

ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Upcoming Meetings
page 2

From the Executive Director's Desk
Gulf of Maine Lobster Warrants Close Monitoring
page 3

Species Profile
Coastal Sharks
page 4

Proposed Management Actions
Atlantic Menhaden Coastal Sharks
page 6

Fishery Management Actions
Jonah Crab Atlantic Menhaden
page 7

ASMFC Urges Transparency and Public Input in Proposed New England Offshore and Canyons Seamounts Monument Decision-making
page 9

In Memoriam
page 9

Science Highlight
River Herring Data Standardization Workshop
Page 10

ACCSP Announces 2016 Funding Awards
Page 11

ASMFC Comings & Goings
page 15

New Species Coordinator Assignments
page 16

On the Legislative Front
page 16

ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence



AAE Recipients from left: Special Agent Todd Smith, Peter Burns, Mike Cahall, Cheri Patterson, Allison Murphy, Deputy Chief Kurt Blanchard, Jason McNamee, Chip Lynch

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented members of the American Lobster Trap Tag Team, Jason McNamee, Deputy Chief Kurt Blanchard, and Special Agent Todd Smith with its Annual Awards of Excellence for their outstanding contributions to fisheries management, science, and law enforcement along the Atlantic coast.

"Every year a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence recognize outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries," said ASMFC Chair Douglas Grout of the New Hampshire Fish and Game. "This evening, we honor several exceptional individuals for their contributions to the management and conservation of Atlantic coast fisheries."

Management & Policy Contributions

American Lobster Trap Tag Team -- Mike Cahall, Nicholas Mwai, and Karen Holmes of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP); Peter Burns, Chip Lynch, Allison Murphy, Julie Mackey, and Ted Hawes with NOAA Fisheries; Cheri Patterson and Renee Zobel with New Hampshire Fish and Game; Tom Hoopes, Story Reed, and Kerry Allard with Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries; Scott Olszewski, Daniel Costa, and John Lake with Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife; Mark Alexander and Colleen Giannini with Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection; and Kim McKown with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

The American Lobster Trap Tag Team is a group of 19 state and federal fishery and data managers and ACCSP staff responsible for the creation of the first of its kind cooperative permitting and trap allocation

continued, see ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE on page 12

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N • Arlington, Virginia 22201 • www.asmfrc.org

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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June 3 (9:30 - 11:30 AM)

Northern Shrimp Section, Portsmouth Public Library, Levenson Community Meeting Room, 175 Parrott Avenue, Portsmouth, NH.

June 9 & 10

National Artificial Reef Workshop, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA.

June 13 (10 -11:30 AM)

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Plan Development Team Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

June 13 - 17

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Cocoa Beach Oceanfront, 1550 N. Atlantic Avenue, Cocoa Beach, FL.

June 14 - 16

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Courtyard Marriott, Newark, DE.

June 17 (9:30 - 11:30 AM)

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

June 21 - 23

New England Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland, ME.

June 27 (9 AM - Noon)

ASMFC & MAFMC Bluefish Advisory Panels Webinar; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

July 11 - 15

ASMFC Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment Workshop, The Hotel at Arundel Preserve, 7795 Arundel Mills Boulevard, Hanover, MD.

July 20 & 21

ASMFC Biological Ecological Reference Points Workgroup, Providence, RI.

July 25 - 27

Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program-South Atlantic, St. Simons Island, GA.

August 2 - 4

ASMFC Summer Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA.

August 8 - 11

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton, Virginia Beach, VA.

August 9 - 11

ASMFC Atlantic Croaker and Spot Assessment Workshop, ASMFC Offices, 1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA.

August 20 - 24

American Fisheries Society 145th Annual Meeting, Kansas City, KS.

September 12 - 16

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Marina Inn at Grande Dunes, 8121 Amalfi Place, Myrtle Beach, SC.

June 14 - 16

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Courtyard Marriott, Newark, DE.

September 20 - 22

New England Fishery Management Council, DoubleTree by Hilton, Danvers, MA.

October 23 - 27

ASMFC 75th Annual Meeting, Harborside Hotel, 55 West St, Bar Harbor, ME.



Gulf of Maine Lobster Warrants Close Monitoring

American lobster in the Gulf of Maine (GOM) is one of the most lucrative fisheries in the U.S. due to its high stock abundance and a robust market for the product. This stands in sharp contrast to the condition of the Southern New England (SNE) stock, which is depleted and in serious need of protection. Embracing the lessons learned from the collapse of the SNE fishery, managers have begun to take a closer look at the GOM lobster fishery in order to understand the primary factors impacting the resource's long-term viability and to investigate potential management measures which ensure the sustainability of the fishery.

The harbinger of things to come occurred in 2009 when the Peer Review Panel for the benchmark stock assessment cautioned that, despite current high levels of abundance and recruitment in GOM and Georges Bank (GBK), "managers be particularly vigilant of recruitment patterns in these stocks and stand ready to impose substantial restrictions should recruitment decline." Further, "current levels of fishing effort and harvest will not be sustainable if the stock returns to lower recruitment and production."

While the 2015 benchmark stock assessment found GOM/GBK abundance levels continued to be high, three of the five young-of-the-year (YOY) indices, which provide a measure of larval settlement and recruitment, were at very low levels. An update of the YOY indices in 2016 showed continued declines in settlement which appear to be spreading throughout GOM and GBK (see accompanying figure).

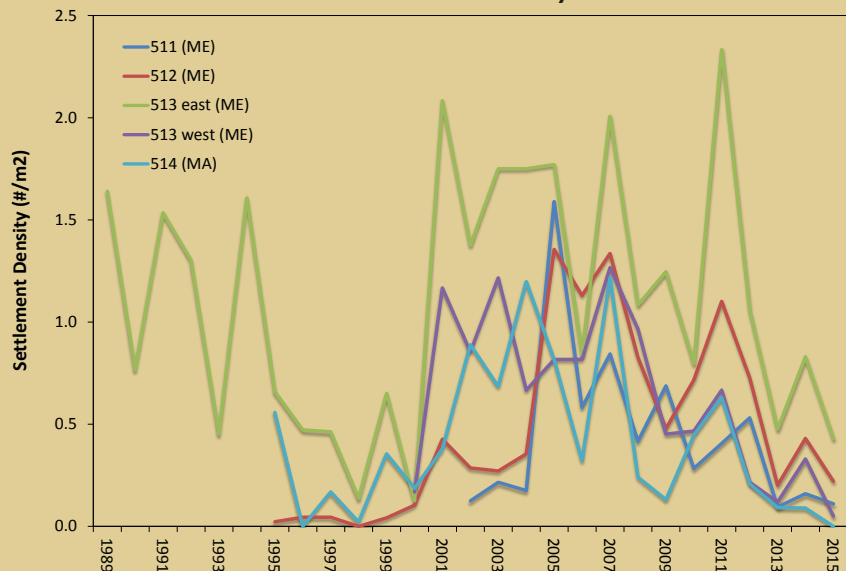
In response to these findings, the Commission's American Lobster Management Board (Board) recently charged the Technical Committee with several tasks, including an investigation of the connectivity between GOM and Canada stocks, a description of how changes in ocean currents are affecting larval supply patterns, and the development of a traffic light analysis (TLA) as a potential management tool.

The TLA is currently used for Atlantic croaker and spot in order to assess long-term changes in the harvest and abundance of the two species. The potential TLA for American lobster would similarly track changes in the stock by utilizing multiple indices, such as ventless trap survey

results, trawl survey data, and landings information, to understand changes from trends seen over the last 10 years. The benefit of the TLA is it allows the Board to proactively manage the GOM/GBK fishery before the stock is declared overfished.

The current overfished definition for the GOM/GBK stock is set at 66 million lobsters, which is well below the current estimated abundance of 248 million lobsters. Allowing the stock to decline to such low levels before taking

**Gulf of Maine American Lobster
YOY Settlement Survey Indices**



management action would certainly cause economic hardship in New England given the number of participants in the fishery. As a result, the TLA has the potential to act as a barometer, prompting the Board to take action if harvest or abundance levels fall below the trends seen in recent years. The Board is committed to staying ahead of the curve and enabling managers to respond to changes in the stock in a timely and efficient manner before a crisis point is reached.

The health of the lobster fishery is critical in GOM and GBK as other fisheries have been declining or have become more tightly managed. The economies of many coastal communities in the region rely heavily the lobster fishery. While the GOM American lobster fishery has been a management success story, close monitoring and management changes may be needed to keep it that way.

Species Profile: Coastal Sharks

Atlantic States & NOAA Fisheries Move Forward with Smooth Dogfish Management

Introduction

Sharks are a vital part of ocean ecosystems all over the world. Considered a keystone species because they generally reside at the top of the food chain, sharks strongly impact other species either directly or indirectly. Removing or reducing shark populations in an area can create imbalance in the food chain and have far reaching negative impacts. Therefore, the health of shark populations in an ecosystem is often an accurate indicator of the overall health of the system.

Most sharks are highly migratory and routinely cross political boundaries. Some make long migrations from the Mid-Atlantic Bight south into the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico in the summer, or even as far as the northern coast of South America in the winter. Many undertake inshore migrations between state waters to specific inshore nursery areas to pup (give birth).

Though more is known today, fisheries managers did not always fully understand the life cycle and ecological role of sharks. In the mid-1980s, sharks were considered an under-utilized resource and fishermen were encouraged to target them. Over the next few years, fishing effort increased considerably, leading to unregulated harvest on some shark species.

In 1993, NOAA Fisheries implemented a Federal Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Sharks of the Atlantic Ocean to rebuild depleted stocks and protect healthy stocks from overfishing. In May 2008, the Commission adopted an Interstate FMP for Atlantic Coastal Sharks to complement federal management actions and increase protection of pregnant females and juveniles at inshore nursery areas. Since 2008, the states have continued to work closely with NOAA Fisheries to set and implement complementary management measures.

Life History

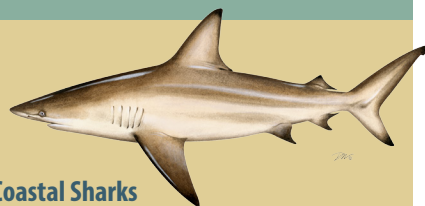
Sharks belong to the class Chondrichthyes (cartilaginous fish) that also includes rays, skates, and deepwater chimaeras (ratfishes). Relative to other marine fish, sharks have a very low reproductive potential. Various factors create this low reproductive rate, such as slow growth, late sexual maturity, one to two-year reproductive cycles, a small number of young per brood, and specific requirements for nursery areas. These biological factors leave many shark species vulnerable to overfishing. Sharks have internal fertilization and the embryo of most species spends its entire developmental period protected within its mother's body, although some species lay eggs. Females produce a small number (2 – 25) of large pups, which have an increased chance of survival due to their size and advanced stage of development.

Adults usually congregate in specific areas to mate and females travel to specific nursery areas to pup. These nursery areas are discrete geographic areas, usually in waters shallower than those inhabited by the adults. Frequently, the nursery areas are in highly productive coastal or estuarine waters where abundant small fish and crustaceans provide food for the growing pups. These shallow areas have fewer large predators than deeper waters, thus enhancing the chances of survival of the young sharks.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

The commercial fishery, which uses bottom longlines and gillnets, is generally concentrated in the Southeastern U.S. and Gulf of Mexico. The Atlantic fishery targets both large coastal shark (LCS) and small coastal shark (SCS) species with bottom longline as the primary commercial gear. An Atlantic bottom longline is, on average, 3.4 miles in length and contains about 300 hooks. Skates, other sharks, or various finfish are used as bait. The gear typically consists of a heavy monofilament mainline with lighter weight monofilament gangions, or branch lines, coming off the main line. The Southeast shark gillnet fishery is comprised of several vessels based primarily out of ports in northern Florida.

Species Snapshot



Coastal Sharks

Interesting Facts

- Sharks have no bones; their skeletons are made of cartilage. Their teeth and other hard parts are hardened with calcium phosphate.
- Tagging studies in the North Atlantic have revealed that blue sharks are the champion migrators among sharks—migrations of 1,200 to 1,700 miles are common. The record journey for a tagged blue shark is 3,740 miles from New York to Brazil.
- The thresher shark uses its unique whip-like tail fin to herd fish in tight shoals and then stuns them with powerful swipes of the tail.
- Smooth dogfish (*Mustelus canis*) are the only species of smoothhound (*Mustelus*) occurring in the Atlantic Ocean.
- Great white sharks are the largest predatory fish in the sea. They live along the coasts of all continents except Antarctica.
- Mako sharks are the fastest of all shark species. They can reach speeds of up to 60 miles per hour (mph) when migrating or hunting. They generally swim at a speed of 35 mph.
- The great hammerhead is the largest of the 9 identified hammerhead species. Hammerhead sharks have disproportionately small mouths and tend to bottom-feed on stingrays.
- The Cooperative Atlantic States Shark Pupping and Nursery (COASTSPAN) survey has monitored nursery grounds along the East Coast since the early 1990s.
- Globally, there are more than 400 species of sharks; ASMFC's FMP addresses 40 sharks in the Atlantic Ocean.

Stock Status

- Varies by species (see table on next page)

Vessels typically use nets ranging from 456 to 2,280 meters long and 6.1 to 15.2 meters deep, with about 5.2 inches of stretched mesh.

In 2014, the top commercially harvested sharks included smooth dogfish, blacktip, Atlantic sharpnose, shortfin mako, and the common thresher shark. LCS landings were approximately 503,594 pounds dressed weight (dw), a 14% increase from 2013, and SCS landings were approximately 269,252 pounds dw, a 3% increase from 2013. Total U.S. landings of Atlantic pelagic species were 358,549 pounds dw in 2014, nearly double 2013 landings. This is largely attributed to increased landings of thresher shark as well as blue, porbeagle, and shortfin mako.

The recreational fishery for Atlantic sharks occurs in federal and state waters from New England to the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea. Once called “the poor man’s marlin,” recreational shark fishing is now a popular sport at all social and economic levels, largely due to accessibility to the resource. Sharks can be caught by rod and reel virtually anywhere in saltwater, with even large specimens available to surf anglers or small boaters in the near-shore area. Most recreational fishing takes place from small to medium-size vessels. SCS species such as Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, and finetooth comprise the majority of the recreational harvest. Short-fin mako and common thresher sharks are generally accessible only to those aboard ocean-going vessels.

Approximately 102,000 sharks were recreationally harvested in 2014 in the Atlantic region, compared to 70,000 sharks in 2013. The SCS complex largely dominated the catch with approximately 91,627 fish harvested in 2014; the largest harvest of the SCS complex since 2009. Sharpnose sharks represented 61% of the this harvest. The LCS complex, including hammerheads, had an estimated 10,785 fish harvested in 2014.

Stock Status

Atlantic shark stock assessments for LCS, SCS, and smoothhound sharks

are generally conducted through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process. However, there have been exceptions where stock assessments were conducted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (ICCAT SCRS). In some cases, NOAA Fisheries looks to available resources, including external peer reviewed literature that, if deemed appropriate, could be used for domestic management purposes.

Stock status is assessed by species or by species complex if there is not enough data for an individual assessment. In summary, fourteen species have been assessed domestically, three species have been assessed internationally, and the rest have not yet been assessed. The accompanying table outlines the stock status and associated assessment process

for each species or species group. In 2015, a benchmark stock assessment (SEDAR 39) was conducted for the smoothhound complex, including smooth dogfish, the only species of smoothhound occurring in the Atlantic. The assessment indicates smooth dogfish is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing.

The North Atlantic blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) stock was assessed by ICCAT SCRS in 2015. The assessment indicated the stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing, as was also concluded in the 2008 stock assessment. However, scientists acknowledge there is a high level of uncertainty in the data inputs and model structural assumptions; therefore, the assessment results should be interpreted with caution.

SEDAR 34 (2013) assessed the Atlantic sharpnose (*Rhizoprionodon terraenovae*)

continued, see COASTAL SHARKS on page 13

Stock Status of Atlantic Coastal Shark Species and Species Groups			
Species/Complex Name	Stock Status		References/Comments
	Overfished	Overfishing	
Pelagic			
Porbeagle	Yes	No	Porbeagle Stock Assessment, ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics Report (2009); Rebuilding ends in 2108 (HMS Am. 2)
Blue	No	No	ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics Report (2015)
Shortfin mako	No	No	ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics Report (2012)
All other pelagic sharks	Unknown	Unknown	
Aggregated Large Coastal Sharks (LCS)			
Atlantic Blacktip	Unknown	Unknown	SEDAR 11 (2006)
Aggregated Large Coastal Sharks - Atlantic Region	Unknown	Unknown	SEDAR 11 (2006); difficult to assess as a species complex due to various life history characteristics/ lack of available data
Non-Blacknose Small Coastal Sharks (SCS)			
Atlantic Sharpnose	No	No	SEDAR 34 (2013)
Bonnethead	Unknown	Unknown	SEDAR 34 (2013)
Finetooth	No	No	SEDAR 13 (2007)
Hammerhead			
Scalloped	Yes	Yes	SEFSC Scientific Review by Hayes et al. (2009)
Blacknose			
Blacknose	Yes	Yes	SEDAR 21 (2010); Rebuilding ends in 2043 (HMS Am. 5a)
Smoothhound			
Atlantic Smooth	No	No	SEDAR 39 (2015)
Research			
Sandbar	Yes	No	SEDAR 21 (2010)
Prohibited			
Dusky	Yes	Yes	SEDAR 21 (2010); Rebuilding ends in 2108 (HMS Am. 2)
All other prohibited	Unknown	Unknown	

Proposed Management Actions

At the Commission's Spring Meeting, species management boards for Atlantic menhaden and coastal sharks approved two draft addenda for public comment. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on these draft addenda, either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. Both documents can be obtained on the Commission's website, www.asafc.org, under Public Input. Following is a brief summary of the proposed measures as well as the public hearing schedule for the draft addenda.

Atlantic Menhaden Draft Addendum I

Draft Addendum I to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Menhaden proposes modifying the FMP's bycatch allowance provision. It considers allowing two licensed individuals to harvest up to 12,000 pounds of menhaden bycatch when working from the same vessel fishing stationary, multi-species gear -- limited to one vessel trip per day. Bycatch represents less than 2% of the total coastwide landings.

The practice of two permitted fishermen working together from the same vessel to harvest Atlantic menhaden primarily occurs in the Chesapeake Bay pound net fishery. This practice enables the fishermen to pool resources for fuel and crew. However, the practice is currently constrained by the FMP's bycatch allowance provision, which includes a 6,000 pound/vessel/day limit. The Draft Addendum seeks comment on whether the provision should be revised to accommodate the interests of fixed-gear fishermen who work together as authorized by the states and jurisdictions in which they fish.

The intent of Draft Addendum I is to add flexibility to one element of the bycatch allowance provision while the Board prepares to address menhaden management more comprehensively through the development of Draft Amendment 3 to the FMP over the next two years.

The following public hearings have been scheduled:

Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife

June 20, 2016 at 6-9 PM
University of Rhode Island Bay Campus
Corliss Auditorium, South Ferry Road
Narragansett, Rhode Island
Contact: Jason McNamee at 401.423.1943

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

June 28, 2016 at 7 PM
Marine Headquarters
Boating Education Center
333 Ferry Road
Old Lyme, Connecticut
Contact: David Simpson at 860.434.6043

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

June 29, 2016 at 6:30 PM
Bureau of Marine Resources
205 North Belle Mead Road
East Setauket, New York
Contact: Jim Gilmore at 631.444.0430

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

July 7, 2016 at 6:30 PM
Atlantic County Library (Galloway Twp. Branch)
306 East Jimmie Leeds Road
Galloway, New Jersey
Contact: Russ Allen at 609.748.2037

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

June 23, 2016 at 6:00 PM
Easton High School
723 Mecklenburg Avenue
Easton, Maryland
Contact: Lynn Fegley at 410.260.8285

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

July 6, 2016 at 6 PM
DNREC Auditorium
89 Kings Highway
Dover, Delaware
Contact: John Clark at 302.739.9914

Coastal Sharks Draft Addendum IV

Draft Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Coastal Sharks seeks to maintain consistency between federal and state FMPs, where possible, and to better incorporate the intent of the smooth dogfish limited exception in the Shark Conservation Act of 2010 (SCA) into state regulations.

Under current regulations, commercial fishermen with only a state commercial fishing license can land smooth dogfish with corresponding fins removed from the carcass. The Draft Addendum proposes to amend the FMP to allow smooth dogfish carcasses to be landed with corresponding fins removed from the carcass as long as the total retained catch, by weight, is composed of at least 25% smooth dogfish. This option is consistent with the federal catch composition requirement, which was included in NOAA Fisheries' final rule for Amendment 9.

The following public hearings have been scheduled:

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

June 28, 2016 at 7 PM
Marine Headquarters
Boating Education Center
333 Ferry Road
Old Lyme, Connecticut
Contact: Colleen Giannini at 860.447.4308

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

June 28, 2016 at 6:30 PM
Bureau of Marine Resources
205 North Belle Mead Road
East Setauket, New York
Contact: Steve Heins at 631.444.0435

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

June 22, 2016 at 6:30 PM
Nacote Creek Marine Law Enforcement Office
360 North New York Road, Mile Marker 51
Port Republic, New Jersey
Contact: Russ Allen at 609.748.2037

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

June 21, 2016 at 3:30 – 5:00 PM
Ocean Pines Library Conference Room
11107 Cathell Road
Ocean Pines, Maryland
Contact: Michael Luisi at 410.260.8341

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

June 23, 2016 at 5:00 PM
Dare County Center, Courthouse Campus
950 Marshall C. Collins Drive
Manteo, North Carolina
Contact: Holly White at 252.264.3911

Jonah Crab Addendum I Approved Draft Addendum Initiated to Establish Coastwide Standard for Claw Landings

The American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Jonah Crab. The Addendum establishes a bycatch limit of 1,000 pounds of crab per trip for non-trap gear (e.g., otter trawls, gillnets) and non-lobster trap gear (e.g., fish, crab, and whelk pots) effective January 1, 2017. In doing so, the Addendum caps incidental landings of Jonah crab across all non-directed gear types with a uniform bycatch allowance. While the gear types in Addendum I make minimal contributions to total landings in the fishery, the 1,000 crab limit provides a cap to potential increases in effort and trap proliferation.

The Addendum responds to concerns regarding the appropriateness of the 200 crab per calendar day/500 crab per trip incidental bycatch limit for non-trap gear established by the 2015 Jonah Crab FMP, as well as concerns regarding the lack of effort controls on non-lobster traps and the potential for trap proliferation. Data submitted by the New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries illustrated less than 1% of non-trap gear incidentally harvested Jonah crab in excess of the FMP bycatch limits. Data from the VTR database also indicated that between May 1, 2013 and August 31, 2015, 194 trips landed Jonah crab with non-lobster gear such as whelk, crab, and fish pots.

The Board also initiated the development of an addendum to consider establishing a coastwide standard for claw landings in the Jonah crab fishery. The FMP currently specifies the fishery be strictly whole crab except for those individuals who can prove a history of claw landings in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. However, claw fishermen from New York and Maine have since been identified and these individuals are currently only allowed to land whole crabs. At the request of the Board, NOAA Fisheries provided regulatory guidance on implementing the current exemption in federal waters, highlighting the exemption may not be consistent with National Standard 4 (measures shall not discriminate between residents of different states). As a result, the Board initiated a draft addendum to create a coastwide claw standard with options for a strictly whole crab fishery, a whole crab fishery with the allowance for a specific volume of detached claws per trip, and the unlimited landing of claws that meet a 2.5" minimum length. The Draft Addendum will be presented to the Board in August. If approved, it will be released for public comment.

The Board also discussed potential management actions to address American lobster stock declines in Southern New England (SNE). It agreed to initiate the development of a Draft Addendum to address the poor condition of the SNE stock by lowering fishing

mortality and increasing egg production through a combination of management tools including gauge size changes, season closures, area closures, and trap reductions. Underlying the Board's discussion was the shared belief that the condition of the SNE American lobster stock is serious and in need of action. Further, its depleted condition is due to a combination of environmental factors and fishing pressure. Lastly, the Board agreed not to pursue a moratorium in the SNE fishery. As a first step in the addendum process, the Board tasked the Technical Committee to review management measures which could achieve a 20%-60% increase in egg production. This analysis will be presented to the Board in August. In addition to taking action on SNE, the Board tasked the Technical Committee to explore several issues regarding the long-term sustainability of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock given the past few years of poor recruitment. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.

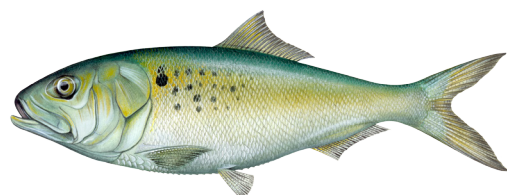


Atlantic Menhaden Episodic Event Set Aside Program Extended and Revised to Include New York

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board extended the episodic event set aside program until the finalization of Amendment 3. It also conditionally approved a request from New York to be added as an eligible state. The program reserves 1% of the coastwide total allowable catch to be used by New England states in areas and times when menhaden occur in higher abundance than normal. Rhode Island opted into the program in 2014 and 2015, and harvested a portion of the set aside each year. As a result of the Board's decision to extend the program, the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut remain eligible to participate in the program in 2016.

New York is currently reporting unusually large amounts of menhaden in the Peconic Bay estuary, raising the potential for more large fish kills, similar to last year, as the waters warm. New York sought Board approval to participate in the episodic event set aside program so fishermen can harvest a portion of the large build-up of menhaden in the Peconic Bay estuary to mitigate the impacts of additional fish kills. The Board approved the request subject to a one million pound harvest cap under the episodic event set aside.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.



Weakfish Assessment Approved for Management Use

Assessment Indicates Stock is Depleted and Overfishing Not Occurring

The 2016 Weakfish Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicate weakfish is depleted and has been for the past 13 years. Under the new reference points, the stock is considered depleted when the stock is below a spawning stock biomass (SSB) threshold of 30% (15.17 million pounds). In 2014, SSB was 5.62 million pounds. While the assessment indicates some positive signs in the weakfish stock in the most recent years, with a slight increase in SSB and total abundance, the stock is still well below the SSB threshold.

The assessment indicates natural mortality (e.g., the rate at which fish die because of natural causes such as predation, disease, starvation) has been increasing since the mid-1990s, from approximately 0.16 in the early 1980s to an average of 0.93 from 2007-2014. Therefore, even though fishing mortality has been at low levels in recent years, the weakfish population has been experiencing very high levels of total mortality (which includes fishing mortality and natural mortality), preventing the stock from recovering. To better address the issues impacting the weakfish resource, the Technical Committee recommends the use of total mortality (Z) benchmarks to prevent an increase in fishing pressure when natural mortality is high. The assessment proposes a total mortality target of 0.93 and threshold of 1.36. Total mortality in 2014 was 1.11, which is above the threshold but below the target, indicating that total mortality is still high but within acceptable limits. This is the first time in 13 years that Z has been below the threshold, and additional years of data are needed to determine whether estimates in Z in the most recent years will remain below the threshold.

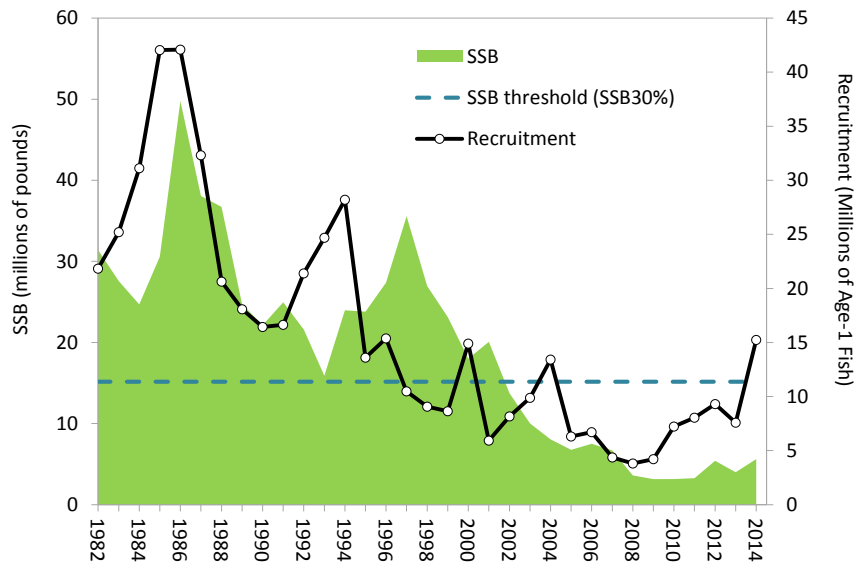
Weakfish commercial landings have dramatically declined since the early 1980s, dropping from over 19 million pounds landed in 1982 to roughly 200,000 pounds in 2014. The majority of landings occur in North Carolina and Virginia and, since the early 1990s, the primary gear used has been gillnets. Discarding of weakfish by commercial fishermen is known to occur, especially in the mixed species trawl fishery, and the discard mortality is assumed to be 100%. Discards peaked in the 1990s but have since declined as the result of management measures and a decline in stock abundance.

Like the commercial sector, catch in the recreational fishery has declined from over 11 million pounds in 1983 to roughly 77,000 pounds in 2014. Recreational harvest has been dominated by New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Recreational

discard mortality, which is assumed to be 10%, has decreased with recreational catch.

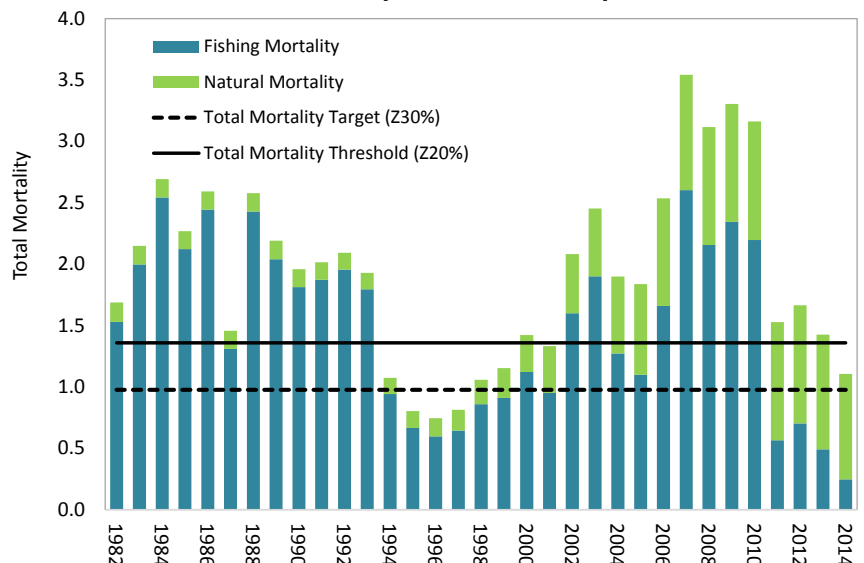
The Board accepted the stock assessment and peer review report for management use, including its proposed new reference points for both SSB and Z. Given the weakfish management program is already highly restrictive with a one fish recreational creel limit, 100 pound commercial trip limit, and 100 pound commercial bycatch limit, and the assessment showed a slight increase in SSB,

Weakfish Spawning Stock Biomass and Recruitment



* The stock assessment assumes 10% of the released fish died as a result of being caught and released.

Contributions of Fishing and Natural Mortality to Total Mortality



continued, see WEAKFISH ASSESSMENT on page 10

ASMFC Urges Transparency and Public Input in Proposed New England Offshore Canyons and Seamounts Monument Decision-making Process

In a May 9th letter to President Barack Obama, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission urged the President and the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) for transparency and a robust opportunity for public input as the Administration considers designating a National Monument through its authority under the Antiquities Act. While details on the specific location of the monument remain unknown, one potential area discussed centers around the New England offshore canyons and seamounts.

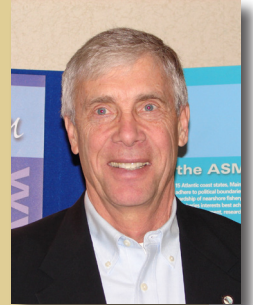
Currently, the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is drafting an Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment which considers protection of corals in and around the canyons of the Atlantic Ocean. At the request of the Council, the Commission conducted a survey of active offshore lobstermen to understand the potential impacts to the fishery should lobster traps be limited by the Draft Amendment. Preliminary results indicate a high dependence on the offshore canyons for revenue, with over \$15 million in revenue generated each year by fishermen targeting American lobster and Jonah crab in the canyons. Given that input from concerned stakeholders is a key component of the Council's decision-making process, the Commission strongly supports using the Council process to develop measures to protect the ecosystems within these deep waters.

If the President chooses to use the Antiquities Act to protect deep sea corals, the Commission requested the designated area be limited to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected. Additionally, the Commission requested the area be limited to depths greater than approximately 900 meters and encompass any or all of the region seaward of this line out to the outer limit of the exclusive economic zone. Further, the Commission asked that only bottom tending fishing effort be prohibited in the area and all other mid water/surface fishing methods (recreational and commercial) be allowed to continue in the area. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or mware@asmfc.org.

In Memoriam

PAT WHITE

On April 15, 2016, Patten D. White passed away full of love and happiness, surrounded by his family and loved ones. From 1995 to 2012, Pat served as Maine's Governor Appointee to the Commission, bringing to the table his years of experience as a lobsterman and Director of the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA). His ability to work with people advanced him into many aspects of fisheries management. As MLA Director, Pat became known as a man of his word. What made him so effective was the integrity and authenticity with which he approached people. He spoke his mind honestly and clearly, gaining him both respect and credibility. He served on the Pew Oceans Commission and was President of the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation. In 2011, Pat was awarded the Commission's highest honor, the Captain David D. Hart Award in recognition of his outstanding contributions to Atlantic coastal fisheries conservation and management. An elegant man in every sense of the word, he will be sorely missed.



JOE GRAHAM

On April 24, 2016, long-time Commission verbatim transcriptionist Joe Graham passed away. For an astounding 43 years, Joe faithfully captured the deliberations and decisions of thousands of Commission board meetings. Through it all, Joe was a warm, friendly, constant, and reliable participant in the Commission process. He along with Senator Doc Gunther and Captain David H. Hart are the only individuals who have served the Commission for this length of time. Not only did he ensure the Commission had an accurate accounting of its discussions, but he also provided much needed pro bono parliamentary advice, reminding Commissioners when they failed to have a second or they changed their motions to such an extent that they needed to be read back into the record. Over his 43-year tenure, he only missed two meetings, a testament to his longstanding commitment to the Commission. To show their appreciation of his longstanding support and dedication to the Commission, Commissioners presented Joe a pen and ink drawing of an Atlantic striped bass and a signed collage of photos of all the friends he made over his years with the Commission at the ASMFC 74th Annual Meeting in St. Augustine, Florida.



Our condolences go out to the families of both great men.



Science Highlight: River Herring Data Standardization Workshop

Along the Atlantic coast, there are numerous river herring monitoring programs conducted by state and federal fishery agencies, and Tribal entities. What has come to light, however, is that many of these programs vary in methodology and the types of data collected. These variations, which have been identified by both the Commission's 2012 river herring benchmark stock assessment and the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (jointly managed by the Commission and NOAA Fisheries) as a concern resulting in inconsistent data for assessing river herring species (alewife and blueback herring). In an effort to better align data collection efforts along the coast, the Commission conducted a River Herring Data Collection Standardization Workshop in late 2015. The goals and objectives for the workshop were:

1. Review long-term state, federal, and tribal river herring fishery-independent monitoring programs and acknowledge fishery-dependent data programs in the U.S. and Canada. This includes survey design and biological sampling.
2. Discuss standardized approaches to data collection and identify what can be implemented quickly with minimal changes to current sampling programs. Identify long-term needs as time permits, including challenges (e.g., resources).
3. Consider information needed for data-limited stock assessment approaches.
4. Produce a meeting summary to help improve river herring data collection throughout the range of river herring and help inform future monitoring efforts (e.g., stock assessment).

The workshop focused on fishery-independent surveys and monitoring programs targeting river herring. In addition to staff from the Commission and NOAA Fisheries, workshop participants included representatives from 15 state agencies, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, and Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The workshop included presentations by agency representatives to identify data collection differences between existing programs and highlight aspects of the various monitoring programs that need to be standardized. Workshop discussions and recommendations focused on best practices for monitoring programs by survey type and design, and standardized data elements for biological sampling. Survey types include run counts, where scientists and volunteers count fish that pass a fixed point on a stream, and traditional fishery-independent surveys like trawl surveys used to estimate relative abundance. Biological sampling consists of collecting physical samples from individual fish like tissue samples for genetic studies, lengths, and otoliths and scales to estimate age. These samples provide information on the biological characteristics and population dynamics of the species (e.g., population structure, growth, and age structure). Throughout the discussion and development of recommendations, it



Alewife (top) and blueback herring (bottom). Photo (c) Mike Waine

was widely recognized that implementing changes to existing monitoring programs or developing new monitoring programs based on the workshop recommendations would be dependent on available resources, which vary across agencies. However, some recommendations, such as collecting information on species identification (including hybrids), length/weight data, and spawning condition, were highlighted as achievable across agencies with minimal additional resources and time. Participants identified these recommendations to be addressed in the short-term to improve standardization. In addition to the recommendations, the workshop served as a forum for river herring monitoring program representatives to share information on new technologies available for monitoring, challenges in monitoring river herring across the coast, and lessons learned. The workshop report is available on the Commission website at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/56fc3c6dRH_DataCollectionStandardizationWorkshopSummary_March2016.pdf. For more information, please contact Jeff Kipp, Stock Assessment Scientist, at jkipp@asmfc.org.

WEAKFISH ASSESSMENT, continued from page 8

the Board took no management action at this time. It directed the Technical Committee to prepare for an assessment update in two years, at which time the Board will review the results and consider possible management action.

A more detailed description of the stock assessment results is available on the Commission's website at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file//572b74a22016WeakfishAssessmentOverview_Final.pdf. The final assessment and peer review report will be posted to the Commission website, www.asmfc.org, by early June on the weakfish webpage. For more information on the stock assessment, please contact Katie Drew, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, at kdrew@asmfc.org; and for more information on weakfish management, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.

ACCSP Announces 2016 Funding Awards

ACCSP FY17 Proposals Due June 13

Over the past 16 years, ACCSP funds have supported over 100 unique data collection and processing projects conducted by our state and federal partners and committees. On May 10, 2016, the ACCSP issued its request for proposals (RFP) to program partners and committees for FY17 funding. Project proposals are evaluated based on their potential to help meet ACCSP goals. These goals, listed in order of priority, are improvements in:

1. Catch, effort, and landings data (including licensing, permit and vessel registration data)
2. Biological data
3. Releases, discards, and protected species data
4. Economic and sociological data

Project activities that will be considered, according to priority, may include:

- Partner implementation of data collection programs
- Continuation of current Program funded partner programs
- Funding for personnel required to implement Program related projects/proposals
- Data management system upgrades or establishment of partner data feeds to the Data Warehouse or Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System.

Projects in areas not specifically addressed may still be considered for funding if they help achieve Program goals. For further guidance, please see the supporting materials provided at <http://www.accsp.org/funding>. Proposals should be submitted by June 13, 2016 to Mike Cahall, Director at mike.cahall@accsp.org and Elizabeth Wyatt, Program Coordinator, at elizabeth.wyatt@accsp.org.

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. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit www.accsp.org.

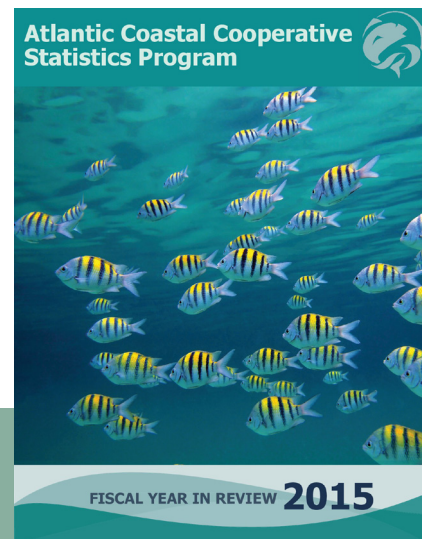
The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has allocated more than \$1.6 million to its state and federal partners for 12 new and ongoing projects to improve data collection and processing for coastal fisheries in 2016. The following projects will be awarded funding:

Program Partner	Project	Award
Maine Department of Marine Resources	Managing Mandatory Dealer Reporting in Maine	\$161,400
	Portside commercial catch sampling and comparative bycatch sampling for Atlantic herring, Atlantic mackerel, and Atlantic menhaden fisheries	\$24,900
Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries	Electronic Trip-Level Reporting for the Massachusetts For-hire Sector	\$88,100
Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife	Maintenance and Coordination of Fishery-Dependent Data Feeds to ACCSP from the State of Rhode Island	\$78,300
	Implementation of a Barcode Commercial Fishing License in Rhode Island	\$33,200
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation	Improving Trip-level Reporting and Quota Monitoring for New York Commercial and For-hire Fisheries	\$198,000
New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife	Electronic Reporting and Biological Characterization of New Jersey Commercial Fisheries	\$165,100
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources	ACCSP Data Reporting from South Carolina's Commercial Fisheries	\$161,500
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Piloting Electronic Commercial Data Collection and Developing a Data Sharing System in Georgia	\$70,700
NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center	Continued Processing and Aging of Biological Samples Collected from U.S. South Atlantic Commercial and Recreational Fisheries in Response to ACCSP Bio-sample targets	\$254,500
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council	South Atlantic States Pilot Implementation Proposal: Charterboat Electronic Data Collection	\$192,300
ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Increase at-sea sampling levels for the recreational headboat fishery on the Atlantic coast (New Hampshire through Georgia)	\$179,100

ACCSP would like to thank NOAA Fisheries for its financial support of electronic reporting projects in the for-hire industry. This funding has enabled ACCSP to fund two additional projects: Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation will receive funding to advance fishery-dependent data collection for black sea bass in the Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic regions using modern technology and a vessel research fleet approach. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center will receive funding to conduct a sampling strategy evaluation to determine which data and what sample sizes are needed to improve assessment accuracy in the South Atlantic.

Annual Report Released

ACCSP has released its 2015 Annual Report, which provides an overview of the Program's goals, accomplishments and ongoing efforts in support of its partners' fisheries data collection and management projects. The report is available on the ACCSP website at http://www.accsp.org/sites/default/files/ACCSP_AnnualReport_2015.pdf.



tracking database for American lobster. As a result of this groundbreaking state/federal partnership, state and federal American lobster permits and associated trap tags can be managed in a coordinated way for the first time. This is not an easy accomplishment given the complexities of American lobster management, which restricts the number of traps fished in its various Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) but allows the transfer of trap allocations among permit holders. The task of creating a multi-jurisdictional program among the states and NOAA Fisheries was challenging due to differences between their permitting approaches. States typically issue permits in the name of the permit holder, while NOAA Fisheries issues permits by the name of the vessel. In order to be efficient for administrators, business friendly for fishermen, and achieve the goals of the lobster management plan, the transfer program had to seamlessly dovetail the differing rules and policies of the states and NOAA Fisheries. Further, the transfer database had to address issues such as matching state and federal permits that could be in different names; fixing differences in data fields across jurisdictions; and reconciling problems associated with a single fisherman having multiple corporations with permits. The database became fully operational in late 2015 and provides the Commission, ACCSP, and associated partners a central database to manage and track trap tag transfers and allocations between commercial lobstermen across jurisdictions, while improving effort data essential for making informed management decisions.

Scientific & Technical Contributions

Jason McNamee, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

Jason McNamee is being recognized for his unparalleled technical abilities, exceptional leadership, and unwavering energy. For over a decade, Mr. McNamee has served as a contributing member and in leadership

positions on numerous Commission species technical committees, stock assessment subcommittees, and science advisory committees. He consistently provides thoughtful and unbiased insight into committee discussions and regularly volunteers for additional work to achieve the committee objectives, using his technical abilities and analytical skills to address challenging issues. In addition, he has a superlative ability to disengage from the political aspects of fisheries management to focus on technical and biological issues to ensure the well-being of our fisheries resources. He is an effective leader, able to find compromise in almost every situation, as well as a skilled communicator at all audience levels.

He has played a key role, as either committee chair or lead assessment scientist, on a number of benchmark stock assessments including the 2013 summer flounder assessment, the 2015 tautog assessment, and the upcoming black sea bass assessment. Notably, he led the Tautog Stock Assessment Subcommittee in developing an assessment that incorporated regional structure to address management board concerns. Further, he helped develop and implement a novel model approach to provide another method of assessing this data-poor stock and further corroborate assessment results. As Chair of the Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee, Mr. McNamee has taken a leadership role in working towards the development of ecosystem-based reference points, offering innovative ways of incorporating ecosystem function into the stock assessment process.

In addition to his abilities and commitment to sound fisheries management, Mr. McNamee is an outstanding colleague, who is enthusiastic about his work, thoughtful and articulate in his speaking, considerate of others' viewpoints, and able to maintain a calm demeanor even under the most adversarial conditions. Highly regarded by committee members, Commission staff, and Commissioners, Mr. McNamee

is an enormous asset to the Commission process and science-based fisheries management as a whole.

Law Enforcement Contributions

Deputy Chief Kurt Blanchard, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

For more than 20 years, Deputy Chief Kurt Blanchard has been an outstanding member of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Environmental Police as well as an active member and past chair of the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee. Throughout his two decades of involvement, Deputy Chief Blanchard has provided leadership and insight on issues involving American lobster, Atlantic striped bass, American eel, tautog, and safe harbor concerns. His institutional knowledge of the Law Enforcement Committee and the Commission has been invaluable, making him the go to person on marine fisheries matters. Deputy Chief Blanchard has been an avid proponent for consistent, and easily understood and enforced management measures. He brings to every discussion the importance of balancing commercial, recreational, and resource concerns.

Deputy Chief Blanchard serves as an important member of a working group charged with providing feedback to NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement related to joint enforcement agreements between that agency and the states. Having served in that capacity since the working group's inception, he has been invaluable in elevating the states' role in enforcing federally managed fisheries. His intimate knowledge of marine affairs and related communities has been an integral part in designing a reasonable and effective approach to protecting natural resources and the people that rely on them.

Committed to ensuring that the next generation of environmental police are given the necessary tools and

continued, see ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE on page 15

and bonnethead (*Sphyrna tiburo*) sharks. The Atlantic sharpnose stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. The stock status of bonnethead shark stocks (Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico) is unknown. It is recommended that a benchmark assessment for both stocks be undertaken.

The North Atlantic shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) stock was assessed by ICCAT SCRS. According to the 2012 assessment, current levels of catch may be considered sustainable as potential indicators of overfishing identified in the prior assessment have diminished. The stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing.

SEDAR 11 (2006) assessed the LCS complex and blacktip sharks (*Carcharhinus limbatus*). The LCS assessment suggested that it is inappropriate to assess the LCS complex as a whole due to the variation in life history parameters, population dynamics, and catch and abundance data among the LCS species. Based on these results, NOAA Fisheries changed the status of the LCS complex from overfished to unknown. As part of SEDAR 11, blacktip sharks were assessed for the first time as two separate populations — Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic. The results indicated that the Gulf of Mexico stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing, while the current status of blacktip sharks in the Atlantic region is unknown.

A 2011 benchmark assessment (SEDAR 21) of dusky (*Carcharhinus obscurus*), sandbar (*Carcharhinus plumbeus*), and blacknose (*Carcharhinus acronotus*) sharks indicates that both dusky and blacknose sharks are overfished and experiencing overfishing. Sandbar sharks continued to be overfished. As described in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, NOAA Fisheries must establish a rebuilding plan for an overfished stock. As such, the rebuilding date for dusky sharks is 2108, sandbar sharks is 2070, and blacknose sharks is 2043. The Commission's Coastal Sharks Management Board approved the assessment for management use in 2012, and NOAA Fisheries' Highly Migratory Species Division (HMS) is incorporating the assessment results as part of Amendment 5a and 5b to its FMP. Amendment 5a addresses sandbar and blacknose sharks, as well as scalloped hammerhead and Gulf of Mexico blacktip. Amendment 5b addresses dusky sharks.

Porbeagle sharks (*Lamna nasus*) were assessed by ICCAT SCRS in 2009. The assessment found while the Northwest Atlantic stock is increasing in biomass, the stock is considered to be overfished with overfishing not occurring. NOAA Fisheries established a 100-year rebuilding plan for porbeagle sharks; the expected rebuilding date is 2108.

A 2009 stock assessment for the Northwest Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico populations of scalloped hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna lewini*) indicated the stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing. This assessment was reviewed by NOAA Fisheries and deemed appropriate to serve as the basis for U.S. management decision. In response to the assessment findings, NOAA Fisheries established a scalloped hammerhead rebuilding plan that will end in 2023.

Fins Naturally Attached Policy

Globally, the largest driver of shark fishing is the demand for fins to make shark fin soup. Often harvesters will 'fin' sharks — a process of removing shark fins at sea and discarding the rest of the shark. The U.S. sought to eliminate the unnecessary waste of shark meat by enacting the Shark Finning Prohibition Act of 2000, which requires shark fins and carcasses to be landed together in U.S. waters. The Interstate Coastal Sharks FMP included these provisions. The practice of 'finning' is therefore illegal in state and federal waters.

Passage of the Shark Conservation Act of 2010 (SCA) instituted additional measures to protect shark species from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities. The Act requires all sharks in the U.S. to be landed with their fins naturally attached to the carcass, but includes a limited exception for smooth dogfish. Fishermen engaged in commercial fishing for smooth dogfish are allowed to remove fins at sea if minimum requirements are met. Specifically, fishermen must possess a valid state commercial fishing license, be fishing within 50 nautical miles from the baseline of an Atlantic state (Maine through Florida), and the total weight of landed smooth dogfish fins cannot exceed 12% of the total dw of landed smooth dogfish carcasses. At the time the Act's passage, smooth dogfish were only managed in state waters. The Commission and the states implemented the provisions of SCA in 2013 through Addendum II to the Interstate FMP.

In 2016, smooth dogfish became federally-managed, falling under the management authority of NOAA Fisheries HMS Division. NOAA Fisheries interpreted the SCA phrase "commercial fishing for smooth dogfish" to mean a trip where smooth dogfish comprise at least 25% of the total retained catch. As a result, vessels with a federal smoothhound commercial fishing permit must meet the catch composition requirement for at-sea fin removal.

In May 2016, the Commission's Coastal Sharks Board released Draft Addendum IV for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes to amend the Coastal Sharks FMP, and complement the federal FMP to allow smooth dogfish carcasses to be landed with corresponding fins removed from the carcass as long as the total retained catch, by weight, is composed of at least 25% smooth dogfish. The Commission is accepting public comment on Draft Addendum IV until July 11, 2016. The Board is expected to take final action on the Draft Addendum in August at the ASMFC Summer Meeting.

In 2007, SEDAR 13 assessed a number of species including the SCS complex and finetooth (*Carcharhinus isodon*) sharks. The peer reviewers considered the data to be the ‘best available at the time’ and determined the status of the SCS complex to be ‘adequate.’ Finetooth sharks were found to be not overfished and not experiencing overfishing.

Atlantic Coastal Management

In August 2008, the Commission’s Coastal Sharks Management Board approved the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Coastal Sharks. The FMP addresses the management of 40 species and establishes a suite of management measures for recreational and commercial shark fisheries in state waters (0 – 3 miles from shore). Prior to this plan, shark management in state waters consisted of disjointed state-specific regulations. The plan allowed for consistency across jurisdictions.

The complementary Interstate FMP also closed loopholes and allowed for joint specification setting throughout the entire Atlantic shark range. In addition, the FMP protects shark nurseries and pupping grounds that are found primarily in state waters. Interstate regulations provide protection to sharks during a particularly vulnerable stage in their life cycle in a location that federal jurisdiction cannot protect. Commercial and recreational fishermen are prohibited from possessing silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead sharks from May 15 – July 15 from Virginia

through New Jersey to protect pupping females.

Recreational fishermen are prohibited from harvesting any species that are illegal to land in federal waters. Recreational landings are controlled through gear restrictions, minimum size limits, and possession limits. Scalloped hammerhead, smooth hammerhead, and great hammerhead have a 6.5’ fork length size limit, and a 4.5’ fork length size limit for all other species. Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, blacknose, bonnethead, and smooth dogfish are exempt from any minimum size limit. Each recreational angler is allowed a maximum harvest of one shark from the federal recreationally-permitted species per calendar day. Each recreational shore angler may harvest one additional bonnethead, one additional Atlantic sharpnose, and one additional smooth dogfish per calendar day. Recreational anglers can only harvest sharks caught with a handline or rod and reel.

The commercial fishery is managed based on maximum sustainable yield, using quotas and possession limits to control harvest level and effort. Addendum III (2013) revised the commercial species groups, which are based on fisheries, biology, and stock status of the various species. They include prohibited, research, non-blacknose small coastal, blacknose, aggregated large coastal, blacknose,



Large tiger shark captured as part of a research survey aboard NOAA Ship OREGON II. Photo (c) Captain Jerry Adams.

from catching or landing any species in either the prohibited or research species groups without a state display or research permit.

The Commission does not set quotas but rather opens and closes the fishery in response to the federal fishery. Fishing effort for aggregated large coastal and hammerhead shark management groups are controlled through commercial retention limits, which can range from zero to 55 sharks per vessel per trip.

The Board established state shares, based on historical landings from 1998-2010, for smooth dogfish via Addendum II (2013). However, implementation was delayed until a benchmark stock assessment and quota were finalized. With completion of the benchmark assessment and implementation of Amendment 9 to the federal FMP, which established a smooth dogfish quota, state shares were implemented in February 2016.

For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, FMP Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Coastal Shark Management Groups	
Species Group	Species within Group
Prohibited	Sand tiger, bigeye sand tiger, whale, basking, white, dusky, bignose, Galapagos, night, reef, narrowtooth, Caribbean sharpnoes, smalltail, Atlantic angel, longfin mako, bigeye thresher, sharpnose sevengill, bluntnose sixgill and bigeye sixgill sharks
Research	Sandbar sharks
Non-Blacknose Small Coastal	Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, and bonnethead sharks
Blacknose	Blacknose sharks
Aggregated Large Coastal	Silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, and nurse
Hammerhead	scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead and smooth hammerhead
Pelagic	Shortfin mako, porbeagle, common thresher, oceanic whitetip and blue sharks
Smoothhound	Smooth dogfish and Florida smoothhound

aggregated large coastal, hammerhead, pelagic, and smoothhound species groups (see accompanying table for a list of species by species groups). Fishermen are prohibited

ASMFC Comings & Goings



DR. BRAXTON DAVIS

In late April, Dr. Braxton Davis became North Carolina's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Dr. Davis is the Director of the North Carolina Divisions of Coastal Management and Marine Fisheries, overseeing the state's marine fisheries programs, coastal planning, coastal development, and conservation programs for the 20 coastal counties. He is a member and past chair of the Coastal States Organization and recently chaired a multi-state committee on beach and inlet management issues. Previously, Dr. Davis served as Director of Policy and Planning for the South Carolina Coastal Management Program in Charleston, SC. He earned a bachelor's degree in Environmental Sciences from the University of Virginia, a master's degree in Biological Sciences from Florida International University, and a Ph.D. in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island. He lives in Morehead City with his wife, Jennifer, and their children, Allison and Cole. Please join us in welcoming Dr. Davis to the Commission.



MIKE WAINE

In early May, after five years with the Commission, Mike Waine left to pursue new challenges working at NOAA Fisheries as a Fish Management Specialist in Silver Spring, Maryland. As ASMFC Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Coordinator and more recently as a Senior FMP Coordinator, Mike coordinated some of the Commission's highest profile species such as Atlantic striped bass and Atlantic menhaden. He played an important role in the successful completion of benchmark stock assessments for both species; Atlantic striped bass in 2013 and Atlantic menhaden in 2015. In response to the findings of the Atlantic striped bass assessment, Mike worked closely with the management board on the development and implementation of Addendum IV, which reduced harvest by 25% for coastal states and 20.5% for Chesapeake Bay states.

Mike was instrumental in the development of Amendment 2 to the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Menhaden, a process which required extensive public hearings and voluminous public comment. The Amendment established the first coastwide limit for total allowable catch. Mike was a significant contributor to the 2015 benchmark stock assessment for Atlantic menhaden, which redefined our understanding of menhaden's stock status and has set the stage for the development of a new plan amendment for the species. As part of the amendment process, Mike worked with Science staff and the Biological Ecological Reference Points Workgroup to begin to develop alternative ecologically-based reference points to manage Atlantic menhaden. Mike's commitment to effective teamwork, excellence in performing his tasks, and his passion for fish and sustainable fisheries will be missed but will serve him well in his new job. We wish him the very best in all his future endeavors.

ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE continued from page 12

are given the necessary tools and education to succeed in conservation leadership, Deputy Chief Blanchard also serves as a steering committee member and executive advisor to the National Conservation Law Enforcement Leadership Academy. In this capacity, he has provided guidance on curriculum, scheduling, candidate selection, instructor evaluation and budget management.

Deputy Chief Blanchard is being recognized today for his outstanding leadership in conservation law enforcement at the state, regional, and national levels, and for his passion and dedication to protecting marine fisheries resources.

Special Agent Todd Smith, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement

Since 2010, Special Agent Todd Smith has worked tirelessly to reveal significant quantities of summer flounder were being taken illegally under the cover of quota acquired through the Mid-Atlantic Research Set Aside (RSA) Program. Through his investigation, Special Agent Smith identified 12 persons and entities exploiting the RSA Program for personal gain, uncovering nearly 600,000 pounds of unreported summer flounder, worth an estimated \$1.2 million. Special Agent Smith highlighted the RSA Program's vulnerability to abuse through under-reporting

and non-reporting of catch, ultimately resulting in the Program's suspension in 2015.

Special Agent Smith served 120 subpoenas which produced 12,500 documents and identified four vessels that sold unreported summer flounder to four federally permitted dealers. He managed the execution of seven simultaneous search warrants, the largest number ever executed in one day in the history of NOAA's Northeast Region, which resulted in further proof that eight individuals and four corporate entities continued to conceal illegal landings of summer flounder caught under the guise of the Program.

To date, Special Agent Smith's dedication and perseverance has resulted in charging nine defendants with 24 felonies. All nine have pleaded guilty. So far, seven sentences have been rendered totaling 16 months of prison time, \$1.2 million in fines, and \$550,000 in restitution. Furthermore, Special Agent Smith has shared his investigative experiences with NOAA Fisheries to aid in its efforts to formulate regulatory changes to the RSA Program. Special Agent Todd Smith achievements are notable and all our Atlantic fisheries are better off thanks to his hard work.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 North Highland Street
Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Return Service Requested

New Species Coordinator Assignments

Kirby Rootes-Murdy Promoted to Senior FMP Coordinator

There have been a number of changes in species assignments by coordinator (see accompanying table). A few of the species assignments are temporary until the Commission hires a new Fishery Management Plan Coordinator. It is anticipated the new coordinator will take over the lead for the South Atlantic species, horseshoe crab, and weakfish.

In May, in recognition of his performance and dedication to the Commission these past three years, Kirby Rootes-Murdy has been promoted to the role of Senior FMP Coordinator. In his new role, Kirby will focus part of his time on mentoring the new FMP Coordinator as well as assist in carrying out other department-wide tasks. Congratulations, Kirby!

ISFMP Responsibilities	
Species Lead	Species
Max Appelman, mappelman@asmfc.org	Atlantic Striped Bass, Atlantic Sturgeon, Bluefish, Northern Shrimp, Spiny Dogfish
Ashton Harp, aharp@asmfc.org	Atlantic Herring, Coastal Sharks, Shad & River Herring, Tautog, Winter Flounder
Kirby Rootes-Murdy, krootes-murdy@asmfc.org	American Eel, Black Sea Bass, Horseshoe Crab, Scup, Summer Flounder, Weakfish
Megan Ware, mware@asmfc.org	American Lobster, Atlantic Menhaden, Jonah Crab
Toni Kerns, tkerns@asmfc.org	Atlantic Croaker, Black Drum, Cobia, Red Drum, Spanish Mackerel, Spot, Spotted Seatrout

On the Legislative Front

House Committee Amends, Advances Striped Bass Legislation

On March 16th, the House Natural Resources Committee held a markup for H.R. 3070 – the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Transit Zone Clarification and Access Act. An amendment in the nature of a substitute was accepted that would allow the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Commission, to establish a recreational striped bass fishery in an area of the EEZ known as the Block Island Transit Zone. The bill does not expand NOAA’s current authority to manage striped bass in the EEZ. An earlier version of H.R. 3070 would have converted the Block Island Transit Zone to state waters for purposes of fisheries management. Possession of striped bass has been allowed in the Block Island Transit Zone since 1996 but commercial and recreational targeting of stripers remains illegal.

For more information, please contact Deke Tompkins, Legislative Executive Assistant, at dtompkins@asmfc.org.

