Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 19, 2017

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

SEAMAP Releases 5-Year Management Plan

Arlington, VA – The Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) has released its 2016-2020 Management Plan. Prepared by the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean components of SEAMAP, the Management Plan serves as a reference for official SEAMAP policies and procedures through 2020. The Plan also includes detailed information on SEAMAP activities and highlights how SEAMAP data meet critical needs for recent stock assessments and management decisions. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, the Plan details how SEAMAP's core surveys have been impacted by level/declining funding. It identifies how expansions in funding could be used to refine existing assessments and advance the movement towards ecosystem-based management; ultimately, leading to more comprehensive fisheries management in the Southeast region.

SEAMAP is a cooperative state/federal/university program for the collection, management, and dissemination of fishery-independent data and information in the Southeastern U.S. and Caribbean. Representatives from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) jointly plan and conduct surveys of economically and ecologically important fish and shellfish species and the critical habitats that support them. Since 1982, SEAMAP has sponsored long-term standardized surveys that have become the backbone of fisheries and habitat management in the Southeast and Caribbean. SEAMAP currently provides the only region-wide mechanism for monitoring long-term status and trends of populations and habitats within the region.

As a cooperative effort, SEAMAP monitors the distribution and abundance of fish and other marine resources from North Carolina through Texas and into the Caribbean. SEAMAP is intended to maximize the capability of fishery-independent and associated survey activities to satisfy data and information needs of living marine resource management and research organizations in the region. The primary means of performing that task is to optimize coordination and deployment of regional surveys and provide access to the

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 (phone) 703.842.0741 (fax) www.asmfc.org

collected data through documents and online databases. Additional roles of SEAMAP are to document long- and short-term needs for fishery-independent data to meet critical management and research needs, and to establish compatible and consistent databases for ecosystem and predictive modeling applications. SEAMAP promotes coordination among data collection, processing, management, and analysis activities emphasizing those specifically concerned with living marine resource management and habitat protection, and provides a forum for coordination of other fishery-related activities.

The 2016-2020 SEAMAP Management Plan is available online at: http://bit.ly/2pw1qXM. For more information about SEAMAP, particularly the South Atlantic component, please visit www.SEAMAP.org or contact Shanna Madsen, SEAMAP-SA Coordinator, at smadsen@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

SEAMAP Contributions

Not only have SEAMAP data proven essential to stock assessments and management decisions but they have also answered important ecological questions, including:

- Assessing long-term trends in coastal marine species, thus providing data for linking population trends with changes in environmental conditions such as temperature changes, nutrient enrichment, and overfishing.
- Documenting and defining essential fish habitat in fishery management plans for the GMFMC, SAFMC, and CFMC.
- Long-term monitoring of juvenile red snapper abundances and providing necessary information for red snapper stock assessments and habitat requirements in the region.
- Identifying and verifying the recovery of Gulf and South Atlantic king mackerel stocks, leading to increased fishing quotas.
- Providing essential data to the international community regarding the impacts of longline fishing for Atlantic bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Determining population size structures, abundances, and necessary life history information for stock assessments of a variety of marine species.
- Evaluating the abundance and size distribution of penaeid shrimp in federal and state waters to assist in determining opening and closing dates for commercial fisheries.
- Surveying hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico to inform managers regarding the impacts to marine resources of the Gulf of Mexico.
- Estimating finfish bycatch in the shrimp fisheries of the Gulf and South Atlantic, supporting bycatch reduction device regulations.
- Evaluating community structure and trophic interactions in the various regions to assist in development of ecosystem models to support ecosystem-based management.
- Collecting bottom habitat and snapper/grouper species information, supporting designation of EFH and the establishment of deepwater marine protected areas in the South Atlantic.
- Contributing to the compilation of existing deepwater habitat distribution and geologic information, which supports SAFMC's creation and conservation of 23,000 square miles of Deepwater Coral HAPC in the South Atlantic - the largest and least impacted deepwater coral ecosystem in the world.

Photo credits from top: Pearse Webster, Coastal Survey; Jeff Rester, GSMFC; and SEAMAP Caribbean