



ASMFC

# FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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## *American Lobster Board Approves Draft Addendum XXV for Public Comment to Address Southern New England Stock Declines*

The American Lobster Management Board has released Draft Addendum XXV to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster for public comment. The Draft Addendum seeks to address the depleted condition of the Southern New England (SNE) stock while preserving a functional portion of the SNE lobster fishery. The document presents a suite of management measures to increase egg production and lower fishing mortality through a combination of management tools including gauge size changes, season closures, and trap reductions.

The Draft Addendum responds to the results of the 2015 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment which found the SNE stock is severely depleted and experiencing recruitment failure. Declines in population abundance were most pronounced in the inshore portion of the stock where environmental conditions have remained unfavorable to lobster since the late 1990s. These stock declines are largely in response to adverse environmental conditions, including increasing water temperatures over the last 15 years, combined with continued fishing mortality.

Draft Addendum XXV focuses on increasing egg production so that, if environmental conditions become favorable, the SNE stock can benefit from a strong recruitment year. The Draft Addendum includes six issues. The first proposes four targets to increase egg production, ranging from 20% to 60%, with an additional option for status quo. The second issue seeks input on proposed management tools to increase egg production and whether these tools should be used independently or in conjunction with one another. The third issue addresses the effects of proposed measures on the recreational fishery. The fourth issue explores the implementation of season closures and potential impacts to the Jonah crab fishery. The fifth issue examines whether management measures should be uniform across Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMA) in SNE. The sixth issue asks how management measures should be applied to the offshore waters of LCMA 3, which spans both the Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank and SNE stock units.

Fishermen and interested stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. The Draft Addendum can be obtained at [http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/AmLobsterDraftAddendumXXV\\_PublicComment.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/AmLobsterDraftAddendumXXV_PublicComment.pdf). Public comment will be accepted until 5 PM (EST) on April 7, 2017 and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Draft Addendum XXV). The Board will review submitted public comment and consider action on the Addendum at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May 2017.

## 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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#### **March 6-10**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Westin Jekyll Island, 110 Ocean Way, Jekyll Island, GA

#### **March 14-16**

MREP Workshop on Fisheries Science and Management for the Recreational Angler, Crowne Plaza, Warwick, RI

#### **March 16 (10 AM - 12:30 PM)**

Northern Shrimp Section, Westin Portland Harborview, 157 High Street, Portland, ME.

#### **March 16 (10 - 11:30 AM)**

Tautog Technical Committee Conference Call; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

#### **March 17 (9 - 11 AM)**

Law Enforcement Committee Conference Call; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

#### **March 23 (10 AM - Noon)**

Shad and River Herring Technical Committee Conference Call; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

#### **March 29 & 30**

Tautog Technical Committee, ASMFC Offices, 1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA

#### **April 5 & 6**

Quality Assurance/Quality Control Fish Ageing Workshop, FL FWCC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, 100 8th Ave SE, St. Petersburg, FL

#### **April 5-7**

Northern Shrimp Data Workshop, Westin Portland Harborview, 157 High Street, Portland, ME

#### **April 11-13**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Icona Golden Inn, 7849 Dune Drive, Avalon, NJ

#### **April 18 -20**

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

#### **May 8-11**

ASMFC Spring Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA

#### **June 6-8**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Main, 100 Main Street, Norfolk, VA

#### **June 12-16**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sawgrass Marriott, 1000 PGA Tour Boulevard, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

#### **August 1-3**

ASMFC 2017 Summer Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA

#### **August 8-10**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Courtyard Marriott, 21 North Juniper Street, Philadelphia, PA



### The Challenges of Joint and Complementary Recreational Fisheries Management

The Commission coordinates the management of 27 Atlantic coastal fisheries and shares in the management of 10 of these species with the New England, Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries. Clearly, there are significant benefits to a shared management approach for fisheries that occur in both state and federal waters. Chief among them is the ability to capitalize on the collective staff, equipment and fiscal resources of the states and our federal partners to forward the common goal of sustainably managing fisheries throughout their range.

While joint management has its benefits, it has also resulted in a tense balance of federal mandates and the unique needs of the individual states. For fisheries with significant recreational harvests, the process is further challenged by the timeliness and resolution of recreational data. Three species in particular – black sea bass, summer flounder and cobia – exemplify the challenges of state/federal management of recreational fisheries.

The Commission recently committed to developing a Cobia FMP to complement that of the South Atlantic Council, while summer flounder and black sea bass are already jointly managed by the Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Council. All three species have been in the news and at the forefront of recreational angler discussions over the past few months. For many fishermen, the science does not match what folks are seeing on the water, leading them to question why management measures are so restrictive. We are keenly aware of these criticisms and the frustrations of the fishing public, which often are a symptom of the difficulty of balancing states' needs with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). Compounding the problem are recreational data limitations in terms of both timeliness and our ability to precisely estimate the impacts of recreational management measures on harvest by state or by sector. This does not mean the recreational data are not good data. However, it does highlight the limitation of using the current data resolution to manage recreational fisheries at a fine scale.

Like me, most will agree that the Magnuson-Stevens Act has successfully rebuilt many stocks. However, the law provides limited flexibility, especially with respect to annual catch limits and accountability measures. While Commission FMPs have flexibility to adjust specifications to reflect differences in life history, address limitations in catch and stock estimates and to ease economic hardship, federal FMPs are limited in their ability to set regional or state-specific measures. For example under current federal management of cobia, the South Atlantic Council must implement one set of coastwide specifications which does not provide equitable access to all parts of the coast.

This inflexibility has resulted in-season closures before the fish migrate northward later in the season causing many anglers to miss out. For black sea bass, anglers are seeing more of these fish than they can remember, and the 2016 benchmark stock assessment indicates the stock is estimated to be 2.3 times the spawning stock biomass target. However, due to estimated high catch rates, recreational fishing opportunities in 2017 will not be increased for black sea bass.

At the same time, managing recreational fisheries through the use of state-specific management measures presents its own set of challenges. Both the Commission and the Councils develop recreational measures and determine final harvest numbers using estimates generated by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). MRIP estimates are most precise on a coastwide basis. While information is available at the regional and state-level, it becomes less precise at finer spatial scales. This leaves us with a catch-22. History has shown us that coastwide recreational management approach does not work because it does not account for species' unique spatial and temporal characteristics (e.g., species are available along the coast at various abundances and sizes, and differing seasons), which lead to inequities between the states. Conversely, the use of state-specific measures under the Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates of annual catch limits and accountability measures has led to a situation where we are constantly in the process of either reacting to overages from the year before or liberalizing regulations to allow for more fish to be harvested. Clearly, we need to find a new approach to jointly managing recreational fisheries. That approach could include averaging data from multiple years, implementing management measures over multiple years or exploring management programs linked to fishing mortality rates. For example, we could set recreational measures for 3-5 years with the recognition that in some years we may exceed the recreational harvest limit while in other years we may fall below it, but over the long-term the highs and lows even themselves out. There are other alternatives to consider but obviously we need a new approach to effectively manage these and other fisheries while reducing frustrations of both fishery managers and the fishing community.

Moving forward, the states and the Councils will need to continue to work to match the management program with the timeliness and resolution of the available data. This will take considerable work and possibly changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Act to significantly improve the fisheries for joint and complementary species. New management plans, which are currently under development for summer flounder and cobia, may offer us a unique opportunity to find the right balance between meeting states' needs and federal mandates while ensuring for the long-term sustainability of both species.

# Species Profile: Red Drum

## Stock Assessment Finds Resource Relatively Stable with Overfishing Not Occurring

### Introduction

Attempts to regulate the Atlantic coast red drum fishery date back to the Commission's first Annual Meeting in 1942. At the meeting, a Delaware Commissioner urged that red drum be made a sport fish or be protected by adequate size limits and daily catch limits, and that its use as fertilizer be prohibited. While this request and later management recommendations were unsuccessful in preventing the overexploitation of red drum, the 2017 benchmark stock assessment indicates that interstate management has made significant strides in improving the population's condition since 1990. At that time, the stability of the stock was uncertain, with an exploitation level that was jeopardizing future recruitment. Through the implementation of more stringent regulations in the 1990s and 2000s, the stock is no longer subject to overfishing and sufficient numbers of young fish are surviving to become breeding adults.

Despite this achievement, managers still face challenges with red drum. Due to data deficiencies regarding the adult population, it cannot be determined whether the stock is overfished or rebuilt. This is because there is limited information on fish older than age four as a result of the fish's life history and regulations that restrict the harvest of fish larger than 27 inches. Due to these unknowns, managers are holding the course on red drum management for the time being, while continuing research efforts seek to provide missing data for future stock assessments.

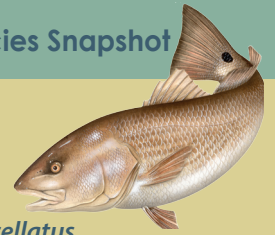
### Life History

The historic distribution of red drum on the Atlantic coast is from Massachusetts through Florida, though few fish have been reported north of the Chesapeake Bay in recent years. Juveniles are most abundant in estuarine waters and inlets, while fish older than age four inhabit deeper waters. The adult fish migrate seasonally, moving offshore or south in the winter and inshore or north in the spring. Spawning occurs at night in the nearshore waters during the summer and fall. Prolific spawners, large females may produce up to two million eggs in a season. Eggs hatch within 24 to 36 hours of being spawned and the larvae are carried by wind and tidal action into shallow, low salinity estuarine nursery areas. Juveniles and sub-adults stay in estuarine areas, feeding on zooplankton and invertebrates such as small crabs and shrimp. Gradually, red drum expand their diet to include fish and larger invertebrates. Depending on the area, males mature between ages one and four (20-28 inches in length), while females mature between ages three and six (31-36 inches in length). Red drum may reach 60 years of age and 60 inches in length (corresponding to greater than 90 pounds in weight).

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Atlantic coast commercial landings have been reported as early as the 1880s. Since 1960, landings have fluctuated around 240,000 pounds, with a high of 627,800 pounds in 1950 and a low of 54,748 pounds in 2004. No directed commercial fishery currently exists for Atlantic red drum. Fish are landed as bycatch in several states, predominantly North Carolina where gillnets take the vast majority of the state's harvest. Landings in North Carolina are restricted by an annual quota and low daily possession limit. Commercial harvest and sale in New Jersey through Virginia is restricted to recreational limits, while Georgia, South Carolina and Florida prohibit commercial harvest. A harvest moratorium and Presidential Executive Order, enacted in 2007, prevents any harvest or sale of red drum from federal waters.

### Species Snapshot



#### Red Drum

*Sciaenops ocellatus*

**Management Unit:** New Jersey to Florida

#### Interesting Facts

- The name is derived from their color and the fact that during spawning time males produce a drum-like noise by vibrating a muscle in their swim bladder.
- Due to their unusual growth pattern, a 36" red drum may be anywhere from 6 - 50 years old.
- Red drum have been successfully reared in hatcheries and released into South Carolina, Georgia and Florida estuaries in stock enhancement programs.
- Some scientists believe the purpose of the spot(s) near the tail is to mimic an eye. This fools predators into attacking the wrong end of the fish and gives the red drum a chance to escape.

**Largest Recorded:** 94 lbs. and 2 oz., Hatteras Island, North Carolina

**Oldest Recorded:** 62 years old

#### Age at Maturity:

Females - Between the ages of one and four (20-28 inches in length)

Males - Between the ages of three and six (31-36 inches in length)

**Stock Status:** Overfishing not occurring



Photo (c) Malcolm Rhodes

The recreational fishery is a nearshore fishery, targeting small “puppy drum” in shallow estuarine waters and large trophy fish along the Mid- and South Atlantic barrier islands. Harvest is restricted by minimum and maximum size limits and a daily trip limit. Due to strict commercial measures, the establishment of gamefish status in some states, and the great popularity of red drum by anglers, recreational fishing has accounted for over 87% of all Atlantic coast red drum landings (by pounds) since 1982. Anglers from Florida through Virginia take most, if not all, of the coastwide annual recreational harvests. Annual harvests have historically ranged between 300,000 and 550,000 fish per year, with the exception of some larger harvests in the mid-1980s. However, from 2010-2015, recreational harvests have exceeded 600,000 fish in three years (2010, 2013, and 2014). Meanwhile, recreational catch (harvest and releases) has increased over time, meaning that the percentage of fish that are caught and released has increased from about 4% in 1982 to more than 83% in 2015. Based on studies of mortality rates following release from gears common to the red drum recreational fishery, the most recent assessment assumed that 8% of fish released by the recreational fishery die.

### Stock Status

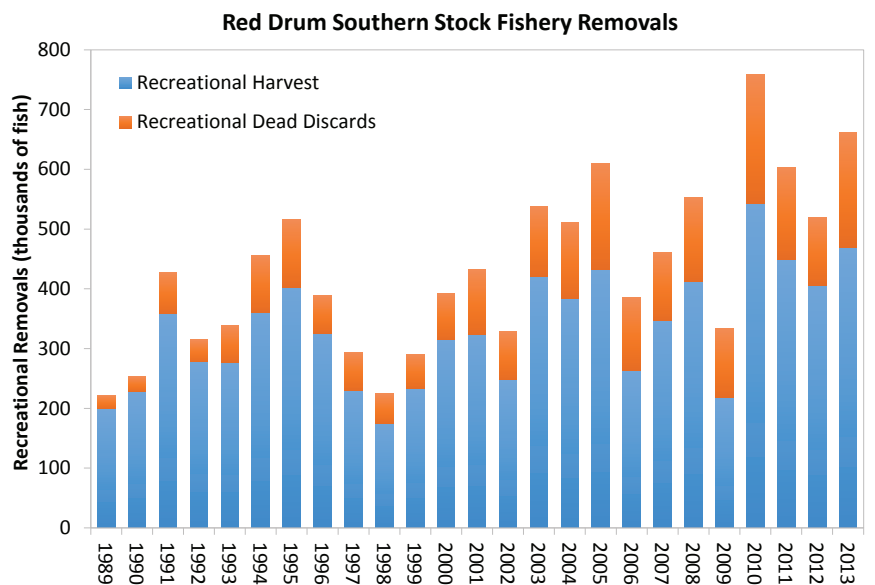
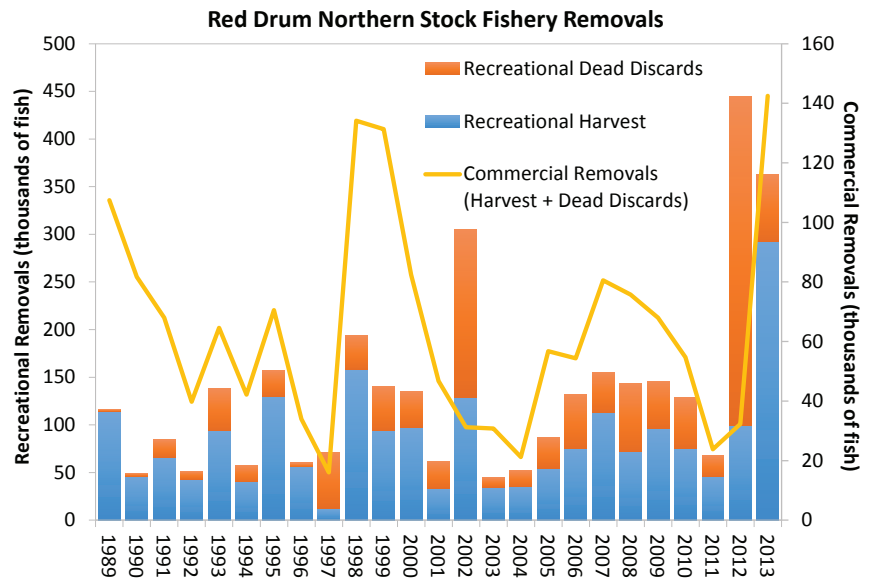
The 2017 Red Drum Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicate overfishing is not occurring for red drum in either the northern (North Carolina-New Jersey) or southern (South Carolina-Florida) stocks. The assessment was unable to determine an overfished/not overfished status because population abundance could not be reliably estimated due to limited data for the older fish (ages 4+) that are not typically harvested due to the current fishery measures (slot-limits).

The assessment estimates annual static spawning potential ratios (sSPR) measured against previously established reference points for red drum. Overfishing is occurring if the three-year average sSPR is less than a threshold of 30%. sSPR is a measure of spawning stock biomass survival rates when fished at the current year’s fishing mortality rate (to limit impacts of extremely productive or unproductive individual years, this assessment used 3-year averages rather than single years) relative to the spawning stock biomass survival rates if no fishing mortality was occurring. In 2013 (the last year for which data were available), the three-year (2011-2013) average sSPR was 43.8% for the northern stock and 53.5% for the southern stock, both above the target and threshold values.

Age-1 recruitment, or the number of fish spawned the previous fall, has fluctuated around averages of 476,579 and 1.57 million fish in the northern and southern stocks, respectively. In more recent years, the largest recruitment occurred in 2012 for the northern stock and 2010 for the southern stock.

### Atlantic Coastal Management

For close to two decades, red drum were jointly managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (state waters, 0-3 miles from shore) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (federal waters, 3-200 miles from shore). The first interstate plan was



continued, see RED DRUM on page 8

## Jonah Crab Addendum II Establishes Coastwide Standard for Claw Harvest

The American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum II to the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Addendum establishes a coastwide standard for claw harvest and a definition of bycatch, based on a percent composition of catch, in order to minimize the expansion of a small-scale fishery under the bycatch allowance.

The Addendum responds to concerns regarding the equity of the claw provision established in the 2015 FMP, which instituted a whole crab fishery with the exception of fishermen from New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia who have a history of claw landings prior to June 2, 2015. Following approval of the FMP, claw fishermen from New York and Maine were identified and, while these fishermen had a history of claw landings, they were required to land whole crabs under the provisions of the FMP. Addendum II permits claw harvest coastwide. Specifically, the Addendum allows Jonah crab fishermen to detach and harvest claws at sea, with a required minimum claw length of 2.75" if the volume of claws landed is greater than five gallons. Claw landings less than five gallons do not have to meet the minimum claw length standard. Fishermen may also harvest whole crabs which meet the 4.75" minimum carapace width.

Addendum II also establishes a definition of bycatch in the Jonah crab fishery, whereby the total pounds of Jonah crabs caught as bycatch must weigh less than the total amount of the targeted species at all times during a fishing trip. The intent of this definition is to address concerns regarding the expansion of a small-scale fishery under the bycatch limit. Prior to this Addendum, a non-trap or non-lobster trap fisherman could land 1,000 crabs as bycatch but was not required to have any other species of catch on board. Through Addendum II, fishermen harvesting under the bycatch limit must have another species on board of greater weight than landed Jonah crabs.

The Addendum is available at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/589501bcJonah-CrabAddendumII\\_Jan2017.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/589501bcJonah-CrabAddendumII_Jan2017.pdf). For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

## Summer Flounder Regional Management Approved for 2017 Recreational Fisheries

The Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXVIII to the Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan, maintaining regional management for the 2017 recreational summer flounder fishery. Specifically, the Addendum requires a one-inch increase in size limit and reduced possession limits to stay within the 2017 recreational harvest limit (RHL). These measures are broadly applied across all states to reduce harvest and provide for more coastwide consistency in regulations. The summer flounder regions, which are continued from 2016, are: Massachusetts; Rhode Island; Connecticut through New York; New Jersey; Delaware through Virginia; and North Carolina.

In August 2016, the Board and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved an approximate 30% reduction in catch limits for both the commercial and recreational fisheries in response to the 2016 stock assessment update, which indicated the resource is experiencing overfishing but is not overfished. In order to not exceed the reduced 2017 RHL, a 41% reduction relative to the 2016 preliminary harvest estimates is needed. To achieve the reduction, the Addendum implements a one-inch increase in size limit from 2016 measures for all regions with the exception of North Carolina. Additionally, all regions are required to constrain their possession limits to 4 fish or less and maintain 2016 season lengths. The approved management program also allows for the continuation of the Delaware Bay specific management measures for New Jersey anglers west of the COLREGS line. In 2016, New Jersey had separate management measures for anglers east and west of the Delaware Bay COLREGS line.

"The Board's decision took into account the findings of the 2015 and 2016 stock assessment updates, both of which found summer flounder abundance is declining and is experiencing overfishing; the need to take harvest reductions to end overfishing immediately through our joint management process with the Mid-Atlantic Council and as prescribed by the Magnuson-Stevens Act; and with the recognition that the confidence intervals around the harvest estimates limit our ability to precisely project the impacts of differing management measures," stated Mike Luisi, Board Chair. "By our action, we struck a balance between the need to reduce harvest, while taking into account the socioeconomic impacts to our stakeholders."

In its report to the Board, the Technical Committee (TC) supported the 2013 summer flounder benchmark stock assessment and its updates through 2016 as the best available science. Further, it agreed with the findings of the recent stock assessments, indicating the resource is declining in abundance and that associated management changes are needed to address this issue; in this case, a reduction in the RHL. The TC recommended uniform adjustments from 2016 management measures (as were approved in the Addendum) to reduce harvest and fishing mortality in an equitable manner.

Once the states have selected final management measures, the Commission will submit a letter to NOAA Fisheries detailing how the measures will constrain fishing to the 2017 RHL. The Commission annually submits this letter as part of the conservation equivalency process that allows for federal coastwide management measures to be waived and for state management measures to be applied in both state and federal waters.

Addendum XXVIII is available at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/58b5cf-80SummerFlounderAddendumXXVIII\\_Feb2017.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/58b5cf-80SummerFlounderAddendumXXVIII_Feb2017.pdf). For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior FMP Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org).

*continued, see FISHERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS on page 7*

## ASMFC & MAFMC Set Black Sea Bass Specifications for 2017 and 2018 Benchmark Assessment Finds Resource Not Overfished & Overfishing Not Occurring

The Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) approved revised specifications for the 2017 black sea bass fishing year as well as specifications for the 2018 fishing year for the northern black sea bass stock (Cape Hatteras, North Carolina to the US-Canadian border). The revised specifications are based on the results of the 2016 benchmark stock assessment, which found the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The approved limits are consistent with the recommendations of the Council's Science and Statistical Committee. The Commission's actions are final and apply to state waters (0-3 miles from shore). The Council will forward its recommendations for federal waters (3 – 200 miles from shore) to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval.

The accompanying table summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL) for black sea bass in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Please note specifications for 2018 may be adjusted based on changes in the fishery or new scientific information.

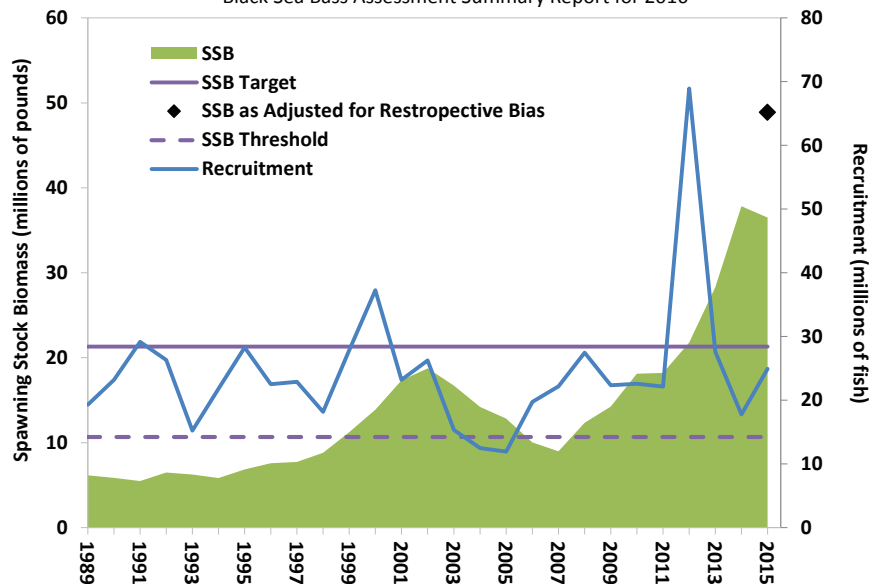
Species	Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Commercial Minimum Fish Size (TL)	Commercial Mesh Size	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
Black Sea Bass	2016	2.70	11"	4.5"	2.82
	2017	4.12	11"	4.5"	4.29
	2018	3.52	11"	4.5"	3.66

In considering 2017 recreational management measures, the Commission and Council maintained status quo measures in federal waters and in state waters from Delaware to North Carolina. These include a 12.5 inch TL minimum size, 15 fish possession limit, and open seasons from May 15 – September 21 and October 22 – December 31 (note: measures for federal waters are not final until approved by NOAA). Northern region states (Massachusetts through New Jersey) have the flexibility to continue 2016 management measures or develop new measures that will collectively constrain harvest to the 2017 RHL. Recognizing the favorable stock condition and the difficulty of precisely projecting the impacts of recreational management measures on overall harvest, the Commission and Council maintained status quo measures for 2017. Preliminary 2016 recreational harvest is estimated at 4.67 million pounds, roughly 380,000 pounds above the 2017 RHL. As additional 2016 harvest estimates become available, the Commission may review these data and consider the potential impacts to achieving the 2017 RHL.

For the first time, the black sea bass stock was modeled as two separate sub-units divided at approximately the Hudson Canyon. For modeling purposes, the data was divided into sub-units but the assessment and peer review noted that the sub-units are not separate stocks but comprise one single stock. As a result, the assessment combined the information from both sub-units to estimate stock-wide abundance and fishing mortality (F) as well as help minimize the effect of retrospective bias in the assessment (which can either overestimate spawning stock biomass and underestimate F, as seen in the southern sub-unit, or underestimate spawning stock biomass and overestimate F, as seen in the northern sub-unit). Spawning stock biomass (SSB) and F estimates for 2015 were adjusted for the retrospective bias (see accompanying graphs). The assessment used both fishery-dependent data (recreational catch and commercial landings/discards) and fishery-independent data from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center Winter and Spring Surveys, the Northeast

### Black Sea Bass Spawning Stock Biomass and Recruitment

Source: 62nd Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop  
Black Sea Bass Assessment Summary Report for 2016



continued, see FISHERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS on page 11

RED DRUM continued from page 5

developed in 1984. In 1990, the Council's plan closed federal waters to red drum harvest, and a 1998 amendment revised definitions for optimum yield and overfishing. Amendments to the interstate plan occurred in 1991 and 2002, partly in response to the Council plan and amendment. Following the implementation of Amendment 2 in 2003, the Council recommended transferring the authority for managing red drum in federal waters to the Commission. Two reasons for this decision were that all harvest is taken in state waters and that, due to data deficiencies, a rebuilding schedule for the federal plan could not be set as required by law. The transfer of authority became effective in late 2008. It did not affect the red drum harvest prohibition in federal waters.



## Red Drum Assessment Q & A

### Introduction

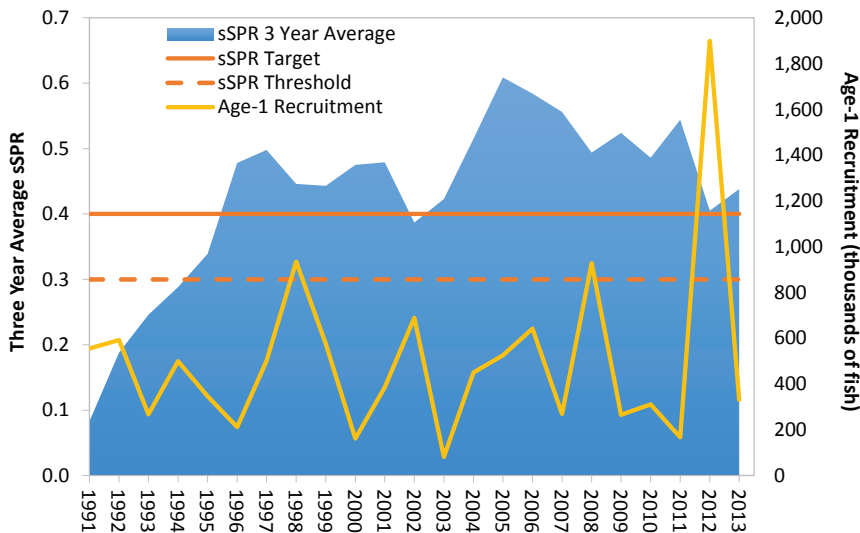
Following is a brief overview of the 2017 stock assessments for red drum. These assessments were initially conducted through the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process using Stock Synthesis (SS3) models. However, after further review by the Red Drum Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (TC/SAS), the TC/SAS expressed concern over certain assumptions made in the SS3 model. The Committee recommended reverting to the Statistical Catch-at-Age (SCA) model used in the 2009 benchmark assessment as the base model for these new assessments, with the inclusion of updated and additional data collected since the 2009 assessment.

The revised assessments were peer-reviewed by an independent panel of scientific experts through the Commission's peer review process. The assessment represents the latest and best information on the status of Atlantic coast red drum stocks and provide the scientific basis for continued management of the species. South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board, which oversees red drum management, accepted the assessments for management use in February 2017.

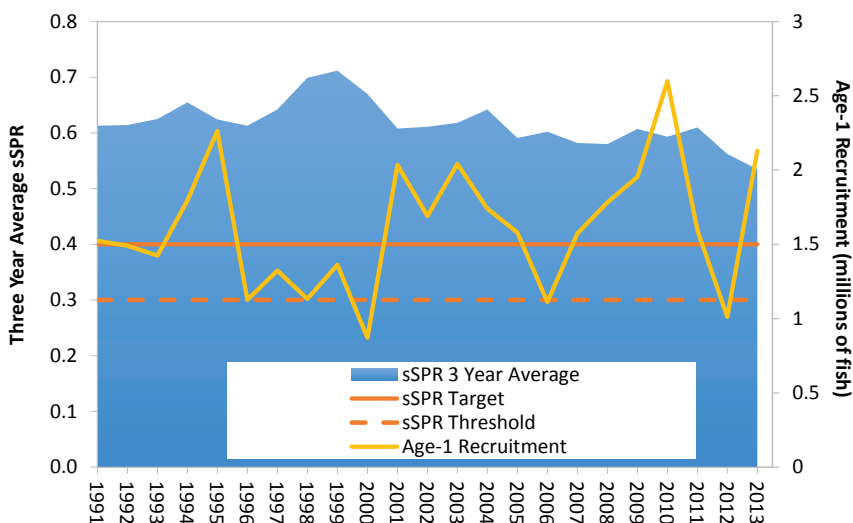
### What Data Were Used?

The red drum stock assessment used both fishery-dependent and -independent data, including information on red drum biology and life history. Fishery-dependent data come from recreational and commercial fisheries, while fishery-independent data are collected through scientific research and surveys. Red drum are divided into two management areas or stocks along the Atlantic coast, a northern stock (from New Jersey to North Carolina) and a southern stock (from South Carolina to Florida). The stock units are based on differences in life history traits between the two stocks (such as growth rates and maximum observed ages) and information from genetic and tagging studies indicating red drum rarely move between the two regions. Separate assessments were performed for each stock.

**Red Drum Northern Stock Three Year Average Static Spawning Potential Ratio (sSPR) & Age-1 Recruitment**



**Red Drum Southern Stock Three Year Average Static Spawning Potential Ratio (sSPR) & Age-1 Recruitment**



continued, see RED DRUM on page 12

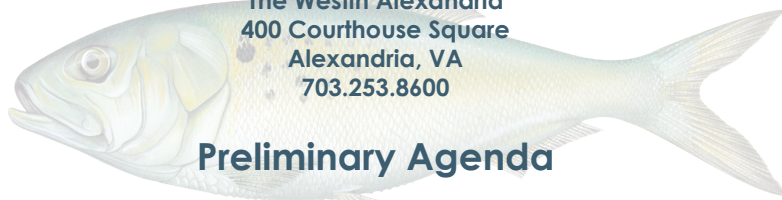
continued, see RED DRUM ASSESSMENT Q&A on page 12



# ASMFC Spring Meeting

May 8 - 11, 2017

The Westin Alexandria  
400 Courthouse Square  
Alexandria, VA  
703.253.8600



## Preliminary Agenda

*The agenda is subject to change. Bulleted items represent the anticipated major issues to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. The final agenda will include additional items and may revise the bulleted items provided below. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.*

### MONDAY, MAY 8

#### 8 AM - Noon Climate Change Workgroup

- Continue to Draft White Papers on Science and Policy Strategies to Assist the Commission with Adapting its Management to Changes in Species Abundance and Distribution Resulting from Climate Change Impacts

#### 1 - 2:30 PM Atlantic Herring Section

- Review and Consider Draft Addendum I for Final Approval
- Review 2016 Spawning Closure Pilot Program
- Consider 2017 FMP Review and State Compliance Reports

#### 2:45 - 5:15 PM American Lobster Management Board

- Review and Consider American Lobster Draft Addendum XXV for Final Approval
- American Lobster Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Subcommittee Report
- Update on Development of Lobster Draft Addendum XXVI
- Discussion on New England Fishery Management Council Deep-Sea Coral Amendment

### TUESDAY, MAY 9

#### 8 - 10:15 AM American Lobster Management Board (continued)

#### 8:30 AM - 5 PM Law Enforcement Committee

- Review and Update 2017 Action Plan Items
- Review and Discuss Ongoing Enforcement Activities
- Review and Discuss ASMFC Species Management Issues
- Update Survey for Enforceability Guidelines
- Develop Orientation Process for New Members
- Federal and State Agency Updates

#### 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM Tautog Management Board

- Technical Committee Harvest Reduction Analyses
  - Review Technical Committee Reports for Long Island Sound, New Jersey/New York Bight and Delaware/Maryland/Virginia
  - Review Regional Working Group Feedback
- Review and Consider Draft Amendment 1 for Public Comment

*continued, see SPRING MEETING PRELIMINARY AGENDA on page 10*

### Public Comment Guidelines

In order to ensure a fair opportunity for public input, the ISFMP Policy Board has established the following guidelines for use at management board meetings:

For issues that are not on the agenda, management boards will continue to provide opportunity to the public to bring matters of concern to the board's attention at the start of each board meeting. Board chairs will use a speaker sign-up list in deciding how to allocate the available time on the agenda (typically 10 minutes) to the number of people who want to speak.

For topics that are on the agenda, but have not gone out for public comment, board chairs will provide limited opportunity for comment, taking into account the time allotted on the agenda for the topic. Chairs will have flexibility in deciding how to allocate comment opportunities; this could include hearing one comment in favor and one in opposition until the chair is satisfied further comment will not provide additional insight to the board.

For agenda action items that have already gone out for public comment, it is the Policy Board's intent to end the occasional practice of allowing extensive and lengthy public comments. Currently, board chairs have the discretion to decide what public comment to allow in these circumstances.

In addition, the following timeline has been established for the submission of written comment for issues for which the Commission has NOT established a specific public comment period (i.e., in response to proposed management action).

1. Comments received 3 weeks prior to the start of a meeting week will be included in the briefing materials.

2. Comments received by **5 PM on Tuesday, May 2, 2017** will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.

3. Following the May 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for management board consideration at the meeting (a minimum of 50 copies).

The submitted comments must clearly indicate the commenter's expectation from the ASMFC staff regarding distribution. As with other public comment, it will be accepted via mail, fax, and email.

**1 - 3:15 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

- Review and Consider Draft Addendum V for Public Comment
- Review and Consider Approval of the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment Terms of Reference
- Board Guidance to Stock Assessment Subcommittee Regarding Development of Biological Reference Points for the 2018 Benchmark Assessment

**3:30 - 5:45 Atlantic Menhaden Management Board**

- Update on Development of Draft Amendment 3
- Biological Ecological Reference Point Working Group Progress Report
- Provide Guidance to Technical Committee Regarding Stock Projections
- Consider 2017 FMP Review and State Compliance Reports

**6:30 Annual Awards of Excellence Reception**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

**8 - 9:30 AM Executive Committee**

*(A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Committee members and Commissioners only)*

- Report of the Administrative Oversight Committee
- Discussion on Advisory Panel Members Serving as Board Proxies
- Future Annual Meetings Update

**9:45 - 10:45 AM Coastal Sharks Management Board**

- Review Final Rule for NOAA Fisheries HMS Amendment 5b (Dusky Sharks)
  - Consider Complementary Management Measures (if necessary)

**11 AM - Noon Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council**

- ACCSP Status Report
  - Program Status
  - Committee Updates
- Review and Consider Approval of 2017 Request for Proposals

**1 - 5 PM Joint Meeting of the ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Management Board and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council**

- Review and Consider Scup Draft Addendum XXIX for Final Approval
- Update on Summer Flounder Comprehensive Amendment Work and Analysis
- Review Implementation of 2017 Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Recreational Measures

THURSDAY, MAY 11

**8 - 10 AM Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board**

- Working Group Updates on Safe Harbor and Accounting for Illegally Harvested Fish
- Review Commissioner Survey Results
- Update on the Marine Recreational Information Program
- Review and Consider Approval of Standard Meeting Practices
- Progress Update on 2017 Sturgeon Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Review Reports from the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership and the Habitat, Artificial Reef and Law Enforcement Committees
- Review and Consider Approval of Assessment Schedule

**10 - 10:30 AM Business Session**

- Review Noncompliance Findings (if necessary)

**10:45 AM - 2:30 PM South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board**

- Review and Consider Spot and Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessments and Peer Review Reports for Management Use
- Review and Consider Cobia Draft FMP for Public Comment

Area Monitoring and Assessment Program Surveys and state surveys from MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD and VA.

With improved recruitment and declining fishing mortality rates since 2007, SSB has steadily increased. SSB in 2015 was estimated at 48.9 million pounds, 2.3 times the SSB target of 21.3 million pounds, and fishing mortality (F) was estimated at 0.27, well below the F target of 0.36. To account for the fact that black sea bass are a protogynous hermaphrodite, which change sex from female to male, the assessment defined SSB as the total of male and female mature biomass which accounts for changes in sex ratio. Recruitment at age 1 averaged 24.3 million fish from 1989 to 2015, with peaks in 2000 (1999 cohort) at 37.3 million and at 68.9 million in 2012 (2011 cohort). The large 2011 cohort, which is currently moving through the fishery, was dominant in the northern area and less so in the south. Since 2012, recruitment has been average with a 2014 cohort estimated at 24.9 million fish. The distribution of black sea bass continues to expand northward into the Gulf of Maine.

Commercial landings averaged 2.9 million pounds from the late 1980s through the 1990s. Since implementation of quotas in 1998, commercial landings have ranged between 2.9 and 3.5 million pounds until

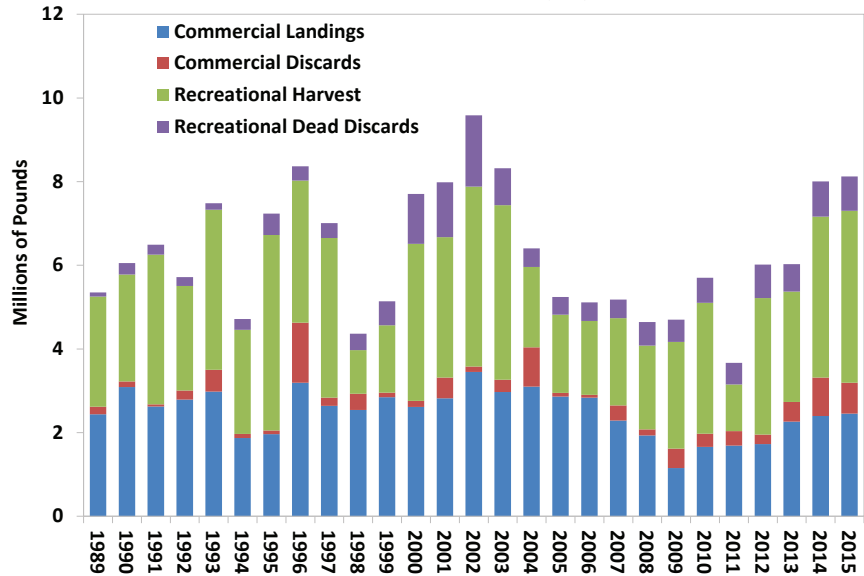
2007. Commercial landings declined to 1.2 million pounds in 2009, then increased to 2.3 million pounds in 2013 and have since remained above 2.5 million pounds. Commercial fishery discards represent a relatively small fraction of the total fishery removals from the stock. Commercial discards were generally less than 0.4 million pounds per year, but increased to 0.9 and 0.7 million pounds in 2014 and 2015, respectively. The recreational fishery harvests a significant proportion of the total catch. Recreational landings averaged 3.7 million pounds annually until 1997. Recreational

harvest limits were implemented in 1998 and landings have since ranged between 1.1 and 4.4 million pounds. Recreational landings in 2015 were 4.1 million pounds. Recreational discard losses, assuming 15% hook and release mortality, are similar, generally less than 0.4 million pounds per year. Estimated mortality from recreational discards was 0.8 million pounds in 2015.

For more information about summer flounder, scup, or black sea bass please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior FMP Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org).

### Black Sea Bass Fishery Removals

Source: 62nd Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop for Black Sea Bass Assessment Summary Report for 2016



### Northern Shrimp Data Workshop Scheduled for April 5-7, 2017 in Portland, ME

The Northern Shrimp Data Workshop will be conducted April 5-7, 2017 at the Westin Portland Harborview in Portland, Maine. The Data Workshop is the first in a series of workshops to develop the next shrimp benchmark stock assessment. The assessment will evaluate the health of the Gulf of Maine northern shrimp population and inform management of this species. The Workshop is open to the public, with the exception of discussions of confidential data, when the public will be asked to leave the room.

For data sets to be considered at the workshop, data must be sent in with an accompanying methods description to Max Appelman ([mappelman@asmfc.org](mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org)) by March 17, 2017. All available data will be reviewed and vetted by members of the Northern Shrimp Stock Assessment Subcommittee for possible use in the assessment.

The benchmark stock assessment will be peer reviewed in April 2018. For more information on submission and presentation of materials at the Data Workshop, or attending the Data Workshop, please contact Max Appelman, FMP Coordinator, at [mappelman@asmfc.org](mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org).

The primary management goal of Amendment 2 is to achieve and maintain the stock's spawning potential at a level capable of sustaining the population. To achieve this goal, the plan further restricted the recreational fishery and maintained existing commercial regulations. The management approach is intended to increase the escapement of inshore juvenile fish to the offshore adult population, and protect the adult population from exploitation. Atlantic coast states from Florida through New Jersey implemented appropriate bag and size limits as required, including a maximum size limit of 27 inches total length. The Amendment also encourages those states outside the management unit (i.e., New York through Maine) to implement supportive measures to protect the red drum resource. In 2013, Addendum I to Amendment 2 described red drum spawning habitats and designated several areas that are important spawning and nursery grounds for red drum as habitats of concern. This Addendum helps states identify important areas that require monitoring to preserve red drum stocks.

While the Board accepted the 2017 stock assessment and peer review report for management use, further action to revise the interstate management plan was not initiated in response to the assessment. Although the stock is not subject to overfishing, managers were hesitant to liberalize any regulations without knowing if the stock is rebuilt. Several surveys that collect data on abundance of adult red drum were established following recommendations from the 2009 stock assessment. These surveys were considered for use in the 2017 assessment, but the short length of time that they have been in effect limits their ability to convey trends in adult abundance with an adequate amount of certainty. Therefore, they were not used to determine whether the stocks are overfished. Continuation of these surveys will be vital for determining overfished status for the red drum stocks in a future assessment.

For more information, please contact Mike Schmidtke, FMP Coordinator, at [mschmidtke@asmfc.org](mailto:mschmidtke@asmfc.org).

### **Fishery-independent Data**

The red drum assessments used a number of different fishery-independent surveys that provide information on trends in relative abundance for different age classes. In the northern stock, the assessment used three fishery-independent surveys from North Carolina: a seine survey that catches young-of-year, a gillnet survey that catches ages one and two, and a longline survey that catches ages seven and older. In the southern stock, the assessment used eight fishery-independent surveys: a Florida small seine survey, a Georgia gill net survey, and a South Carolina stop net survey that catches age one fish; a South Carolina trammel net survey that catches fish up to age two; a Florida haul seine survey that catches age two and three fish; and longline surveys from Georgia (1 mile sets) and South Carolina (1 mile and 1/3 mile sets) that catches adult red drum ages seven and older.

### **Tagging Data**

In the southern stock, tag-recapture data from South Carolina were used to describe the age composition of fish released alive by anglers in South Carolina and Georgia. A previously published tagging study from North Carolina was used to estimate age composition for fish released alive by anglers in Florida, as the North Carolina study was conducted when regulations were similar to Florida's regulations.

In the northern region, a 2008 study provided important information used in the assessment about fishing mortality and the age composition of the fish released alive by recreational anglers.

### **What Models Were Used?**

An SCA model was used to assess the red drum stocks. The model combines the catch-at-age data from commercial and recreational fisheries with information from fishery-independent surveys and biological information such as growth rates and natural mortality rates to estimate the abundance and fishing mortality rates of each age class. Because of the limited data on adults, the model groups all fish ages seven and older into a single "plus group." The model, which estimates static spawning potential ratios (sSPR), determines if current fishing mortality rates will likely lead to sustainability over the long-term. For the purposes of these assessments, sSPR is a measure of spawning stock biomass survival when fished at the current year's fishing mortality rate relative to the spawning stock biomass survival if no fishing mortality was occurring. Due to high variability in red drum recruitment between years, a three-year average sSPR was used to determine the status of the stock.

### **Data and Research Needs**

More information on the abundance and age composition of the adult population (ages four and older) is critical to improving the red drum stock assessments. Several fishery-independent surveys have been developed since the last assessment. However, longer time series for the surveys are needed, most notably to improve the abundance estimation for adult (ages four and older) red drum that are not susceptible to the fishery. Additionally, tagging data were very important to the northern assessment, and similar analyses by tagging programs covering the southern stock could prove beneficial.

A more detailed overview of the assessment can be accessed at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/58b5c1eaRedDrumAssessmentOverview\\_Feb2017.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/58b5c1eaRedDrumAssessmentOverview_Feb2017.pdf).

Throughout March and April, the Commission and its member states will be busy gathering public comment on proposed management actions for American lobster (see cover story), Atlantic herring and scup. Below is a brief description of the proposed changes. Readers should visit the Commission website at <http://www.asmfc.org/about-us/public-input> to obtain the draft documents and view scheduled public hearings.

## Atlantic Herring

The Atlantic Herring Section has released Draft Addendum I to Amendment 3 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for public comment. Draft Addendum I includes management options to ensure the seasonal quota is distributed throughout Trimester 2, are applied consistently by the states adjacent to Area 1A, and address excessive capacity.

The Draft Addendum was initiated in response to the accelerated rate of Area 1A Trimester 2 (June through September) landings in recent years and the increasingly dynamic nature of days out measures to control effort that have varied across states. The Section utilizes days out of the fishery to slow the rate of Area 1A catch by restricting the number of available landing days. Landing reports indicate vessels are harvesting herring on days out of the fishery and transferring fish at-sea to carrier or larger vessels until landing is permitted. The practice of fishing outside of landing days has limited the effectiveness of the days out program in controlling the rate of harvest.

The Draft Addendum presents six management options to improve the performance of the Area 1A fishery, ranging from restricting a vessel from landing fish caught on days out of the fishery to limiting transfers at sea as well as the amount a vessel can land per week. The document also seeks input on a tiered weekly landing limit for future management consideration.

Fishermen and interested stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until **5 PM (EST) on April 7, 2017** and should be forwarded to Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or

at [aharp@asmfc.org](mailto:aharp@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Draft Addendum I).

The Section will review submitted public comment and consider final approval of Addendum I at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May 2017. For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, FMP Coordinator, at [aharp@asmfc.org](mailto:aharp@asmfc.org).

## Scup

The Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Draft Addendum XXIX to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes shortening the length of the commercial scup summer period and extending length of the winter period(s) to better allocate the commercial quota, which has been under-harvested since 2011. The quota allocation for each period is not being altered.

The Draft Addendum was initiated jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to address concerns raised by Advisory Panel members that commercial landings have been lower than the annual limits in recent years and the quota periods could be better utilized. The changes are intended to allow higher possession limits for a longer period of time each year, thus increasing the likelihood the commercial fishery will fully harvest the quota. The Draft Addendum proposes changes to the three scup commercial quota periods (Winter I, Summer, and Winter II), specifically a change in the start and end dates for the Summer Period. The options propose to shorten the summer period by 31 or 46 days.



Photo (c) Ashton Harp, ASMFC

The Draft Addendum also proposes options to continue allowing state permitted fishermen to begin fishing early in state waters when the Winter I quota closes prior to April 15. These options include extending the number of days the earlier fishing can occur as well as the start date when earlier fishing can occur. Allowing access prior to the start of the Summer period state permitted fishermen provides access to the resource when scup are highly available to nearshore (state) fisheries.

Fishermen and interested stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on Draft Addendum XXIX either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until 5 PM (EST) on March 31, 2017 and should be forwarded to Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at [comments@asmfc.org](mailto:comments@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Draft Addendum XXIX).

The Board will review submitted public comment and consider final action on the Draft Addendum at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May 2017. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.



### Senate Confirms Secretary of Commerce

Wilbur Ross was confirmed by the Senate to serve as Secretary of the Commerce Department on February 27<sup>th</sup>. The position is a member of the President's Cabinet, the most senior appointed officers of the executive branch serving directly under the President. The President has not nominated a candidate for NOAA Administrator yet, which also requires Senate confirmation. Ben Friedman is currently serving as Acting NOAA Administrator and Sam Rauch is currently serving as Acting Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, a position that does not require Senate confirmation. Leadership and senior staff at NOAA Fisheries is not expected to be fully in place until late in 2017.

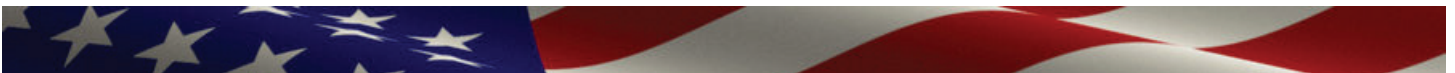
### Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization Reintroduced in House

Representative Don Young (R-AK) has reintroduced the 'Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act' in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. A version of this legislation was passed by the House in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. The legislation is essentially identical to last Congress with two notable exceptions. Chairman Young decided to pull the sections on electronic monitoring and the red snapper re-allocation study in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. No major action on marine fisheries issues is expected in the House Natural Resources Committee until the Administration is able to put more NOAA fisheries staff in place.

### Federal Appropriations Update

For fiscal year 2017, only one appropriations bill has been enacted (Military Construction/Veterans Affairs). The rest of the federal government is operating under a Continuing Resolution at fiscal year 2016 funding levels through April 28<sup>th</sup>. Both chambers of Congress have begun work on fiscal year 2018 appropriations by initiating a budget resolution, which lays out overall funding ceilings for the year. At this point, no appropriations bills have been unveiled for fiscal year 2018.

For more information, please contact Deke Tompkins, Legislative Executive Assistant at [dtompkins@asmfc.org](mailto:dtompkins@asmfc.org).



### Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board Initiates Development of Draft Addendum V to Liberalize Management Measures

The Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board initiated the development of Draft Addendum V to Amendment 6 to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to consider liberalizing coastwide commercial and recreational regulations. The Board's action responds to concerns raised by Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions regarding continued economic hardship endured by its stakeholders since the implementation of Addendum IV and information from the 2016 assessment update indicating fishing mortality is below the target.

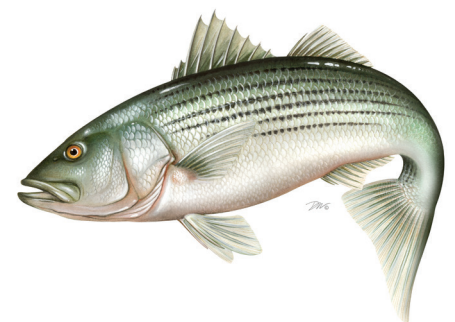
Addendum IV, implemented for the 2015 fishing season, required coastwide harvest reductions to reduce fishing mortality (F)

to a level at or below the target. Specifically, coastal fisheries implemented measures to reduce harvest by 25% compared to 2013 levels, and Chesapeake Bay fisheries implemented measures to reduce harvest by 20.5% compared to 2012 levels. Additionally, an objective of Addendum IV is to protect the 2011 year class.

According to the results of the 2016 stock assessment update, the Atlantic striped bass stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Furthermore, Addendum IV successfully reduced fishing mortality to a level below the target (F in 2015 is estimated at 0.16), and length-frequency data from the catch in 2015 indicates a strong presence of the 2011 year class which is

anticipated to join the coastal spawning population this year.

A draft of the addendum will be presented for Board review in May. For more information, please contact Max Appelman, FMP Coordinator, at [mappelman@asmfc.org](mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org).



# ACCSP Receives Positive Reviews for 1st Year of APAIS Coordination

In 2016, the 13 Atlantic states from Maine to Georgia began cooperatively conducting the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) under the coordination of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) in order to collect dockside information on marine recreational fishing catch. These data, an integral part of the NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), had been collected by a third party contractor in previous years. Throughout this transition, ACCSP worked with each state partner as well as NOAA Fisheries to adjust assignment sample allocations by month and mode both to reflect recreational fishing activity more closely and to optimize project staffing. An added benefit of the states assuming conduct of APAIS has been greater buy-in and engagement by the states' angling communities.

ACCSP held initial field training sessions prior to sampling in 2016. Training sessions utilized regional species to sharpen samplers' fish identification and measuring skills and provided a review of proper survey procedures.

Using existing state and federal partnerships within the new cooperative approach, Partners were able to make clarifications to survey parameters within the existing survey design. For example, in an effort to increase the precision of the for-hire industry's fishing activity, states focused on obtaining additional interviews from charter boat anglers. Along with the day-to-day activities of APAIS, state Partners also updated site information and recreational fishing pressure in the MRIP Site Register. This register is the sampling frame from which monthly sampling assignments are drawn, meaning fishing sites selected from the register will be sampled by APAIS interviewers at the designated date and time. Additionally, each state worked extensively to update their vessel directories to incorporate changes in the for-hire industry, thus assisting with other surveys (e.g. For-Hire Survey) under the umbrella of MRIP.

ACCSP performed data capture, processing, and data delivery to MRIP, who in turn continued to lead survey design and develop catch and effort estimates. ACCSP relied on past experience in data management as well as its partnership with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission to implement data capture technology and develop web-enabled tools for processing raw data. The development of an Assignment Tracking Application, in which all project staff were encouraged to access and provide continued feedback, established real-time communication of data to and from state partners.

Strong state commitment to maintain quality data was a major contributing factor to the success of the APAIS transition. Throughout the year, state Partners and ACCSP completed all data deliveries to the MRIP, having completed 56,849 intercepts of eligible anglers during 9,084 site-based and 683 headboat assignments. The ACCSP received positive partner feedback for its role in project coordination and data processing throughout the 2016 field season. This year, ACCSP and state partners will continue to improve communication efforts and data quality checks in order to provide the best possible data to MRIP.

2017 APAIS also includes the socioeconomic add-on survey (SEAS). Conducted once every five years, the SEAS is used to gather data about the anglers' expenditures during their recreational fishing trips in order to measure the economic importance of saltwater recreational fishing.

## APAIS Lead Geoff White Receives Award for Meritorious Service

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, ACCSP Recreational Program Manager Geoff White received the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Executive Director's Award for Meritorious Service for superior performance in the successful launch and completion of the first year of state conduct of the APAIS.

Geoff has been instrumental in coordinating the transition of the survey, working with the state survey leads and NOAA's Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) team to ensure a smooth transition. ACCSP Director Mike Cahall said, "Geoff has been the lynchpin and architect of this successful transition. I couldn't be more pleased with the outcome."

"Over the past two years, Geoff has done an extraordinary job of working with the states and NOAA Fisheries to successfully launch the state conduct of APAIS, MRIP's catch survey," stated ASMFC Executive Director Bob Beal. "His attention to detail, commitment to excellence and passion for improving data quality made him the perfect choice for the first recipient of the Meritorious Service Award." Congratulations Geoff!



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](http://www.accsp.org).

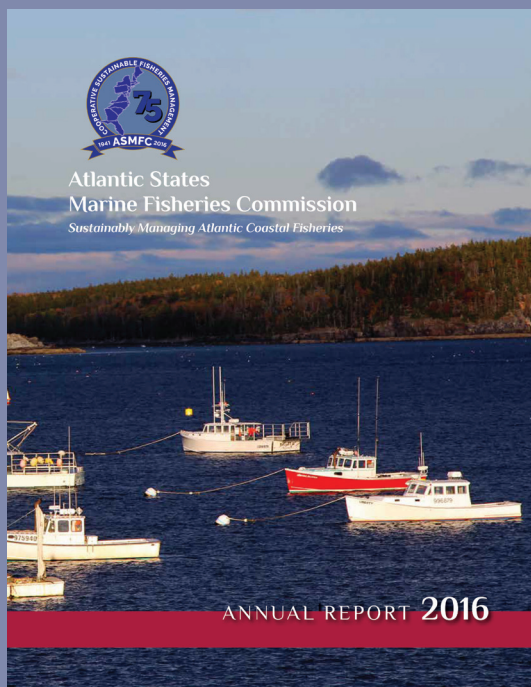
## Jeff Kipp Named Employee of the Quarter

In the four and a half years since Jeff Kipp joined the Commission staff, first as Stock Assessment Scientist and later promoted to Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, he has worked with tireless dedication to elevate the quality of the Commission's science activities and stock assessment processes. In recognition of his dedication and accomplishments, Jeff was named Employee of the Quarter for the First Quarter of 2017.

Jeff was the lead analyst on the first coastwide stock assessment for black drum as well as the recently released benchmark stock assessment for red drum. Throughout the development and peer review of the latter assessment, which took over two years to conduct and included an exploration of two different models to assess the status of the stock, Jeff showed tremendous dedication, perseverance and leadership. His outstanding work resulted in the completion of a very challenging stock assessment, while also laying the path for future red drum assessments.

Jeff's myriad achievements also include co-developing new models for the first ever coastwide spot stock assessment and providing substantial analytical support for the latest croaker assessment, both of which required ingenuity, teamwork and critical problem solving. He confidently initiates new projects for the betterment of the Fisheries Science Program, showing great enterprise in launching the river herring data standardization effort and jumping in to contribute to stock assessment training workshops. Jeff is a committed team player, exhibiting creativity, thoroughness and effective communication skills in all his collaborative endeavors.

Jeff has a Professional Science Master's Degree in Quantitative Fisheries from University of Maryland Eastern Shore and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from High Point University in North Carolina. As Employee of the Quarter, he received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in his personal record. In addition, his name is on the Employee of the Quarter plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Jeff!



## 2016 Annual Report Now Available

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has released its 2016 Annual Report, which provides an overview of significant management actions and associated science activities the Commission and its member states took in 2016 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](http://www.asmfc.org), under Quick Links or directly at <http://www.asmfc.org/files/pub/2016AnnualReport.pdf>.