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ASMFC
FISHERIES focus
Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Spring Meeting
May 2-5, 2022

Westin Crystal City
1800 Richmond Highway
Arlington, VA 22202

Final Agenda

This will be a hybrid meeting (both in-person and via webinar) to allow for remote participation by Commissioners and interested stakeholders. For information on remote access, go to http://www.asmfc.org/home/2022-spring-meeting. The Law Enforcement Committee meeting will not be available remotely. The agenda is subject to change and reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

MONDAY, MAY 2

10 AM – Noon **Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council**

- Public Comment
- Consider Funding Decision Document and FY2023 Request for Proposals (*J. Simpson*) **Action**
- Committee Updates
  - 2022 Data Accountability Report – Completed
  - Status Update on 2023-2027 Atlantic Recreational Implementation Plan
  - Status Update on Methodology for Logbook Estimates of Catch and Effort with Dockside Validation
- Program Updates

Noon – 1 PM **Lunch Break**

1 – 2 PM **Coastal Pelagics Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider Quota Block Timeframe for Cobia **Possible Final Action**
  - Technical Committee Report (*A. Giuliano*)
  - Consider Changes to the Three-Year Quota Block for Harvest Specifications for Cobia (*J. Cimino*)
- Updates on Spanish Mackerel Stock Assessment Timeline and Federal Waters Management (*E. Franke*)
- Elect Vice-Chair **Action**

2:15 – 4:15 PM **Sciaenids Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider Red Drum Simulation Assessment and Peer Review Report **Action**
  - Presentation of Red Drum Simulation Assessment Report (*J. Ballanger*)
  - Presentation of Peer Review Panel Report (*A. Schueller*)

continued, see SPRING MEETING on page 6

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.

Upcoming Meetings

May 2 - 5
ASMFC Spring Meeting, The Westin, Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA; visit http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/5/2022/ASMFC-2022-Spring-Meeting/1761 for more information

May 16 (1 - 4 PM)
Black Sea Bass Stakeholder Meeting; visit https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/research-track-working-group-2022-improving-assessments-black-sea-bass for more information

May 17 (1 - 4 PM)
Assessment Science Committee; visit http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/5/2022/Assessment-Science-Committee-/1911 for more information

May 18 (10 AM - Noon)
Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee; visit http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/5/2022/Atlantic-Menhaden-Stock-Assessment-Subcommittee/1931 for more information

May 23 (9 AM - 4 PM)
ASMFC Habitat Committee Spring Meeting; visit http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/5/2022/Habitat-Committee-Spring-Meeting-/1944 for more information

June 1 (10 AM - Noon)
Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee; visit http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/6/2022/Atlantic-Menhaden-Stock-Assessment-Subcommittee/1932 for more information

June 7 - 9
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hyatt Place, Riverhead, NY; visit https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2022/june-2022-council-meeting for more information

June 13 - 17
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Key West Marriott Beachside, Key West, FL; visit https://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/council-meetings/ for more information

June 28 - 30
New England Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland, ME; visit https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/june-2022-council-meeting for more information

July 18 - 22
American Plaice and Spiny Dogfish Research Track Peer Review; visit https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov//event/american-plaice-spiny-dogfish-2022-research-track-assessment-peer-review-meeting for more information

August 1-4
ASMFC 2022 Summer Meeting, The Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA

August 8-11
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting, The Notary Hotel, 21 North Juniper Street, Philadelphia, PA; visit https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2022/august-2022-council-meeting for more information

Commission and Federal Partners Ink New MOU: Renewing Commitment to Cooperative Science and Management

In March, the Commission signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NOAA Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The Commission is grateful to NOAA Fisheries and FWS for their longstanding and continued scientific and financial support. Also notable is the addition of the USGS for the first time, which has shown itself to be an increasingly valuable source of scientific research for the Commission.

The MOU codifies federal support and cooperation under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, and the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act. Through the MOU, the Commission, NOAA Fisheries, FWS, and USGS formally agree to work together and share capacity across federal and interstate agencies to meet the objectives of the statues. In doing so, the Commission and its federal partners will coordinate on shared priorities and commit resources to support interstate fishery management.

The MOU stipulates signatories will continue to improve the scientific information for management of recreational and commercial fisheries priorities, such as improving information needed on predator and prey species' life histories and interactions, fish habitat needs, and environmental conditions. The parties also intend to seek opportunities to expand their respective capabilities where possible for the application of population and habitat modeling and assessment, annual and integrated monitoring, ecological systems modeling and forecasting, and science for adaptive management and modeling.

As the primary federal agency responsible for the stewardship of U.S. ocean resources and their habitats, NOAA Fisheries has been an important federal partner to the Commission for five decades. Managers and scientists from NOAA Fisheries have a voting seat on the vast majority of Commission species management boards and serve on numerous species technical support groups. Through a Cooperative Agreement, NOAA Fisheries and the Commission are able to fund research and science priorities important to both entities. For example, NOAA Fisheries has provided funding for many fisheries not managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, such as horseshoe crab, Atlantic menhaden, American lobster, and Atlantic striped bass. Conversely, the Commission has provided support to NOAA Fisheries in support of groundfish at-sea monitoring and training, administering federal aquaculture pilot funding, and the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summits. Some projects under the Cooperative Agreement that benefit both the Commission and NOAA Fisheries include funding for upgrades to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program capabilities, annual support for the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program, and East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning.

The contributions of FWS can be traced back to the genesis of the Atlantic Striped Bass Act in 1984. Currently, FWS has a voting seat on ASMFC Management Boards for Atlantic Striped Bass, Weakfish, Shad & River Herring, Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, Atlantic Menhaden, Atlantic Sturgeon, American Eel, and Horseshoe Crab. Of note, FWS has played a longstanding role in the Striped Bass Winter Tagging Cruise, provided significant assistance in developing the Revision to the Adaptive Resource Management Framework for horseshoe crab, and is active in American eel monitoring.

As the only agency within the Department of the Interior (DOI) with a non-regulatory science mission, USGS is considered the research arm of the DOI. As such, USGS is uniquely positioned to support the Commission and state marine fishery agencies with actionable science. Since 2018, the USGS Eastern Ecological Science Center (EESC) has increased engagement with the Commission and its partner agencies to determine where USGS science capabilities align with interstate science priorities. This engagement is designed to complement science support provided by NOAA and FWS. From rivers and streams to marine environments and brackish estuaries in between, EESC and the Commission are collaborating to bring together local, regional, and national expertise to provide the science needed to support effective fisheries management. Incorporating habitat considerations into fishery management decisions is critical because habitat loss and degradation have been identified as significant factors affecting the long-term fisheries productivity and sustainability.

The research partnership between EESC and the Commission encompasses a vast swath of science priorities that address USGS, EESC, Commission, and state priorities including habitat mapping and assessment, improving diadromous fish passage, studying migratory behavior, invasive species research, genetics and population modeling support, investigating unusual mortality events and fish diseases, evaluating temperature changes on freshwater and marine species, management support for endangered/threatened species, science to support management decision, and more.

Decades of collaboration between these agencies and the Commission and our member states have improved management and science for our shared Atlantic coast species. The Commission has always valued the contributions of these federal partners to the Commission's science and management process and looks forward to strengthening these relationships through this new MOU.

Redfish: Past Management, Present Challenges, and Future Assessments

Introduction

Attempts to regulate the Atlantic coast red drum fishery date back to the Commission's first Annual Meeting in 1942. At the meeting, a Delaware Commissioner urged that red drum be made a sport fish or be protected by adequate size limits and daily catch limits, and that its use as fertilizer be prohibited. By 1990, the stability of the stock was uncertain, with an exploitation level that was jeopardizing future recruitment. Through the implementation of more stringent regulations in the 1990s and 2000s, the stock is no longer subject to overfishing and sufficient numbers of young fish are surviving to become breeding adults, as most recently indicated by the 2017 Red Drum Stock Assessment.

Despite this achievement, managers still face challenges with red drum. Due to data deficiencies regarding the adult population, it cannot be determined at this time whether the stock is still overfished or rebuilt. This is because there is limited information on fish older than age 4 as a result of the fish's life history and regulations that restrict the harvest of fish larger than 27 inches. Due to these unknowns, managers continue to support efforts to provide these missing data for use in future stock assessments.

Red drum is scheduled for a benchmark stock assessment in 2024. In order to improve upon past modeling efforts and identify the most appropriate modeling approaches given our current data limitations, a new methodology is being used to evaluate how well several candidate models are able to accurately and precisely assess a simulated red drum population. This simulation assessment will help managers identify which candidate models should be used in the upcoming benchmark assessment.

Life History

The historic distribution of red drum on the Atlantic coast has been from Massachusetts through Florida, though few fish have been reported north of the Chesapeake Bay in recent years. Juveniles are most abundant in estuarine waters and inlets, while fish older than age four inhabit deeper waters. The adult fish migrate seasonally, moving offshore or south in the winter and inshore or north in the spring. Spawning occurs at night in the nearshore waters during the summer and fall. Prolific spawners, large females may produce up to two million eggs in a season. Eggs hatch within 24 to 36 hours of being spawned, and the larvae are carried by wind and tidal action into shallow, low salinity estuarine nursery areas. Juveniles and sub-adults stay in estuarine areas feeding on zooplankton and invertebrates such as small crabs and shrimp. Gradually, red drum expand their diet to include fish and larger invertebrates. Depending on the area, males mature between age one and four (20-28 inches in length), while females mature between age three and six (31-36 inches in length). Red drum may reach 60 years of age and 60 inches in length (corresponding to greater than 90 pounds in weight).

Species Snapshot

Red Drum

Sciaenops ocellatus

Management Unit
Maine through Florida

Interesting Facts:

- The name is derived from their color and the fact that during spawning time males produce a drum-like noise by vibrating a muscle in their swim bladder.
- Due to their unusual growth pattern, a 36" red drum may be anywhere from 6 - 50 years old
- Red drum have been successfully reared in hatcheries and released into South Carolina, Georgia and Florida estuaries in stock enhancement programs.
- Some scientists believe the purpose of the spot(s) near the tail is to mimic an eye. This fools predators into attacking the wrong end of the fish and gives the red drum a chance to escape.
- Largest on Record: 94 lbs. and 2 oz., Hatteras Island, North Carolina
- Oldest Recorded: 62 years old

Age at Maturity:

Males – Between the ages of one and four (20-28 inches in length)

Females – Between the ages of three and six (31-36 inches in length)

Stock Status: Overfishing not occurring

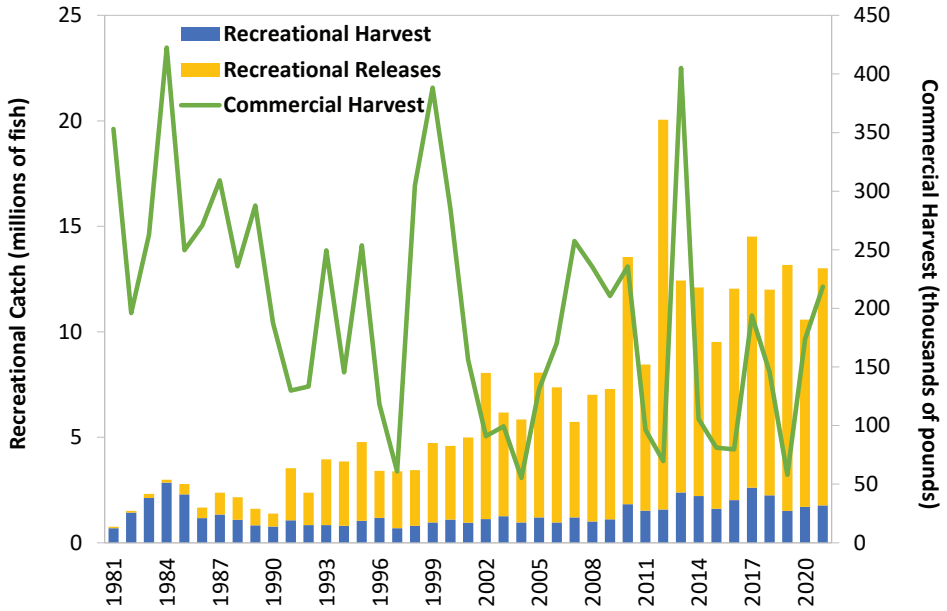
Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

Atlantic coast commercial landings of red drum have been reported as early as the 1880s. Since 1960, landings have fluctuated around 240,000 pounds, with a high of 627,800 pounds in 1950 and a low of 55,280 pounds in 2004. Landings in 2021 were 218,592 pounds. No directed commercial fishery currently exists for Atlantic red drum. Fish are landed as bycatch in several states, predominantly North Carolina, where gillnets take the vast majority of the state's harvest. Landings in North Carolina are restricted by an annual quota and low daily possession limit. Commercial harvest and sale in New Jersey through Virginia is restricted to recreational limits, while Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida prohibit commercial harvest. A harvest moratorium and Presidential Executive Order, enacted in 2007, prevents any harvest or sale of red drum from federal waters (3 - 200 miles from shore).

The recreational fishery for red drum is a nearshore fishery, targeting small "puppy drum" in shallow estuarine waters and large trophy fish along the Mid- and South Atlantic barrier islands. Harvest is restricted by minimum and maximum size limits and a daily trip limit. Due to strict commercial measures, the establishment of gamefish status in some states, and the great popularity of red drum by anglers,

recreational fishing has accounted for over 90% of all Atlantic coast red drum landings (by pounds) since 1982 and over 96% since 2011. Anglers from Florida through Virginia take most, if not all, of the coastwide annual recreational harvests. Annual harvests have historically ranged between 700,000 and 1.3 million fish per year, with the exception of some larger harvests in the mid-1980s. However, from 2011 to 2020, recreational harvests have all exceeded 1.5 million fish, and recreational harvests in five years (2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, and 2018) have exceeded 2 million fish. Meanwhile, recreational catch (harvest and releases) has increased over time, meaning that the percentage of fish that are caught and released has increased from about 6% in 1982 to more than 86% in 2021. Based on studies of mortality rates following release from gears common to the red drum recreational fishery, the most recent assessment assumed that 8% of fish released by the recreational fishery die.

Red Drum Recreational Catch and Commercial Landings
Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse, 2021



Atlantic Coastal Management

For close to two decades, red drum were jointly managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (state waters, 0-3 miles from shore) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council; federal waters, 3-200 miles from shore). The first interstate plan was developed in 1984. In 1990, the Council's plan closed federal waters to red drum harvest, and a 1998 amendment revised definitions for optimum yield and overfishing. Amendments to the interstate plan occurred in 1991 and 2002, partly in response to the Council Plan and Amendment. Following the implementation of Amendment 2 in 2003, the Council recommended transferring the authority for managing red drum in federal waters to the Commission. Two reasons for this decision were that all harvest is taken in state waters and that, due to data deficiencies, a rebuilding schedule for the federal plan could not be set as required by law. The transfer of authority became effective in late 2008. It does not affect the red drum harvest prohibition in federal waters.

The primary management goal of Amendment 2 is to achieve and maintain the stock's spawning potential at a level capable of sustaining the population. To achieve this goal, the plan further restricted the recreational fishery and maintained existing commercial regulations. The management approach is intended to increase the escapement of inshore juvenile fish to the offshore adult population, and protect the adult population from exploitation. Atlantic states from Florida through New Jersey implemented appropriate bag and size limits as required, including a maximum size limit of 27 inches total length. The Amendment also encourages those states outside the management unit (i.e., New York through Maine) to implement supportive measures to protect the red drum resource.

In 2013, Addendum I to Amendment 2 described red drum spawning habitats and designated several areas that are important spawning and nursery grounds for red drum as habitats of concern. This Addendum helps states to identify important areas that require monitoring to preserve the red drum stocks.

Similarly, a report on Sciaenid Fish Habitat was released in 2017 with information on habitat for several species, including red drum, during all stages of their lives, their associated Essential Fish Habitats and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, threats and uncertainties to their habitats, and recommendations for habitat management and research. This report is meant to be a resource when amending Fishery Management Plans in the future for these species.

Stock Status

The 2017 Red Drum Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicated overfishing is not occurring for red drum in either the northern (North Carolina-New Jersey) or southern (South Carolina-Florida) stocks. The assessment was unable to determine an overfished/not overfished status because population abundance could not be reliably estimated due to limited data for the older fish (ages 4+) that are not typically harvested due to the current fishery measures (slot-limits).

The assessment estimates annual static spawning potential ratios (sSPR) measured against previously established reference points for red drum. Overfishing is occurring if the three-year average sSPR is less than a threshold of 30%. The stock is managed to a target of 40% sSPR. sSPR is a measure of spawning stock biomass

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Spring Meeting Agenda (continued from page 1)

MONDAY, MAY 2

2:15 – 4:15 PM **Sciaenids Management Board (continued)**

- Progress Update on Black Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment (*J. Kipp*)
- Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger*) **Action**

TUESDAY, MAY 3

8:30 – 10 AM **Horseshoe Crab Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Progress Update on Draft Addendum VIII (*C. Starks*)
  - Review Recommendations on Options for Implementing the Adaptive Resource Management Framework Revision
  - Provide Guidance to the Plan Development Team
- Update on PDT Review of Biomedical Mortality and Best Management Practices for Biomedical Collections (*C. Starks*)

10:15 – 11:45 AM **Shad and River Herring Management Board**

- Consider American Shad Habitat Plans/Updates (*B. Neilan*) **Action**
  - Connecticut River
  - Merrimack River
- Consider American Shad and River Herring Sustainable Fishery Management Plan Updates (*B. Neilan*) **Action**
  - New York (River Herring)
  - Delaware River Basin Cooperative (American Shad)
- Consider Technical Committee Report from Board Task on Prioritizing Systems for Shad Recovery and Developing Inventory of Available Data to Support Development of Fish Passage Criteria (*B. Neilan*)
- Consider Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance for 2020 Fishing Year (*J. Boyle*) **Action**
- Update on the 2023 River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment
  - Discuss Stock Assessment Subcommittee Membership (*K. Drew*)
- Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger*) **Action**

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM **Lunch Break**

12:45 – 5:15 PM **Atlantic Menhaden Management Board**

- Public Comment
- 2021 Landings Data Update (*J. Boyle*)
- Consider Draft Addendum I to Amendment 3 for Public Comment (*T. Kerns*) **Action**
  - Review 2020 Landings Proposal

6:30 – 8 PM **2020 and 2021 Annual Awards of Excellence Reception**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4

8:00 - 10:00 a.m. **Executive Committee**

A portion of this meeting will be a closed session for Committee members and Commissioners only

- Public Comment
- Review and Consider Approval of the Commission Budget for Fiscal Year 2023 (*L. Leach*) **Action**
- Consider Changes to the Commission's Appeals Policy (*R. Beal*)
- Discuss Use of *De Minimis* in Interstate Fishery Management Plans (*T. Kerns*)
- Conduct the Executive Director's Performance Review (**Closed Session**)

8:30 AM – 3 PM **Law Enforcement Committee**

1 hour lunch break included

A portion of this meeting will be a closed session for the LEC Coordinator and Committee members only

- Public Comment
- Review Enforceability Guidelines and Consider Updates, as Needed
- Review and Discuss ASMFC Species
  - Trackers in the American Lobster Fishery
  - Atlantic Herring: Update on Regulation Changes in Federal Waters

- State Agency Reports
- Elect Vice-Chair Action
- Review and Discuss Ongoing Enforcement Activities (**Closed Session**)

10:15 – 11:15 AM **Coastal Sharks Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider Zero Retention Limit/Closure of the Shortfin Mako Fishery **Final Action**
- Overview of the NOAA Fisheries Proposed Rule (*K. Brewster-Geisz*)
- Review Convention in the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora Proposal to List 54 Shark Species in Appendix ll (*D. Colson Leaning*) **Possible Action**
- Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger)* **Action**

11:30 AM – 5:15 PM **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**
1 hour lunch break included

- Public Comment
- Draft Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Final Approval **Final Action**
  - Review Options and Public Comment Summary (*E. Franke*)
  - Advisory Panel Report (*E. Franke*)
  - Law Enforcement Committee Report (*K. Blanchard*)
  - Consider Final Approval of Draft Amendment 7
- Review 2022 Stock Assessment Update Projection Scenarios (*K. Drew*)
- Consider Next Steps for Draft Addendum VII to Amendment 6 **Possible Action**
  - *Motion from October 2021: Move to defer until May 2022 consideration by the Atlantic Striped Bass Board of Draft Addendum VII to Amendment 6 to allow further development and review of the transfer options*
- Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger*) **Action**
- Elect Vice-Chair **Action**

THURSDAY, MAY 5

8:30 – 11 AM **Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board**

- Public Comment
- Executive Committee Report (*S. Woodward*)
- Consider Changes to the Appeals Policy (*R. Beal*) **Final Action**
- Update on Mode Split Work Group (*R. Beal*)
- Report from De Minimis Work Group (*T. Kerns*) **Possible Action**
- Update on East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning (*T. Kerns*)
- Report from the Law Enforcement Committee (*T. Kerns*)
- NOAA Report on Sea Turtle Bycatch in Trawl Fisheries (*C. Upite*)
  - Review Stakeholder Outreach on Action to Develop Bycatch Reduction Measure to Reduce Sea Turtle Takes
- Update on MAFMC's Consideration of Re-initiating the Research Set Aside Program (*R. Beal*)
- Review Information Related to Tautog Commercial Tagging Program (*J. Boyle*)
- Review Noncompliance Findings (if necessary) **Action**

11 – 11:15 AM **Business Session**

- Public Comment
- Consider Approval of Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass (*M. Gary*) **Final Action**
- Consider Noncompliance Recommendations (if necessary)

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. **Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC)**

- Reconvene with MAFMC
- Initial Discussion on Commission Harvest Control Rule Draft Addenda and MAFMC Framework (*D. Colson Leaning, J. Beatty*)

The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP or Partnership) has had a busy couple of months! We are excited to share the Partnership's latest happenings. To learn more about any of these opportunities, contact Lisa Havel, ACFHP Director, at LHavel@asmfc.org.

Melissa Laser Fish Habitat Conservation Award

After multiple postponements of the 2020 and 2021 Melissa Laser Fish Habitat Conservation Award presentations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ACFHP was pleased to present Andrew Goode of the Atlantic Salmon Federation and Wenley Ferguson of Save the Bay – Narragansett Bay with the 2020 and 2021 awards, respectively, during a virtual ceremony on March 3rd. The ceremony was led by Kent Smith, ACFHP Chair, and attended by the ACFHP Steering Committee and friends and colleagues of Mr. Goode and Ms. Ferguson. Jeremy Bell, Climate Adaptation Program Director at The Nature Conservancy in Maine; Patrick Keliher, Maine Department of Marine Resources Commissioner; and Dan Kircheis, NOAA Fisheries Penobscot Bay Salmon Recovery Coordinator, gave remarks on Mr. Goode's successful career restoring fish passage in Maine. Chris Powell, ACFHP Steering Committee member (Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, retired) and Jonathan Stone, Executive Director of Save the Bay – Narragansett Bay spoke on Ms. Ferguson's accomplishments in restoring Narragansett Bay.

Andrew Goode of the Atlantic Salmon Federation

The accomplishments of Mr. Goode and Ms. Ferguson directly support ACFHP's vision of providing healthy, thriving habitats of sufficient quantity and quality to support all life stages of Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes. To learn more about the recipients' accomplishments, visit: https://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/andrew-goode-and-wenley-ferguson-receive-the-2020-and-2021-melissa-laser-fish-habitat-conservation-awards/.


Wenley Ferguson of Save the Bay – Narragansett Bay

The Melissa Laser Fish Habitat Conservation Award is bestowed upon individuals deemed to further the conservation, protection, restoration, and enhancement of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes in a unique or extraordinary manner. The award was established in memory of Dr. Melissa Laser who passed away unexpectedly on April 27, 2010. Melissa was a biologist with the Maine Department of Marine Resources where she worked tirelessly to protect, improve, and restore aquatic ecosystems in Maine and along the entire Atlantic coast. Melissa brought her smiling dedication and enthusiasm to ACFHP's Steering Committee as well as the ASMFC Habitat Committee.

ACFHP is accepting nominations for the 2022 Melissa Laser Fish Habitat Conservaiton Award through May 4th, 2022. To view the instructions on submitting a nomination, visit: https://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/acfhp-seeking-nominations-for-2022-melissa-laser-fish-habitat-conservation-award/.

Conservation Opportunities

On March 25th, the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) opened its Request for Proposals (RFP) for the new Bass Pro Shops U.S. Open National Bass Fishing Amateur Team Championships funding opportunity. This grant program is funded by proceeds from the Bass Pro Shops U.S. Open National Bass Fishing Amateur Team Championships. To date, the championships have dedicated nearly $1.6 million to NFHP that were earned through a combination of entrance fees and generous matching donations from tournament sponsors Bass Pro Shops and Toyota.

The grant program funds will be administered by Beyond the Pond, the 501c3 organization established to manage private NFHP financial donations.

Higher priority will be given for projects specifically designed to improve aquatic habitat within reservoirs and, by doing so, support enhanced angling conditions and opportunities. Funding may also be used to conserve natural lake habitats, and interconnected tributary flows that also impact lake and reservoir habitat conditions and recreational fish production. Projects benefitting ASMFC-managed diadromous species including American eel, shad and river herring, and striped bass could qualify for this opportunity. This RFP closes on **May 16, 2022**. To learn more, visit: https://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/nfhp-bass-pro-shops-us-open-grant-program-rfp-is-now-open/.

Additionally, ACFHP has begun soliciting applications for habitat conservation projects in need of funding that align with ACFHP's objectives and priority habitats in order to respond promptly to funding opportunities from various sources. The RFP is not linked to a specific funding source. Instead, newly submitted projects reviewed and approved by ACFHP will be added to our project database and recommended as funding becomes available.

The amount of funding currently and soon to be available for habitat restoration projects is unlike anything we have seen in a generation. With the applications submitted through the RFP, ACFHP is preparing to nimbly respond to new funding opportunities with previously approved projects. There is no deadline for the RFP. The sooner we receive applications, the faster ACFHP can review and consider your project for new funding opportunities. While submitting an application does not guarantee funding, it will increase the visibility of your project among ACFHP partners and other funders.

The RFP can be found on the ACFHP website at https://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/acfhp-launches-general-request-for-habitat-conservation-proposals/.

On April 13th, ACFHP released its recently approved inclusion and Diversity Statement. Development of the Statement was led by ACFHP Steering Committee member and former ACFHP Coordinator, Jessie Thomas-Blate of American Rivers.

We at ACFHP are committed to making fish habitat conservation welcoming and accessible for all, and look forward to the work ahead. Our first step will be to thoughtfully and honestly examine our operation, culture, and conservation work during our strategic plan development process taking place this year.

ACFHP Inclusion and Diversity Statement

ACFHP's mission is to accelerate the protection, restoration, and enhancement of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes through partnerships between federal, tribal, state, local, and other entities. Our vision is to achieve healthy, thriving habitats of sufficient quantity and quality to support and sustain all life stages of these fishes.

Toward these goals, ACFHP is committed to making fish habitat conservation welcoming and accessible for all. ACFHP encourages understanding and appreciation of our natural world while promoting its conservation for the benefit of both people and nature. We believe that habitat conservation is essential to addressing the climate crisis which will impact everyone, regardless of where they come from, how they look, or their economic status. Furthermore, aquatic species and the habitats on which they depend benefit most when more people are engaged in their conservation. We believe that anyone who enjoys nature and the outdoors can be a "conservationist." ACFHP does not discriminate on the basis of skill level, length of time identifying as an environmentalist or conservationist, age, gender identity, skin color, size, sexual orientation, ability, religion, socioeconomic status, or national or ethnic origin.

We at ACFHP will thoughtfully and honestly examine our operations, culture, and conservation work to acknowledge and address unintended harm to systematically excluded communities. ACFHP will strive to minimize such harm in the future and, to the best of our abilities, consider impacts to all stakeholders. We will be advocates for change within the environmental community, committing to equality, justice, and inclusion for all, particularly in situations within our sphere of influence. We know we have more work ahead and are committed to acknowledging our mistakes and continuing to learn and improve.

The Statement can be viewed on the ACFHP website at https://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/acfhp-releases-inclusion-and-diversity-statement/. The Steering Committee voted to approve the statement unanimously at its virtual meeting on March 3rd.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act Takes A Step Forward

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) is a transformational wildlife conservation bill pending before the U.S. Congress. If enacted, it would provide $1.395 billion annually to proactively conserve wildlife deemed at-risk by states, territories, and tribes. RAWA, like the Commission process, is state driven. It has the potential to positively impact numerous Commission-managed marine and diadromous species and their habitats.

Specifically, RAWA creates a dedicated funding source for State Wildlife Action Plans and Tribal Wildlife Plans. A State Wildlife Action Plan is a blueprint for conserving fish, wildlife, and plants *before* they reach the point where drastic protection measures are needed, including listing and protection under the Endangered Species Act. Congress required each state to create a State Wildlife Action Plan in 2005 and to update them in 2015 as a condition for receiving certain federal conservation funding. Each State Wildlife Action Plan identifies Species of Greatest Conservation Need and must be approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For the first time, RAWA can ensure states have the full resources to implement congressionally-mandated State Wildlife Action Plans by providing dedicated funding to execute large-scale conservation projects that benefit both game and non-game species. Numerous State Wildlife Action Plans on the Atlantic coast emphasize marine and diadromous species, including those managed by the Commission.

The funding mechanism for RAWA is notable, in that it is automatic, and Congress need not appropriate funding on an annual basis. As introduced, RAWA would allocate $1.3 billion annually for states to implement State Wildlife Action Plans and $97.5 million for tribal wildlife plans. RAWA also creates an Innovative Grants Program for state and territory fish and wildlife agencies to recover Species of Greatest Conservation Need and species listed under the Endangered Species Act. Funds are allocated to states using a formula based on land area and population size. No state can receive less than 1% or more than 5%. There is a 25% non-federal match requirement.

On April 7, 2022, RAWA was advanced out of the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee by a vote of 15-5. While the original core of RAWA remains intact, some notable changes were approved during the April 7 markup. RAWA was amended to create a new "Endangered Species Recovery and Habitat Conservation Legacy Fund" (Legacy Fund). The Legacy Fund provides $750 million to federal agencies over four years to address the existing endangered species recovery backlog. The cost of the Legacy Fund was offset by ramping up state funding and while scaling back the federal funding. The Legacy Fund will be $450 million in FY22, $200 million in FY23, and $100 million in FY24.

On the other side of Capitol Hill, the House Natural Resources Committee approved its companion bill, H.R. 2773, on January 19, 2022 by a vote of 29-15.

Congress and President Finalize Fiscal Year 2022 Spending Package, Includes Many Wins for Atlantic Marine Fisheries

On March 15, 2022, President Biden signed H.R. 2471, a government-wide spending package for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22), into law. The legislation addresses many Commission and state agency priorities including funding to offset industry costs associated with the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan, full funding for NEAMAP Mid-Atlantic and NEAMAP Maine-New Hampshire, encouraging NOAA Fisheries to collect Chesapeake Bay menhaden abundance, and directing NOAA Fisheries to continue the Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey.

For questions on legislative issues affecting the Commission, including RAWA or federal funding, please contact Deke Tompkins at dtompkins@asmfc.org.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (in $ thousands)	FY21 Omnibus	FY22 Omnibus
Fisheries Science and Management		
Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services	146,927	153,750
Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments	175,927	187,500
Observers and Training	55,468	57,000
Fisheries Management Programs and Services	123,836	129,400
Aquaculture	17,500	18,000
Salmon Management Activities	62,050	63,050
Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions	41,500	42,902
Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants	3,365	3,372
Total, Fisheries Science and Management	**626,573**	**654,974**
Enforcement	75,000	77,731
Joint Enforcement Agreements	18,500	18,500
Habitat Conservation and Restoration	57,625	55,000
Total, National Marine Fisheries Service	**964,862**	**1,015,955**
Other Line Items of Interest		
Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles & Other Species	125,164	147,750
National Sea Grant College Program	75,000	76,000
Coastal Zone Management and Services	46,700	49,000
Coastal Zone Management Grants	78,500	79,000
National Estuarine Research Reserve System	28,500	29,700

Increase to FY22 amount, decrease to FY22 amount >10% change

Employees of the Quarter

For the first quarter of 2022, Commission staff had the opportunity to recognize both Cecilia Butler and Lisa Carty for their notable contributions to the Commission's Finance and Administration Department. In order for states to conduct the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, Cecilia and Lisa worked hand-in-hand to hire numerous angler interviewers across several states. Their tireless efforts throughout this hiring process consistently epitomized the qualities and values of Employee of the Quarter.

Cecilia Butler

Cecilia is a seasoned veteran of the Commission, having recently celebrated her 20th work anniversary! Cecilia has always taken great pride in the quality of her work, striving for excellence in order to reflect the best on behalf of the Commission. Despite how COVID-19 has changed the way we work, she has forged ahead on her own, never letting the quality of her work waver. Cecilia has been a great team player, working closely with Lisa to help her get up to speed on the "ins and outs" of human relations (HR) processes. Her hard work, enthusiasm, and creativity ensure that employees are satisfied with the support they receive regarding benefits and other HR issues.

Lisa Carty

In a little over one year, Lisa has made herself an indispensable asset to the Commission by helping to ensure the success of our Department of Finances and Administration. Lisa's strong ownership of her work is reflected through her dedication to improving HR operations. Driven by a strong initiative, she has allowed for the streamlining of many processes and even the development of new ones. Her efforts have ensured that we have an efficient and smooth-running recruitment and on-boarding process, an efficient contracting process, and the timely completion of other Finance and Administration Department tasks. Lisa's enthusiasm and creativity know no bounds. Sshe is an inspiration to those she works with.

As Employees of the Quarter (EOQ), Cecilia and Lisa received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in their personal record. In addition, their names are on the EOQ plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Cecilia & Lisa!

Comings and Goings

STAFF

In March, ACCSP welcomed two new staff members: Jamal Quididen and Daniel Mestawat. Both were hired as Programmers to provide support to ACCSP software, including the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information Sysytem, which allows commercial harvesters and dealers to report landings electronically.

JAMAL QUIDIDEN

Jamal has a Master's degree in computer science earned in Morocco, and has over eight years of experience in software and web development. He has helped migrate processes from paper to electronic data capture, installed VMS on a French fishing vessel, worked for the local government in Morocco, and has a background in SQL databases.

DANIEL MESTAWAT

Daniel has a Bachelor of Science in engineering earned in Ethiopia and a certificate in software development from NVCC. He has over six years in Oracle SQL programming and API development and web development experience. Daniel likes to fish and has an interest in user-centric design.

Please join us in welcoming Jamal and Daniel.

ACCSP Partners with GSMFC to Incorporate SEAS into Electronic APAIS Collection in 2022

The addition of the Socioeconomic Add-on Survey (SEAS) to the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) on January 1, 2022, was the result of a collaboration between ACCSP, the Gulf State Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC), and the Marine Recreational Information Program. Staff contributed to the design and layout of the SEAS questions in the electronic format and the development of training materials for the state interviewers.

APAIS is an annual, in-person survey of marine recreational anglers located at public fishing access sites. SEAS is part of the larger Marine Recreational Fishing Expenditure Survey and is added to the APAIS roughly every five years. The SEAS is between four and eight questions that take three to five minutes to complete depending on angler responses. The Expenditure Survey is used to estimate the dollars spent on marine fishing trips and fishing-related equipment to provide an understanding of the economic contributions of expenses in terms of jobs, sales generated, and contributions to gross domestic product. Federal and state governments, as well as the public, benefit from the reporting of this information to better understand the tangible importance of marine recreational fishing in the United States.

Shifting the SEAS from paper to the electronic format allows for a seamless transition from the APAIS to the SEAS questions. This not only eliminates the need for paper forms, but also cuts down on interview time. Additionally, built-in quality control checks and logic-based speed improvements have removed redundancies in data collection and increased data input accuracy. The interviews already conducted this year show high angler participation and quality data.

The inclusion of the SEAS in the 2022 APAIS sampling period will provide valuable insight on the economic importance of the recreational fishing industry and will assist in constructing well informed decisions regarding recreational fishing issues. ACCSP is pleased to have joined with GSMFC for the APAIS and SEAS electronic data collection.

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 www.accsp.org.

RED DRUM, continued from page 5

survival rates when fished at the current year's fishing mortality rate. To limit impacts of extremely productive or unproductive individual years, this assessment used 3-year averages rather than single years relative to the spawning stock biomass survival rates if no fishing mortality was occurring. In 2013 (the last year for which data were available), the three-year (2011-2013) average sSPR was 43.8% for the northern stock and 53.5% for the southern stock, both above the target and threshold values.

Photo (c) Ken Neill

Age-1 recruitment, or the number of fish spawned the previous fall, has fluctuated around averages of 476,579 and 1.57 million fish in the northern and southern stocks, respectively. In more recent years, the largest recruitment occurred in 2012 for the northern stock and 2010 for the southern stock.

Red drum is currently in the process of undergoing a new benchmark stock assessment. In 2020, the Sciaenids Management Board (Board) approved the development of a new methodology to simulate the full red drum population. The simulated population has been used to test a variety of assessment modeling techniques to identify the model(s) best suited for tracking red drum population dynamics and most applicable for the next benchmark stock assessment. Due to the work and modeling expertise needed for the simulation assessment, the benchmark assessment has been postponed until 2024. The Simulation Assessment and Review Report will be considered by the Board in May 2022, and the preferred model(s) will be used in future benchmark assessments to provide advice to the Board on red drum management. For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, FMP Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org.