



Habitat Committee

ASMFC Annual Meeting

October 30-31, 2013

St. Simons Island, GA



Agenda

Day 1, Wednesday, October 30

1. Welcome and Introductions (K. Smith)
2. 2013 Work Plan Update (M. Yuen)
3. Draft 2014 Work Plan (M. Yuen)
 - a. ASMFC Strategic Plan
4. Fish Passage Update (J. Kipp)
5. Habitat Management Series (M. Topolski)

Day 2: Thursday, October 31

6. Bottleneck Working Paper (J. Kritzer)
7. Habitat Hotline (C. Patterson)
8. Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (M. Yuen)
9. Sciaenid Source Document (M. Yuen)

2013 Work Plan Progress Update

2013 Work Plan for the Habitat Committee: Progress Report Summary		
Task	Item	Progress
4.1.3	Artificial Reefs Committee: MARAD letter	Completed. Sent to MARAD on 6/5/13. GSMFC sent similar letter based on ours. Still no response.
4.2.1	Habitat FMP Sections 1) Red Drum 2) Lobster 3) Black Drum	1) Completed, approved in Aug 2013. 2) Completed, approved for public comment! Some additions... 3) On hold, as approved by Board. HC to develop Sciaenid Source Doc in 2014-2015.
4.2.4	Habitat Limitations (Bottlenecks)	Completed FMP outline. Working Paper and new FMP sections in progress as scheduled.
4.3.5	Habitat Managers Database	Completed but ongoing. List has been cleaned up of bad email addresses, updated in MMS.

2013 Work Plan Progress Update

2013 Work Plan for the Habitat Committee: Progress Report Summary		
Task	Item	Progress
4.4.3	Habitat Hotline	In progress as scheduled. HC will review the draft later this month, it will be designed by Lisa Hartman, and the ISFMP PB will consider the final for approval during the 2014 Winter Mtg.
4.4.4	Habitat Mgt Series	Delayed. Working group developing outline and draft. HC to review outline in Oct. Final draft anticipated for Board review and consideration in May 2014.
4.5.2	Habitat Committee Guidance Document	Completed, approved in Aug 2013.
4.5.3	Develop Action Plan for 2014	Discussed with HC in Aug 2013 conf call, need to finalize based on new ASMFC Strategic Action Plan.

2014 ASMFC Strategic Plan

Goal 4 – Protect and enhance fish habitat and ecosystem health through partnerships and education

Goal 4 aims to conserve and improve coastal, marine, and riverine habitat to enhance the benefits of sustainable Atlantic coastal fisheries and resilient coastal communities in the face of changing ecosystems. Habitat loss and degradation have been identified as significant factors affecting the long-term sustainability and productivity of our nation's fisheries. The Commission's Habitat Program develops objectives, sets priorities, and produces tools to guide fisheries habitat conservation efforts directed towards ecosystem-based management.

2014 ASMFC Strategic Plan

The challenge for the Commission and its state members is maintaining fish habitat in the absence of specific regulatory authority for habitat protection or enhancement. Therefore, the Commission will work cooperatively with state, federal, and stakeholder partnerships to achieve this goal. The Commission and its Habitat Program endorses the National Fish Habitat Partnership, and will continue to work cooperatively with the program to improve aquatic habitat along the Atlantic coast. Since 2008, the Commission has invested considerable resources, as both a partner and administrative home, to the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, a coastwide collaborative effort to accelerate the conservation and restoration of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes.

2014 ASMFC Strategic Plan

Strategies to Achieve Goal

- a. Identify critical habitat through fisheries management programs and partnerships.
- b. Educate Commissioners, stakeholders, and the general public about the importance of habitat to healthy fisheries and ecosystems .
- c. Engage local, state, and regional governments in mutually beneficial habitat protection and enhancement programs through partnerships .
- d. Foster partnerships with management agencies, researchers, and habitat stakeholders to leverage regulatory, political, and financial support.
- e. Identify mechanisms to evaluate ecosystem health.
- f. Engage in state and federal agency efforts to ensure climate change response strategies are included in habitat conservation efforts.

2014 ASMFC Action Plan

4.1 Identify critical habitat through fisheries management programs and partnerships

Task 4.1.1 – Draft a sciaenid habitat source document working closely with technical committees, other species experts, and staff. For each species, include descriptions of habitat types or areas most critical to restoring or maintaining sustainable stocks. Habitat sections will describe the habitat limitations creating a bottleneck to the recovery of a species of concern.

Task 4.1.2 – Prioritize and publicize important habitat types for Commission-managed species as identified in the ACFHP Strategic Plan.

Task 4.1.5 – Coordinate artificial reef activities among the Atlantic coast states, and between the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions.

2014 ASMFC Action Plan

4.2 Educate Commissioners, stakeholders, and the general public about the importance of habitat to healthy fisheries and ecosystems

Task 4.2.1 – Facilitate coordination and distribution of information for ecosystem-based management and marine protected area activities, and the potential consequences of significant anthropogenic activities on habitats of concern.

Task 4.2.2 – Participate in regional and national habitat meetings and scientific conferences to facilitate increased communication with agencies and programs that have jurisdiction over habitat.

Task 4.2.3 – Review and improve format of Habitat Hotline Atlantic newsletter to enhance the utility and effectiveness of meeting the target audience's needs. Produce and distribute annual issue of the newsletter.

Task 4.2.4 – Develop next installment of the Habitat Management Series: Nearshore and Estuarine Aquaculture for ISFMP Policy Board review and acceptance. Identify a subsequent topic (e.g. Sand mining, Power plant impingement, climate change impact on fish habitat).

2014 ASMFC Action Plan

4.3 Engage local, state and regional governments in mutually beneficial habitat protection and enhancement programs through partnerships

Task 4.3.1 – Highlight local habitat activities in Habitat Hotline Atlantic and distribute to local governments.

Task 4.3.2 – Work with ACFHP to foster partnerships with like-minded organizations at local levels to further common habitat goals.

Task 4.3.3 – Provide stakeholders with the tools to effectively communicate, promote and accomplish habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement programs at the local level.

Task 4.3.4 Serve as a point of contact and information conduit at the Commission for energy-related issues affecting fish habitat.

Task 4.3.5 – Continue to provide coordination support for ACFHP, under the direction of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP) Board.

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4.4 Foster partnerships with management agencies, researchers, and habitat stakeholders to leverage regulatory, political, and financial support

Task 4.4.1 – Provide information or comment on Atlantic coast projects and permits in accordance with ASMFC project review protocol.

Task 4.4.2 – Facilitate funding and partnership opportunities to promote habitat research in the states.

Task 4.4.3 – Identify partnership opportunities and forge additional relationships with organizations – such as non-governmental organizations and the recreational fishing community - to facilitate the promotion of fish habitat through a collaboration of strengths of different stakeholder groups.

Task 4.4.4 – Through ACFHP, and in cooperation with other Fish Habitat Partnerships and the National Fish Habitat Board, work with partners to develop monitoring and data standards for assessment of coastal habitat condition and fishery resource status prior to and following alteration projects.

Task 4.4.5 – Maintain habitat managers database to disseminate information about important habitat areas identified in Habitat Committee products. Use social media to connect with regional and local decision makers.

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4.5 Identify mechanisms to evaluate ecosystem health

Task 4.5.1 – Review habitat program goals and evaluate accomplishments annually.

Task 4.5.2 – Work with state and federal agencies, the Councils, and non-governmental organizations to build on existing efforts to **develop a coast wide GIS of fish habitat resources**, to identify important fish habitats for Commission managed species as defined in the ACFHP Species-Habitat matrix.

2014 HC Work Plan

- Habitat Hotline
- Habitat Management Series
- Sciaenid Source Document (2014-2015)
- Atlantic Sturgeon stock assessment
 - HC review

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4.6 Engage in state and federal agency efforts to ensure climate change response strategies are included in habitat conservation efforts

Task 4.6.1 – As revisions to habitat sections of FMPs are made include recommendations to mitigate climate change impacts on habitat

Task 4.6.7 – Identify inconsistencies in state coastal regulatory planning programs and develop recommendations for improvements to the ISFMP Board.

2014 ASMFC Action Plan

Questions and Comments?