
Fisheries Science Program

The Commission's Fisheries Science Program coordinates research, surveys, and produces stock assessments to inform effective fisheries management. The Program's objective is to ensure the best scientific information available - biological, social, and economic - is incorporated into the Commission's fishery management plans. The Program provides a focal point for coordination and enhancements to fishery-dependent and -independent data collection and management; stock assessments and independent peer reviews; multispecies assessments and ecological reference points; socioeconomic information; fish habitat partnerships; fish passage guidance, and fishing gear technology research. Fisheries Science also guides various research activities among state and federal marine resource agencies and universities on the Atlantic coast. Initiatives include developing new surveys, establishing fish ageing and maturity measurement protocols, and evaluating climate change effects on fisheries resources.

Management of sustainable fisheries relies on accurate and timely scientific advice. The Commission's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan charges the Fisheries Science Program with producing sound, actionable science through a technically rigorous, peer-reviewed stock assessment process. Assessments are developed using a suite of fishery-independent surveys and fishery-dependent monitoring, as well as research products developed by a broad network of fisheries scientists at state, federal, and academic institutions along the coast. The Program encompasses the development of new, innovative scientific research and methodology, and the enhancement of the states' stock assessment capabilities. It provides for the administration, coordination, and expansion of collaborative research and data collection programs. Achieving the goal will ensure sound science is available to serve as the foundation for the Commission's evaluation of stock status and adaptive management actions.

Annual action planning is guided by the following objectives:

- Conduct stock assessments based on comprehensive data sources and rigorous technical analysis;
- Characterize the risk and uncertainty associated with the scientific advice provided to decision-makers
- Provide training to enhance the expertise and involvement of state and staff scientists in the development of stock assessments
- Streamline data assimilation within individual states, and among states and ASMFC
- Proactively address research priorities through cooperative state and regional data collection programs and collaborative research projects with engaged stakeholders
- Explore the use of new technologies to improve surveys, monitoring, and the timeliness of scientific products
- Promote effective communication with stakeholders to ensure on-the-water observations and science are consistent