



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Approves Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass Amendment Strengthens Measures to Support Stock Rebuilding

In May, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass. The Amendment establishes new requirements for the following components of the FMP: management triggers, conservation equivalency, measures to address recreational release mortality, and the stock rebuilding plan. The last striped bass stock assessment found the stock was overfished and that overfishing was occurring. This finding required the Board to end overfishing within one year and rebuild the stock by 2029. Amendment 7 strengthens the Commission's ability to reach the rebuilding goal by implementing a more conservative recruitment trigger, providing more formal guidance around uncertainty in the management process, and implementing measures designed to reduce recreational release mortality. This Amendment builds upon the Addendum VI action to address overfishing and initiate rebuilding in response to the assessment findings.

"On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this amendment process over the past few years to address these critically important management issues. This includes ASMFC staff, and the state and federal partners who served on all the various committees involved in the development of Amendment 7, as well as the Advisory Panel. I would especially like to acknowledge former Board Chair David Borden of Rhode Island for his leadership throughout much of the process," stated Board Chair Marty Gary with the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. "Stakeholders clearly voiced their dedication and commitment to the conservation of this species through the thousands of comments we received. The Board is grateful for this tremendous public participation and believes that the actions we took through Amendment 7 are reflective of the majority of stakeholders' priorities. The Board remains focused on rebuilding this iconic species."

Amendment 7 establishes an updated recruitment management trigger, which determines when the Board is required to make management adjustments based on striped bass young-of-the-year data. The updated recruitment trigger is more sensitive to low recruitment than the previous trigger, and it requires a specific management response to low year class strength. The response requires reevaluation of the fishing mortality management triggers to account for low recruitment. If one of those triggers trips after reevaluation, the Board is required to take action to reduce fishing mortality.

Amendment 7 also updates the spawning stock biomass triggers by establishing a deadline for implementing a rebuilding plan. The Board must implement a rebuilding plan within two years of when a spawning stock biomass trigger is tripped.

continued, see AMENDMENT 7 on page 7

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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Joseph Cimino (NJ), Vice-Chair

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July 11 (9 AM - 4 PM)

Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2022/Atlantic-Menhaden-Technical-Committee-and-Stock-Assessment-Subcommittee/1965>; visit for more information

July 18 (begins at 1 PM) - 21 (ends at Noon)

Black Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment Workshop, The Westin Crystal City Reagan National Airport, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2022/Black-Drum-Benchmark-Stock-Assessment-Workshop/1971> for more information

July 18 - 22

American Plaice Research Track Peer Review; visit <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/american-plaice-spiny-dogfish-2022-research-track-assessment-peer-review-meeting> for more information

July 28 (3 - 6 PM)

Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2022/Spiny-Dogfish-Advisory-Panel/1968> for more information

August 2-4

ASMFC 2022 Summer Meeting, The Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/home/2022-summer-meeting> for more information

August 8-11

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting, The Notary Hotel, 21 North Juniper Street, Philadelphia, PA; visit <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2022-august-2022-council-meeting> for more information

August 9 (9 AM - 4 PM)

American Eel Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee; visit <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/8/2022/American-Eel-Technical-Committee-and-Stock-Assessment-Subcommittee/1967> for more information

September 12-16

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Town & Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC; <https://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/> for more information

September 18-23

7th International Marine Debris Conference; visit: <https://www.7imdc.org/> for more information

September 27-29

New England Fishery Management Council, Beauport Hotel, Gloucester, MA; <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/september-2022-council-meeting> for more information

October 4-6

Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hyatt Place Dewey Beach, 1301 Coastal Highway, Dewey Beach, DE; <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2022/october-2022-council-meeting> for more information



Commission Places Spotlight on Overarching Policies and Practices

Over the past two years, Commission leadership has prioritized a comprehensive review and consideration of several policy initiatives that are integral components of our interstate fisheries management process. Some have been part of the management process for many years while others have emerged only recently. The following is a brief overview of those initiatives and where we are in the process of reviewing and modifying them.

Appeals Process

The 1995 Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Charter provides the opportunity for any state to appeal a decision made by a species management board. However, it was not until 2003 that the ISFMP Policy Board formalized the Appeals Process. Under this process, an appealing state must meet one of four criteria: (1) the appealed decision is inconsistent with objectives of the fishery management plan (FMP); (2) the decision did not follow processes identified in the ISFMP Charter, Rules and Regulations, or other ASMFC guiding documents; (3) the decision was based on insufficient, inaccurate, or incorrect application of technical information; and (4) management actions resulted in unforeseen circumstances/impacts that were not considered by the species management board.

The Appeals Process was clarified in 2019 to provide better guidance on the type of decisions that could be appealed. Following a New York appeal on a black sea bass commercial allocation decision in 2021, states noted that additional improvements to the Appeals Process were needed. Specific changes include guidance on (1) appeals from states represented by the current or past Commission Chair or the Vice-Chair; (2) the scope of corrective actions; and (3) cases in which a management board is unable to make the changes necessary to respond to the findings of the Policy Board. The changes will be considered by the Policy Board in August 2022.

De Minimis

The Commission includes *de minimis* provisions in interstate fishery management plans (FMPs) to reduce the management burden for states that have a negligible effect on the conservation of a species. As defined in the ISFMP Charter, *de minimis* is a situation in which, under existing conditions of the stock and the scope of the fishery, conservation and enforcement actions taken by an individual state would be expected to contribute insignificantly to a coastwide conservation program required by an FMP, amendment, or addendum. *De minimis* provisions vary by species and include a range of requirements for management measures, reporting, and qualification periods. To date, Policy Board discussions have focused on balancing standardization across FMPs and maintaining flexibility to address data limitations, commerce issues, and potential management loopholes.

A work group is currently drafting recommendations for *de minimis* standards for all Commission FMPs, including how *de minimis* is calculated, what fisheries it applies to, and what regulations *de minimis* states are exempt from. The Policy Board will consider the working group recommendations in August 2022.

Conservation Equivalency

Conservation equivalency provides management flexibility to individual states while implementing mandatory requirements of FMPs. Allowing states to tailor their management programs in this way avoids the difficult task of developing one-size-fits-all management measures while still achieving equivalent conservation benefits to the resource. Conservation Equivalency Guidelines detail the process for developing, approving, implementing, and reviewing management measures that are conservationally-equivalent to those required by the management program.

Prompted by concerns that conservation equivalency may undermine the effectiveness of management measures, the Commission's Management and Science Committee (MSC) is exploring improvements to the policy that provide state flexibility and while ensuring long-term sustainability. An update from the MSC will be provided to the Commission's Executive Committee in August.

Recreational Mode Split

Recreational fisheries are comprised of multiple modes – shore, private anglers, and for-hire fisheries – each with its own needs and priorities. Currently, the Commission does not have a policy on recreational mode splits, but in several cases, the states have implemented different management measures for different modes in a single fishery (e.g., bluefish, striped bass, black sea bass). These mode-split decisions have been made at the species management board level without a Commission-wide policy. Current recreational data collection programs were not designed to inform whether mode-split management measures achieve their intended purpose. A Mode-Split Work Group is developing policy recommendations for future mode splits.

The Commission and Atlantic states take seriously our public trust responsibilities for our shared marine resources, to the many businesses that depend upon them, and to ensuring they will be there for future generations to enjoy. Addressing these issues is another step we are taking to serve the needs of our stakeholders and strengthen the sustainability of commercial and recreational management measures.

ASMFC & MAFMC Seek to Bring Management Stability to Popular Commercial, Recreational, and Subsistence Species

Introduction

A summertime resident of inshore waters, scup (*Stenotomus chrysops*) are pound-for-pound some of the strongest fighters, making them a popular fish for anglers. Scup also represent an important food source for many subsistence fishers along the Atlantic coast. The success story of scup's rebuilding from a mere 8 million pounds of spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 1995 to a whopping 514 million pounds in 2013 has propelled scup to the top of the list of reliable recreational species within its range. Many scup can be fished from within casting distance of the beach or fishing piers, providing shore anglers with access to the resource as well.

This positive picture of the stock's status starkly contrasts with the pressing management issues that are currently facing the Scup Management Board and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC). Recreational harvest estimates are so far above the recreational harvest limits in recent years that the current management system requires harvest be reduced to bring the recreational fishery within its limits. To address this issue, managers are in the process of implementing new allocations between the commercial and recreational sectors as well as developing a new regulatory structure for setting recreational measures, such as bag size and season limits, which will aim to bring stability and predictability to the recreational measures while simultaneously preventing overfishing.

Life History

Scup are a migratory, schooling species found on the continental shelf of the Northwest Atlantic, commonly inhabiting waters from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The abundance of scup in a specific area is frequently influenced by water temperature. Scup prefer temperatures greater than 45° F and are most frequently encountered in water temperatures from 55° to 77° F.

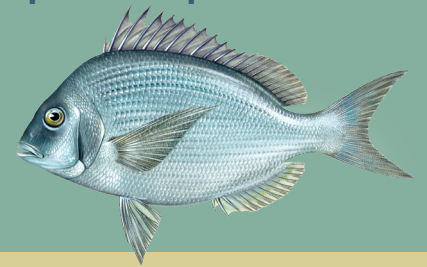
Scup overwinter in offshore waters from southern New Jersey to Cape Hatteras. When water temperatures begin to rise in spring and summer, scup migrate to more northern and inshore waters to spawn. Spawning areas include locations from southern New England to Long Island, New York. Large fish arrive to the spawning grounds first, followed by successive waves of smaller individuals, suggesting that scup school by size. Larval scup are pelagic and are found in coastal waters during warmer months. Juvenile scup use a variety of coastal habitats and can dominate the overall fish population in large estuarine areas during the summer months.

Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

Scup are highly sought after by commercial harvesters and recreational anglers throughout Southern New England and the Mid-Atlantic. Commercial fisheries extend from Massachusetts to North Carolina. Commercial landings have widely fluctuated over the times series, peaking at 48.9 million pounds in 1960 and reaching an all time low of 2.7 million pounds in 2000. Since 2000, landings have fluctuated from 3.8 million pounds in 2001 to 17.9 million pounds in 2013. Approximately 13 million pounds were landed in 2020 and 2021. Since 1979, commercial landings have largely come from Rhode Island (38%), New Jersey (26%), and New York (16%). Commercial discards have been highly variable during most of the past three decades, averaging 26% of the total commercial catch during 1981-2020. In absolute terms, discards reached their highest level in 2017 at 10.4 million pounds. The time series low of approximately 1 million pounds occurred in 2003.

The recreational fishery is significant, with anglers accounting for 12 to 75% of total annual catches from 1981-2021. Prior to 1996, when the Commission and the MAFMC adopted the Scup Fishery Management Plan (FMP), recreational landings ranged from 2.3 million pounds to 14.2 million pounds. After the FMP was approved, recreational harvest remained low for a few years around 2-4

Species Snapshot



Scup
Stenotomus chrysops

Management Unit

Massachusetts through North Carolina

Common Names: porgy, maiden, fair maid, ironside, northern porgy

Interesting Facts:

- Scup are thought to spawn in the morning unlike most fish that spawn at night.
- Scup's laterally flattened body is about two times as long as it is wide.
- Scup feed frantically and fight energetically when hooked.
- Females release an average of 7,000 eggs, which are fertilized externally.

Largest on Record

- 6 lbs. and 3 oz., Fenwick Shoals, MD

Oldest Recorded

- Can live up to 20 years

Age at Recruitment

- 50% recruited to the fishery at age 2 (6.1")
- 100% recruited into fishery at age 3 (~8.3")

FMP Rebuilding Goals

- Biomass Target ($SSB_{40\%}$) = 198 million pounds
- Fishing Mortality Target ($F_{40\%}$) = 0.200

Stock Status

Not overfished and not experiencing overfishing

million pounds, which helped lead the way for SSB to recover in the early 2000s. Since the regional recreational management approach was introduced in 2003, recreational landings have averaged 10.4 million pounds annually. In 2021, recreational anglers harvested 16.2 million pounds, with the majority of the harvest coming from the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey.

Stock Status

The 2021 management track stock assessment indicated the stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. SSB, which was estimated at 389 million pounds in 2019, is about two times the target of 198 million pounds.

Since 1984, recruitment (e.g., the number of fish entering the population) estimates have been influenced mainly by the fishery dependent and independent catches-at-age, and averaged 136 million fish during 1984-2019. The 2006, 2007, and 2015 year classes are estimated to be the largest of the time series, at 255, 258, and 415 million age 0 fish, respectively. Below average recruitment occurred in 2017-2019. Stock biomass is projected to further decrease toward the target unless more above average year classes recruit to the stock in the short-term.

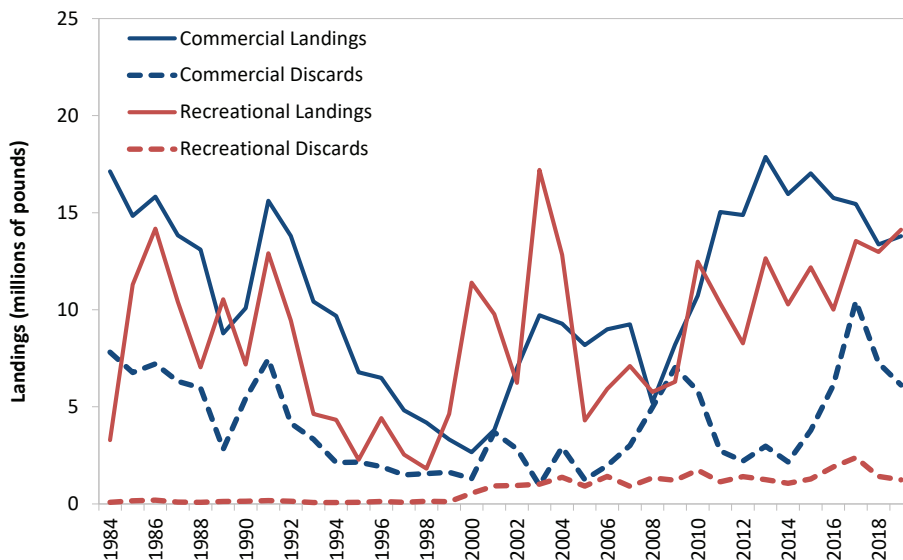
Atlantic Coastal Management

Scup are one of four species jointly managed by the Commission and the MAFMC. Scup are managed under Amendment 13 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (August 2002) and its subsequent Addenda (Addenda IX - XXXI and recented adopted Addendum XXXIV). The management program divides a total annual quota between the recreational fishery (22%) and the commercial fishery (78%). Recreational fishery management measures include a combination of minimum size limits, bag limits, and fishing seasons. Since 2004, the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York have formed a northern region when setting their recreational regulations. This regional approach enables greater consistency between the states where anglers from different states are often fishing alongside each other in the same waters.

In 2021, the Board and MAFMC jointly approved changes to the commercial and recreational allocations of summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass through the adoption of the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment. These changes are intended to better reflect the current understanding of the historic proportions of catch and landings from the commercial and recreational sectors. The Board and MAFMC developed the Amendment in response to recent changes in how recreational catch is estimated by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), which resulted in a revised time series of recreational data

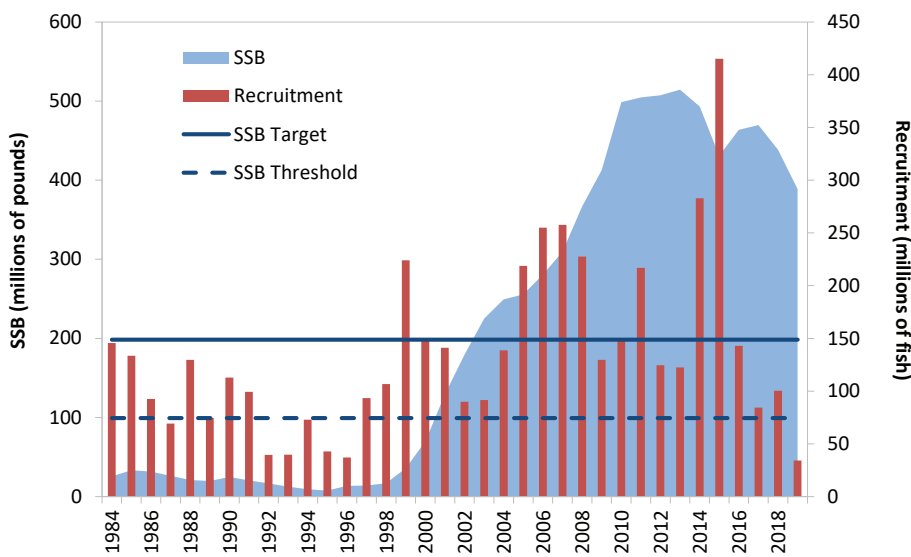
Scup Commercial and Recreational Landings & Discards

Source: Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2021



Scup Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) and Recruitment

Source: Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2021



continued on next page

going back to the 1980s. This created a mismatch between the data that were used to set the allocations and the data currently used in management for setting catch limits.

The Board and MAFMC set a commercial quota of 20.38 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit (RHL) of 6.08 million pounds for the 2022 fishing season. Compared to 2021 landings limits, this represents a slight decrease in the commercial quota and a minor increase in the RHL. However, in response to high levels of recreational landings in recent years the Board and MAFMC agreed to increase the scup recreational minimum size by one inch in state and federal waters. In state waters, this one-inch increase will be applied to each state's measures, which varies by state and mode. No changes were made to the commercial measures for 2022.

Harvest Control Rule

This June, the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) and MAFMC approved changes to the recreational fisheries management programs for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The changes include a new process for setting recreational measures (bag, size, and season limits) and modifications to the recreational accountability measures. The Policy Board and MAFMC recommended these changes through a framework action, and the Policy Board adopted the new process through Addendum XXXIV to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and Addendum II to the Bluefish FMP. Approval of this new process is part of a broader long-term effort by both the Commission and MAFMC to improve recreational management of these four species. The new management program aims to provide greater stability and predictability in recreational measures from year-to-year while accounting for uncertainty in recreational catch estimates.

The Policy Board and MAFMC considered a range of management options and ultimately selected one referred to as the "Percent Change Approach," with an agreement to continue development of several other options for possible implementation by 2026. Under the selected approach, managers will consider two factors when determining whether recreational measures should be restricted, liberalized, or remain unchanged for the next two years. First, they will look at how recreational harvest limits (RHLs) for the next two years compare to recent estimates of recreational harvest. This gives an indication of whether recreational harvest is likely to exceed the RHL if management measures remain unchanged. Next, managers will consider the most recent estimate of stock size relative to the target stock size. These two factors, in combination, will be used to determine the percentage change in harvest that management measures should aim to achieve.

Under the new process, when recent harvest estimates are close to the future RHL, management measures will either remain unchanged or be reduced or liberalized by 10%, depending on stock size relative to the target. In cases where the RHL is substantially



Photo (c) John Chisholm, MA DMF

above or below recent harvest estimates, the specific reduction or liberalization will vary based on stock size and will either be fixed at 10% or will be based on the difference between recent harvest and the RHL but capped at 20% or 40% (see table on page 11 for additional details). The Policy Board and MAFMC selected this option because it uses currently available data and gives additional consideration to stock status when making management decisions. Under this approach, changes will be considered every other year when new scientific information about the stock is available.

While the Percent Change Approach is similar in some ways to the current process for setting recreational measures, there are several key differences. To account for uncertainty in recreational data, future RHLs will be evaluated relative to the confidence intervals around recent recreational harvest estimates. A confidence interval indicates the range of possible values given the statistical uncertainties around the estimate. The new process also places greater emphasis on stock status, potentially reducing the magnitude of restrictions in measures when the stock status is healthy. Finally, the new process will provide greater stability, as measures will be set for two years at a time instead of every year.

The Policy Board and MAFMC acknowledged this approach will not solve all recreational fisheries management challenges. With this in

SCUP, continued on page 11

AMENDMENT 7, continued from page 1

For conservation equivalency (CE), which provides states the flexibility to tailor management measures, Amendment 7 does not allow CE to be used for most recreational striped bass fisheries when the stock is overfished. Amendment 7 also provides constraints around the use of Marine Recreational Information Program data for CE proposals and defines the overall percent reduction/liberalization a proposal must achieve, including required uncertainty buffers. These restrictions are intended to minimize the risks due to uncertainty when CE is used for non-quota managed striped bass fisheries.

Since recreational release mortality is a large component of annual fishing mortality, Amendment 7 establishes a new gear restriction which prohibits gaffing striped bass when fishing recreationally. This new restriction, along with the existing circle hook requirement when fishing recreationally with bait, are intended to increase the chance of survival after a striped bass is released alive. Additionally, Amendment 7 requires striped bass caught on any unapproved method of take (e.g., caught on a J-hook with bait) must be returned to the water immediately without unnecessary injury. This provision, which is related to incidental catch, was previously

a recommendation in Addendum VI to Amendment 6.

For stock rebuilding, Amendment 7 addresses the upcoming 2022 stock assessment and how it will inform efforts to meet the 2029 stock rebuilding deadline. Given concerns about recent low recruitment and the possibility of continued low recruitment, Amendment 7 requires

Coastal Pelagics Board Sets Cobia Total Harvest Quota for 2023 Fishing Season

The Coastal Pelagics Management Board approved a total harvest quota for the Atlantic migratory group of cobia of 80,112 fish for the 2023 fishing season. This total quota results in a coastwide recreational quota of 76,908 fish and commercial quota of 73,116 pounds.

The total quota level of 80,112 fish was first approved in February 2020 for the 2020-2022 fishing seasons. In 2021, the allocation of that total quota changed through Addendum I, and some states implemented new recreational cobia measures in 2021. Based on a recommendation from the Technical Committee, the Board changed the cobia quota timeframe from 2020-2022 to 2021-2023, thereby, maintaining the previous year's harvest quota of 80,112 fish for the 2023 fishing season.

This change to the quota timeframe aligns with the timing of new measures implemented in 2021.

The Board will meet in 2023 to consider setting new specifications for the 2024-2026 fishing seasons.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, FMP Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org.

Use of Electronic Trackers Approved for Federally-permitted American Lobster & Jonah Crab Vessels

The American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum XXIX to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for American Lobster and Addendum IV to the Jonah Crab FMP. The Addenda establish electronic tracking requirements for federally-permitted vessels in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, with the goal of collecting high resolution spatial and temporal effort data to support a number of ongoing efforts.

The Board initiated the Addenda in August 2021 to address several challenges facing the fishery, including stock assessment limitations, protected species interactions, marine spatial planning efforts, and enforcement in federal waters. Given the critical need for enhanced spatial and temporal data in the offshore fishery to address these issues, the Addenda require federally-permitted American lobster and Jonah crab vessels with commercial trap gear area permits to collect location data via an approved electronic tracking device. Specifically, electronic tracking devices will be required for vessels with commercial trap gear area permits for Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Outer Cape Cod. LCMA 6 (Long Island Sound) and the Area 5 waiver permit, which allows Area 5 permit holders to target black sea bass with unbaited traps, are excluded from the tracking requirements.

The data collected through electronic tracking under the Addenda will greatly improve the stock assessment's ability to estimate exploitation and abundance for American lobster by providing size composition data at a finer resolution than what is currently available. Additionally, the models used to assess the location of vertical lines in the fishery and their associated risk to endangered right whales will be substantially improved, which could have an impact on federal risk reduction



Photo (c) Eszter Keresztes courtesy of FL FWC

FISHERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS,
continued on page 13

New Story Map Explores Regional Pilot Projects in Support of Sustainable Aquaculture

Marine aquaculture (mariculture) is an important source of sustainable seafood production and a growing industry that creates jobs, supports communities, and promotes international trade. The U.S. aquaculture and mariculture industry was valued at \$1.4 billion and produced 627 million pounds of meat and 1.2 million jobs in 2015. As the human population continues to grow, there will be an ever-increasing demand for seafood. Aquaculture and mariculture can help meet that demand. In an effort to support its growth in the Atlantic states, the Commission has begun to support a number of aquaculture and mariculture initiatives.

In 2018, a small grants program was established through a Cooperative Agreement between NOAA Office of Aquaculture and the Commission. The program's emphasis focuses on promising but less commercially developed technologies for finfish, shellfish, seaweed, and other relative newcomers to the domestic aquaculture and mariculture industry.

These pilot projects encourage and support the development and deployment of economically and environmentally sustainable aquatic farming techniques and business practices. To date, \$2.3 million has been distributed or committed through four funding opportunities made available by NOAA and the Commission.

Through the same Cooperative Agreement, in 2019, NOAA and the Commission provided Congressional funds to support ongoing research for off-bottom shellfish production in coastal areas. The Eastern Oyster Breeding Consortium led by Rutgers



A shellfish farm permitted in Massachusetts, which used a web-based interface focused on enhancing the permitting pathway. Photo (c) MA DMF, <https://www.massaquaculturepermitting.org/>



Clam seed is produced in Florida hatcheries for grow out on aquaculture leases. Photo (c) Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

University was selected with research goals to develop advanced tools for genome-based research and breeding that addresses regional shellfish breeding needs. To date, \$2.9 million has been distributed through three funding opportunities to support this Consortium. A story map on the Aquaculture Grants Program and Regional Pilot Projects in Support of Sustainable Aquaculture can be found at <https://arcg.is/Hab100>.

In May 2020, the Commission released the 16th report in its Habitat Management Series entitled, *Aquaculture: Effects on Fish Habitat along the Atlantic Coast* to provide a broad description of current and common aquaculture and mariculture practices along the Atlantic coast, and the effects these practices can have on fish habitats. Supporting research in aquaculture and mariculture will have far-reaching benefits, particularly in nearshore communities that are particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts of climate change and associated risks of wild fishery declines. These examples of public outreach, research, and

innovation are vital to the aquaculture and mariculture industry, and the United States as a whole. The report can be found at http://www.asmf.org/files/Habitat/HMS16_Aquaculture_May2020.pdf.

For more information on the Regional Pilot Projects, please contact Lindsey Aubart, Cooperative Projects Coordinator, at laubart@asmfc.org and for more information on the the publication *Aquaculture: Effects on Fish Habitat along the Atlantic Coast*, please contact Lisa Havel, Habitat Program Coordinator, at lhavel@asmfc.org.

ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence for 2020 and 2021

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented its Annual Awards of Excellence to an esteemed group of fishery managers, scientists, stakeholders, and law enforcement officers for their outstanding contributions to fisheries management, science, and law enforcement along the Atlantic coast. Specifically, the award recipients for 2020 and 2021 were Lynn Fegley and Derek Orner for management and policy contributions; Rich Wong, Jimmy and Bobby Ruhle, and a subset of the Atlantic Menhaden/Ecological Reference Points Team for technical and scientific contributions; Greg DiDomenico for outreach and advocacy contributions; and Captain Michael Eastman, Special Agents Chris McCarron and Steven Niemi, and Enforcement Officer Timothy Wilmarth for law enforcement contributions.

“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 Spud Woodward of Georgia. “I am humbled by the breadth and extent of accomplishments of the recipients and am grateful for their dedication to Atlantic coast fisheries.”

Management and Policy Contributions

Lynn Fegley, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

It is impossible to overstate Lynn Fegley’s contributions to the Commission and her leadership in interstate fisheries management and coastwide data collection. Her notable accomplishments include work on the implementation of ecological reference points in the management of Atlantic menhaden; writing and implementing Maryland’s CARES Act Spending Plan; serving as an active member of the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board and, subsequently, the recently established Sciaenids and Pelagics Management Boards; and leading the discussion to improve accountability in coastwide harvest data standards while Chair of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council. Highly knowledgeable about and committed to effective interstate fisheries management and policy, Ms. Fegley consistently shows her dedication to hard work, scientific rigor, and integrity in all that she does.

Derek Orner, NOAA Fisheries

A valued federal partner for many years, Derek Orner has served as NOAA Fisheries’ lead on numerous Commission management boards and committees, including those for striped bass, shad and river herring, and Atlantic menhaden, providing sound advice and guidance on the management of these species. Additionally, Mr. Orner has played a critical role to the ongoing success of interstate fisheries management through his efforts to ensure the Commission and states consistently receive their appropriated funding from Congress in a timely manner. He has a

keen understanding of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act and a strong commitment to state/federal partnership, as exemplified by his contributions to the recently signed interagency Memorandum of Understanding between NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Scientific and Technical Contributions

Dr. Rich Wong, Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife

During Rich Wong’s 17-year career with Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, he has been a mainstay of the technical committees for a number of Mid-Atlantic species, including bluefish, summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. Dr. Wong has long been recognized for his strong stock assessment skills, spotlighted recently in his development of the catch multiple survey analysis for the horseshoe crab benchmark assessment, which was also used in the 2021 Revision of the Adaptive Resource Management Framework for the Delaware Bay.

Jimmy and Bobby Ruhle

Father and son Jimmy and Bobby Ruhle have been tireless advocates for the commercial fishing industry, while concurrently advancing cooperative/collaborative approaches to fisheries science. With decades of fishing expertise and knowledge of local fishing grounds, The Ruhles have served on the trawl committees and advisory panels for both the Commission and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, as well as the State of North Carolina. They are both committed to ensuring that the trawl gear used on research surveys promotes confidence within the industry. When it became evident that a federal research survey would not be able to sample the nearshore regions, Jimmy Ruhle who stepped in to work with state and federal partners to fill the gap and establish the NorthEast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) in 2007. NEAMAP has been providing valuable fisheries data ever since and is used in multiple stock assessments.

Atlantic Menhaden/Ecological Reference Points Team of Dr. Amy Schueller, Dr. Matt Cieri, Dr. Jason McNamee, Dr. David Chagaris, Dr. Andre Buchheister, Dr. Kristen Anstead, Dr. Katie Drew, Sarah Murray, and Max Appelman

A subset of members from the Atlantic Menhaden/Ecological Reference Points Team were recognized for their successful completion of two concurrently developed Benchmark Stock Assessments for Atlantic Menhaden and Ecological Reference Points (ERP). While these assessments, particularly the ERP assessment, were many years in the making and involved the contributions of dozens of individuals, this group of people have been instrumental in making the ERP assessment a reality. Through their collective work and leadership, this team of state and federal scientists and Commission staff helped to

ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE, continued on next page

significantly advance the understanding of Atlantic menhaden and its role as an important forage fish. Their efforts have provided the Commission with the tools needed to fulfill its promise to stakeholders to manage menhaden in an ecologically sustainable way. Of special note are the efforts of Dr. David Chagaris and Dr. Andre Buchheister, preeminent experts in the field of fisheries resources, predator-prey interactions, and ecosystem-based fisheries management and models, for their work on the development of the ERP model which is currently being used in management.

Outreach and Advocacy Contributions

Greg DiDomenico, Lund's Fisheries

Longtime industry advocate Greg DiDomenico was recognized for his outreach and advocacy contributions to fisheries management along the coast. Previously with Garden State Seafood Association and now with Lund's Fisheries, Mr. DiDomenico has been a tireless voice for New Jersey's commercial fishing industry at the state, interstate, regional, and federal levels. He has been an ever present voice at Commission and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council meetings speaking on behalf of the needs of commercial harvesters.

Law Enforcement Contributions

Captain Michael Eastman, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department Law Enforcement Division

Throughout his more than 20 year career, Captain Michael Eastman with New Hampshire Fish and Game Department Law Enforcement Division has proven himself as a very capable leader who cares about the officers he works with and the resources he is charged to protect. He is a longstanding member of the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee, serving as both Vice-chair and Chair to that Committee. He also serves as the law enforcement liaison on several species management boards, including Atlantic herring, northern shrimp, and American eel. His fair and professional approach has earned him the respect of the public he serves. He has led by example and demonstrated for other officers how to become successful through hard work and determination. Captain Eastman's work ethic and level of professionalism have been assets to both New Hampshire Fish and Game and the Commission throughout his career.

Special Agents Chris McCarron and Steven Niemi, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement

The thorough and relentless investigative efforts of NOAA's Special Agents McCarron and Niemi ensured the success of two concurrent prosecutions whose illegal activities undermined the integrity of the Chesapeake Bay blue crab industry. The NOAA Office of Law Enforcement received multiple industry complaints regarding the actions of several companies who were accused of selling imported crab meat as Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab. As the Case Agents from the lead agency, Agents Niemi and McCarron coordinated with multiple State and Federal Law Enforcement entities to create and execute the investigative plan. This comprehensive investigation resulted with the companies admitting responsibility for importing

over \$8.7 million dollars of foreign crab meat into the U.S. illegally, mislabeled, repacked and marketed the product as Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab. Agents McCarron and Niemi worked tirelessly during their investigations and their work has had a profound and immediate impact on the region's industry.

Enforcement Officer Timothy Wilmarth

Enforcement Officer Timothy Wilmarth is being recognized for his focus and determination in developing a safe and effective enforcement strategy to address the effects of non-compliant offshore, deep set lobster gear on the mortality of the critically endangered North Atlantic right whales and in support of the Commission's American lobster management program. Enforcement Officer Wilmarth took the idea of using remote operated vehicles from concept to reality and has allowed officers to effectively locate and inspect deep set lobster gear without having to physically retrieve the gear, which has historically posed a variety of problems including the safety of officers conducting the inspections. When deployed, the ROV can detect and record any gear or tag violation from the ocean surface down to the ocean floor to include inspecting tags, escape panels, markings, and compliance with trap limits. Through his hard work and technological innovation on the project, law enforcement officers will now have a safer platform to ensure gear compliance and boost efforts to protect endangered species such as the North Atlantic right whale.

Comings & Goings

GARY JENNINGS

In May, Gary Jennings became Florida's new Governor's Appointee to the ASMFC. He replaces William Orndorf who served in that position since 2008. Mr. Jennings is currently the Director of Keep Florida Fishing for the American Sportfishing Association. He serves on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission Aquatic Plant Management Technical Advisory Group. He is also a member of the Florida Coastal Conservation Association, the Seaplane Pilots Association, and the Aircraft Pilots and Owners Association. Mr. Jennings is a life-long, avid angler and boater with more than 25 years of experience in the fishing and boating industries. He has dedicated his career to improving access to clean waters and abundant fisheries. His wealth of fisheries knowledge and strong network of industry relationships will make him a great asset to the Commission.



A resident of Windermere, FL, Mr. Jennings earned his bachelor's degree in human resource management and hospitality administration from Florida State University. Welcome aboard, Mr. Jennings!

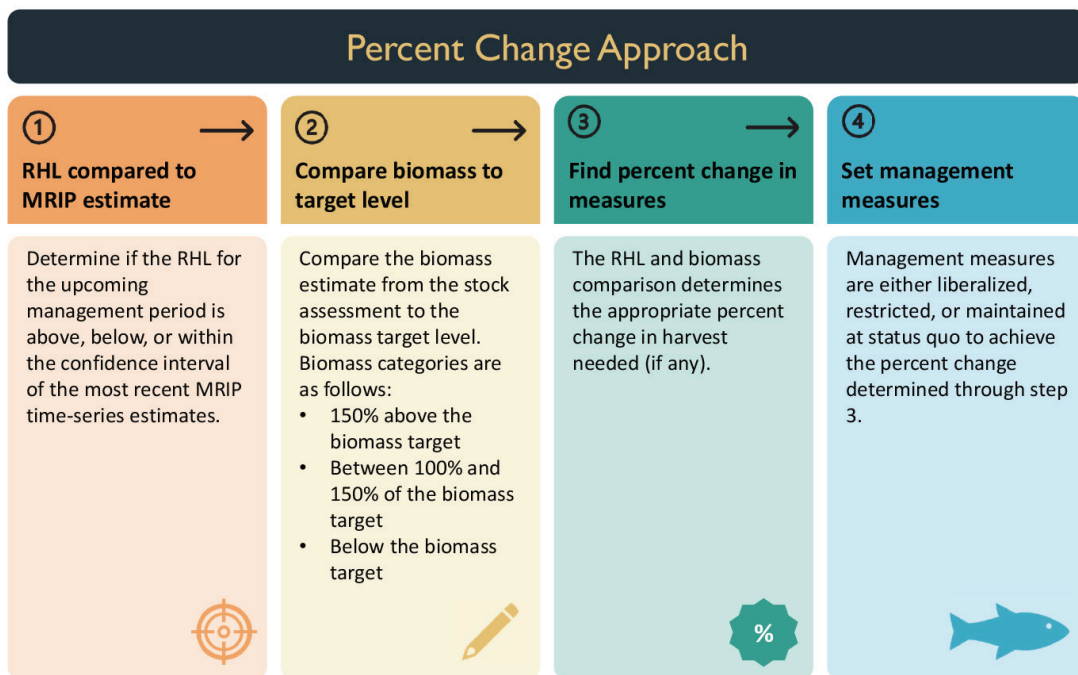
mind, they agreed to continue refinement of the Percent Change Approach as well as two other options considered within the Draft Framework/Addenda, with particular emphasis on using improved statistical models to develop measures. Use of the approved Percent Change Approach will sunset no later than the end of 2025 with a goal of implementing a new and improved approach to managing the recreational fisheries by the beginning of 2026.

The Policy Board and MAFMC also revised the recreational accountability measures for all four species. Specifically, when biomass is between the target and threshold levels, the requirement of paying back recreational catch limit overages will account for whether those overages contributed to overfishing based on the most recent stock assessment information.

The Policy Board and MAFMC considered but did not recommend an option to set constraints around the use of the Commission’s conservation equivalency policy as applied to the recreational fisheries for these four species. They decided to maintain the current policy to allow individual states the flexibility to tailor management measures to meet the needs of their fisheries.

The Framework/Addenda’s changes to the recreational management program are final for state waters (0-3 miles from shore) and will be used to develop 2023 recreational measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The new process will not be used for bluefish until the stock is declared rebuilt. The Council will submit the framework to NOAA Fisheries for review, approval, and implementation. For more details, visit <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/hcr-framework-addenda>.

Addendum XXXIV will be available on the Commission’s website at <http://www.asmfc.org/species/scup> in July. For more information, please contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at dleaning@asmfc.org.



Scup as part of a mixed fish assemblage. Photo (c) NEAMAP

For the second quarter of 2022, Trevor Scheffel, ACCSP Data Coordinator, was awarded Employee of the Quarter for his dedication to tasks essential to the coordination of several data collection surveys, including the Socioeconomic Add-on Survey, Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, and for-hire effort surveys in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast.

Since joining the Commission three years ago, Trevor has collaborated with ACCSP partners to deliver quality results by implementing software and processing data. His expertise was critical in the transition of the Socioeconomic Add-on Survey to tablet data collection. During this transition, Trevor balanced an increasingly complicated network of state and federal priorities until the survey was implemented at the beginning of 2022.

Throughout the pandemic, Trevor has gone above and beyond expectations to make sure the Recreational



Team was not just succeeding, but also successfully advancing ACCSP priorities. This has included picking up additional responsibilities for data delivery and wave reports, as well as onboarding new recreational staff and training over 100 field staff.

Trevor's dedication, positive attitude, and knowledgeable approach have contributed substantially to the quality of data through the state conduct of Marine Recreational Information Program surveys. His

efforts have directly contributed to the ACCSP's ability to meet the needs of its partner agencies. While Trevor consistently displays teamwork, initiative, and responsibility in his position, he showed real leadership during these recent tasks. As Employee of the Quarter, Trevor received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in his personal record. In addition, his name is on a plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Trevor!

ACCSP Supports Innovation and Modernization in Fisheries Data Collection

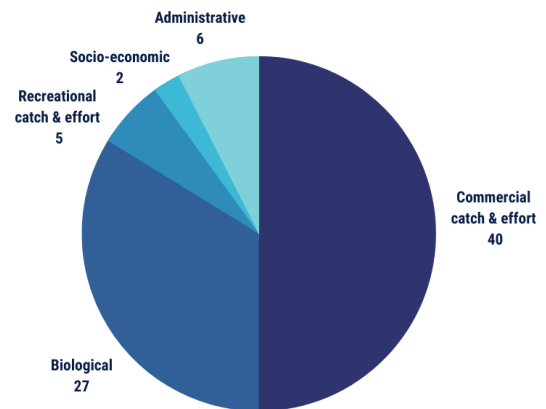
The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) is a state-federal cooperative initiative to improve recreational and commercial fisheries data collection and data management activities on the Atlantic coast. ACCSP supports further innovation and modernization in fisheries-dependent data collection and management technology through its annual funding process.

Every year, ACCSP issues a Request for Proposal to partners and committees. The purpose of this funding opportunity is to aid partners in implementing, maintaining, and modernizing their data collection systems and data feeds to ACCSP. Additionally, pilot projects that are relevant to other partners are often funded to promote the sharing of knowledge and the efficient use of available resources. All projects must comply with the Atlantic Coast Data Standards, as developed by the partners, which define ACCSP's policies for fisheries data collection.

ACCSP has funded 80 partner projects from FY2017 through FY2022. All projects have program priorities associated with ACCSP modules. The data modules are commercial catch and effort, recreational catch and effort, biological, bycatch and protected species and socioeconomic. Administrative projects are the ACCSP annual operating budget along with any supplemental funds that pass through ACCSP to support a partner project, such as hiring staff. Over the past 6 years, there have been 40 commercial catch and effort funded projects, 27 biological funded projects, 5 recreational catch and effort funded projects, two socioeconomic funded projects and six administrative projects (see figure).

The deadline for this year's Request for Proposals is August 17; visit <https://www.accsp.org/accsp-re-opens-fy23-rfp-through-aug-17/> for more information.

ACCSP Funded Projects by Module since 2017



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. For further information please visit www.accsp.org.

requirements for the fishery. With a better understanding of the spatial footprint of the U.S. lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, managers will be better positioned to minimize and mitigate the impacts of other ocean uses such as aquaculture, marine protected areas, and offshore energy development on the fisheries. Furthermore, vessel tracking data will enhance the efficiency and efficacy of offshore law enforcement efforts.

The Addenda establish minimum criteria that must be met by tracking devices and vendors to be approved for use in the fishery, including a data reporting rate of one ping per minute, technical specifications, and customer service standards. To identify devices and vendors that meet these criteria, the Commission will form a work group to review and approve tracking technologies, and provide information on available options to the states.

States, in conjunction with Commission staff, will work to develop an implementation plan, including a standard operating procedure and a request for quotes from vessel tracking companies. The Commission is requesting that NOAA Fisheries implement the requirements of the Addenda through the federal rulemaking process by May 1, 2023.



Jonah crabs. Photo (c) Derek Perry, MA DMF

The Addenda can be found at http://www.asmfc.org/uploadsfile/6250aa41AmLobsterAddendumXXIX_JonahCrabAddendumIV_March2022.pdf. Answers to some frequently asked questions about the electronic tracking program can be found [here](#). For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Wishing you all a safe and happy July Fourth!

