



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA

Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015

ASMFC Spring Meeting April 30 - May 3, 2012

**Crowne Plaza Hotel Old Town
901 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia**

Preliminary Schedule

The agenda is subject to change. 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. Please see page 14 for the Commission's Public Comment Guidelines.

April 30, 2012

- 1:00 - 3:00 PM Atlantic Herring Section
3:15 - 5:15 PM American Lobster Management Board

May 1, 2012

- 8:30 - 10:00 AM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM Law Enforcement Committee
10:15 - 11:45 AM American Eel Management Board
1:00 - 2:00 PM South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board
2:15 - 4:45 PM Shad & River Herring Management Board
5:00 - 6:00 PM Executive Committee
6:30 - 8:00 PM Annual Awards of Excellence Reception

May 2, 2012

- 8:30 - Noon Atlantic Menhaden Management Board
1:15 - 3:15 PM Sturgeon Management Board
3:30 - 6:00 PM ISFMP Policy Board

May 3, 2012

- 8:30 - 10:30 AM Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board
10:45 - 11:45 AM Horseshoe Crab Management Board
11:45 AM - 12:15 PM ISFMP Policy Board
12:15 - 12:30 PM Business Session
1:00 - 3:00 PM Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

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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 a 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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Upcoming Meetings

4/10 - 12:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Sanderling, 1461 Duck Road, Duck, North Carolina; 252.261.7743.

4/24 - 26:

New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Hotel, Mystic, Connecticut.

4/24 - 26 (8:30 AM - 5:30 PM each day):

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership MOU Contacts & ASMFC Habitat Committee, Fish & Wildlife Research Institute, 4th Floor Conference Room, 100 8th Avenue SE, St. Petersburg, Florida.

4/30 - 5/3:

ASMFC Spring Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; 703.683.6000.

5/15 (8:30 AM - 12:30 PM):

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee Stock Assessment Update Webinar. Please contact Mike Waine at mwaine@asmfc.org for more information.

5/29 (1 - 5 PM):

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee Stock Assessment Update Webinar. Please contact Mike Waine at mwaine@asmfc.org for more information.

6/7 (9 - 11 AM)

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee Stock Assessment Update Webinar (Tentative meeting; will only occur if additional time is needed following May Webinars). Please contact Mike Waine at mwaine@asmfc.org for more information.

6/11 - 15:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Renaissance Orlando Airport Hotel, 5445 Forbes Place, Orlando, Florida.

6/12 - 14:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton New York, 1335 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York.

6/19 - 21:

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

6/25 - 29:

ASMFC Technical Meeting Week, location to be determined.

8/7 - 9:

ASMFC Summer Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

60 Years Ago: Determination Heeds No Interference

February 18, 1952, started as windy, wet, cold day in New England with a powerful winter storm bearing down on Cape Cod. Before it was over, a series of events driven by nature and man would coincide to make it a day of tragedy and courage of historic proportions. Although not about fisheries, this is a remarkable story of shipwrecks, rescue, and courage.

On that day, two 503 foot tankers were traveling off Cape Cod, pummeled by the large waves driven by a nor'easter. The *Fort Mercer* radioed the Coast Guard that she was disabled 20 miles off Provincetown. Cutters and aircraft were dispatched but by noon the ship had broken apart. The second tanker, the *Pendleton*, had also broken apart and her long range radios had been destroyed. Later in the afternoon a Coast Guard seaplane arrived on scene and only then did the Coast Guard realize it was dealing with four separate rescue operations involving two split tankers with 84 lives at risk.

The Officer in Charge of the Chatham Life Boat Station ordered Boatswain Mate First Class Bernard Webber to pick a crew and attempt to cross the Chatham Bar to reach the *Pendleton*. By 6 p.m. Webber and his crew were aboard the *CG36500*, a 36-foot, 90 horsepower wooden motor lifeboat rated for 15 persons. Four men set out, later described as not expecting to get to the *Pendleton*, not expecting to rescue anyone if they did, not expecting to make it back across the treacherous bar...not expecting to live.

Crossing the bar, the powerful breakers smashed out the windshield and ripped the compass off its mounts rendering it useless. Sensible seamanship would have indicated the crew return, but with lives at risk reason and calculation were wiped out, leaving courage and a refusal to quit. So Webber pressed on into the dark snow and gale force winds despite the engine stalls caused by the loss of fuel suction due to the violent motion of the boat. Offshore, 33 crew members huddled on the stern section, wet, cold, and uncertain of their fate as the tanker was battered by 20-foot waves.

Driving blind into the darkness, Webber followed the

erie sounds of twisting and straining steel as the hull was being wrenched apart by the swells. They arrived on scene, five miles ashore, to initially find only one man on deck, 30 feet above the waterline. Soon others appeared and a rope ladder was lowered, and crew members began making their way down to the *CG36500*. But the ladder alternately dipped the sailors into the 38 degree water and whipsawed them out from the hull as the ship heaved and rolled while Webber struggled to maintain station. Some survivors jumped into the frigid water and were recovered by Webber's crew. Once aboard they were jammed into the small forward survivors cabin. Others were positioned towards the stern of the boat and in the engine compartment.



The Rescue Boat *CG36500* returning to the Chatham Fish Pier with 32 survivors of the tanker *Pendleton* after the rescue at sea. Photo credit: Cape Cod Community College.

One man fell into the water becoming wedged near the 11-foot propeller of the *Pendleton*. He was crushed when a large wave slammed the motor lifeboat against the hull. Shaken by his death, Webber and his crew nevertheless directed their efforts to recovering the dozen sailors who remained aboard. Just as the last man was off, what was left of the *Pendleton* rolled over.

With the 32 survivors packed on board, the *CG36500* was dangerously overloaded and moving sluggishly in the water. When Webber reported his status to the Chatham Station several Coast Guard cutters further offshore wanted him to bring the survivors to them. With no compass, Webber was essentially lost, and thought the order ludicrous. Turning his radio off, he headed towards where he thought the shore was, intending to run the *CG36500* through the surf and onto the beach. As he drew closer, he spotted a small buoy off of Chatham and was able to make it safely across the bar and into the harbor.

In recognition of their heroic actions, Webber and his crew received the Gold Life Saving Medal. Their courage epitomized the old Life Saving Service credo of, "You have to go out, but you don't have to come back." In April of this year, the Coast Guard will further honor Webber and his legacy when it commissions the Bernard C. Webber, the first of a new class of fast response cutters. The new cutter's motto: "Determination Heeds No Interference."



American Lobster
Homarus americanus

Interesting Facts:

- * Lobsters smell food with small hairs covering their body and 4 small antennae.
- * Lobsters' teeth are in their stomach.
- * Lobsters molt in order to grow. In the 1st year, a lobster molts 10 times to reach a length of 1 - 1 1/2".
- * A lobster that has lost 1 claw is called a cull. One that has lost 2 claws is called a bullet. Lobsters can grow back new claws, legs and antennae.

Largest Recorded: 44 lbs.

Maximum Age: Determining the exact age of a lobster has not been discovered. Based on knowledge of body size at age, the maximum age attained may approach 100 years.

Stock Status:

- *GOM and GBK - Not depleted and not experiencing overfishing
- * SNE - Depleted and not experiencing overfishing

Species Profile: American Lobster *Challenges Ahead in Rebuilding the Southern New England Lobster Stock*

Introduction

With an ex-vessel value of nearly \$400 million in 2010, American lobster ranks as one of the top commercial fisheries along the Atlantic coast. Over the last seventeen years, coastwide landings have increased substantially, rising from about 57 million pounds in 1993 to 116 million pounds in 2010. The Maine lobster fishery accounts for almost 80% of the value of the coastwide lobster fishery. Despite these overall increases, Southern New England (SNE) landings have been declining over the past several years. The 2009 assessment and recent Technical Committee review has found the stock to be in poor condition with continued low abundance and poor recruitment. Environmental changes in concert with fishing mortality have been identified as principal causes of lower recruitment levels and poor stock condition.

In 2011, the Board approved Addendum XVII which reduces exploitation by 10% in the SNE lobster conservation management areas (LCMAs 2-6). The Board also approved development of Addenda XVIII and XIX, which will propose scaling the SNE fishery to the size of the SNE resource.

Life History

American lobster is a bottom-dwelling crustacean that is widely distributed over the continental shelf of North America. In the inshore waters of the U.S., it is most abundant from Maine through New Jersey, with abundance declining from north to south. Offshore, it occurs from Maine through North Carolina. Three stocks units have been identified based on regional differences in life history parameters. They are the Gulf of Maine (GOM), Georges Bank (GBK), and SNE.

Lobsters are solitary and territorial, living in a variety of habitats as long as there is a burrow or crevice in which they can take cover. They usually remain within a home range of about 5-10 square km. In offshore areas, large mature lobsters make seasonal migrations inshore to reproduce. In southern inshore areas, large lobsters may move to deeper, cooler waters seasonally or permanently.

Reproduction and growth are linked to the molting (shedding of their shell) cycle. Lobsters have hard external skeletons (shell) that provide protection and body support. Lobsters periodically shed their shell to allow their body size to increase and mating to occur. Sperm is deposited in "soft" (recently molted) females and stored internally until extrusion, which can extend for two years. When



Linda Grindle with the Lobster Foundation of Massachusetts and Beth Casoni with the MA Lobstermen's Association (MLA) display part of the day's catch. Photo courtesy of MLA.

extruded, the eggs are fertilized and attached to the underside of the female, where they are carried for 9 to 11 months before hatching. Females hatch their eggs from mid-May to mid-June. Lobster larvae transition through five stages. For the first four stages larvae are planktonic, swimming at or near the water surface. At the fifth larval stage, juveniles sink to the ocean floor where they remain for the rest of their lifetime. Lobsters reach market size in about four to nine years, depending on water temperature and other biological factors.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

The lobster fishery has seen incredible expansion in effort and landings since the late 1940s and early 1950s, when landings varied around 25 million pounds. The last two decades alone have seen dramatic increases in lobster landings, rising from 57 million pounds in 1993 and peaking in 2010 with harvest estimates of 116 million pounds.

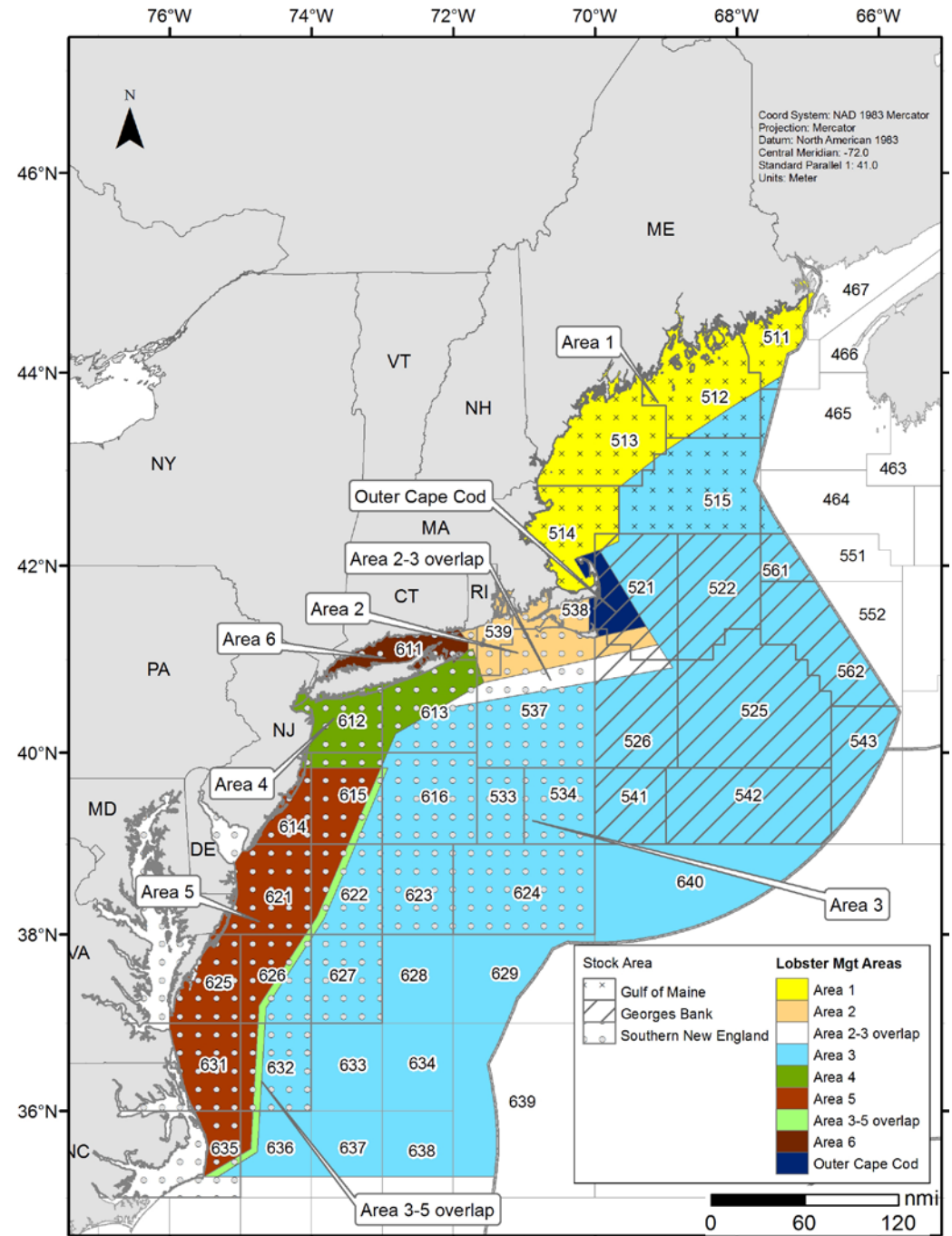
Approximately 85% of lobsters were caught in the waters of Maine and New Hampshire accounting for 82% and 3% of the commercial landings, respectively in 2010. Massachusetts accounted for 11% of the landings yielding 12.76 million pounds in 2010. Landings in the SNE stock area have been declining since the late 1990s from highs of approximately 20 million pounds to lows of approximately 5 million pounds in 2010.

Lobster pots are the predominant commercial gear, with a small percent of the landings being caught by trawls. Lobster is also taken recreationally with pots and by hand while SCUBA diving. The magnitude of recreational landings is unknown.

Atlantic Coastal Management

American lobster is managed under Amendment 3 and its 17 addenda. Its major provisions include: minimum and maximum carapace length; maximum trap limits; prohibition on the

Map of American Lobster Conservation Management Areas and Stock Assessment Areas



possession of buried lobsters (lobster with eggs); prohibition on possession of lobster meat and lobster parts; trap configuration requirements; prohibition on spearing lobsters; prohibition on possession of female v-notched lobsters; and limits on landings with non-trap gear. Amendment 3 establishes seven lobster management areas: Inshore GOM (Area 1), Inshore SNE (Area 2), Offshore Waters (Area 3), Inshore Northern Mid-Atlantic (Area 4), Inshore Southern Mid-Atlantic (Area 5), New York and Connecticut State Waters (Area 6), and Outer Cape Cod. Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs), com-

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ASMFC Releases Atlantic Menhaden Public Information Document for Public Comment

The Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden is available for public comment and review on the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News. As the first step in the development of Amendment 2, the PID presents the current status of the fishery and resource, and solicits public input on which major issues and alternatives should be included for consideration and analysis in Draft Amendment 2.

The PID's primary focus is to initiate discussion on the timing and implementation of achieving the new fishing mortality threshold ($F = 1.32$) and target ($F = 0.62$) reference points recently adopted through Addendum V. Since fishing mortality in 2008 (the latest year in the assessment) is estimated at 2.28, overfishing is occurring, however, the stock is not overfished. The goal of the new reference points is to increase abundance, spawning stock biomass, and menhaden availability as a forage species. The PID also seeks public input on a more timely and comprehensive catch reporting system, and scopes

potential options to be used in managing Atlantic menhaden commercial bait and reduction fisheries as well as recreational fishery.

Alongside the development of Amendment 2, the peer-reviewed stock assessment will be updated with data through 2011 to provide a more recent estimate of fishing mortality. Results of the assessment update will be used to estimate the harvest reductions needed to achieve the new threshold and target fishing mortality rates. Therefore, preliminary harvest reductions are provided in the PID but will likely change based on the results of the stock assessment update.

Nearly every Atlantic coast state from Maine to Georgia will be holding public hearings throughout March and early



Atlantic menhaden captured on the SEAMAP Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise.

April to gather public input on the PID. Please check the Commission's website on its Meeting page for details on the scheduled hearings. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the PID either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. Public comment must be received no later than 5:00 PM (EST) on April 20, 2012 and should be forwarded to Michael Waine, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or mwaine@asmfc.org (Subject line: PID).

On the Legislative Front

On February 13, the President released his FY2013 budget request to Congress. Within the NOAA Fisheries budget request, funding for expanding annual stock assessments rose by \$5 million from the FY2012 enacted budget; additionally, funding requested for survey and monitoring projects rose by \$2.5 million. The funding request for Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions, under which the ASMFC receives the majority of its federal funding, decreased by \$4.5 million. The funding requests for Fisheries Statistics and the Fish Information Network remained nearly level. Finally, the funding request for Cooperative Research and MARMAP both increased from the FY2012 enacted levels, by \$1 million and \$300,000, respectively.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's FY2013 budget request represents an increase of \$72 million over the FY2012 enacted level. This budget request includes maintaining ecosystem restoration funding for the Chesapeake Bay at \$10.3 million and State and Tribal Wildlife Grants at \$61.3 million. The request includes increasing funding to administer the Endangered Species Act by \$3.7 million to \$179.7 million. Finally, funding for the operation and maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge System is requested at \$494.8 million, an increase of \$9.1 million. For more information, please contact Danielle Chesky, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at dchesky@asmfc.org.

Horseshoe Crab Board Implements New Multispecies Management Framework

The Horseshoe Crab Management Board has approved Addendum VII to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum implements the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework, which incorporates both shorebird and horseshoe crab abundance levels to set optimized horseshoe crab harvest levels for the Delaware Bay area. The ARM Framework was developed by the Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Geological Survey in recognition of the relationship between horseshoe crab eggs and shorebirds in the Delaware Bay Region. The ARM Framework was peer-reviewed in 2009 and accepted by the Board in 2010.

The Addendum allocates the ARM harvest output among the four states (New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia, and Maryland) that harvest horseshoe crabs from the Delaware Bay population. The allocation is based upon multiple decision options, including the proportion of horseshoe crabs harvested that originate from Delaware Bay and allowance for additional male harvest by Virginia and Maryland to compensate for protecting female horseshoe crabs when the ARM harvest output includes a moratorium on female crabs. This provision will help meet bait demands and mitigate the economic impact of a moratorium on female horseshoe crabs.

As part of implementation, the most recent estimates of horseshoe crab and red knot abundance will be used in the ARM Framework to estimate the optimized harvest level for Delaware Bay crabs. The allocation prescribed within Addendum VII will determine how the ARM optimized harvest output will be divided among the four Delaware Bay states. Should the data used to implement the ARM Framework be unavailable in a particular year, the Board will solicit input from its the Technical Committees and Advisory Panels on whether the previous ARM harvest or Addendum VI management measures should be implemented for that year.



Red knots feeding on horseshoe crab eggs. Photo courtesy of Gregory Breese, USFWS

Addendum VII will be implemented for the 2013 fishing season. It is available on the Commission's website (www.asmf.org) under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at 703.842.0740.

Northern Shrimp Section Closes 2012 Fishery

Effective 2359 hours (EST) on February 17, 2012, the Northern Shrimp Section and its member states will close the 2012 northern shrimp fishery. Preliminary landings data indicate harvest reached 1,996 mt on February 11, 2012. Given harvest has averaged about 400 mt per week and the fishery is known to have considerable late reporting, landings are projected to have already exceeded the total allowable catch (TAC) of 2,211 mt.

When it set the specifications for the 2012 fishery, the Section had announced

its intention to close the fishery when landings were projected to reach 95% of the TAC (2,100 mt). Any landings above the established TAC is expected to lead to a fishing mortality rate in excess of the management program's fishing mortality threshold ($F_{threshold}$) of 0.41. Any fishing above the $F_{threshold}$ would lead to overfishing of the stock.

The trawl season began on January 2, 2012 with three landing days a week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday), while the trap season started on February 1, 2012

with a 1,000 pound landing limit per vessel per day. The states of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts will be issuing closure notices consistent with their state procedures.



Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board Initiates Addendum to Address Illegal Striped Bass Harvest

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board has initiated an addendum to address illegal striped bass harvest. The Board's action is in response to recommendations of the Interstate Watershed Task Force (IWTF). The IWTF conducted a multi-year, multi-jurisdictional investigation on illegal striped bass harvest within Chesapeake Bay which resulted in over \$1.6 million dollars in fines levied against 19 individuals and three corporations for more than one million pounds of illegal striped bass harvested estimated to be worth up to seven million dollars.

The covert investigation determined that some Virginia commercial fishermen were illegally harvesting fish during the Potomac River Fisheries Commission's closed season, as well as illegally harvesting oversized fish from Virginia waters during the spawning season. Additionally, some Maryland commercial fishermen were taking advantage of loopholes in the state tagging system to falsely report large numbers of smaller, legal-sized fish, allowing them to obtain more tags and exceed quota limits. The investigation also found some wholesale dealers were

complicit through false recordkeeping, false check-in, and knowingly buying illegal or untagged fish.

The investigation revealed that the current control measures for regulating striped bass harvest could be improved. The IWTF and the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) recommended increasing penalties for illegally harvested fish and implementing a uniform commercial tagging system among all states with commercial striped bass fisheries.

The IWTF and LEC acknowledge the efforts of Maryland, Virginia and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission in initiating measures to deter the activities detected by the Task Force. Maryland has reformed its commercial fishing management rules, including the suspension or



Commercially caught Atlantic striped bass with Virginia tags.

revocation of commercial licenses from violators and increasing the penalty for commercially fishing without a license. The Potomac River Fish Commission has permanently revoked the commercial licenses of the violators identified from the investigation, while Virginia suspended the commercial licenses of identified violators for two years, the maximum amount allowed by Virginia law.

The Board will consider potential management options for inclusion in the Draft Addendum for public comment at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Commissioners/Proxies:

Steven Bowman - In March, Steven Bowman retired as Commissioner of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission to become Chief of Police of the Smithfield Police Department. Since 2006, Steve served as Virginia's Administrative Commissioner. Prior to that, Steve was an active and long-standing member of the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee. Jack Travelstead has been named VMRC's Acting Commissioner as well as Virginia's new Administrative Commissioner. We wish Steve the very best in his new job and in all his future endeavors.

John Frampton - In February, John Frampton retired as Director of the

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) after a 37-year career of service to the citizens and natural resources of South Carolina. For the last eight years, John served as South Carolina's Administrative Commissioner. In 2010, he was awarded the Commission's highest annual award -- the Captain David H. Hart Award -- for his outstanding efforts to improve Atlantic coast marine fisheries conservation and management. Robert H. Boyles Jr., SCDNR's Deputy Director for Marine Resources, has been appointed to serve as the state's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. We wish John a long retirement, filled with good health and much happiness.

Fentress "Red" Munden -- In January, Red Munden retired from the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, ending a 43-year career in marine fisheries management. A frequent and valued contributor to the Commission's fisheries management and science programs, Red served on numerous committees, teams, and management boards. Red also was an active participant on NMFS Marine Mammal Take Reduction Teams for Bottlenose Dolphin, Atlantic Large Whales, Harbor Porpoise and Pelagic Longline, working to reduce interactions between marine mammals and commercial fishing gears. We wish Red a long and wonderful retirement.

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Tautog Board Sets Required Harvest Reduction at 39%

The Tautog Management Board has lowered the harvest reduction necessary for states to comply with Addendum VI. Under the revised stock assessment update, states from Connecticut through Virginia are required to reduce harvest by 39% from the average of 2008 and 2009 levels. This change responds to errors found in the 2011 assessment update, which overestimated the 2009 fishing mortality rate and, therefore, the associated harvest reduction necessary to achieve the fishing mortality target. Previously, states had been required to reduce harvest by 53%.

Approved in late 2011, Addendum VI lowers the fishing mortality target to 0.15 and requires states to implement measures to achieve this target. Additionally, it allows for reductions based on regional/state fishing mortality rates for states that

can demonstrate a lower regional fishing mortality rate than the coastwide assessment. Massachusetts and Rhode Island submitted and received Board approval for a regional assessment which demonstrated a local fishing mortality rate below the Addendum VI target. Therefore, they will not need to make any harvest reductions. All other states are required to meet the 39% reduction in harvest and can employ a combination of bag limits, size limits and/or closed seasons based on approved methodologies to achieve the reductions. Management measures derived using alternative methodologies will need to be vetted through the Commission's Tautog Technical Committee and approved by the Management Board before they can be implemented by the state(s). All states have the option of implementing more conservative management measures.

The revised assessment results show the stock continues to be overfished with overfishing occurring. The spawning stock biomass (SSB) has remained at low levels for the last decade, with 2009 SSB estimated at 10,663 metric tons — 38% of the target SSB (26,800 metric tons). Current coastwide fishing mortality (F) is estimated at 0.26, well above the Addendum VI target of F=0.15. At F=0.15, original projections estimated that SSB would exceed the SSB threshold (20,100 metric tons) around 2018. However, under the corrected assessment, the stock is not projected to reach the threshold by 2025. Based on these new findings, some Board members expressed concern that the current Ftarget is insufficient to rebuild the stock. The rebuilding strategy will be discussed at a future meeting.

States Finalize 2012 Black Sea Bass Recreational Measures

Upon review of the latest black sea bass recreational data from last year (waves 1 – 6), the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board has modified the percent that states may liberalize their 2012 recreational management measures to achieve the 1.32 million pound (942,857 fish) harvest limit for the 2012 fishery. The northern region states of Massachusetts through New Jersey will implement measures that achieve a 37% liberalization throughout the region and a 32% liberalization coastwide; the percent of liberalization will vary by state. Northern region states had the option to collectively liberalize regulations by 41% but opted to be more conservative. State-specific regulations follow below.

Since the Board's approval of Addendum XXII and the resultant 2012 state recreational management measures in February 2012, new 2011 recreational harvest estimates were released by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The data indicates the projections used to form the basis of this year's regulations under estimated the 2011 harvest. Coastwide recreational harvest for the 2011 black sea bass fishery is now estimated at 713,478 fish (versus the initial estimate of 654,142 fish). As a result of the new estimate, northern states

will still be able to liberalize their 2012 recreational management measures but not to the extent that they would have under the previous estimate (initial liberalization was 57%). The northern states will be working over the next month to finalize their recreational black sea bass management measures.

Based on the stock projections completed in 2011, the black sea bass stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The projections indicate the stock is at about 111% of its biomass target.

State	Minimum Size (inches)	Possession Limit	Open Season
Massachusetts	14	10 fish	May 11 – June 24
		20 fish	June 25 – October 31
Rhode Island	13	15 fish	June 15 – December 31
Connecticut	13	15 fish	June 15 – December 31
New York	13	15 fish	June 15 – December 31
New Jersey	Still finalizing measures		
Delaware	12.5	25 fish	May 22 – October 14
			November 1 – December 31
Maryland	12.5	25 fish	May 22 – October 14
			November 1 – December 31 (Season may change depending on federal regulations)
Virginia	12.5	25 fish	May 19 – October 14
			November 1 – December 31
PRFC	12.5	25 fish	May 19 – October 14
			November 1 – December 31
North Carolina (North of Hatteras)	12.5	25 fish	May 19 – October 14
			November 1 – December 31

Species Profile: American Lobster (continued from page 5)

posed of industry representatives, were formed for each management area. The LCMTs are charged with advising the Lobster Board and recommending changes to the management plan within their areas.

Stock Status

The 2009 peer-reviewed stock assessment report indicates that the resource presents a mixed picture of stock abundance throughout its U.S. range. The report indicated record high stock abundance and recruitment (number of lobsters entering the fishery) throughout most of the GOM and GBK. The SNE stock, fared less well with continued low abundance and poor recruitment.

Stock status is determined by comparing threshold values to the average abundance and exploitation rate during recent years- (2005-2007). Thus, “overfishing” is occurring when the average recent exploitation rate is higher than the threshold. A stock is “depleted” when average recent abundance falls below the threshold. Given these reference points, the GOM and GBK stocks are not depleted and overfishing is not occurring (see Figures 1 & 2), while the SNE is depleted but not experiencing overfishing (see Figure 3). The Board set the SNE abundance reference points to a lower target level than the GOM and GBK stocks because it believes the SNE stock has limited ability to rebuild to higher historical levels.

Southern New England

In the spring of 2010, the Commission’s American Lobster Technical Committee (TC) reviewed recent trends in abundance (2008 and 2009) and considered a variety of biological and environmental factors that may be impacting SNE lobster stocks. In May 2010, the TC submitted a report stating its belief that the SNE stock was experiencing recruitment failure. Evidence suggested the reproductive potential and abundance of the SNE stock had continued to fall to lower levels than what was presented in the 2009 assessment. While larval production and settlement are inherently variable, sustained poor production can only lead to reduced recruitment and ultimately to reduced year class strength and lower future abundance levels. The TC stated that recruitment failure was caused by

Figure 1. Estimated Abundance of American Lobster in the Gulf of Maine
Source: ASMFC American Lobster Stock Assessment, 2009

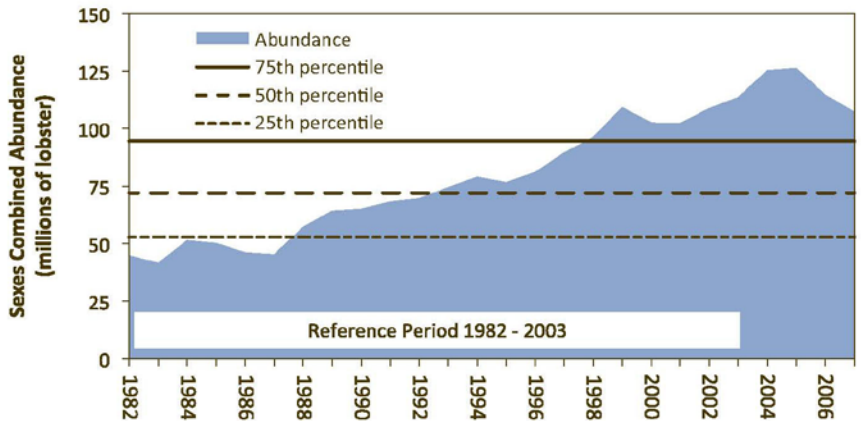


Figure 2. Estimated Abundance of American Lobster in Georges Bank
Source: ASMFC American Lobster Stock Assessment, 2009

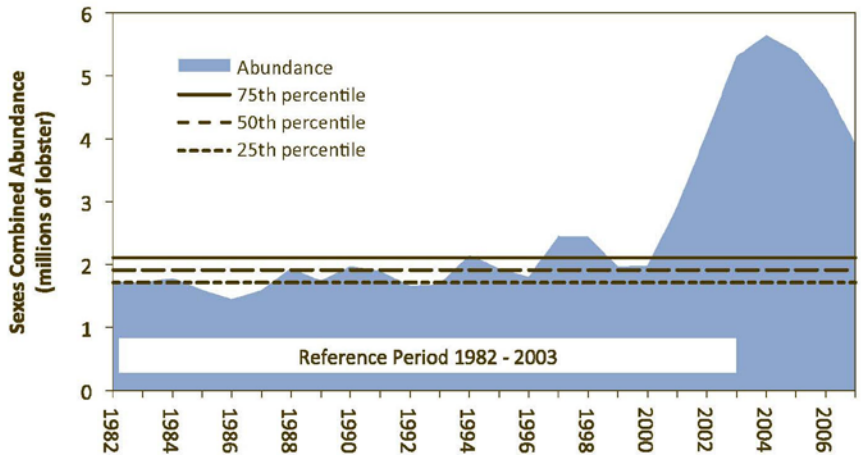
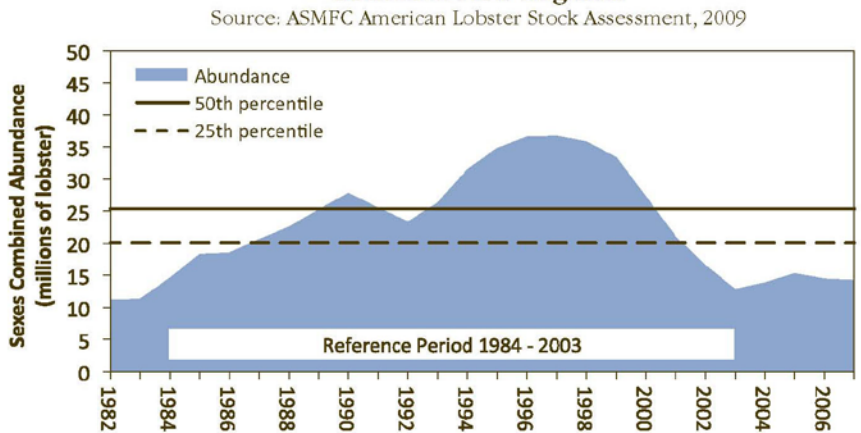


Figure 3. Estimated Abundance of American Lobster in Southern New England
Source: ASMFC American Lobster Stock Assessment, 2009



Timeline of Management Actions: Amendment 3 (1997); Addendum I (1999); Addendum II (2001); Addendum III (2002); Addenda IV & V (2004); Addenda VI & VII (2005); Addenda VIII & IX (2006); Addenda X & XI (2007); Addendum XIII (2008); Addenda XII, XIV & XV (2009); Addendum XVI (2010); Addendum XVII (2011)

overwhelming environmental and biological changes coupled with continued fishing. At that time, the TC recommended a 5-year moratorium on harvest in the SNE stock area to provide the maximum likelihood of rebuilding the stock above the threshold and toward the target abundance in the foreseeable future.

Following the presentation of the TC reports to the Board concerning recruitment failure and stock projections, the Board moved to have the findings reviewed by the Center for Independent Experts (CIE). Both the TC and CIE reviewers concurred that environmental changes in concert with fishing mortality were the principal causes of the recent stock decline and resulting lower recruitment levels. Although it is not possible to predict how recruitment may change in the near future, it was noted that environmental conditions are unlikely to return to the previous favorable state observed in the early 1990s. Therefore, reducing exploitation is necessary in order to prevent further avoidable erosion of the spawning stock and increase the chances of stock recovery should recruitment and natural mortality conditions improve. The CIE reviewers generally agreed that a moratorium or severe reductions (~75%) in fishing mortality were needed immediately to maximize chances of rebuilding the stock.

Management Response

To address the concerns of the declining resource, the Management Board approved Addendum XVII in February 2012 to reduce exploitation by 10% in the SNE management areas beginning July 2013. The management areas have initiated either mandatory v-notch programs or season closures or a combination of both to meet the requirements of the addendum.

The Board also initiated Draft Addenda XVIII and XIX, to rebuild the SNE stock over the long-term. Both addenda were initiated to scale the SNE fishery to the size of the SNE resource, including an option for a minimum reduction in traps fished by 25%. Draft Addendum XIX specifically addresses LCMAs 2 and 3. Options in the documents will include recommendations from the LCMTs, TC, and Plan Development Team.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator for Management, at 703.842.0740 or tkerns@asmfc.org.

Science Highlight: American Lobster Ventless Trap Survey

The American Lobster Ventless Trap Survey is a regional survey conducted in the Northwest Atlantic that is designed to gather fishery-independent information for use in stock assessments. The Ventless Trap Survey is composed of a series of 5 local surveys conducted by the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York. Each state conducts sampling in waters off their own coast while New York and Connecticut share responsibility for sampling Long Island Sound. Scientists and contracted fishermen work cooperatively to collect the data. The Ventless Trap Survey began in the summer of 2006 and has been conducted annually through 2012.

Why ventless traps?

Although several fishery-independent trawl surveys encounter lobster across their range, trawls are not an ideal gear because they cannot operate on rocky or ledge habitats which lobster often frequent. Also, trawl surveys cannot operate in areas where static gear (e.g., lobster pots and gillnets) is deployed. Therefore, a large portion of the most productive lobster habitat is not accessible to trawl survey gear. In contrast to existing trawl surveys, the Ventless Trap Survey was specifically designed to catch lobster using a more effective gear, the lobster trap.

Commercial lobster traps are required to have an escape vent that allows most sublegal lobster to exit the trap. This escape vent helps reduce the stress and potential mortality associated with being trapped and processed on the boat. The Ventless Trap Survey utilizes multiple sets of 6 traps deployed at the same time in the same location. Three traps are vented and three are ventless. The vented traps are designed to monitor trap catch rates of mostly legal-sized lobster. The ventless traps are designed to collect valuable information about catch rates of sublegal lobster which represent future recruitment to the fishery.

Survey Design & Data Collection

Traps are deployed between June and November in a random stratified fashion such that sets of 6-traps are randomly placed within certain depth categories and geographic areas. Soak time is three nights. All lobster caught in the Ventless Trap Survey are examined and biological information is recorded, including carapace length, sex, egg-bearing status, shell disease condition, and v-notch status.

Use in Stock Assessments

The most current lobster stock assessment, conducted in 2009, used a statistical catch-at-length model designed by Dr. Yong Chen at the University of Maine. This model uses information about commercial catch-at-length, changes in legal size regulations, discard rates of egg-bearing and v-notched lobster, and trends in fishery-independent survey data to estimate stock abundance, fishing mortality, and recruitment. Changes in survey catch rates over time are used as indices of stock abundance which provide the model with information about

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ACCSP Awards Two Million Dollars in Funding to State/Federal Data Collection and Management Projects

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), a state and federal partnership for marine fisheries data collection and data management, has allocated nearly \$2 million to its state and federal partners for new and ongoing projects to improve data collection for coastal fisheries in 2012. The following projects will be awarded funding:

- The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has been awarded \$245,084 for an observer program for the Mid-Atlantic (New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia) and Rhode Island small mesh otter trawls.
- ASMFC will also receive \$133,466 in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to work on an extension for the observer program for the Mid-Atlantic small mesh otter trawls.
- The NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Fisheries Science Center will receive \$236,440 to process and age biological samples collected from South Atlantic commercial and recreational fisheries in response to ACCSP bio-target samples.
- Maine Department of Marine Resources will receive \$233,622 to continue to manage dealer and harvester reporting in Maine.
- Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries will receive \$76,050 to continue collecting trip-level reports for all Massachusetts commercial permit holders.
- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management will receive \$99,379 to maintain and coordinate its fishery-dependent data feeds to ACCSP.
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Fisheries Science Center will jointly receive \$178,584 to further develop biological characterization and implementation of the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) for the commercial fisheries in New Jersey.
- North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries will receive \$41,500 to update angler contact information for grandfathered license holders in North Carolina.
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources will receive \$186,558 to continue instituting a collection method for the ACCSP commercial module in South Carolina.
- The Recreational Technical Committee of the ACCSP will receive \$128,468 to increase intercept sampling levels for the Marine Recreational Information Program for-



hire methodology of the charter boat fishery on the Atlantic coast (New Hampshire through Florida) and \$159,573 to increase at-sea sampling levels for the for-hire survey head-boat fishery on the Atlantic coast (New Hampshire through Florida).

About ACCSP

ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program to design, implement, and conduct marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and to integrate 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 Service, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For more information, please visit www.accsp.org.

Science Highlight: American Lobster Ventless Trap Survey (continued from page 11)

trends in the number and size of lobster over time. The 2009 assessment used indices of abundance created from trawl survey data collected by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

The Ventless Trap Survey data will be used in the upcoming 2014 stock assessment to create a new fishery-independent index of abundance. Because carapace length and sex of each lobster caught is recorded, the index can provide the model with vital information about changes in length structure over time for males and females. Also, with the use of ventless traps, data collection will target sublegal lobster, thereby improving our ability to estimate and predict trends in small, sublegal lobster that have not yet recruited to the fishery. States are committed to continuing this important survey given they are successful in securing funding, a definite challenge in today's fiscal environment. For more information, please contact Genny Nessler, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist at 703.842.0740 or gnessler@asmfc.org.

Emily Greene Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter



In her four years with the Commission, Emily Greene has helped to firmly establish the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) as a nationally recognized entity dedicated to conserving important fish habitat along the Atlantic coast. Her efforts have significantly contributed to the Commission's Vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." In recognition of her accomplishments, Emily was named Employee of the Quarter for the first quarter of 2012. The award is intended to recognize contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.

Over the last year, Emily's diverse skills and strong work ethic have been a considerable asset to the ACFHP Steering Committee as it pursued a number of projects and tasks. In late 2011, the ACFHP Steering Committee

approved the Partnership's Five Year Conservation Strategic Plan, which identifies key conservation strategies and long-term scientific project priorities to confront pervasive threats to fish habitat along the Atlantic coast. Emily worked closely with two other fish habitat partnerships -- the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture -- to achieve a 2012 Multistate Conservation Grant which will support the continued operation of, and enhance the coordination between, the three partnerships. Emily has also made considerable strides in promoting the Partnership through its website, outreach materials that focus on state and regional fish habitat projects funded by ACFHP, and two displays that will be used at professional conferences and industry tradeshows to highlight program activities and involve the broader public in habitat conservation initiatives.

Emily holds a Master of Environmental Management from the Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences at Duke University and a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Environmental Science from the College of William and Mary. As Employee of the Quarter, she received a \$500 cash reward, a small gift, and a letter of appreciation to be placed in her personal record. In addition, her name is on the Employee of the Quarter plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Emily!

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Staff:

Christopher R. Ford -- In March, Christopher Ford joined the Commission staff as Assistant to the Executive Director. Christopher received a Master's degree in Public Administration from George Mason University and a B.A., cum laude, in Economics and Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He has worked for the Alaska Coalition to support protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and more recently for Oceana as the



Climate and Energy Intern. Christopher is an avid recreational angler, having grown up in the Kettle Moraine State Forest of Wisconsin where he spent many of his early years fishing local rivers. Welcome aboard, Christopher!

Meredith Wilson -- In February, Meredith Wilson accepted a position with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries as Assistant to the Director. For two and a half years, Meredith served as Executive Assistant, providing critical support to the Commission's Executive Director. As part of her responsibilities, Meredith worked closely with the Executive Director on communicating a number of fisheries policy and funding issues to Congress. This also included working with Legislative and Governor-appointed Commissioners on ways they can connect and interact with their congressional delegations in order to help the Commission and their states better manage fisheries. We wish Meredith the very best in her new position.

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ASMFC Public Comment Guidelines

With the intent of developing policies in the Commission's procedures for public participation that result in a fair opportunity for public input, the ISFMP Policy Board has approved 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).

- Comments received 3 weeks prior to the start of a meeting week will be included on the briefing CD.
- Comments received by 5:00 PM on

the Tuesday immediately preceding the scheduled ASMFC Meeting (in this case, the Tuesday deadline will be April 24, 2012) will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/ Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.

- Following the Tuesday, April 24, 2012, 5:00 PM deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for the 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.