



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Approves 2014 – 2018 Strategic Plan

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission unanimously approved its 2014 – 2018 Strategic Plan at its 2014 Winter Meeting. The Plan revises the Commission's long-term vision to "Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries" and establishes seven major goals and related strategies to pursue this vision. The Strategic Plan will guide the Commission's activities over the next five years and will be implemented through annual action plans.

"This Strategic Plan is the culmination of extensive and thoughtful strategic planning by my fellow Commissioners," states Commission Chair Dr. Louis B. Daniel, III of North Carolina. "The document revises the Commission's long-term vision, values, driving forces, and goals to better respond to new challenges and opportunities in Atlantic coast fisheries management. The Commissioners' goal, through the review process, was to strengthen the Strategic Plan to make it more effective, concise, and accessible to the public. We are deeply grateful for the thoughtful input we received from our stakeholders, with more than 4,500 comments submitted during the public comment period. Commissioners were pleased to learn that an overwhelming majority of the public's comments supported the direction of the Commission and we are committed to addressing the other issues raised through our annual action plans."

The Plan's seven goals are:

1. Rebuild, maintain, fairly allocate, and promote Atlantic coastal fisheries
2. Provide the scientific foundation for and conduct stock assessments to support informed management actions
3. Promote compliance with fishery management plans to ensure sustainable use of Atlantic coast fisheries
4. Protect and enhance fish habitat and ecosystem health through partnerships and education
5. Strengthen stakeholder and public support for the Commission
6. Advance Commission and member states' priorities through a proactive legislative policy agenda
7. Ensure the fiscal stability and efficient administration of the Commission

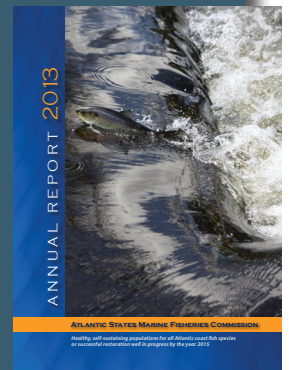
The 2014 – 2018 Strategic Plan is available on the Commission website at http://www.asmfc.org/files/pub/2014-2018StrategicPlan_Final.pdf.

2013 Annual Report Now Available

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has released its 2013 Annual Report, which provides an overview of

significant management actions and associated science activities the Commission and its member states undertook in 2013 to

maintain and restore the abundance of Commission-managed species. The Report reflects ASMFC Commissioners' commitment to accountability and transparency in all they do to manage and rebuild stocks under their care. The report is available on the Commission website at www.asmfc.org under Quick Links or directly at http://www.asmfc.org/files/pub/ASMFC_2013AnnualReport.pdf.



Upcoming Meetings

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.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Science Director

Toni Kerns
ISFMP Director

Laura C. Leach
Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor
Director of Communications
tberger@asmfc.org

703.842.0740 Phone
703.842.0741 Fax
www.asmfc.org
info@asmfc.org

March 13 (10 AM - 1 PM)

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board Conference Call; dial 888.394.8197 (passcode 499811) to join conference call and go to <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/617005454> to register for webinar.

March 13 (begins 9 AM)

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee Conference Call; dial 888.394.8197 (passcode: 815277) to join conference call.

March 14 (begins at 1 PM)

ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee Conference Call; dial 888.394.8197 (passcode: 815277) to join conference call.

March 17 (1 - 4 PM)

ASMFC Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee and Spot Plan Review Team Conference Call; dial 888.394.8197 (passcode: 499811) to join conference call.

March 19 (begins at 1 PM) - 21 (ends at 12:30 PM)

East Coast Climate Change and Fisheries Governance Workshop, The Westin Washington, D.C. City Center, 1400 M Street NW, Washington, DC; visit www.mafmc.org/council-events/2014/east-coast-climate-change-and-fisheries-governance-workshop for more information.

March 27 (1 - 4 PM)

ASMFC/NOAA Fisheries River Herring Technical Expert Working Group Conference Call; dial 888.394.8197 (passcode 815277) to join conference call.

April 1 (begins at 8 AM) & 2 (ends at 3 PM)

NOAA Fisheries Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit, The Westin Hotel, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA; visit www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/management/recreational/2014_summit/index.html for more information.

April 8-10

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Montauk Yacht Club, 32 Star Island Road, Montauk, NY.

April 10

SEAMAP-South Atlantic Workgroup, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, 217 Ft. Johnson Road, Charleston, SC.

April 22-24

New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Mystic, Mystic, CT.

May 6 (begins at 9 AM) - 8 (ends at 1 PM)

ASMFC American Lobster Stock Assessment Workshop, NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Clark Conference Room (Aquarium), 166 Water Street Woods Hole, MA.

May 1 (9 AM - 5 PM)

ASMFC Habitat Committee, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, 6 Herndon Avenue, Annapolis, MD.

May 12-15

ASMFC Spring Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA.



ASMFC Explores Recreational Fishing, Climate Change, and Magnuson Act Reauthorization

Over the next couple of months, the Commission will be involved in a number of cross cutting activities, ranging from recreational fishing to climate change to Magnuson Act reauthorization. Below is a little about the scheduled events with links to more information (if available).

2014 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit

On April 1 and 2, the Commission will assist NOAA Fisheries in hosting the 2014 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit. The Summit will bring together more than 100 marine recreational fisheries stakeholders from across the country to reflect on past progress, identify current challenges, and collaborate on solutions to advance NOAA Fisheries' recreational fisheries initiatives. The Summit builds upon the success of the 2010 Summit, the results of which formed the basis for NOAA's National and Regional Recreational Saltwater Fisheries Action Agendas, including an agenda for Atlantic Highly Migratory Species, which are planning documents that serve as the road map for future collaborations. Having made significant progress on those agendas, NOAA Fisheries felt it was important to reassemble the marine recreational fisheries community to review accomplishments, assess current concerns and opportunities, and recommit to working together. While the Summit will include a few level-setting informational presentations, the majority of time will be spent in group and roundtable discussions with the help of an independent facilitation team, MAKERS. Participants will be encouraged to share ideas and opinions while also listening and learning from peers. A number of anglers and fishery managers from the Atlantic states will participate in the Summit, and the Commission is looking forward to the opportunity to assist in crafting NOAA Fisheries' future recreational fisheries initiatives. For more information on the Summit, go to http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/management/recreational/2014_summit/index.html.

East Coast Climate Change and Governance Workshop

On March 19 -21, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council will host a workshop to explore the potential impacts of climate change on marine fisheries governance. The workshop was planned in conjunction with the New England and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, ASMFC, and NOAA Fisheries. Climate change has resulted in observed shifts in geographic distribution, productivity, and life history characteristics of many managed species along the East Coast. The primary objectives of the workshop are to:

- Explore the impacts on climate change with an emphasis on the policy implications of shifting fishery distribution and changing productivity.

- Evaluate processes for documenting climate related changes and initiating a management response.
- Identify information needs to guide research and coordination between management entities.
- Examine the flexibility of existing management framework to accommodate climate related governance challenges.
- Discuss potential solutions and opportunities to address needed governance changes between the East Coast management partners and NOAA Fisheries.

The workshop will be held at the Westin Washington DC, City Center and is geared toward fisheries managers and scientists. For more information on the workshop, go to <http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2014/east-coast-climate-change-and-fisheries-governance-workshop>.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Reauthorization

As many of you are aware, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) is up for reauthorization this year. First enacted in 1976 and most recently amended in 2007, MSA is the chief law governing U.S. federal marine fisheries. The Commission has long recognized the sweeping impact of the law on both federal and state fisheries. Not only does the Commission jointly manage eight fisheries with NOAA Fisheries and the regional fishery councils, but it recognizes that healthy fisheries are dependent upon management decisions made at both the state and federal levels. As such, the Commission has been paying careful attention as Congress crafts the next authorization of this important law. Input from the states will be vitally important to ensure the next iteration of MSA positions fisheries, fishery stakeholders, and coastal communities in a position to thrive.

In an effort to educate and engage our Commissioners, we have formed an MSA Working Group to conduct a workshop during our 2014 Spring Meeting. The workshop is intended to provide a background and history of MSA and shepherd the Commission through the process of providing input to Congress. The workshop will include guest speakers with special insight into the congressional process of reauthorizing MSA, and a robust discussion allowing all of our Commissioners to express their priorities and concerns as reauthorization moves forward. At the end of the process, we hope to provide federal lawmakers with a concise, well thought out set of ASMFC principles that will help strengthen MSA and the productivity of our nation's state and federal fisheries.

Species Profile: American Shad

State Habitat Plans Help Identify Biggest Threats to Species Recovery

Introduction

Each spring, as water temperatures slowly warm, fishermen and nature-lovers know what's moving into the rivers. Following the scent of the water, American shad hone in on streams where they were born. These small fish travel up to 2,000 miles from their oceanic feeding grounds to their freshwater spawning grounds. As they enter freshwater and swim upstream, they are a favorite target for recreational fishermen, as shad are known to put up a good fight. Many communities hold festivals to celebrate the arrival of shad in the spring. As a forage fish, shad are an important seasonal prey for larger predators, including birds and other wildlife. However, declines in many shad stocks prompted the Commission to adopt Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (Amendment 3) in 2010 with the goal of rebuilding and ensuring the sustainability of shad populations.

Life History

American shad are a migratory anadromous fish that spend most of their life in the Atlantic Ocean but return to coastal rivers and tributaries in the spring to spawn. Adults are highly migratory along the coast with primary summer feeding grounds located in the Bay of Fundy and three primary offshore wintering grounds located off the Scotian Shelf/Bay of Fundy, in the Middle Atlantic Bight (Maryland to North Carolina), and off the Florida coast.

Spawning adults are capable of migrating hundreds of miles upstream where impediments do not block movement; however, in most river systems, they do not spawn as far upstream as they did historically. Males or "buck shad" return first, followed by females or "roe shad." They spawn usually at night or during overcast days. In the southern range (Cape Hatteras south), females release as many as 700,000 eggs during the spawning season, but both males and females normally die after spawning. In the northern range (Cape Hatteras north), females typically release 300,000 eggs or less during the spawning season; however, most shad will return again to spawn in the following years, with some shad living up to ten years.

The young leave their natal (home) river within the first year and will spend the next few years at sea, schooling in large numbers with shad from other regions and feeding on plankton and other small fish or crustaceans. Upon reaching maturity – at about age four – they will return to their natal streams to spawn.

When the fish slow down and in themselves declare the end of the [spawning] season, you can stand on a rock in the river and watch them go by. These are the ghost days. The fish, always in single file as they climb into faster water and advance the migration, are gray and spectral. But they keep going. If you throw out a proper cast and let it swing down current an occasional shad will hit. They may be tired but they're not defeated.

– John McPhee, *The Founding Fish*

Importance

American shad play an important ecological role in freshwater, estuarine, and marine environments during its anadromous life cycle. Once in the ocean, American shad are preyed upon by many species including sharks, tunas, king mackerel, seals, and porpoises. They are also a seasonally important prey species for a number of fish, birds, and wildlife species, with the adult spawning American shad arriving in the early spring when other prey may be scarce and the nesting/breeding season is just beginning for many wildlife predators. During earlier periods of high abundance, American shad played a significant role in ecosystem nutrient and energy cycling. For example, in South Atlantic coastal river systems, many shad die shortly after spawning and provide beneficial marine-derived nutrients to the freshwater systems.

American shad played an important cultural role to Native Americans and early colonists. Their importance today is still seen in the many communities which still celebrate the arrival of American shad in the spring by holding festivals to mark the occasion. These festivals include activities such as

Species Snapshot

American Shad *Alosa sapidissima*

Management

Unit:
Maine -
Florida



General Characteristics:

- Adults average 20 inches in length and 4 pounds in weight.
- Range from Newfoundland to Northern Florida
- Opportunistic predator, feeding primarily in plankton
- Females are larger than males

Interesting Facts:

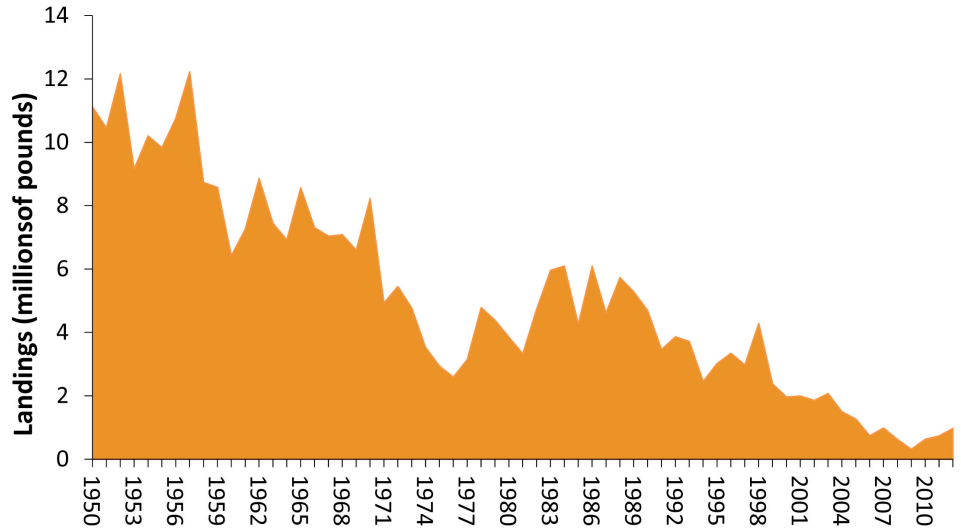
- George Washington was an avid and exceptional shad fisherman.
- The Latin name translates as "most savory."
- The State of Connecticut designated American shad as its state fish in 2003.

Stock Status:

- There are 86 discrete American shad stocks along the East Coast.
- Many stocks remain severely depressed compared to historic levels.

American Shad Commercial Landings

Source: Personal communication NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, 2013



Timeline of Management Actions: FMP (1985); Amendment 1 (1999); Addendum I (2000); Amendment 2 - River Herring (2009); Amendment 3 - American shad (2010)

fishing for shad, shad bakes or “planking,” along with a variety of other activities including running events, arts and crafts shows, music, and many other activities to foster community relations, attract tourists, and benefit the local economy. A listing of shad and river herring festivals can be found in Amendment 3 on the Commission’s website.

Recreational & Commercial Fisheries

Since the early 1800s, American shad have supported major commercial fisheries along the Atlantic coast and were one of the most valuable food fish of the U.S. Atlantic coast before World War II. The estimated East Coast catch in 1896 was 50 million pounds, but by the 1950s landings had declined to approximately 10 million pounds. Fisheries included in-river fisheries targeting river-specific stocks and ocean fisheries targeting mixed stocks of schooling shad. In-river landings began decreasing and ocean harvest landings began increasing during the 1970s, with coastwide landings of approximately two million pounds annually. By 1996,

1, 2013, only states with a sustainable fishery management plan in place may have directed commercial fisheries for American shad (see ‘Atlantic Coastal Management’ section).

Data on American shad recreational fisheries are very limited. Historically, large recreational shad fisheries were known to occur on the Connecticut, Hudson, Delaware, Susquehanna, Santee-Cooper, Savannah, and St. Johns Rivers. The actual harvest (i.e. catch and removal) may amount to only about 20-40% of total catch as a result of catch-and-release angling practices. Recreational catch-and-release anglers are encouraged to use a barbless hook and to keep shad in the water when removing the hook to avoid stress to the fish.

Stock Status

The 2007 benchmark stock assessment identified 86 separate tributaries or potential individual stocks.

American shad stocks are river-specific; that is, each major tributary along the Atlantic coast appears to have its own spawning stock. The stock assessment found that stocks were at all-time lows and did not appear to be recovering to acceptable levels. Recent declines

were noted for Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Georgia stocks, as well as in the Hudson (NY), Susquehanna (PA), James (VA), and Edisto (SC) Rivers. Although improvement has been seen in a few stocks (e.g., Potomac and York Rivers), many remain severely depressed compared to their historic levels. The benchmark stock assessment identified the primary causes of stock decline as a combination of overfishing, pollution, and habitat loss due to dam construction.

Atlantic Coastal Management

In 2010, the Commission’s Shad and River Herring Management Board approved Amendment 3. In an effort to aid in the recovery of depleted and declining stocks, Amendment 3 prohibits state water commercial and recreational fisheries beginning January 1, 2013 unless states/jurisdictions develop and implement sustainable fishery management plans (SFMPs.) Amendment 3 defines a sustainable fishery as “a commercial and/or recreational fishery that will not diminish the potential future stock reproduction and recruitment.” SFMPs must clearly demonstrate that the state’s or jurisdiction’s American shad fisheries meet this definition of sustainability through sustainability targets which must be monitored, achieved, and maintained. Connecticut, Pennsylvania,

continued, see AMERICAN SHAD on page 11



Father and son with an American shad. Photo courtesy of Peter L. Groves, Woo’s Shad Fishing, www.woofish.com/shad.html

ocean harvest comprised 67% of the coastwide landings. The ocean-intercept fishery was closed in 2005. Since then, coastwide landings have averaged 575,000 pounds annually, with the largest landings occurring in North and South Carolina. As of January

Regional Management for 2014 Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Recreational Fisheries Approved

The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXV to the Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan, establishing regional recreational management for both species for the 2014 fishing year. For summer flounder, the Addendum creates management measures by region with the intent of providing more equity in recreational harvest opportunities along the coast, especially between New York and New Jersey. The approved summer flounder regions are Massachusetts and Rhode Island; Connecticut through New Jersey; Delaware through Virginia; and North Carolina. For black sea bass, the Board also approved the continuation of management measures by northern (Massachusetts – New Jersey) and southern regions (Delaware – North Carolina).

Addendum XXV was initiated to address a growing concern that current summer flounder management measures are not providing recreational fishermen along the coast with equitable harvest opportunities to the resource. Its adaptive regional management approach is designed to allow the management program to adjust to past, current, and future changes to the resource and the fishery. Under this approach, all states within a region will be required to have the same possession limit, size limit, and season length. The Technical Committee will work with the states to develop, for Board consideration and approval, measures for each region that will collectively achieve, but not exceed, the recreational harvest limit. The adaptive regional management approach has been approved for the 2014 fishing year only.

For black sea bass, the Board approved the continuation of ad hoc regional management measures by northern (Massachusetts – New Jersey) and southern regions (Delaware – North Carolina). This approach has been used since 2011 and offers some advantages over coastwide regulations, which can disproportionately impact states within the management unit. Specifically, regional measures address geographic differences in the stock (size, abundance and seasonality) while maintaining the consistent application of management measures by neighboring states. States in the northern region will reduce their catch based on the region's performance in 2013. The Technical Committee will work with the states to develop regional management measures for Board consideration and approval. States in the southern region will implement measures consistent with federal regulations (current recommended federal measures are a 12.5 inch TL minimum fish size, 15 fish possession limit, and open season from May 19 – September 18 and October 18 – December 31). The regulations of the two regions combined will achieve the required coastwide harvest reduction in order to not exceed the 2014 recreational harvest limit. The Board approved the ad hoc regional measures approach for the 2014 fishing year, with the option of extending it through 2015 by Board action.

The Board will meet via conference call on Thursday, March 13, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. to consider approval of regional proposals for the 2014 summer flounder recreational fishery and state proposals for the 2014 black sea bass recreational fishery (see page 3 for meeting additional meeting details). Addendum XXV is available on the Commission website on the Summer Flounder page at <http://www.asmfc.org/species/summer-flounder>. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Maine Implements First Ever Quota for Glass Eel Fishery

The Commission's American Eel Management Board approved a conservation equivalency proposal from the State of Maine to allow quota management of its glass eel fishery. A quota of 11,749 pounds will be in place for Maine's 2014 glass eel fishing season, which begins on March 22nd. This quota, developed with input from Maine's fishing industry and Tribal Nations, represents a 35% reduction in 2013 Maine's glass eel harvest. In addition to quota management, Maine will also be implementing a harvester swipe card system with daily dealer reporting in order to increase accuracy of landings data and reduce opportunities for illegal harvest.

Prior to this fishing year, the Maine glass eel fishery was regulated by the 1998 Fishery Management Plan (FMP) which requires all states to maintain as conservative or more conservative management measures at the time the FMP was approved. Under the FMP, Maine's glass eel fishery was regulated by gear restrictions and a license cap. The change from input controls (gear restrictions and license cap) to output controls (quota management) should allow for increased management flexibility and conservation of the resource.

The Board continues to work on the elements of Draft Addendum IV, which will propose coastwide conservation measures for American eel fisheries. The Board will consider approval of the Draft Addendum for public comment at its next meeting in May 2014. For more information, please contact Kate Taylor at ktaylor@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.



New Acoustic Tagging Study to Evaluate Atlantic Striped Bass Migratory Patterns

Understanding anadromous fish migration patterns - when fish migrate by season, size, and age group - and the frequency with which fish return to the tributaries where they were born is important for developing regional stock assessments and management strategies. A long standing question in the assessment and management of coastal striped bass is the migration rates and residency of striped bass produced in the Chesapeake Bay. Past tagging and ageing studies demonstrated that residency and migration fluctuate widely with size, gender, and season. However, the data are not detailed enough to be used in stock assessment models designed to analyze trends for multiple regions of the coast (Chesapeake, Delaware, Hudson, New England). Migration and residency patterns from studies using conventional fish tags are influenced by tag reporting rates and also fluctuate year-to-year due to environmental conditions in the Chesapeake Bay. Telemetry tagging studies, however, do not rely on tag reporting and use the latest acoustic technology to independently track migrating fish.

Acoustic tags transmit unique sound signals, or pings, that are detected and stored by acoustic telemetry receivers deployed in the water (Figure 1). A unique and timely opportunity exists to utilize telemetry arrays recently deployed at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay by the U.S. Navy, within the Chesapeake Bay by a NOAA-funded study on Atlantic sturgeon,, and broader sharing of tagging data through the new Atlantic Coastal Telemetry Network (ACT) and the Mid-Atlantic Telemetry Observing System (MATOS). Striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, and other fish outfitted with acoustic tags can now be tracked as they move into and out of the Chesapeake and migrate seasonally in coastal waters (6-10 miles from shore). A new study starting this spring and led by Dr. Dave Secor's research team at the University

of Maryland's Chesapeake Biological Laboratory (CBL) will place acoustic tags in 100 striped bass, tracking them for a 2.5 year period within the Potomac River and across major regions and tributaries of the Chesapeake and Atlantic coast.

In cooperation with ACT and MATOS, the CBL study will exchange acoustic receiver and transmitter data collected in the Chesapeake Bay, as well as request from cooperating investigators recapture data from Potomac fish detected in acoustic arrays set up in the South Atlantic Bight, North Carolina sounds, the Chesapeake, Delaware, and Hudson estuaries, and the coastal waters from New England through Virginia.

Based upon recapture data, the research team will evaluate a set of hypotheses related to seasonal migration patterns and degree of residency within the Chesapeake Bay including,

- Expected size and sex-specific patterns of outmigration
- Seasonal timing of outmigration and the influence of temperature and water flow
- Segregation of resident striped bass in the Potomac River, Chesapeake Bay regions, and other tributaries
- Degree of visitation of outmigrating striped bass to non-natal estuaries (e.g., Delaware, Hudson, North Carolina sounds) and coastal regions
- Incidence and timing of anadromous spawning runs and the role of temperature and water flow

The proposed work addresses the key assessment issue of how Chesapeake Bay striped bass contribute to coastal stocks. Within the Chesapeake, the behaviors of tagged fish will be compared to models of available habitat during summer

continued, see SCIENCE HIGHLIGHT on page 8

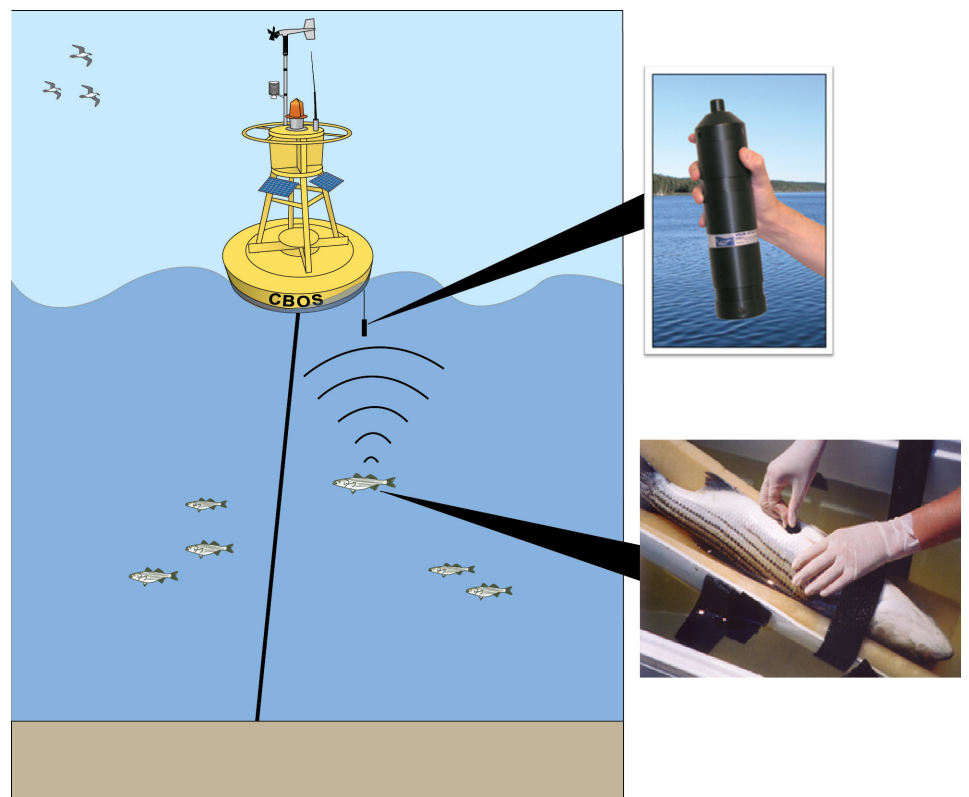


Figure 1. An Atlantic striped bass implanted with an acoustic tag being detected by a VEMCO VR2 receiver affixed to a Chesapeake Bay Observing System Buoy. Photos courtesy of VEMCO and Dave Secor, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

On the Legislative Front

On January 17, 2014, President Obama signed H.R. 3547, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, into law. H.R. 3547 is an omnibus appropriations bill that funds the entire federal government at a level of \$1.012 trillion through September 30, 2014. The portion of the bill that funds the Commerce Department reduces NOAA Fisheries 2014 budget by \$13.569 million (2.6 percent) from 2013 levels. However, the reduction in funding was not uniform across all funding lines. Federal funding for “Regional Councils and Fishery Commissions” and the “Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act” line items received increases in funding over 2013. In addition to increased funding in 2014, the Commission’s funding cuts from sequestration will be reduced.

An added benefit of enacting H.R. 3547 is that it clears the appropriations backlog and puts Congress back on a regular appropriations schedule. This spring and summer, Congress can work on 2015 appropriations instead of working on a series of short-term spending bills throughout the year as we’ve seen the past couple years.

2012 and 2013. The \$75 million figure represents a compromise between the Senate’s \$150 million and the House’s \$0 funding figures. NOAA Fisheries and Congressional appropriators are currently negotiating the details of funding distribution and what it may be used for.

Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

H.R. 3547 did not include language supported by some in the Senate regarding the closure of the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office (NERO). Instead, the agreement modifies the Senate language by continuing operations at NERO, but directs NOAA to change the name of the office to the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) to better reflect the geographic region that office represents, which includes New England, the Mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes areas. The agreement further recommends that NOAA Fisheries



Electronic Monitoring

H.R. 3547 reiterates that NOAA shall maintain full funding for the continued installation of electronic logbooks and monitoring systems. The electronic monitoring systems are to be part of an integrated at-sea monitoring program and serve as an alternative to observers for vessels carrying electronic monitoring systems. The agreement requires NOAA Fisheries to work with the small boat fixed gear fleet to implement a cooperative research program designed to test the functionality of available electronic monitoring systems. This cooperative research program is required to address data quality, costs, species identification capabilities, and the reliability of hardware. NOAA Fisheries is required to ensure this effort is adequately

resourced for the fiscal year 2014 work program. For more information, please contact Deke Tompkins, Legislative Executive Assistant, at dtompkins@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740

| | Councils/Commissions | Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2014 Enacted | \$32,000,000 | \$2,500,000 |
| House Proposed 2014 | \$32,000,000 | \$2,000,000 |
| Senate Proposed 2014 | \$32,008,000 | \$2,500,000 |
| 2013 Enacted | \$31,555,000 | \$2,000,000 |
| 2012 Enacted | \$31,754,000 | \$0 |

Federal Disaster Assistance

H.R. 3547 included \$75 million in Fisheries Disaster Assistance for disasters declared by the Secretary of Commerce in New England, the Gulf of Mexico, and Alaska in

improve services to the fishing industry by enhancing operations at fishery science centers and fishery statistics offices to give NOAA Fisheries stronger local connections throughout the region.

SCIENCE HIGHLIGHT, continued from page 7

and fall months. Broader impacts also include predictions of how climate variables (warming water temperatures and flow) influence seasonal striped bass migrations and how fishing seasons may be modified to reflect the migratory patterns of Chesapeake Bay striped bass.

For additional information on the Potomac River striped bass acoustic tagging study, please contact Dr. Dave Secor at 410.326.7421, or secor@umces.edu. For information and updates on this specific project visit <http://fishconnectivity.cbl.umces.edu/research/PAST>. For information on a variety of Atlantic coast fish tagging programs, visit the Commission’s tagging website at www.fishtag.info.

ACCSP: Frequently Asked Questions About the Data Warehouse

One of the highlights for the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) in 2013 was the release of a new version of the Data Warehouse. The Data Warehouse is an online database populated with fishery-dependent data supplied by the 23 program partners of ACCSP. The latest developments included providing users with 1) a query tool of the Data Warehouse for quick public access and 2) transparent and timely updates on when datasets are updated in the Data Warehouse. The Data Warehouse now has the capability for immediate public access to non-confidential data, without the requirement of login credentials. This new Public Data Warehouse feature increases accessibility for first-time or less frequent visitors of the Data Warehouse. To login or access the Public Data Warehouse, please visit <http://www.accsp.org/dataware.htm>.

In case you are new to the Data Warehouse or just need a refresher, here are the answers to five of our most frequently asked questions. If your question isn't addressed here, be sure to check our FAQs page here <http://www.accsp.org/FAQs.html>.

1) What is the current status of the data?

The timing of updates varies by data source. For the most up-to-date data please visit <http://mahi.accsp.org:8080/myJSPs/SOAD.jsp>. This status is updated as data are loaded.

2) Why should I use ACCSP data?

ACCSP data are unique because we synchronize data received from all

program partners into one integrated set of codes for variables such as species, gear, and fishing area. Data are available through flexible and intuitive queries and can be viewed or downloaded through the interface. Through the Data Warehouse, users can obtain confidential access to data that can be downloaded online.

3) What is the difference between reported quantity, landed pounds, and live pounds?

Reported quantity refers to what was landed and reported, including market and grade categories. Reported quantity must be viewed with the units of measure (lbs, bushels, etc.).

Landed pounds refers to the reported quantity converted into pounds. For example, a landing may have a reported quantity of 13 and unit measure of count and be dressed. These 13 dressed fish weigh 28 pounds and so the landed pounds is 28.

Live pounds is the reported quantity converted to whole animal weight. Live pounds is a more accurate measure of what was harvested. For example, the 13 dressed fish weigh 28 pounds, but represent 35 pounds of live weight. Shellfish are the exception and are converted to meat-weights in this column.

4) Should I look at Dealer Reports or Fishermen Trips?

It depends. Dealer reports have true weights, market and grade categories,

and price information but are generally not required to have detailed fishing area and gear information. Dealer reports are more complete for total landings.

Therefore, dealer reports are best used for questions such as "How much of species X was landed last year in my state?"

Fishermen reports have better effort information (fishing area and gear) but weights may have been estimated by the captain.

Fishermen reports are best used for questions such as "How much of species X was caught in fishing area 611 (Long Island Sound)?"

5) When should I use a custom data request?

If you have a unique question or cannot retrieve the data you desire from the Data Warehouse, you should complete the custom data request form. A staff member from the Data Team will work with you to create a custom data request. To obtain the custom data request form, please visit http://www.accsp.org/Forms/ACCSPCustom_Data_Request_Form.pdf.

ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program that designs, implements, and conducts marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and integrates those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. For more information about ACCSP, please visit <http://www.accsp.org/>.



Proposed Management Actions

Atlantic Croaker & Spot Draft Addendum Initiated

In February, the Commission's South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board has initiated the development of a Draft Addendum to the Fishery Management Plans for Spot and Atlantic Croaker. The Draft Addendum will propose replacing the current trigger analysis with the use of a traffic light approach in determining management measures for both species along the coast. The Draft Addendum will also include options that will allow for conservation equivalency measures to achieve reductions in catch and harvest when needed.

The Board initiated the Draft Addendum in response to concerns over trends in the spot and Atlantic croaker fisheries. The current management of Atlantic croaker and spot compares annual changes in various trigger indices (recent landings and survey information) for each non-assessment year to review trends in the fisheries. The results of the most recent trigger analysis found declines in the commercial and recreational landings for both Atlantic croaker and spot fisheries but did not trip the triggers. The Technical Committee was concerned that the current triggers do not illustrate long-term trends in the stocks and lack specific and timely management responses.

The traffic light approach has been used as a precautionary framework for fisheries with limited data to allow for a reasonable level of resource management. The name comes from assigning a color (red, yellow, or green) to categorize relative levels of indicators on the condition of the fish population or fishery. The approach provides a clear illustration of the trends in the fishery and the need for management action. This method has been developed for use in the blue crab fisheries of North Carolina and Georgia.

The proposed traffic light approach is expected to be an interim approach until the completion of the next stock assessment for both species. The Draft Addendum will be presented to the Board for consideration and approval in May 2014. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Atlantic Herring Amendment Initiated

In February, the Commission's Atlantic Herring Section initiated a new amendment with the primary purpose of more fully protecting spawning herring in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine). The draft amendment will review and consider changes to the Area 1A spawning area regulations as well as consider (1) removing the fixed-gear set-aside rollover provision, (2) requiring the declaration of intended fishing gear types prior to the quota periods, and (3) requiring vessel fish holds to be emptied of fish before leaving the dock on a fishing trip.

The draft amendment is initiated to correct inconsistencies in the application of current spawning area regulations. In preparation for the amendment, the Section has tasked the Technical Committee to review the current default closure dates, area delineations, and time periods. The draft amendment will also propose removing the rollover provision for the fixed gear set-aside in order to allow for increased opportunities for small scale fixed gear fishermen when Atlantic herring are present after the overall Area 1A quota has been harvested by the limited access fishery.

Further, the draft amendment will propose that vessel owners declare in advance their intended fishing gear type for each quota period in order to provide managers with an estimate of effort for each quota period and better inform the Section's decisions regarding harvest control measures (e.g., days out). Additionally, in order to address concerns about the discards and full reporting, the draft amendment will propose vessel holds be emptied of fish before leaving the dock on a fishing trip.

A Public Information Document (PID) will be developed in consultation with the New England Fishery Management Council to ensure consistent regulations with the federal fishery management plan. The PID will be available for Section consideration in the Commission's Spring Meeting. For more information, please contact, Melissa Yuen, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at myuen@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Jack Travelstead

With his retirement in January, Jack Travelstead stepped down as Administrative Commissioner from the Commonwealth of Virginia, ending a more than 30-year career in marine fisheries management. Over that time, Jack helped guide the evolution of the Commission's programs and policies into the 21st century. His forward thinking and continuous participation aided the Commission in making significant changes to its Interstate Fisheries Management Program as well as the development and implementation of a coastwide data collection and management program under the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. As management board chair, he directly influenced on the development and implementation of sound fisheries conservation and management programs for many of the Commission's managed species, including bluefish, striped bass, summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, tautog, and shad and river herring. In 2003 in recognition of his vast contributions to the Commission and Atlantic coastal fisheries conservation and management, Jack received the Commission's highest annual award, the Captain David H. Hart Award. We wish Jack a long, healthy, and happy retirement. He will be greatly missed.

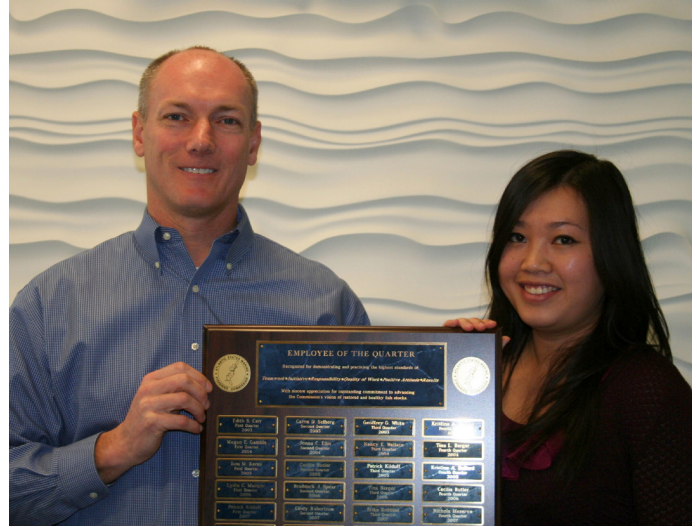
John M.R. Bull

On February 28th, John M.R. Bull was appointed Commissioner for the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) and, in that capacity, ASMFC Administrative Commissioner. He joined the VMRC in 2007 as Director of Public Relations and Legislative Liaison, working closely with the agency's constituent groups, the news media, the Virginia General Assembly on all aspects of agency business. Before joining VMRC, John was an award-winning newspaper reporter at eight different newspapers for over 23 years, most recently as an investigative reporter and Virginia General Assembly reporter for the Newport News Daily Press. He is a journalism graduate from Penn State University. His hobbies include fishing, kayaking and golf. He and his wife, Jane Elizabeth, live in Hampton. Welcome aboard John!

Melissa Yuen Receives ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

In a little over a year, Melissa Yuen has made important contributions to the Commission's fisheries management and habitat programs, advancing its efforts toward sustainable fisheries management and promoting the benefits of habitat to fisheries. For her exemplary efforts, Melissa was named Employee of the Quarter for the first quarter of 2014. The award is intended to recognize contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.

Melissa's passion, enthusiasm, and attention to detail are clearly reflected in her work products. She has kept the Atlantic Herring Section and Winter Flounder Management Board abreast of changes in the federal fishery management plans and anticipated necessary actions in state waters to keep the plans aligned. She coordinated the development of two recent volumes of *Habitat Hotline Atlantic*, effectively promoting state, regional and federal fisheries habitat conservation efforts.



Despite her heavy work load, Melissa enthusiastically accepted new and expanded responsibilities by assuming coordination of the Habitat and Artificial Reef Committees. An exceptional team player, Melissa generously shares of her time whether it be assisting a new staff member get up-to-speed or helping to write and review content for the website and other outreach products. Melissa also creatively approaches challenges, offering a fresh perspective to her coworkers. Melissa has a Master of Advanced Studies in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation from Scripps Institute of Oceanography and a Bachelor of Science in Zoology from the University of Maryland, College Park. As Employee of the Quarter, Melissa received a cash award and small gift, a letter of appreciation for personnel folder, and her name engraved on a plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Melissa!

AMERICAN SHAD, continued from page 5

New York, New Jersey, Delaware, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida all have approved SFMPs for American shad. All states and jurisdictions are allowed to maintain a shad catch-and-release recreational fishery.

In addition, Amendment 3 requires states and jurisdictions to submit a habitat plan regardless of whether their commercial fishery would remain open. The habitat plans outline current and historical spawning and nursery habitat, threats to those habitats, and habitat restoration programs in each of the river systems. The purpose of the habitat plans is to provide a record of the major threats facing American shad to aid in future management efforts. The habitat plans provide a comprehensive picture of threats to American shad in each state and include collaboration with other state and federal agencies (e.g., state inland fish and wildlife agencies, water quality agencies, U.S Army Corps of Engineers).

The two largest threats identified in the habitat plans were barriers to migration and a lack of information on the consequences of climate change. A key benefit of the habitat plans is that each river system relevant to shad now has its threats characterized. The habitat plans will be filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to ensure that shad habitat is considered when hydropower dams are licensed. They will also be shared with inland fisheries divisions to aid in habitat monitoring and restoration efforts. In February 2014, the Board approved habitat plans for all states/jurisdictions with the exception of the Hudson and Merrimack Rivers, and the State of Florida. It is anticipated that habitat plans will be updated every five years. To learn more about state habitat plans, go to the Shad & River Herring webpage at <http://www.asmfc.org/species/shad-river-herring> (under Management Section). For more information, please contact Marin Hawk, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mhawk@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Shad Habitat Threats and Future Plans

Largest Threats

- * Main stem dams in New England states which impede fish passage
- * Contaminant issues with natural gas in Mid-Atlantic states
- * Dredging in Southeast may impact shad habitat, but it is unclear to what extent

Lack of Information

- * Climate change impacts
- * Data on competition and predation by invasive species
- * Assessment of toxic and thermal discharges in watersheds

Future Plans

- * Investigating potential dam removals
- * Working to improve water quality coastwide
- * Exploring the feasibility of using fish passage technologies on larger rivers

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 North Highland St.
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Recreational Specifications Set for 2014 Southern New England/ Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder Stock

The Commission’s Winter Flounder Management Board set specifications for the 2014 recreational fishing season for the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) stock. The season will extend from March 1 to December 31 with a two fish creel limit. This change is an expansion of the 60-day recreational open season. The action is intended to increase fishing opportunities in the southern range where other species’ availability may be limited later in the year. All other commercial and recreational management measures for the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and SNE/MA stocks will be maintained (see Table 1).

The Board reaffirmed its commitment to work cooperatively with the New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office to effectively rebuild winter flounder stocks throughout their range. For more information, please contact, Melissa Yuen, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at myuen@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Table 1. Minimum commercial and recreational management measures for the Inshore Winter Flounder FMP. No changes were specified for FY2013.

| Stock | Sector | Trip Limit/ Possession Limit | Size Limit | Season | Gear |
|--------|--------------|---------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|---|
| GOM | Commercial | 500 lbs/trip/ day | 12" | Maintain Closures | Minimum 6.5" square or diamond mesh in cod-end |
| | Recreational | 8 fish | 12" | NA | |
| SNE/MA | Commercial | 50 lbs 38 fish/trip/day | 12" | Maintain Closures | Minimum 6.5" square or diamond mesh in cod-end 100-lb mesh trigger |
| | Recreational | 2 fish | 12" | March 1 – December 31 | |