



ANNUAL REPORT



2025





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Presented in compliance with the terms of the Compact and the state-enabling acts creating such Commission and Public Law 539-77th Congress assenting thereto (Chapter 283, Second Session, 77th Congress; 56 Stat. 267) approved May 4, 1942, as amended by Public Law 721, 81st Congress, approved August 19, 1950

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Our Mission

To promote cooperative management of fisheries – marine, shell, and diadromous – of the Atlantic coast of the United States by the protection and enhancement of such fisheries, and by the avoidance of physical waste of the fisheries from any cause.

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Introduction

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) is pleased to present our 2025 Annual Report. The report fulfills our obligation to inform Congress on the Commission's use of public funds and provides stakeholders with an overview of activities and progress in carrying out our cooperative stewardship responsibilities for the marine, shell, and diadromous species under our care.

This report includes a quick reference guide to the stock status of the 27 species groups managed by the Commission; a fisheries management section, focusing on species which had the most significant management or stock assessment activities in 2025; and sections highlighting major accomplishments in 2025 in the areas of fisheries science, habitat conservation, and fishery data collection and management. Please visit the Commission's website at asmfc.org for additional information on any of our programs or activities.

The Commission was formed 84 years ago by the 15 Atlantic coastal states to assist in managing and conserving their shared coastal fishery resources. With the recognition that fish do not adhere to political boundaries, the states formed an Interstate Compact, which was approved by the US Congress in 1942. The Commission's mission as stated in the Compact is to promote cooperative management of fisheries – marine, shell, and diadromous – of the Atlantic coast of the US by the protection and enhancement of such fisheries, and by the avoidance of physical waste of the fisheries from any cause. The states have found that their mutual interest in sustaining healthy coastal fishery resources is best promoted by working cooperatively, in collaboration with the federal government. With this

The Commission is committed to ensuring the sustainability of Atlantic coast fishery resources.

approach, the states uphold their collective fisheries management responsibilities in a cost-effective, timely, transparent, and responsive fashion.

The Commission serves as a deliberative forum for the Atlantic coastal states to come together to discuss the biological, socioeconomic, and environmental issues central to developing management programs for each species. Each state is represented on the Commission by three Commissioners: the director of the state's marine fisheries management agency, a state legislator, and an individual appointed by the state's governor to represent fishery interests.

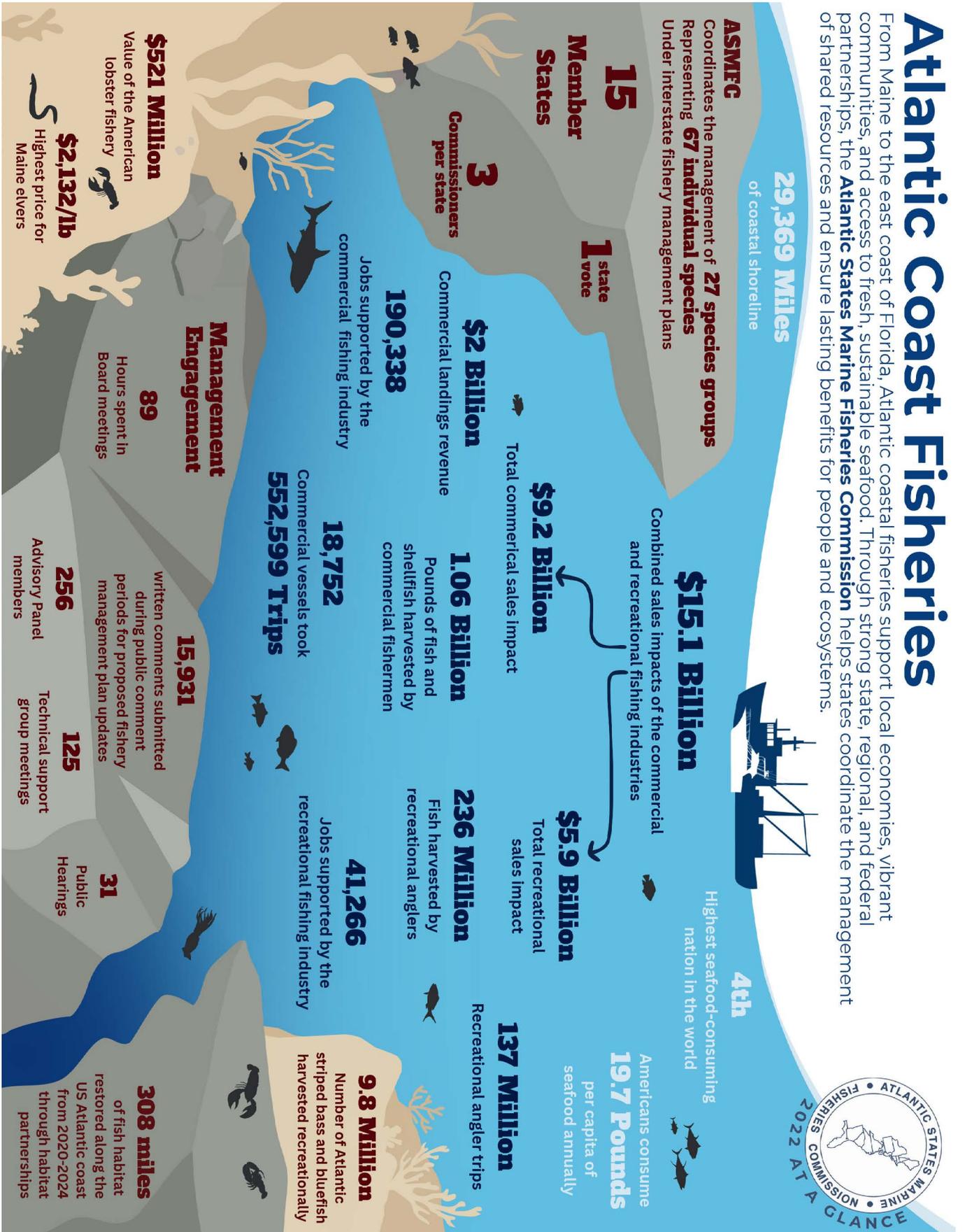
The Commission is committed to ensuring the sustainability of Atlantic coast fishery resources. Healthy and vibrant resources mean more jobs and more opportunities for those that live along the coast. In 2022, marine commercial and recreational fisheries along the Atlantic coast generated approximately 232,000 jobs and \$15.1 billion in sales impacts (see next page for more details). Further, more than 90% of the Atlantic coast recreational catch is taken in state waters, with many of the most prominent species, such as Atlantic striped bass, summer flounder, and red drum, moving through multiple jurisdictions.

In the face of increasing fisheries management demands and state budget cuts, the Commission is extremely efficient and produces a high return on investment — even with a fishery management budget that has remained essentially level for the past decade. With millions of people depending on Atlantic coast fisheries for recreation, work, and as a source of nourishment, this investment by Congress and the states likely represents one of the best return rates in all natural resource management.

We remain grateful to Congress, the Administration, our Governors, and state legislators for their continued support of the Commission and its vision of **Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries**. Many of our accomplishments would not have been possible without their trust and confidence. In addition, the technical support provided by NOAA Fisheries, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and US Geological Survey staff to the Commission and states is an invaluable component of our interstate fisheries management, science, and data collection activities.

Atlantic Coast Fisheries

From Maine to the east coast of Florida, Atlantic coastal fisheries support local economies, vibrant communities, and access to fresh, sustainable seafood. Through strong state, regional, and federal partnerships, the **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission** helps states coordinate the management of shared resources and ensure lasting benefits for people and ecosystems.

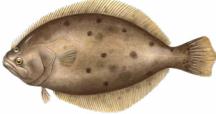


Atlantic Coast Fisheries infographic is available to download at: <https://asmfc.org/news/atlantic-coast-fisheries-infographic/>

Quick Guide to ASMFC Species Stock Status

SPECIES		OVERFISHED	OVERFISHING	ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW
	American Eel	Depleted	Unknown	Stock status based on trend analysis in 2023 benchmark stock assessment. Measures implemented in 2013/2014 to reduce fishing mortality and prevent expansion of the fishery. ME glass eel quota set at 9,688 pounds for 2025-2027. Coastwide yellow eel harvest cap reduced to 518,281 pounds based on continued population decline.
	Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank (GOM/GBK)	N	Y	Stock status based on 2025 benchmark assessment; 2023 abundance and recruitment remain favorable but have declined since peaks in 2018. Recent exploitation is just above the exploitation threshold, indicating overfishing is occurring. A MSE is recommended to establish management objectives and identify potential measures to prevent further declines.
	Southern New England	Depleted	N	Stock status based on 2025 benchmark assessment; abundance and recruitment lowest on record.
	American Shad	Depleted	Unknown	Stock status based on 2020 benchmark assessment. Species depleted on coastwide basis, with recovery limited by restricted access to spawning habitat. Amendment 3 established 2013 moratorium unless river-specific sustainability can be documented.
	Atlantic Croaker	Unknown	Unknown	2020 TLA triggered management action for Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic regions; changes to state recreational and commercial fishery regulations implemented in 2021. Benchmark assessment underway.
	Atlantic Herring	Y	N	Stock status based on 2024 assessment update; SSB at 26% SSB target.
	Atlantic Menhaden	N	N	Use of ERPs approved by Board in 2020. Stock status based on 2025 single-species assessment update and ERP Benchmark Assessment. The 2025 single-species assessment used a revised value of natural mortality that was lower than the value used in prior assessments, which resulted in a lower overall estimate of population size. Coastwide TAC reduced by 20% for 2026 to 186,840 mt.
	Atlantic Striped Bass	Y	N	Stock status based on 2024 assessment update. Stock rebuilding deadline is 2029. To support stock rebuilding, more restrictive management measures implemented in 2024 to reduce fishing mortality.
	Atlantic Sturgeon	Depleted	N	Stock status based on 2024 assessment update; coastwide abundance has likely increased since 1998 and total mortality is likely below reference point. Mixed results at DPS level. 40+ year moratorium implemented in 1998; listed in 2012 under the ESA.
	Black Drum	N	N	Stock status based on 2023 benchmark assessment; spawning biomass has been increasing; exploitation has remained at a higher, stable level since the early 2000s.
	Black Sea Bass	N	N	Stock status based on 2025 management track stock assessment; SSB estimated to be 2.8 times the biomass target.
	Bluefish	N	N	Stock status based on 2025 management track stock assessment. Amendment 2 (2021) established a 7-year rebuilding program, which will be in effect until biomass reaches target. Management track assessment scheduled for 2027.

SPECIES		OVERFISHED	OVERFISHING	ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW
	Coastal Sharks	Varies by species and species complex		
	Cobia	N	N	Stock status based on 2020 benchmark stock assessment. Pattern of rapid biomass increases in strong recruitment years followed by years of decline. Addendum II (2024) modifies recreational allocation framework, allows Board to quickly update allocations if underlying data are revised, expands range of data used in harvest evaluations, and allows Board to set management measures for longer periods.
	Horseshoe Crab	Unknown	Unknown	Stock status based on 2024 benchmark assessment update; NE region stock stable; NY region stock poor; and DE Bay and SE region stocks good. Coastwide abundance has fluctuated, with many surveys decreasing after 1998 but increasing in recent years. ARM Framework used since 2013 to set harvest levels for DE Bay-origin horseshoe crabs. ARM Framework Revision adopted via Addendum VIII in 2022.
	Jonah Crab	Not Depleted Compared to Historic Lows	Unknown	Stock status based on 2023 benchmark assessment; coastwide population abundance remains above historic lows but recent declines in landings and CPUE should be closely monitored. Measures implemented to prevent harvest of immature crabs and cap fishery to limit expansion.
	Northern Shrimp	Depleted	N	Stock status based on 2025 data update; total abundance estimated at a time-series low and recruitment has remained below 20th percentile for the past 3 years. Index of predation pressure and winter surface temperature showed improvement in the most recent year of data. Moratorium in place since 2014 and extended to 2028 to protect remaining spawning population. Amendment 4 (2025) provides Section the ability to set moratoria for up to 5 years, if desired.
	Northern Region	N	N	Stock status based on 2024 benchmark stock assessment. Addendum II (2025) implements a process to allow the Sciaenids Board to approve new measures to end overfishing of the southern stock.
	Southern Region	Y	Y	
	River Herring	Depleted	Unknown	Stock status based on 2024 benchmark assessment. No significant trends were detected coastwide and results varied by river. Amendment 2 established 2012 moratorium unless river-specific sustainability can be documented.
	Scup	N	N	Stock status based on 2025 management track stock assessment; SSB estimated to be over 3 times its target. Management track assessment scheduled for 2027.
	Spanish Mackerel	N	N	Stock status based on 2022 stock assessment update, which found stock status unchanged. However, if the high fishing mortality rate seen in 2020 continues, the stock may fall into an overfishing status.
	Spiny Dogfish	N	N	Stock status based on 2023 management track assessment; Despite a decline in stock productivity, SSB estimated to be 101% of the target and F to be 89% of the threshold.
	Spot	Unknown	Unknown	2020 TLA triggered management action for Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic regions; changes to state recreational and commercial fishery regulations implemented in 2021. Benchmark assessment will be initiated following completion of Atlantic croaker assessment.

SPECIES		OVERFISHED	OVERFISHING	ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW
	Spotted Seatrout	Unknown	Unknown	No range-wide assessment. Omnibus Amendment includes measures to protect spawning stock & established 12" minimum size limit.
	Summer Flounder	N	N	Stock status based on 2025 assessment. Management track assessment scheduled for 2027.
	Massachusetts-Rhode Island	N	N	Stock status based on 2025 assessment update. NJ-NYB region no longer overfished but now experiencing overfishing. DMV region, which was previously not overfished nor experiencing overfishing, is now overfished and experiencing overfishing.
	Long Island Sound	N	N	
	New Jersey-New York Bight	N	Y	
	Delaware/Maryland/Virginia	Y	Y	
	Weakfish	Depleted	N	Stock status based on 2019 assessment update. Species depleted since 2003; population experiencing high levels of natural mortality, preventing stock recovery. Harvest limited to 1 fish bag limit and a 100 pound commercial bycatch limit. Benchmark stock assessment scheduled to begin in 2026.
	Gulf of Maine	Unknown	N	Stock status based on 2025 management track assessment; abundance indices relatively flat over time series with a slight increase near the end of the time series. 2026 research track has been postponed.
	Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic	N	N	Stock status based on 2025 management track assessment; SSB at record lows despite sustained low levels of fishing mortality. Recruitment has declined sharply since 1980s and remains near time series low. 2026 research track has been postponed.

WHAT DOES A STATUS MEAN?

Unknown - There is no accepted stock assessment to estimate stock status.

Depleted - Reflects low levels of abundance though it is unclear whether fishing mortality is the primary cause for reduced stock size.

Overfished - Occurs when stock biomass falls below the threshold established by the fishery management plan (FMP), impacting the stock's reproductive capacity to replace fish removed through harvest, and that decline is driven primarily by fishing mortality.

Overfishing - Removing fish from a population at a rate that exceeds the threshold established in the FMP, impacting the stock's reproductive capacity to replace fish removed through harvest.

Benchmark stock assessment - A full analysis and review of stock condition, focusing on the consideration of new data sources and newer or improved assessment models. This assessment is generally conducted every few years and undergoes a formal peer review by a panel of independent

scientists who evaluate whether the data and the methods used to produce the assessment are scientifically sound and appropriate for management use.

Stock assessment update - Incorporates data from the most recent years into a peer-reviewed assessment model to determine current stock status (abundance and overfishing levels).

Management track or operational assessments - Part of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) stock assessment process (management track) and the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) stock assessment process (operational). Provides routine, scheduled, and updated advice to directly inform management actions. Management track and operational assessments ensure that stock status is updated on a regular and predictable basis.

Research track assessments - Part of the NEFSC and SEDAR stock assessment processes and are complex scientific efforts that are designed to be carried out over

several years. They can (1) focus on research topics for one or more individual stocks, (2) evaluate an issue or new model/tool that could apply to many stocks and/or (3) consider extensive changes in data, model, or stock structure. Research assessments can provide the basis for future management assessments.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ARM	Adaptive Resource Management
CPUE	Catch Per Unit Effort
DPS	Distinct Population Segment
ERPs	Ecological Reference Points
ESA	Endangered Species Act
F	Fishing Mortality
MSE	Management Strategy Evaluation
SSB	Spawning Stock Biomass
TLA	Traffic Light Analysis

Visit <https://asmfc.org/species/> for more details about the Commission's fisheries management program.

Species Highlights

Atlantic Menhaden

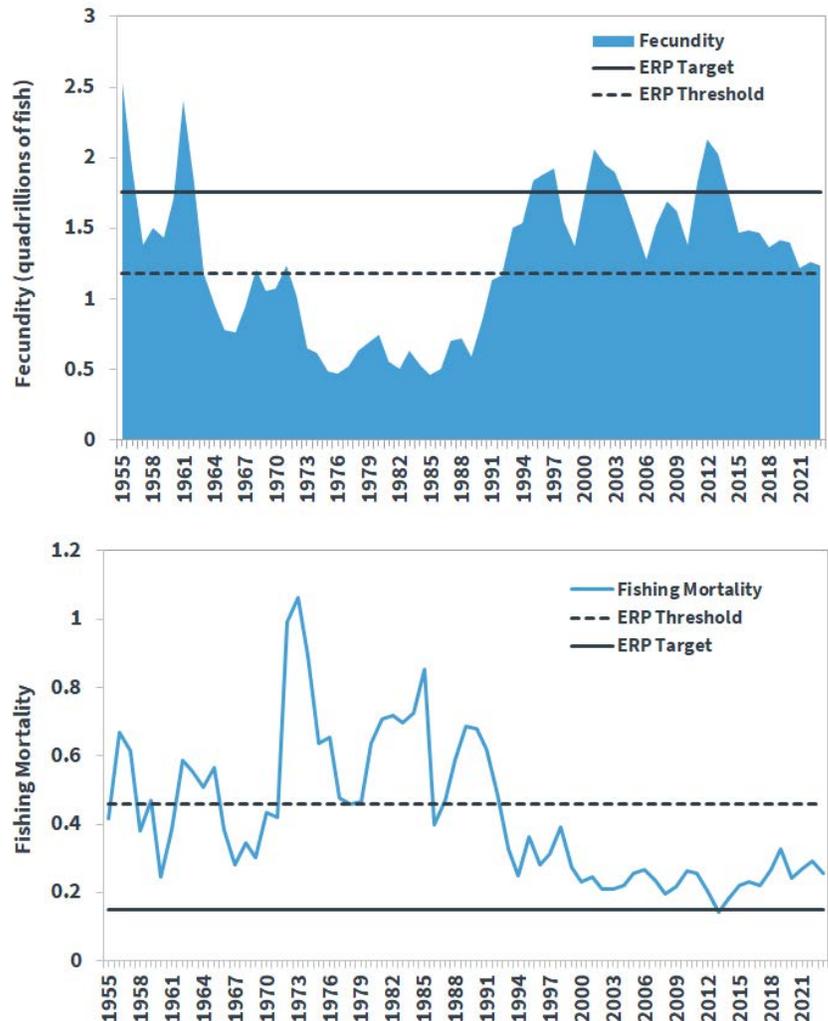
Atlantic menhaden support the largest fisheries by volume on the Atlantic coast. The catch is processed into fish oil and meal for a wide variety of products and used as bait for a number of commercial and recreational fisheries. Menhaden are also an important prey species for many predators, including striped bass, bluefish, marine mammals, and birds like osprey. To balance the needs of the fishery with those of predators in the marine ecosystem, the Commission has taken an innovative ecosystem approach to managing the species. Since 2020, the Commission has used an ecosystem model to establish ecological reference points (ERPs) that take into account menhaden's role as a forage fish. A separate single-species model is used to estimate Atlantic menhaden population size and fishing mortality to compare to ERPs to determine stock status and quota options. The approach combines the strengths of both types of models (single-species and ecosystem models) and represents one of the few Atlantic coast fisheries where an ecosystem model is used to provide quantitative management advice.

In 2025, the Commission's ecosystem model was updated to include additional data on key predator and prey species and an improved model structure. A change to the single-species model was also made by working with external scientists to revise the estimate of natural mortality. Natural mortality is the rate at which fish die due to natural causes like predation and disease, and it is an influential parameter in the single-species model. The revised, lower estimate of natural mortality changed the menhaden population size and fishing mortality over the entire time-series, with estimates of total biomass being lower and estimates of fishing mortality being higher than previously assumed.

While the change did not affect stock status – Atlantic menhaden were not overfished and not experiencing overfishing – it did result in recommendations for a lower quota for the 2026 fishing season compared to the 2023-2025 quota. For 2026, the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board set the total allowable catch (TAC) at

Atlantic Menhaden Fecundity (top) and Full Fishing Mortality (bottom)

Source: Atlantic Menhaden Single-Species Assessment Update, 2025



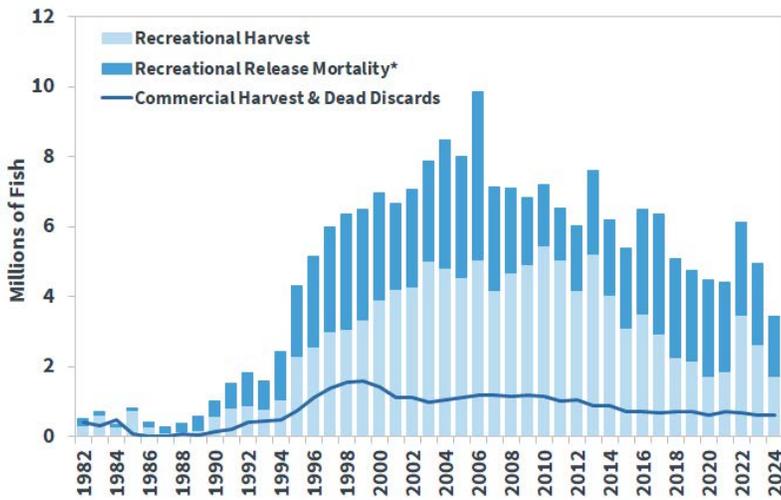
186,840 mt, a 20% decrease from the 2023-2025 TAC of 233,550 mt. This drop in quota responds to assessment findings that indicate fishing mortality (F) was above the ERP F target and fecundity (a measure of the number of eggs the stock can produce in a year) was below the ERP fecundity target. Projections indicated the 2026 TAC would have a zero percent chance of overfishing in 2026. The Board will meet in November 2026 to set the TAC for 2027, 2028, and possibly 2029.

Atlantic Striped Bass

Atlantic striped bass is regularly referred to as America's greatest game fish on the Atlantic coast. High demand for this species among fishermen and consumers, coupled

Atlantic Striped Bass Commercial Landings & Recreational Landings and Release Mortality

Source: 2024 Stock Assessment Update and 2025 State Compliance Reports



*9% of fish released alive are assumed to die because of being caught.

with the complexity of its seasonal distribution along the coast, makes sustainable management of the population challenging. The dynamic nature of the fishery's management will likely continue for years to come, especially as the Commission focuses on rebuilding the stock to its biomass target by 2029 and amidst concerns about low recruitment and the lack of strong year-classes to support the stock and the fishery.

Throughout 2025, the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board considered further reductions in fishery removals in response to stock projections indicating a low probability of meeting the 2029 stock rebuilding deadline and concern about the lack of strong year-classes behind the 2018 year-class. After a thorough public comment process and considerable deliberation, the Board decided not to move forward with the proposed 12% reduction. Preliminary estimates of 2025 recreational catch through June were lower than anticipated and suggested the projections may have underestimated the probability of rebuilding by 2029 and overestimated the reductions necessary to rebuild. The Board noted the over 4,000 public comments they received on Draft Addendum III were sharply divided on the issue, as was the Board itself. The Board approved two changes through Addendum III: tagging commercially-harvested striped bass by the first point of landing and a standard method for measuring total length of striped bass.

Ultimately, the Board maintained current recreational measures and commercial quotas, noting the potential economic consequences of the proposed reduction, the low fishing mortality rate in 2024, and preliminary indications of even lower catch in 2025. However, the Board continues to be concerned about the seven consecutive years of low recruitment in Chesapeake Bay and the impact on the stock as those weak year-classes become the majority of the spawning stock biomass after 2029. To address this, the Board approved the establishment of a work group to consider these upcoming stock and management challenges beyond 2029.

Horseshoe Crab

Horseshoe crabs provide unique marine resource management issues along the Atlantic coast. An ecologically important species, horseshoe crab eggs are a primary food source for red knots, which are considered threatened under the Endangered Species Act, as they stop over in the Delaware Bay region during their migration from South America to the Arctic. Horseshoe crabs are also economically important, providing bait for commercial American eel and whelk fisheries along the coast. Additionally, their bright blue blood is collected by the biomedical industry to produce Limulus Amoebocyte Lysate, the most widely used reagent for detecting contaminants in medical devices and drugs. The challenge for fisheries managers is to balance horseshoe crab harvest to meet these diverse needs, while ensuring sustainability of the resource for future generations.





Mid-Atlantic Species

Since the 1980s, the Commission has worked jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) on the management of bluefish, summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The Commission coordinates management in state waters (0 – 3 miles from shore) and the Council coordinates management in federal waters (3 – 200 miles from shore). All four species are highly sought after by commercial harvesters and recreational anglers throughout Southern New England and the Mid-Atlantic. Through the joint management efforts, all four species are not overfished nor experiencing overfishing.

Based on concerns related to uncertainty and variability in the recreational fishery catch estimates and the need to frequently change measures based on those data, the Commission and Council have been working on a process to improve how recreational management measures are set (bag, size, and season limits). The Commission and Council use a Percent Change Approach for setting recreational measures, which

accounts for stock status when setting measures and creates more opportunities for stability in management measures.

In 2025, a change was made to the approach to add a fourth biomass category to guide whether measures should change. The added category is for stocks near their biomass target and establishes a separate process for overfished stocks. These changes have and will be implemented in two phases. The first phase, which was implemented in late 2025 to set 2026 and 2027 measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass, continues to use a harvest-based target. For bluefish, which is under a rebuilding plan, the Commission and Council will use the process outlined in the rebuilding plan for setting recreational measures until the stock is declared rebuilt.

The second phase of modifications, which will be implemented for setting 2030 recreational measures and beyond, will update the process to use a catch-based target. Unlike the current process, which focuses on achieving a specific level of predicted harvest, a catch-based approach aims to achieve a target level of total

Because of horseshoe crab's importance in the Delaware Bay, harvest is informed through the use of the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework. In 2025, under recently approved Addendum IX, which allows the Horseshoe Crab Management Board to set multi-year specifications for male-only harvest, the Board set an annual harvest limit of 500,000 male horseshoe crabs and zero female Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crabs for 2026 and 2027. While the ARM Framework output allowed for a small amount of female harvest, the Board elected to maintain zero female horseshoe crab harvest for the next two fishing years as a conservative measure while it conducts a Horseshoe Crab Stakeholder Engagement Workshop on Management in the Delaware Bay Region. Through this process, stakeholders will evaluate several aspects of the ARM Framework and consider changes to better align the model with stakeholder values. Under Addendum IX, the Board can maintain the harvest limit of 500,000 male horseshoe crabs through 2028 based on the 2025 ARM Framework output with no annual action required. The Board will continue to review survey data on red knots and horseshoe crabs each year and can modify the specifications before 2028 if necessary.

dead catch, including both harvest and dead discards. This approach will allow for more explicit consideration of how measures affect discards.

The Commission and Council also continued to make progress on the development of the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment. Based on comments received during scoping, the two bodies agreed that recreational sector separation and recreational data collection should be addressed separately. Further development of the amendment will focus on management options for recreational sector separation, including mode management (private angler versus for-hire), as well as consideration of for-hire permitting and reporting requirements. Given the complexity of issues related to recreational data collection and use, as well as need to more clearly define the objectives for recreational data collection improvement, the Commission and Council will address this issue over a longer timeframe.

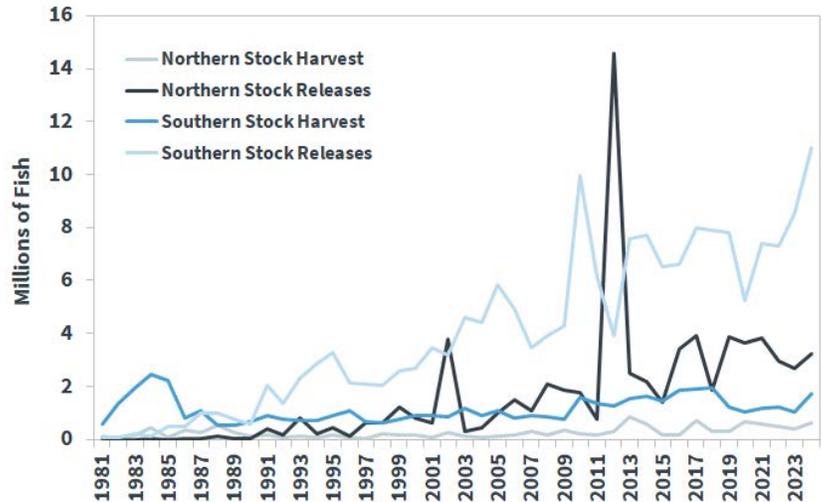
Red Drum

Red drum, also known as redfish, are beloved game fish found along the Atlantic coast from Massachusetts to Florida. Highly sought after by recreational anglers, especially in the South where fishing is exclusively for sport, red drum thrive in estuarine waters during their younger years before moving to deeper areas as adults. While the northern population is healthy and not overfished, the southern stock (South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida) is currently experiencing overfishing, emphasizing the need for ongoing conservation efforts.

In 2025, the Sciaenids Management Board approved Addendum II to Amendment 2. The Addendum updates red drum management, with the goal of improving efficiency, flexibility, and timeliness in implementation of new measures and providing assessment advice. The Addendum establishes a process whereby states can propose management measures in response to new assessment advice, including assessment analyses outside of the Commission’s stock

Red Drum Recreational Harvest and Release by Stock

Source: NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program, 2025



assessment process. It also allows the Board to approve new methods to estimate the impact of different management options on fishing mortality. In order to end overfishing of the southern stock, states will reduce fishing effort to achieve a fishing mortality of $F_{30\%}$. In 2026, South Carolina and Georgia will submit proposals for a 14.4% reduction for Board review, while Florida’s current measures are estimated to have achieved the reduction.

Northern stock states of New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina will maintain their current fishing regulations, while Virginia, Maryland, and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission will all implement a 3 fish



bag limit and 18"-26" inch total length slot. These measures, which are currently in place for Virginia, are meant to simplify management and enforcement in the shared waterbodies of the three jurisdictions. Although these measures will raise Maryland's current red drum bag limit from 1 fish to 3 fish, the Board noted these new measures will lower the 5-fish bag limit for red drum in the Potomac River to 3 fish, providing some additional protection to red drum within the 18"-26" total length slot. The implementation date for all new measures is September 1, 2026.

Tautog

Tautog, also known as blackfish, are sturdy fish found along the Northeast Atlantic coast from Nova Scotia down to Georgia, with the highest numbers between Cape Cod and Chesapeake Bay. They can live for over 30 years and are highly prized by anglers for their fight and tasty meat. While most of the catch comes from recreational fishing, commercial fishing also targets tautog, especially in states like New York and Massachusetts. Because of their site fidelity, tautog are assessed and managed in four regional groupings – Massachusetts-Rhode Island (MARI), Long Island Sound (LIS), New Jersey-New York Bight (NJ-NYB) and Delaware-Maryland-Virginia (DMV).

In 2025, the Tautog Management Board received the results of the Regional Stock Assessments Update,



Stock Status of Tautog in the MARI, LIS, NJ-NYB, and DMV Regions

Spawning Stock Biomass				
Region	Target	Threshold	2024	Status
MARI	6,143 mt	4,595 mt	9,572 mt	Not overfished
LIS	9,799 mt	7,349 mt	13,718 mt	Not overfished
NJ-NYB	7,910 mt	5,929 mt	7,900 mt	Not overfished
DMV	4,400 mt	3,236 mt	2,687 mt	Overfished

Fishing Mortality				
Region	Target	Threshold	2024	Status
MARI	0.27	0.46	0.26	Not overfishing
LIS	0.25	0.35	0.25	Not overfishing
NJ-NYB	0.20	0.33	0.44	Overfishing
DMV	0.18	0.29	0.36	Overfishing

which found stock status varies by region. Tautog were not overfished nor experiencing overfishing in MARI and LIS; not overfished but experiencing overfishing in NJ-NYB; and overfished and experiencing overfishing in DMV.

Stock status remained unchanged for the MARI and LIS regions from the 2021 update but did change for the NJ-NYB and DMV regions. The NJ-NYB region went from being overfished but not experiencing overfishing in the 2021 update to not being overfished but experiencing overfishing in this update. The DMV region was previously not overfished nor experiencing overfishing but was considered overfished and experiencing overfishing in the 2025 update.

Since the 2021 update, recruitment has increased in the LIS and NJ-NYB regions, and MARI shows a slight increase in spawning stock biomass. In the DMV, fishing mortality had been low since 2012 before reaching a peak in 2021 followed by a sharp decline thereafter. Total removals have increased in all regions, driven primarily by increases in recreational harvest.

In response to the assessment findings, the Board initiated an addendum to address changes in stock status for NJ-NYB and DMV. The Draft Addendum will also consider allowing the MARI and LIS regions to modify management for precautionary purposes.

Fisheries Science to Support Management

Management of sustainable fisheries relies on accurate and timely scientific advice.

The Commission strives to produce sound, actionable science through a rigorous, peer-reviewed stock assessment process. Assessments are developed using a broad suite of fishery-independent surveys, fishery-dependent monitoring, and research conducted by state and federal scientists, and academic institutions. The Commission's scientific goals include developing innovative methodologies and enhancing state stock assessment capabilities. Achieving the goals ensures that robust science supports the Commission's evaluation of stock status and adaptive fisheries management actions.

STOCK ASSESSMENTS

In 2025, Commission analytical teams completed multiple species assessments and continued work on several stock assessments scheduled for completion in 2026. Each assessment supports significant management decisions and advances the quality of Atlantic fisheries science. Noteworthy achievements include new benchmark assessments for American lobster and ecosystem reference points for Atlantic menhaden, along with assessment updates for Atlantic menhaden, tautog, weakfish, and horseshoe crab. Additionally, state stock assessment scientists contributed to federal stock assessments for black sea bass, scup, summer flounder, bluefish, winter flounder, and Atlantic herring.

American Lobster

American lobster is one of the most valuable commercial fisheries in the US with an average annual landings value exceeding \$650 million. Given the economic importance of this fishery, the Commission regularly assesses the status of the resource either through annual data updates or through a more comprehensive benchmark stock assessment and peer review process every five years. The population is managed and assessed as two stocks: the Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock inhabiting waters from northeast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts to the US/Canadian border in Maine; and the Southern New England (SNE) stock found in waters southwest of Cape Cod to North Carolina.

In 2025, the Commission completed a new stock assessment that included abundance, exploitation, and environmental data through 2023. Abundance reference points are the primary metric to evaluate stock health, while exploitation reference points are more uncertain and are intended to

provide a safeguard against sudden increases in fishing pressure. Exploitation is the proportion of lobsters removed by fishing compared to the total population. American lobster are sensitive to environmental conditions, particularly temperature. Therefore, environmental data were analyzed alongside population and fishery data to identify potential changes in the stock's productivity.

The GOM/GBK stock makes up the majority of landings, averaging 93% of coastwide landings in the past five years. The new stock assessment determined the GOM/GBK stock is not depleted but abundance has declined 34% since peak levels in 2018 which may adversely impact the economic condition of the fishery. While the abundance remains above the reference point, overfishing is occurring, with recent exploitation slightly above the management reference point threshold. Environmental conditions in the GOM/GBK region remain favorable for lobster.

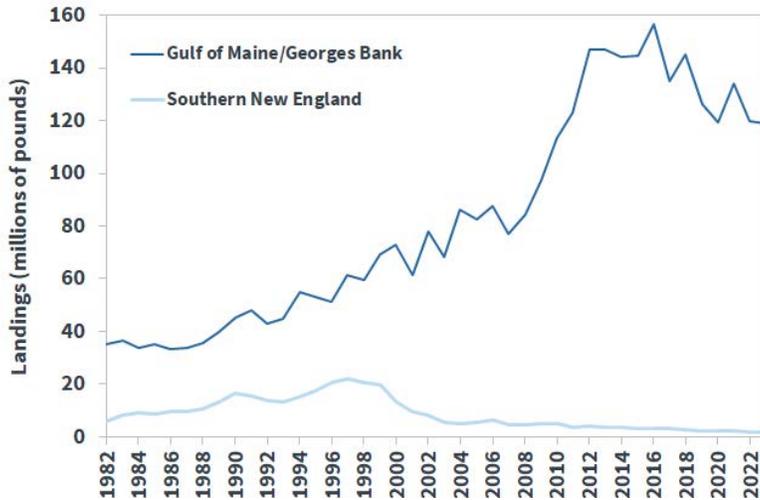


Conversely, the SNE stock is significantly depleted with record low abundances for all life stages in recent years, although overfishing is not occurring. SNE indices show a peak in abundance in the mid- to late 1990s, followed by declines to record low levels. Several SNE surveys that historically encountered lobsters have not caught any lobsters in recent years. Water temperatures have increased to unfavorable levels for lobsters, particularly in inshore waters. The SNE stock made up about a quarter of the total landings in the 1990s but accounted for less than 2% of total landings in the past five years.



American Lobster Landings by Stock

Source: 2024 Stock Assessment Update and 2025 State Compliance Reports



The assessment acknowledged that, despite adverse environmental conditions being the major contributor to the poor condition of the SNE stock, significant management action would provide the best chance of stabilizing or improving abundance and reproductive capacity of the stock. For the GOM/GBK stock, the assessment recommended development of a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to clearly define fishery management objectives across stakeholders, better understand socioeconomic conditions, and identify management tools supported by the industry that prevent further abundance declines. In 2026, the American Lobster Management Board will consider development of an MSE along with other potential management responses.

FISH POPULATION SURVEYS

The Commission coordinates the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) and the South Atlantic component of the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP-SA). The programs facilitate state- and federally-funded fishery-independent surveys that provide consistent sampling and long-term data series to inform fisheries stock assessments. In 2025, NEAMAP and SEAMAP-SA focused on streamlining data collection, improving collaboration across surveys, and expanding data collection in coastal waters of the eastern US.

NEAMAP

In 2025, NEAMAP supported changes in data collection methods via software and database management workshops among survey partners. The first workshop resulted in several survey programs starting the process of changing

from existing paper data collection methods to a digitized format, with the goal of streamlining data delivery to stock assessments. The Commission supported individual surveys by acquiring digital data collection equipment and software. A second workshop produced recommendations for database management methods, with the goal of helping state agencies make their data more accessible and aiding in future transitions from outdated databases to more modern alternatives. In 2025, NEAMAP data were used in several stock assessments, including American lobster, tautog, and ecosystem models for managing Atlantic menhaden.

SEAMAP-South Atlantic

The SEAMAP-South Atlantic survey data are used to assess the status of reef fish and nearshore species in the Southeast US. The SEAMAP Habitat Characterization Work Group evaluated the costs and benefits of collecting environmental data during surveys, notably the usefulness of such data in stock assessments. In 2025, SEAMAP survey data were used in spot and croaker annual data updates, the weakfish assessment update, as well as assessments for species managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

HABITAT PROTECTION, RESTORATION, AND ENHANCEMENT

Protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish habitats are essential to promoting the sustainability of fisheries along the Atlantic coast. Many Commission-managed species depend on structurally complex habitats such as oyster reefs, salt marshes, and other estuarine features that support feeding, spawning, and nursery functions. Because oyster reefs also provide ecosystem services including water filtration, shoreline stabilization, and biodiversity support, maintaining and restoring oyster reefs is a priority for many state and regional partners.

To advance oyster reef restoration, the Commission’s Habitat Committee developed the Atlantic States Shell Recycling Program report, which provides practical guidance for agencies, nonprofits, and local partners interested in establishing or expanding shell recycling programs that support habitat restoration and living shoreline projects. The report addresses key considerations such as shell collection, curing and storage, siting, partnerships, outreach, and coordination with restoration practitioners, while recognizing that regulatory frameworks vary by state. It does not provide design or permitting guidance for restoration but emphasizes the importance of monitoring to demonstrate ecological



return on investment. Building on lessons learned coastwide, the Habitat Committee continues to strengthen partner engagement to identify near-term priorities that best support state needs.

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

As a member of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP), the Commission addresses habitat threats through a broad and coordinated approach, leveraging resources from many agencies, organizations, and corporations to protect and improve Atlantic fish habitat. ACFHP operates under the purview of the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

On-the-Ground Projects

In 2025, ACFHP partnered with USFWS to fund three new on-the-ground restoration projects that advance shoreline resilience, habitat connectivity, and applied science across the region.

In Florida, ACFHP, in collaboration with the University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory, supported an oyster reef and living shoreline restoration project along the Matanzas River in the Town of Marineland. The project will construct approximately 500 feet of living shoreline using innovative 'oyster arch' structures designed to reduce wave energy, stabilize eroding shorelines, and provide substrate for oyster growth. These structures will replace existing rock rubble armoring and protect newly planted mangroves and marsh grasses, improving fish and shellfish habitat while restoring lost ecosystem services. The site will also serve as a hands-on education and workforce development resource, reaching an estimated 5,000–7,000 K–12 students annually and supporting graduate-level coastal restoration training.

In Chesapeake Bay, ACFHP provided continued funding to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, in partnership with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, to expand a three-year study evaluating how restored oyster reefs support fish and forage species compared to non-restored areas. The project integrates scientific monitoring with angler-led citizen science and outreach events, including the annual Rod and Reef Slam Fishing Tournament, to increase public awareness of oyster reef benefits.

In Pepperell, Massachusetts, ACFHP supported the Burke's Pond Dam Removal and Habitat Restoration Project on Sucker Brook. Led by the Squan-a-Tissit Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the project will remove the final barrier to fish passage, restoring coldwater stream connectivity and improving habitat for brook trout, American eel, and other species through dam removal, riparian restoration, instream

habitat enhancements, and long-term monitoring. For more information on all ACFHP-funded projects, please visit: atlanticfishhabitat.org/on-the-ground-projects/.

Science and Data Projects

In 2025, ACFHP initiated development of a guidance document to inform interstate and regional seed-transfer practices for submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), with a primary focus on *Zostera marina* (eel grass), as well as *Ruppia maritima* (widgeon grass). The guidance document will compile and interpret the latest science and best management practices (BMPs) to support seed-based research, restoration, and management, while also serving as a resource for agencies and organizations considering policies or regulations. Addressing seagrass information gaps will allow restoration practitioners to more effectively conserve and restore habitat that supports several ecosystem services, including serving as an important nursery ground for young fish.



Outreach and Communications

ACFHP also completed a new interactive ArcGIS StoryMap showcasing coastwide efforts to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance fish habitats along the US Atlantic coast from Maine to the Florida Keys. The StoryMap, "*Making the Connection: From Headwaters to Coral Reefs*," highlights how the Atlantic coast is a living network of connected habitats, where healthy rivers, estuaries, wetlands, and nearshore marine environments support fish, communities, and coastal economies. Through maps, photos, project examples, and conservation tools, the StoryMap illustrates ACFHP's work across four ecologically distinct subregions: the North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and South Florida.

The StoryMap launch coincides with preparations to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the National Fish Habitat Partnership in 2026, marking two decades of collaboration to protect and restore fish habitats across the United States.

Dependable and Timely Fisheries Statistics

Effective management depends on quality fishery-dependent data to inform stock assessments and management decisions.

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), composed of state, regional, and federal partners along the Atlantic coast, plays a critical role in the collection and consolidation of national fishery data. It delivers timely and accurate catch and effort, biological, and socioeconomic data on Atlantic coast recreational, for-hire, and commercial fisheries to support science and management.

ACCSP was established in 1995 as one of five regional Fisheries Information Networks (FINs) to resolve challenges related to inconsistent temporal and spatial coverage and incompatible datasets. By standardizing and centralizing fishery-dependent data collection and management along the Atlantic coast, ACCSP ensures greater accuracy and uniformity. FINs, as collaborative state-federal programs, provide reliable and timely marine fisheries data within their respective regions, supporting informed decision-making and sustainable resource management.

In 2025, ACCSP collaborated with state and federal partners to maintain, extend, and modernize data systems. Major accomplishments include (1) building software that meets specific partner needs, reduces the burden on industry, and meets the reporting requirements of multiple jurisdictions in a single report; (2) providing funding at the state, regional, and federal levels to help partners complete projects that address ACCSP’s current goals and priorities; and (3) collecting, standardizing, and disseminating data in a timely fashion while maintaining the necessary levels of confidentiality.

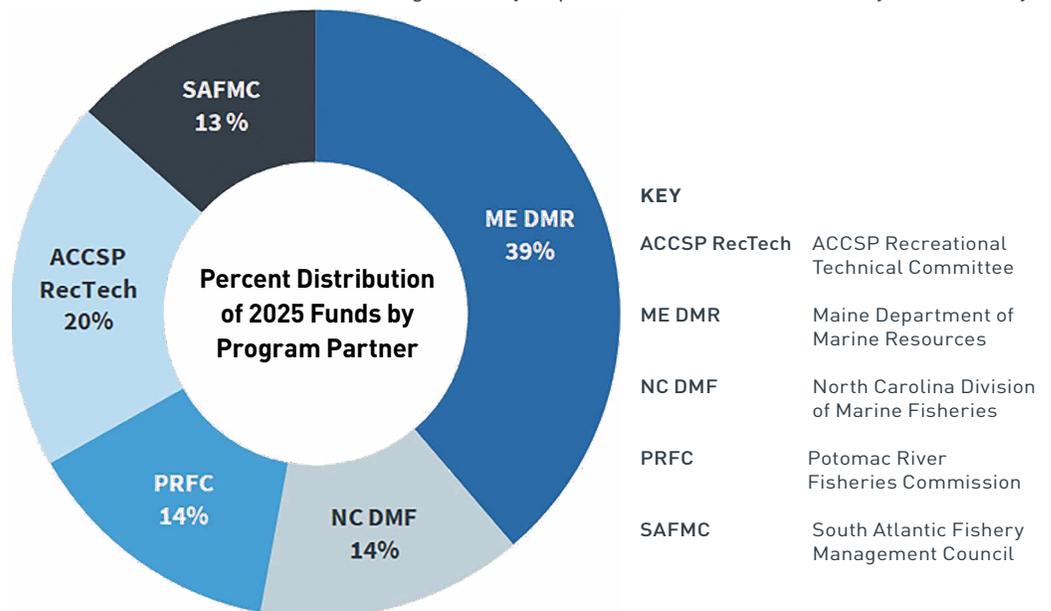
Funded Projects

Each year, ACCSP allocates funding to its program partners to enhance the quality and efficiency of fisheries data collection and management. In 2025, with support from Congressional

funding, ACCSP awarded almost \$1 million to several projects along the Atlantic coast, focusing on electronic reporting, biological sampling, and citizen science (see figure). Project highlights include the modernization of legacy data systems in North Carolina; pilot testing the use of recreational catch cards to capture release information within the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Access Point Angler Intercept Survey; and developing an expanded research initiative for commercial black sea bass fisheries in the Gulf of Maine. To find out more about the funded projects, visit: accsp.org/what-we-do/partner-project-funding/.

Software Development

ACCSP provides partner agencies with electronic reporting tools for commercial dealers and commercial, for-hire, and recreational harvesters through the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) suite of applications. SAFIS applications are available to dealers and harvesters at no cost, fulfilling mandatory reporting requirements of state and federal fisheries agencies. In 2025, SAFIS applications had over 7,800 users, with thousands more using third party applications to submit data to the SAFIS database. These electronic reporting systems have significantly improved the ease and efficiency of data entry



for the fishing industry, enabling faster data submission to ACCSP and its partners.

In 2025, ACCSP worked with partners to modernize and streamline electronic Dealer Reporting (eDR) software to improve functionality and layout; the redesigned system was successfully launched the end of 2025. With the redesign, ACCSP has transitioned fish dealer report submissions to automated data processing, with interactive data validations. This transition improves security, efficiency, and data consistency to support fisheries management.

Data Collection and Dissemination

ACCSP compiles data from the Atlantic states and federally-permitted fisheries to support regional data needs for stock assessments and management in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast regions. In 2025, ACCSP uploaded new 2024 data and revised historical data to ensure consistency among state, federal, and regional datasets, enabling scientific and management analyses to use the best available data. These data are available in the ACCSP Data Warehouse and are included as the Atlantic commercial contribution to NOAA's annual publication, *Fisheries of the United States*. ACCSP data contributed to at least 14 Atlantic coast stock assessments completed by the Commission and East Coast Science Centers in 2025.

Within the ACCSP Data Warehouse, the biological module provides fish length, weight, and age data to support stock assessments and policy development for the Commission and partner agencies. ACCSP maintains a biological inventory, a partner-managed repository documenting biological sampling programs across state and federal agencies. A key focus in 2025 was the continued development and expansion of the biological module, which aggregates high-resolution biological sample data using standardized formats approved through ACCSP's committee process. The biological module includes datasets for species such as American lobster, Atlantic herring, and Jonah crab. In 2025, ACCSP advanced two joint initiatives by establishing automated data submission processes with North Carolina

and NOAA's Southeast Fisheries Science Center. These data collaborations extended the available information for all species in the South Atlantic region from 1990-2025. ACCSP administers state recreational data collection for NOAA's MRIP along the Atlantic coast and presents catch and effort estimates in the Data Warehouse. ACCSP continues to address the top three coastal priorities: improving catch estimate precision, developing for-hire logbook methods,



and improving estimates of released fish. In 2025, data governance and security were strengthened by ACCSP by advancing the process for approving confidential data access requests. A refined confidential access framework allows partners to grant either limited or full access based on user roles and data needs. Limited confidential access supports custom data requests, stock assessment activities, and research efforts, while full access enables authorized staff to query confidential data directly within the Warehouse. This structured approach ensures that sensitive fisheries data are protected while still being accessible to those who require it for scientific and management purposes.

The majority of the Commission’s budget goes directly to support the interstate fisheries management, monitoring, and science activities of the states.

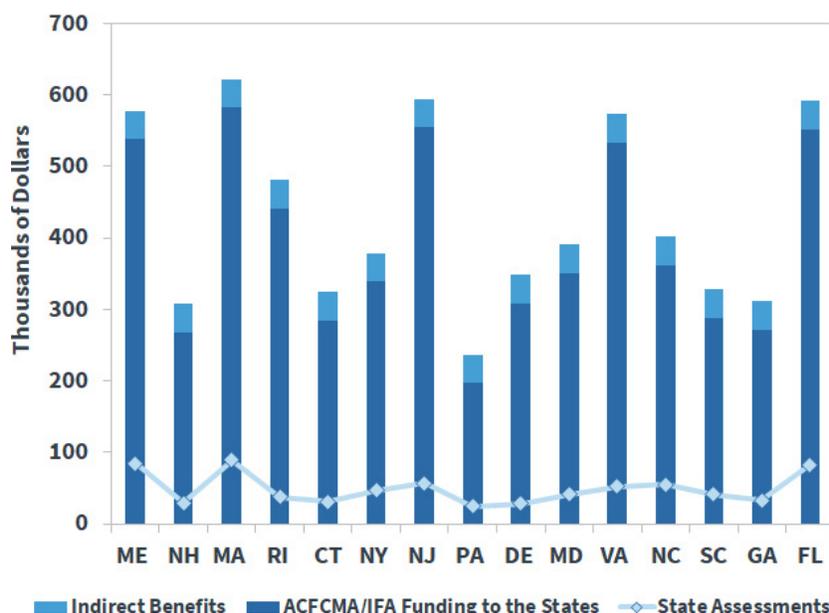
The Commission’s FY26 budget is \$35.3 million. The base funding (\$733,445) is provided by the member states’ annual appropriations, which are determined by the value of commercial fishing landings and saltwater recreational trips within each state. The bulk of the Commission’s funding is received through federal cooperative agreements funded by line-item appropriations in the NOAA budget to implement the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA) and the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, as well as provide oversight and management for state conduct of the Marine Recreational Information Program. The Commission also receives funds from NOAA Fisheries to carry out the provisions of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IFA). As seen in the accompanying graph, which illustrates the benefits states receive from ACFCMA and IFA, the majority of the Commission’s budget goes directly to support the interstate fisheries management, monitoring, and science activities of the states. USFWS also provides funding to the Commission through its Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program (Wallop/Breaux).

The following two pages provide a condensed statement of financial position information for the years ended June 30, 2025, and 2024.

2026 Return on State Assessments to the Commission

Source: FY26 ASMFC Assessments and FY25 ACFCMA & IFA Allocations

*Indirect Benefits include travel and per diem for 6 people from each state to participate in Commission meetings. Please note that this figure does not include the collective benefits derived from the work of the FMP Coordinators and Science Staff.



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Condensed Statement of Financial Position Information
June 30, 2025 and 2024

	ASSETS	
	2025	2024
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,288,172	\$ 365,863
Grants and accounts receivable	6,402,615	5,423,148
Prepaid expenses	10,000	85,331
Total Current Assets	7,700,787	5,874,342
Investments	1,169,039	1,117,284
Restricted Cash	158,467	326,973
Operating lease right-of-use asset, net	30,603	54,942
Property and equipment, net	2,637,134	2,743,010
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 11,696,030	\$ 10,116,551

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 4,294,597	\$ 2,913,392
Accrued salaries and vacation	881,559	850,023
Contract liabilities	699,986	473,586
Due to CARES Act recipients	36,081	259,049
Operating lease liability, current portion	19,204	41,048
Total Current Liabilities	5,931,427	4,537,098
LONG-TERM LIABILITIES		
Operating lease liability, long-term portion	44,540	63,061
Total Long-Term Liabilities	44,540	63,061
TOTAL LIABILITIES	5,975,967	4,600,159
Net assets without donor restrictions	5,720,063	5,516,392
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 11,696,030	\$ 10,116,551

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Condensed Statement of Activities Information
 Years Ended June 30, 2025 and 2024

	2025	2024
REVENUE		
Grant revenue	\$ 40,772,545	\$ 56,212,911
State assessments	733,444	733,445
Annual meeting fees	5,549	6,325
Other	51,869	32,504
Total Revenue	41,563,407	56,985,185
EXPENSES		
CARES Act pass through	2,656,891	12,816,756
Salaries and fringe benefits	8,286,579	7,749,733
Subcontracts	20,223,894	18,703,475
Travel	1,333,399	1,279,427
Disaster Relief Expense	7,792,238	15,442,441
Cyber Breach Expense	-	234,490
Other	1,066,735	888,347
Total Expenses	41,359,736	57,114,669
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	203,671	(129,484)
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	5,516,392	5,645,876
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	\$ 5,720,063	\$ 5,516,392

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Chelsea Tuohy, Fishery Management Coordinator

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COVER

Horseshoe crabs spawning on a Delaware beach
© Photography by Ariane Müller

INSIDE COVER

Young-of-year (YOY) Atlantic striped bass sampled as part of the Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources (MD DNR) YOY Survey
© Stephen Badger, MD DNR

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Spawning horseshoe crabs © Gregory Breese, USFWS

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Nichola Meserve with a male black sea bass
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Angler with an adult red drum © Ken Neill

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Commercial fisherman harvesting tautog © Wes Townsend

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Eelgrass © NOAA Chesapeake Bay Program

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Egg-bearing female American lobster © NOAA Ocean Technology Foundation

PAGE 13

Healthy shellfish bed serving as a natural living shoreline
© Partnership for the Delaware Estuary

HEADER FOR PAGES 14-15

Beaufort, North Carolina © Tina Berger, ASMFC

PAGE 15

American lobster being sampled as part of the Northern Shrimp Trawl Survey, © ASMFC

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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