 PM)
American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment Review Workshop, Northeast Fisheries Science Center Aquarium Building, Clark Conference Room, 166 Water St. Woods Hole

September 9–10
ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee

September 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

September 29–October 2
ACCSP Operations and Advisory Committees, Portsmouth, NH

October 7 (begins at 9 AM) – 9 (ends at 1 PM)
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Notary Hotel Philadelphia, 21 North Juniper Street, Philadelphia, PA

October 27–30
ASMFC Annual Meeting, Hyatt Place, Dewey Beach, DE

December 2–4
New England Fishery Management Council, Newport Harbor Hotel and Marina, Newport, RI

December 8–12
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Garden Inn Outer Banks/Kitty Hawk: 5353 N. Virginia Dare Trail, Kitty Hawk, NC

December 15 (begins at 9 AM) – 18 (ends at 1 PM)
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Madison Hotel, 1177 15th Street NW, Washington, DC

February 2–5
ASMFC Winter Meeting, Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA

May 4–7
ASMFC Spring Meeting, Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA

August 3–6
ASMFC Summer Meeting, Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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 15 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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Adaptive Management Seeks to Address Uncertainty

Cobia are highly prized game fish found along the Atlantic coast and the Gulf, renowned for their strength and agility, making them a favorite among recreational anglers. Managed under the Interstate Fishery Management Plan, Atlantic cobia fisheries balance commercial quotas and variable recreational landings to maintain a healthy population. The most recent stock assessment indicates Atlantic cobia are not overfished nor experiencing overfishing, with ongoing adaptive management measures in place to support the species' range and long-term viability for both fisheries and coastal communities.

Photo (c) Aaron Game

Atlantic Coastal Management

Cooperative management of Atlantic cobia with the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils began in 2017 when the Commission approved the **Interstate FMP for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia**. In 2019, the Commission approved **Amendment 1 to the FMP**, which transitioned the FMP from complementary management with the Councils to sole management by the Commission's member states. The Amendment established management measures for the transition, including processes for the Commission to set harvest quotas and sector allocations, defining stock status criteria, and recommending management measures to be implemented by NOAA Fisheries in federal waters. Amendment 1 also transitioned responsibilities of monitoring and closing (if necessary) commercial harvest to the Commission.

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Species Snapshot

Cobia

Stock Status: Not overfished nor experiencing overfishing

Common Names: black kingfish, black salmon, ling, lemonfish, crabeater, prodigal son, black bonito, sergeantfish, yew, cubby

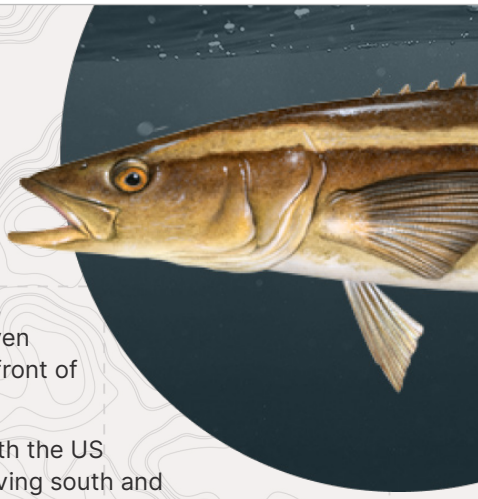
Management Unit: Rhode Island to Georgia

Maximum Size: 6 feet, 100 pounds

Life Span: 12 years old

Interesting Facts

- Cobia is the only species in the family Rachycentridae.
- The name originates from the Greek words 'rhachis' (spine) and 'kentron' (sting), and was inspired by the seven to nine sharp spines at the front of the first dorsal fin.
- They migrate seasonally, with the US Atlantic migratory stock moving south and offshore in the winter and moving north up the coast as far as Massachusetts in the summer. They feed primarily on crabs, squid, and fish.



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The Amendment established a *de minimis* status for the commercial sector that exempts states with small commercial harvests from in-season monitoring requirements.

In 2019, in response to concerns regarding recreational and commercial sector quota allocations, the Board initiated **Addendum I**. Approved in October 2020, the Addendum modified the allocation of the resource between the commercial and recreational sectors, updated the methodology to calculate the commercial trigger for in-season closures, and adjusted commercial and recreational de minimis measures.

In 2023, in response to increased cobia harvest in some Mid-Atlantic states, as well as concerns about high uncertainty associated with cobia recreational harvest estimates, the Board initiated Addendum II. Approved in 2024, **Addendum II** modifies the recreational allocation framework, allows the Board to update allocations quickly if the underlying data are revised, expands the range of data used in harvest evaluations, and allows the Board to set management measures for a longer period of time. The Addendum changed the recreational allocation framework from a state-by-state to a regional framework, with a northern region of Rhode Island through Virginia and a southern region of North Carolina through Georgia. The new regional allocation framework is intended to reduce uncertainty by using harvest estimates based on a larger sample size combining multiple states in a region, instead of individual state-level harvest estimates. Each region is allocated part of the recreational quota based on each region's percentage of the coastwide harvest in number of fish over the last ten years, combining 50% of 2014-2023 data and 50% of 2018-2023 data. This results in 68.7% of the recreational quota available to the northern region and 31.3% of the quota available to the southern region. Using the more recent data, as compared to previously using 2006–2015 data, accounts for changes in harvest and potential range expansion of the species in recent years.

The total harvest quota for both sectors for the 2024–2026 fishing seasons is 80,112 fish, which is the same harvest quota that has been in place since 2020. Per the Addendum I allocation of 4% for the commercial sector, the commercial fishery has a coastwide commercial quota of 73,116 pounds annually. The current management measures for the commercial fishery include a 33" fork length (or 37" total length) minimum size limit and 2 fish limit per person, with a 6 fish maximum vessel limit. The commercial Atlantic cobia fishery will close once the commercial quota is projected to be reached.

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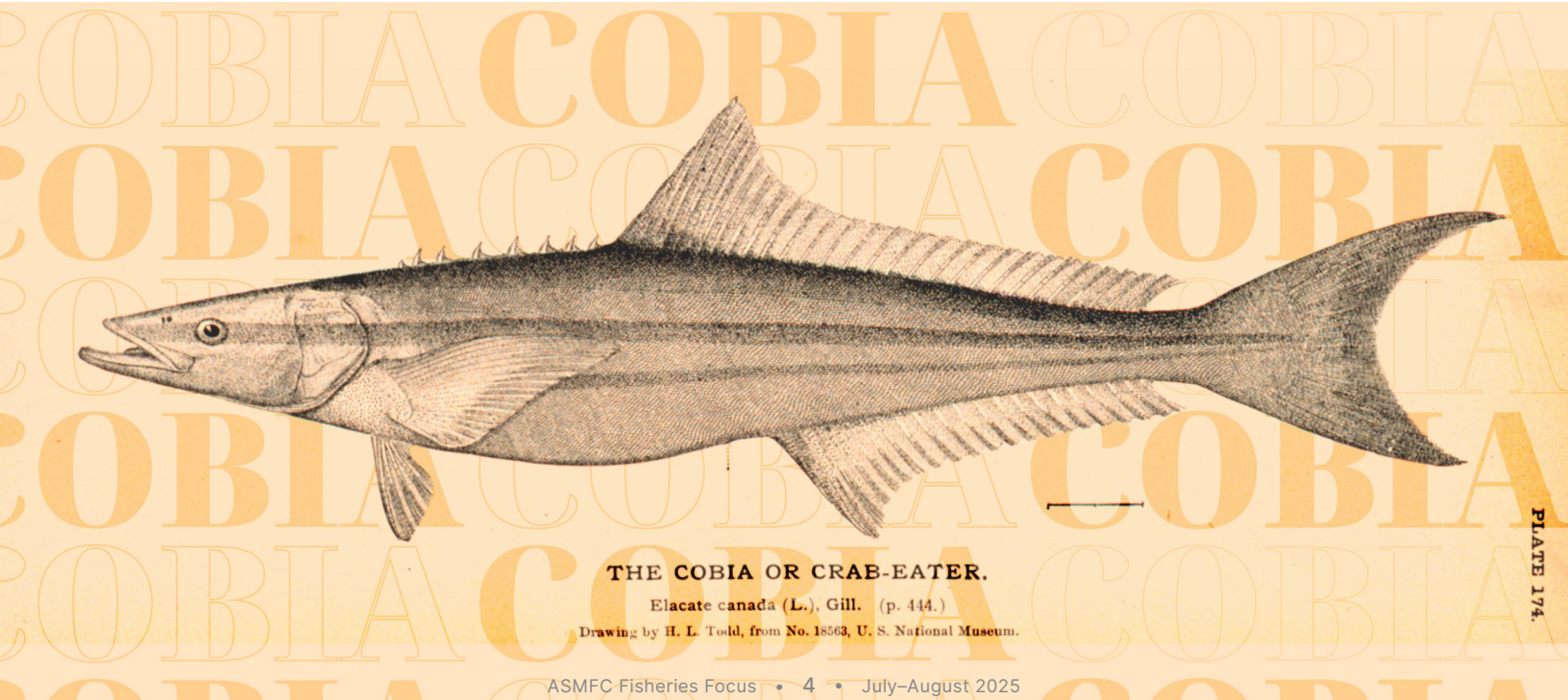

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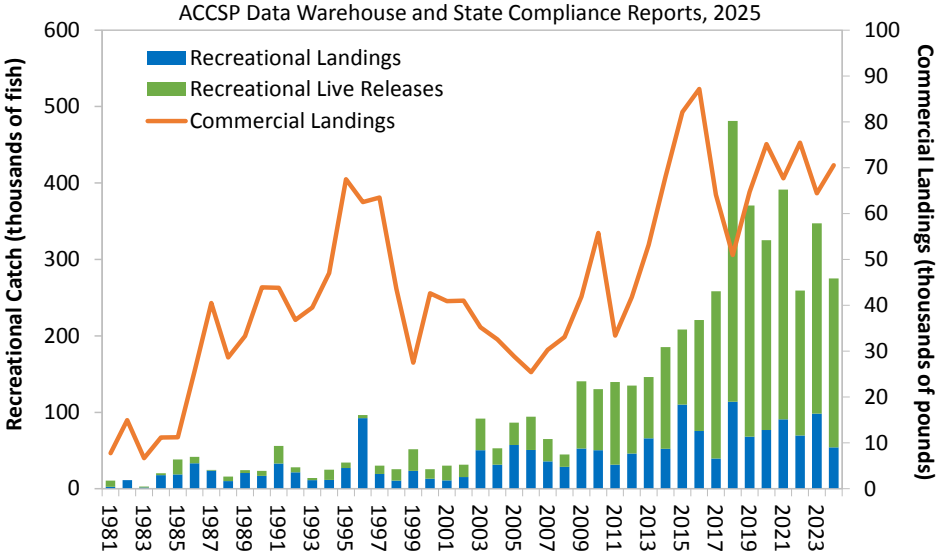
Per the 96% allocation to the recreational sector, the coastwide recreational harvest target is 76,908 fish. Recreational measures for 2025 and 2026 are based on the Addendum II regional allocation framework evaluating each region's harvest from 2021-2023 against each region's soft targets: 52,825 fish for the northern region and 24,083 fish for the southern region. The northern region (RI-VA) was above its target and was required to reduce by 16% to the target. To achieve this reduction, the northern region agreed on a regionwide 43" minimum size limit (total length) and 2-fish vessel limit/1-fish bag limit. The season is year-round for Rhode Island through Delaware and is June 15 through September 20 for Maryland through Virginia. The southern region (NC-GA) was below its target and so maintained the state-specific measures that have been in place for several years. Those states each have a 36" minimum size (fork length) and 1-fish bag limit in place, while the seasons and vessel limits are state-specific (not to exceed 6 fish per vessel).

Stock Status

The **2020 Atlantic Cobia Benchmark Stock Assessment** (SEDAR; SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review 58) found the Atlantic cobia stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. Stock status was determined by comparing spawning stock biomass (SSB) and fishing mortality rate (F) to reference point values based on F40%, or the fishing mortality rate that results in 40% of the stock's maximum reproductive potential in the absence of fishing.

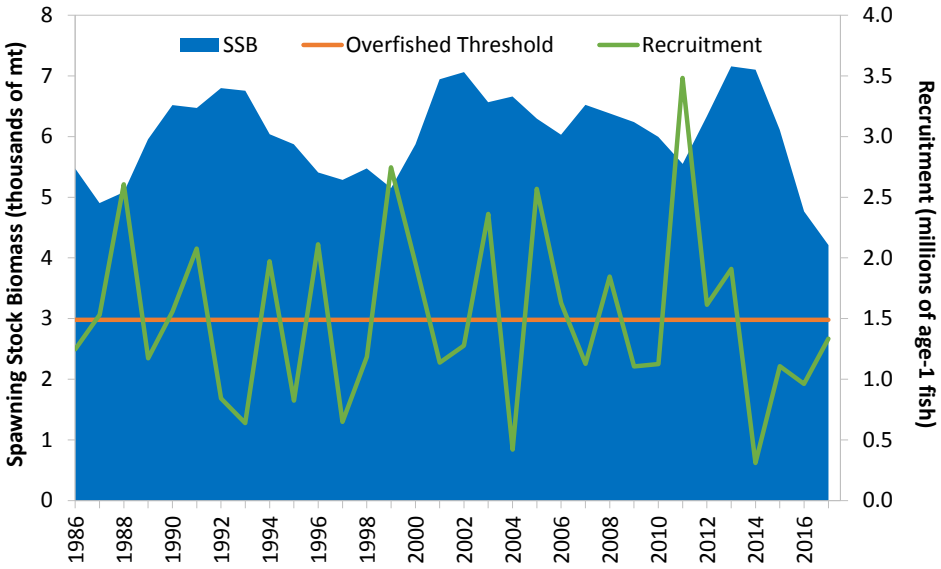
Atlantic Cobia Recreational Catch and Commercial Landings

Source: NOAA Fisheries, Fisheries Statistics Division, 2025; ACCSP Data Warehouse and State Compliance Reports, 2025



Atlantic Cobia Spawning Stock Biomass & Recruitment

Source: SouthEast Data, Assessment and Review, 2020



Atlantic cobia biomass has shown a pattern of rapid increase in strong recruitment years followed by years of decline. These strong year classes have maintained the stock above the overfished threshold through subsequent periods of biomass decline since the 1980s. Data from the assessment identified several of these notably strong year classes, the most recent of which occurred in 2010. The next stock assessment for Atlantic cobia is a benchmark assessment (SEDAR 95) scheduled for completion in 2026 or 2027.

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Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Enthusiastically pursued by recreational anglers, Atlantic cobia support an important recreational fishery throughout the South Atlantic and into the Mid-Atlantic region. Primary methods include bottom fishing with natural bait as well as sight-casting, which has gained popularity in recent years. The annual recreational harvest of Atlantic cobia, from Georgia northward, has varied widely with little trend since 2003, ranging from 28,624 fish to 113,939 fish. However, the recreational fishery has grown noticeably in recent years, with average recreational harvest of 79,789 fish (2.4 million pounds) per year over the last 10 years (2015-2024). The 2024 recreational harvest was 54,289 fish (1.6 million pounds), with the majority harvested by Virginia. Recreational releases of live fish have generally increased over time. From 2015-2024, an average 73% of cobia caught recreationally were released alive each year, which is higher than the average 61% released alive each year from 2005-2014.

The commercial fishery is on a much smaller scale, with an average harvest of about 70,237 pounds per year over the last ten years. Coastwide cobia commercial landings in 2024 were estimated at about 70,535 pounds, with the majority harvested by Virginia and North Carolina. Primarily a bycatch fishery in some areas, it has been associated with the snapper/grouper hook and line fishery and troll fisheries for many South Atlantic species, although more directed fisheries have recently developed in some areas. The two greatest commercial harvests in the time series, which extends back to 1950, occurred in 2015 and 2016 at over 80,000 pounds each year.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at **efranke@asmfc.org**.

Photo (c) Jason Stemple

Life History

Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) are distributed worldwide in tropical and warm-temperature waters. They occur along the Atlantic coast from Nova Scotia to Argentina, and are abundant in US waters from Chesapeake Bay south through the Gulf. Two stocks are recognized in US waters, one along the Atlantic coast from Georgia north (Atlantic cobia) and the other along the east coast of Florida through the Gulf. This stock definition was determined through the SEDAR 58 Stock Identification Process. Stock structure continues to be investigated through ongoing tagging studies to further identify and describe stock mixing zones and potential subcomponents of these populations.

Cobia typically reach sexual maturity by 3 years, with males maturing earlier than females. Females grow to be larger than males, and may reach 6 feet and weigh up to 100 pounds.

On the US Atlantic coast, cobia move into nearshore waters when water temperatures reach 20-25°C (68-77°F). While aggregated inshore, they spawn over a period of 4-6 weeks. Spawning is localized, with at least 2 genetically distinct spawning aggregations occurring within the Atlantic stock, one in Virginia and the other in South Carolina. The timing of local spawning progresses up the coast as temperatures warm, with peak spawning in May for South Carolina, June for North Carolina, and July for Virginia. Cobia are batch spawners, meaning a female may spawn several times (about every 4 to 6 days) during the spawning season.

Cobia make seasonal migrations, wintering in the south or offshore and moving north and inshore during the summer months. They are drawn to structure to feed and find shelter from predation. Juveniles and adults are often found around live bottom, wrecks, and buoys, as well as flotsam and seaweed mats. Their diet consists primarily of crustaceans and fish.

Sciaenids Board Approves Red Drum Draft Addendum II for Public Comment

Draft Addendum Considers Modifications to Red Drum Management

The Sciaenids Management Board approved Draft Addendum II to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Red Drum for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers several changes to the management programs in the southern (South Carolina to Florida) and northern (New Jersey to North Carolina) regions in response to the findings of the 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report.

Specifically, the assessment found the southern stock to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. As a result, the Draft Addendum considers two fishing mortality options states may not exceed in order to end overfishing. Although the northern stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing, the Board is concerned with an increasing trend in fishing mortality observed in the northern region. To address this trend, the Draft Addendum considers changes to the recreational bag and slot limits of states in the northern region, as well as provide states the opportunity to align their differing regulations, particularly in Chesapeake Bay.

The Draft Addendum also includes a process for states to propose management measures in response to the 2024 benchmark stock assessment, as well as future assessment advice. Further, the Draft Addendum proposes a process to allow states to submit stock status analyses conducted outside the Commission's stock assessment process to be considered for management use. Lastly, the Draft Addendum proposes updates to the management program's de minimis provisions. The Commission includes *de minimis* provisions in its FMPs to reduce the management burden for states whose measures would have a negligible effect on the conservation of the species.

The states of Maryland through Florida will be conducting hearings to gather public input on the Draft Addendum throughout September. Visit the **Red Drum Action Tracker** webpage to download the Draft Addendum, learn how to submit comment, and view more details about the scheduled public hearings. The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the Addendum in October.

For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at **tbauer@asmfc.org**.

Atlantic Striped Bass Draft Addendum Approved for Public Comment

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the point of harvest or point of sale. To address concerns that waiting to tag harvested fish until the point of sale could increase the risk of illegal harvest, the Draft Addendum considers requiring commercial tagging at the point of harvest or first point of landing intended to improve enforcement and compliance. There is also concern that inconsistent methods of measuring the total length of striped bass for compliance with size limits undermines the intended conservation, consistency, and enforceability of the coastwide size limits. To address this, the Draft Addendum considers coastwide requirements for defining total length for both sectors. The states of Maine through Virginia will be conducting hearings to gather public input on the Draft Addendum throughout September. Visit the **Atlantic Striped Bass Action Tracker** webpage to download the Draft Addendum, learn how to submit comment, and view more details about the scheduled public hearings. The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the addendum in October 2025 at the Commission's Annual Meeting in Dewey Beach, DE.

ROSA Advances Collaborative Fisheries Science with New Data Governance & Regional Science Awards

ROSA team & summer interns at the 2024 State of the Science on Offshore Wind Energy, Wildlife, and Fisheries.

The Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA) continues to build momentum for its mission to grow collaboration at the intersection of ocean development and fisheries through rigorous, stakeholder-driven science. This summer, ROSA is advancing two major efforts: improving fisheries and offshore wind data governance and launching its inaugural Regional Science Program awards. These efforts reflect ROSA's growing role as a trusted hub for regional coordination and actionable science.

Building a Stronger Data Foundation

ROSA's new Data Governance Program, launched earlier this year, is establishing foundational standards for how offshore wind and fisheries data are documented, shared, and maintained. Two working groups, focused on image data and fishing gear data, are actively and collaboratively developing guidance on metadata, data availability, and stewardship. These standards will help ensure that data collected from different sources and projects can be integrated and used to inform long-term ocean planning and fisheries management.

Supporting Regional Science to Fill Critical Gaps

ROSA recently announced the recipients of its first Regional Science Program awards, selected through a competitive process with input from ROSA's stakeholders. The funded studies will investigate larval dispersal, cumulative impacts on fisheries resources, and the operational challenges faced by commercial and recreational fisheries within offshore wind areas. A brief overview of each project will be shared at the next **ROSA Advisory Council** meeting on September 25 at 1 PM ET. These projects, funded by offshore wind developers through ROSA's collaborative model with the State of New York, are designed to generate independent, accessible findings that directly address regional science needs.

The **ROSA Research Gaps Analysis** informs these regional science needs. This analysis consolidated overlapping research needs into "Summarized Research Needs." It then compares the objectives of ongoing and completed projects in ROSA's Fish and Fisheries OffshoRe Wind Research Database (FishFORWRD) against these summarized needs to identify remaining research gaps. Recently peer-reviewed by 15 subject matter experts, the ROSA Research Gaps Analysis fosters a shared understanding of progress made and outstanding research required to assess the effects of offshore wind on fish and fisheries along the U.S. Atlantic Coast. This analysis and results will serve as a valuable resource for funders, researchers, and offshore developers in identifying and prioritizing critical future research needs.

Strengthening Regional Coordination

In June, ROSA convened its Advisory Council with participation from federal and state agencies (from ME to NC), recreational and commercial fishing industry representatives, offshore wind

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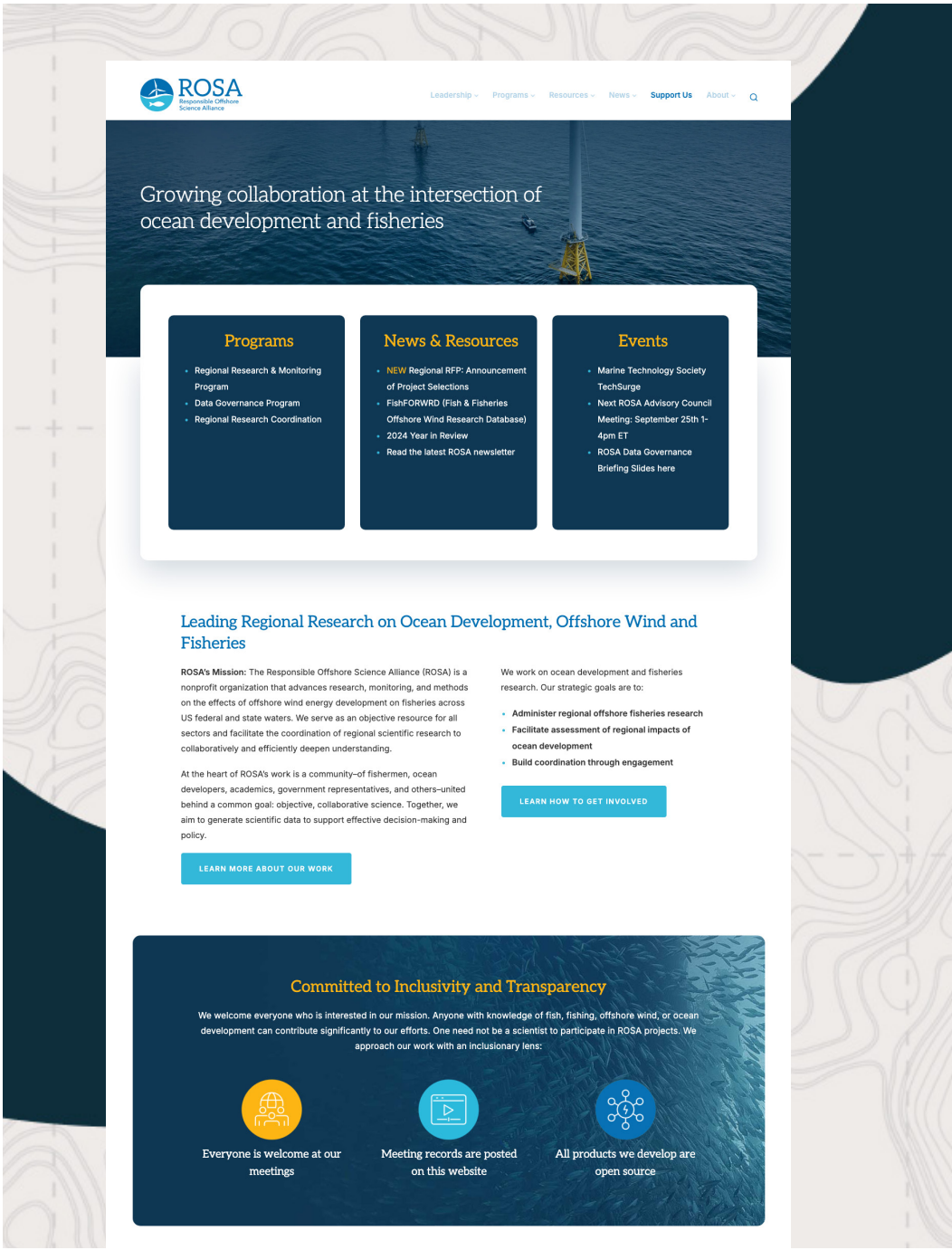
developers, and science organizations. Discussions focused on sharing research efforts across the region, perspectives on floating offshore wind, and socioeconomic and sociocultural indicators of impacts to fishing communities. The Council continues to be an essential venue for cross-sector dialogue on emerging offshore issues.

Upcoming: TechSurge on Fisheries & Benthic Monitoring

ROSA is also co-organizing the upcoming **TechSurge on Fisheries and Benthic Monitoring**, hosted by the Marine Technology Society, in partnership with Rhode Island Sea Grant, University of Rhode Island, and the Northeast Regional Ocean Council. This October 8-9 event will convene experts from across sectors to explore advancements in monitoring technologies and practices that support responsible offshore development. The program will highlight:

- Advancements in benthic mapping technologies
- The use of technology to transition from traditional survey methods, including highlights on new innovations
- Monitoring technologies applicable to offshore development
- A panel featuring perspectives from members of the fishing community
- Informal mentor connections to support relationship-building



The TechSurge will feature a combination of curated panels, an open call for abstracts, and the Tech Café, which is an interactive exhibit hall showcasing innovative technologies through desktop demonstrations, along with lightning talks from both industry and student participants.

Through these and other initiatives, ROSA remains committed to supporting collaborative, regionally relevant science that informs decision-making and helps protect sustainable fisheries. For more information or to get involved, visit **rosascience.org** and sign up for our newsletter at **rosascience.org/newsletter-signup/**.

Support for Improving Existing Recreational Data Collection Approaches

Effective fisheries management depends on reliable data and when it comes to recreational fisheries, that means continuing to improve the way we collect, analyze, and use information gathered directly from anglers and the for-hire industry. The Angler Point Access Intercept Survey (APAIS) plays a central role in this effort, acting as the foundation for key recreational estimates that support sustainable fisheries along the Atlantic coast.

APAIS, conducted through a collaborative partnership between state agencies, NOAA Fisheries, and the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), is a fisheries survey that involves trained state samplers interacting face-to-face with anglers at fishing access sites. By collecting information on fishing trips, species caught, and angler effort, APAIS provides critical input into NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), which serves as the primary source for recreational fisheries statistics used in stock assessments and management decisions.

Data collection through surveys like APAIS allows members of state staff to engage directly with the fishing communities they're there to help support, fostering connections between fisheries managers and the recreational fishing public. These in-person interviews help build trust and transparency, while also ensuring that the voices of anglers are reflected in the data and decisions that shape fisheries policy.

APAIS Interviewer. Photo (c) Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

By collecting information on fishing trips, species caught, and angler effort, Angler Point Access Intercept Survey (APAIS) provides critical input into NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program.

NOAA Fisheries is responsive to feedback from partner agency ideas and updates. An excellent example of this is the 2025 pilot study, being conducted by the ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee, to hand out catch cards to help record discarded/released catch in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Due to a number of factors, including changes in species availability, regulations, and angler preferences, there has been a growing portion of total recreational catch being released at sea, which is not observable in traditional dockside fisheries surveys. Refining the estimation of this increasing discarded catch information is a major priority for the Atlantic coast.

Improving the accuracy and timeliness of data collection helps managers set more responsive catch limits, reduce uncertainty in stock assessments, and ensure regulations are both effective and equitable. Investing in better tools, expanding sampling coverage, exploring and implementing electronic reporting opportunities, and continuing to foster strong partnerships between agencies and anglers are all essential components of this ongoing work. By improving how we gather and use these data, we enhance our collective ability to conserve marine resources for current and future generations.

ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and their integration into a single system. For further information please visit **accsp.org**.

Comings & Goings

Pat Geer

At the Commission's Summer Meeting, Commissioners and staff bid a fond farewell to Pat Geer, a longtime participant in the Commission's fishery management process.

After receiving his Master's in Biological Oceanography from Old Dominion University, Pat started his fisheries career at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science as a marine scientist. As principal investigator on many projects, including the well-known Juvenile Fish and Blue Crab Trawl Survey, he established a reputation for rigorous science and innovative research.

Pat then worked for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division (CRD) for 16 years. He was Chief of Marine Fisheries for the last eight years of his tenure at GA CRD, overseeing critical programs and mentoring the next generation of marine professionals.

In 2019, Pat became Chief of Fisheries Management at the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, where he led countless initiatives ensuring the vitality of Virginia's aquatic resources. Prior to this role, Pat served as the Division's Deputy Chief starting in April 2018, guiding policy and operations with expertise and integrity.

Throughout his career, Pat has been recognized as a leader and collaborator at every level. He has served as a Commissioner or proxy for almost 20 years and acted as the Virginia state designee to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Congratulations, Pat, on your well-deserved retirement!

Cheri Patterson

This June, Cheri Patterson retired from the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NH FGD) Marine Division, after nearly five decades of dedicated service to the State of New Hampshire and to the conservation and management of marine resources in her home state and along the Atlantic coast. Since 2020, with her appointment as Chief of the Marine Division, Cheri became the state's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Prior to this, she served as the state's administrative ongoing proxy since 2008.

Over her many years with NH FGD, she supervised the Marine/Anadromous, Fisheries Statistics, Marine Recreational Fisheries, and Invertebrate Fisheries Units of the Marine Fisheries Division. Duties included planning, coordinating, and supervising various fisheries-dependent and fisheries-independent programs, and fisheries policy. In this capacity, she also served on several Commission committees, plan review and plan development teams, and workgroups.

As Chief of the Marine Division, she represented the Department on a variety of marine interstate and intrastate fisheries management boards, committees, and teams, including the ASMFC, ACCSP, New England Fishery Management Council, National Marine Fisheries Service Atlantic Large Whale and Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction teams, the Portsmouth Oil Spill Response Workgroup, and the Seabrook Nuclear Plant Technical Advisory Committee.

Deeply committed to doing her job with the highest standards, she always came prepared to tackle whatever task was before a board or committee she participated on. As one of the early members and chair of the ACCSP Operations Committee and later as a Coordinating Council member and chair, Cheri played a key role in the development and evolution of the ACCSP.

We thank Cheri for all she has done for the conservation and management of her state, regional, and coastwide fishery resources. We wish you a long and happy retirement.