ASMFC
FISHERIES focus
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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1444 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C.
Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015

ASMFC Explores Fish Passage Issues

Why is the Commission Concerned about Fish Passage?

Millions of artificial barriers have been constructed along the Atlantic coast to impound and redirect water for irrigation, flood control, electricity, drinking water, and transportation—all altering natural features of rivers and streams. Fisheries managers, stakeholders and the public at large have become increasingly concerned about the effects of impoundments on fish and other aquatic species. Many dams are obsolete and no longer serve their original purpose. In most cases, these impoundments serve as a barrier to fish migration, which is fundamental to the life history of many species. As a result, some populations of native fish are gone and others are on the brink of disappearing.

The Commission is particularly concerned about the migrations to spawning habitat for Atlantic sturgeon, American shad, hickory shad, alewife, blueback herring, and striped bass, and migrations to long-term growth areas for American eel. Without access to these habitats, it will be very difficult to restore populations of these very important diadromous species.


CT Fishway. Photo courtesy of Tom Wagner, Town of Waterford

Workshop Overview

On April 3 & 4, 2008, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission held a workshop for Commissioners and Technical Committee members on fish passage issues impacting Atlantic coast states. The workshop was held in Jacksonville, Florida. The goals of the workshop were to:

- Initiate development of a Commission fish passage protocol that can be applied by the states when addressing future passage issues
- Provide a summary of current fish passage technologies and techniques to Commissioners and Technical Committee members
- Provide a forum to discuss recent experiences with dam re-licensing and potential future Commission/state involvement
- Discuss species-specific fish passage concerns and solutions

A series of presentations were given on a variety of topics, including: common designs for fish passage available today, fish passage concerns for Commission-managed species, experiences with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) dam re-licensing process, experiences with fish passage and dam removal at non-hydropower dams, case studies on dealing with fish passage, and American eel-specific passage issues.

The workshop provided opportunities for participant discussion and the development of recommendations (32 total) to be brought before the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP).

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Inside This Issue

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 anadromous 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.

Upcoming Meetings

7/8 - 10:
ASMFC River Herring Data Workshop, Hotel Providence, 311 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

7/9 (8:30 AM - 5:00 PM):
ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee, Hilton Norfolk Airport Hotel, 1500 N. Military Highway, Norfolk, Virginia.

7/9 (6:30 PM):
ASMFC Public Hearing on Draft Addendum V to the Interstate FMP for Horseshoe Crab, VMRC, 2600 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor, Newport News, Virginia.

7/14 - 17:
ASMFC Weakfish Data Workshop, Hotel Providence, 311 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

7/16 (5:30 PM):
ASMFC Public Hearing on Draft Addendum V to the Interstate FMP for Horseshoe Crab, DE DNREC, Richardson and Robbins Building Auditorium, 89 Kings Highway, Dover, Delaware.

7/17 (6:00 PM):
ASMFC Public Hearing on Draft Addendum V to the Interstate FMP for Horseshoe Crab, MD DNR, Ocean Pines Library, 11107 Cathell Road, Berlin, Maryland.

8/5 - 8:
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Renaissance Philadelphia Hotel Airport, 500 Stevens Drive, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 610-521-5900.

8/17 - 21:
AFS 138th Annual Meeting, Ottawa, Canada.

8/19 - 21:
ASMFC Summer Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; (800) 333-3333 (see preliminary agenda on page 7).

9/8 – 12:
ASMFC Technical Meeting Week, location to be determined.

10/7 - 9:
New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Hotel, Mystic, Connecticut.

10/14 - 16:
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Ramada Inn, 1701 South Virginia Dare Trail, Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina; 252-441-2151.

Finding the Good and Praising It

We can all derive inspiration from the dedication of the many individuals and organizations working hard to ensure our fisheries and oceans are left in better condition for the next generation. Last month, NOAA took time to recognize some of these remarkable efforts with its presentation of the 2008 Sustainable Fisheries Leadership Awards. Chosen from a pool of nearly 70 nominees, the recipients reflect a wide range of accomplishments. Their efforts remind us that great things can be achieved when people dedicate themselves to pursue goals they passionately care about.

Mr. Ralph Rayburn was posthumously honored for his lifetime contributions towards conscientious management of marine resources of the Gulf of Mexico. He was a visionary who worked cooperatively with shrimp fishermen and conservationists to help address unintended sea turtle catches. He served as Executive Director of the Texas Shrimp Association, Deputy Chief of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and most recently, as Associate Director of the Texas Sea Grant College Program at Texas A&M University. He was a voting member of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council for a number of years and at the time of his death was Chair of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Mr. Patrick F. Riley, Capt. Manuel Calderon, and Capt. Louis Stephenson received the Stewardship and Sustainability Award for their leadership in the development of effective and efficient fishing gear. Their nets and doors not only minimize sea turtle bycatch, but also sharply reduce the amount of fuel needed by the Gulf and South Atlantic shrimp fishery.

The Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Population Restoration Program, based at the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, was recognized with the Conservation Partnership Award for its efforts over the past 30 years to protect and recover Kemp's ridley sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico. When the project began in 1978 an estimated 924 nests were identified and protected. In 2007, thanks to the efforts of 26 diverse partners from the U.S. and Mexico, over 15,000 nests were protected and more than one million turtle hatchlings were released into the Gulf of Mexico.

Mr. Clayward Tam of the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources received the Science Research and Technology Award for his efforts to involve the fishing community in cooperative research on jacks, one of Hawaii's most valued sport and food fish. This project has given fishery scientists and managers critical information on the life history of jacks while helping to strengthen the relationship between fishermen and scientists.

The Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation received the Coastal Habitat Restoration Award for its efforts to remove old nets, plastics, and other debris from the fur seal rookeries on the Pribilof Islands and throughout coastal Alaska. The foundation has successfully involved Tribal Nations, recreational groups, and the commercial fishing industry to remove hundreds of tons of debris from Alaskan shores. Funded by the North Pacific fishing industry, the Marine Conservation Alliance is dedicated to the sustainable management of fisheries through sound science.

Mr. Douglas Gregory received the Public Education, Community Service, and Media Award for his work as a Sea Grant Extension agent in the Florida Keys. Known for his strong communication skills, he has improved the public's knowledge of commercial fishing. At the same time, he has promoted fishermen's understanding of the importance of sustainable fishing and assisted them in taking an active role with state and federal regulators in pursuit of that goal.

The Special Recognition Award was given to Mr. Robert C. Fletcher, President of the Sportfishing Association of California, for his lifetime dedication to the management, conservation, and sustainable use of West Coast marine fisheries. Previously, Mr. Fletcher served as Chief Deputy Director of the California Department of Fish and Game. Over the last three decades he has chaired or been a member of multiple state, regional and national committees, councils, and commissions. His work on building consensus among competing stakeholders has reflected his dedication to promoting the long-term sustainability of marine fisheries.

All of the award recipients share in the desire to improve their small corner of the ocean world. In reading the full description of their activities I was struck by their ability to pursue solutions that were in the long-term interest of both the fishermen and the fish. They serve as an inspiration to us all of what can be done to leave the ocean and our fisheries in better condition for the next generation. Hopefully that is a goal we can all agree to.

Horseshoe Crab
Limulus polyphemus

Uses:
*** Bait for conch and eel fisheries**
*** Provides important food source for migrating shorebirds, finfish, and sea turtles**
*** Supports production of LAL, which is used to detect human pathogens in patients, drugs, and intravenous devices**

Interesting Facts:
*** Once called "horsefoot crabs" because of their semblance to a horse's hoof**
*** Have existed for up to 400 million years**
*** Are more closely related to spiders than crabs**
*** Adult females can extrude up to 20,000 eggs per spawning episode**
*** Can increase size by as much as 25% after each molt**

Age at Maturity/Life Span:
9 - 12 years/17 - 20 years

Stock Status: Unknown

Species Profile: Horseshoe Crab
Horseshoe Crab Populations Show Positive Response to Current Management Measures

Introduction
Horseshoe crabs are at the epicenter of one of the most interesting marine resource management issues along the Atlantic coast. They play a vital ecological role in the migration of shorebirds from South America to the Arctic, as well as providing bait for commercial American eel and conch fisheries along the Atlantic coast of the United States. Additionally, their unique blood is used by the biomedical industry to produce Limulus Amoebocyte Lysate (LAL), an important tool for detecting contaminated medical devices and drugs. The challenge of fisheries managers is to ensure that horseshoe crabs are managed to meet all these diverse needs, while conserving the resource for the future.

Life History
Horseshoe crab distribution extends along the Atlantic coast from northern Maine to the Yucatan Peninsula and the Gulf of Mexico. The Delaware Bay supports the largest spawning population in the world. Adults either remain in estuaries or migrate to the continental shelf during the winter months. Migrations resume in the spring when the horseshoe crabs move to beach areas to spawn. Juveniles hatch from the beach environment and spend the first two years in nearshore areas.

Spawning usually coincides with the high tide during the full and new moon. Breeding activity is consistently higher during the full moon than the new moon and is also greater during the night. Adults prefer sandy beach areas within bays and coves that are protected from surf. Eggs are laid in clusters or nest sites along the beach with females laying approximately 88,000 eggs per year in different egg clusters.

The eggs play an important ecological role in the food web for migrating shorebirds. The Delaware Bay Estuary is the largest staging area for shorebirds in the Atlantic Flyway and an estimated 425,000 to one million migratory shorebirds converge on the Delaware Bay to feed and rebuild energy reserves prior to completing their northward migration.

Juvenile and adult horseshoe crabs feed mainly on mollusks, although they also prey on a variety of benthic organisms and vascular plants. The horseshoe crab must molt or shed its chitinous exoskeleton to grow and can increase size by up to 25 percent after each molt. Molting occurs several times during the first two to three years of a horseshoe crab's life. As it grows larger, more time occurs between molts. It usually takes 17 molts to reach sexual maturity (9 – 12 years).

Photo courtesy of Dr. Rob Robinson, British Trust for Ornithology

Stock Status
The status of the stock is unknown largely due to the lack of long-term

data sets for commercial landings and stock abundance. However, data from multiple lines of evidence indicate that the Delaware Bay horseshoe crab population is experiencing positive population growth. The Virginia Tech trawl survey shows increases in immature and mature males and females. The Delaware Bay spawning survey shows stable to increasing adult females and increasing adult males. A 2003 – 2005 tagging study conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service showed increases in juveniles seven to eight years of age during that time. The table below provides conclusions about population trends per region based on the 2004 peer reviewed benchmark stock assessment for horseshoe crab.

Table 1. Regional Trends in Horseshoe Abundance
Source: ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment Report, 2004

Region	Sub-region	Time series duration of longest dataset	Conclusion about population change
Southeast	NA	1995-2003	Stable
Delaware Bay	NA	1988-2003	Declined
New York	W. Long Island Sound, various bays	1987-2003	Stable or increased
	E. Long Island Sound, Peconic Bay	1980-2003	Declined from peak levels in early to mid-1990s, but consistent with mid-1980s levels
New England	Cape Cod	1978-2002	Declined or stable
	Narragansett Bay	1975-2002	Declined or stable

The Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee is concerned with harvest increases in regions outside of Delaware Bay (i.e. areas of Massachusetts and New York), which are coincident with harvest reductions within Delaware Bay. An overarching conclusion of recent coastwide assessments has been that management should be regional or embayment specific. It is now apparent that current harvest of the Delaware Bay population is consistent with population growth. However, it is unclear whether populations in the outlying regions can sustain increased harvest. New York and Massachusetts have made changes to their regulations for the 2008 fishing season to address recent increased harvest in their respective waters.

Commercial Fisheries & Biomedical Harvest

From the 1850s to the 1920s, between 1.5 and four million horseshoe crabs were harvested annually for fertilizer and livestock feed. By the 1960s, only 42,000 horseshoe crabs were reported to be harvested annually.

Today, horseshoe crabs are harvested primarily as bait for use in traps designed to catch American eel and conch. Preliminary coastwide commercial landings for bait in 2007 are approximately 811,000 horseshoe crabs, over a threefold reduction in landings since 1998 (see Figure 1 on next page). The reduction is partly due to regulation and partly because of decreased demand. Commercial fishermen have adopted new gear such as bait bags and cups allowing them to catch the same amount of eel and conch while using as little as a tenth of the bait.

Horseshoe crabs are also collected by the biomedical industry to support the production of LAL, a clotting agent that aids in the detection of human pathogens in patients, drugs, and intravenous devices. No other procedure has the same accuracy as the LAL test. The current estimate of medical usage is around 500,000 horseshoe crabs per year on the Atlantic coast. While crabs are bled and released live generally within 48 hours of capture, up to 15 percent do not survive the procedure.

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Cooperative Delaware Bay Egg Survey Completes 4th Year

Horseshoe crab eggs provide a crucial link between the crabs and several shorebird species, including the red knot, that migrate through Delaware Bay each spring. The eggs are like little energy pellets that red knots gorge on to gain enough weight for their flight to the Arctic. New Jersey and Delaware are committed to ensuring there are sufficient eggs available to migratory shorebirds to fuel their journey. They have engaged on a cooperative effort over the past four years to estimate the density of eggs available to shorebirds.

The survey is still in its infancy and clear trends are not yet apparent. But, several findings are coming to light. Egg densities across and within beaches are highly variable and can be affected by the tides, weather, and shorebird density. Observed egg densities between Delaware and New Jersey are very different with Delaware having an order of magnitude higher. These differences might be due, in part, to methodological differences. Regardless of what caused the disparity, this underscores the complexity of understanding ecological processes in such a dynamic environment.

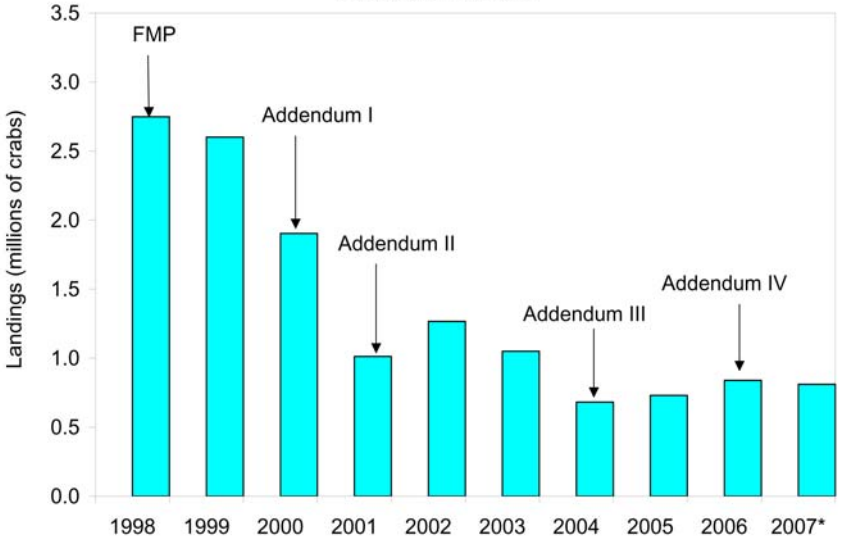
Unfortunately, it appears egg availability to shorebirds in 2008, the survey's fourth year, was low. The problem wasn't lack of crabs (there were plenty in the water), it was weather. A large storm during Mother's Day weekend delayed much of the spawning that starts in early May. The Horseshoe Crab Management Board will continue to monitor this survey as more years of data are collected. This survey is likely to become a key piece of managing horseshoe crabs for the needs of migratory shorebirds. Stay tuned!

Species Profile: Horseshoe Crab (continued from page 5)

Atlantic Coastal Management

In 1998, the Commission approved the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Horseshoe Crabs. The goal of the FMP is to conserve and protect the horseshoe crab resource to maintain sustainable levels of spawning stock biomass to ensure its continued role in the ecology of coastal ecosystems, while providing for continued use over time. Addendum I to the FMP, approved in February 2000, established individual state caps on horseshoe crab bait landings and recommended a harvest area closure in federal waters off of Delaware. On March 7, 2001, NOAA Fisheries Service established the Carl N. Shuster Jr. Horseshoe Crab Reserve, encompassing nearly 1,500 square miles of federal waters off the mouth of Delaware Bay that are closed to horseshoe crab harvest.

Figure 1. Horseshoe Crab Bait Landings
Source, ASMFC 2008



In March 2004, the Board approved Addendum III in response to recommendations made by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Shorebird Technical Committee. The addendum advanced the conservation of horseshoe crab and migratory shorebird populations in and around the Delaware Bay through additional horseshoe crab harvest restrictions. Addendum IV, approved in May 2006, further restricts bait harvest in the Mid-Atlantic region. It is designed to maximize egg availability to migratory shorebirds in the Delaware Bay by prohibiting harvest of horseshoe crab prior to and during the peak spawning season for the crabs as well as the peak feeding period for shorebirds. In anticipation of the expiration of Addendum IV in the fall of 2008, the Board is considering options in Addendum V that would extend the Addendum IV provisions for another year (see page 2 of this issue for a list of scheduled hearings). The Board's final decision on Addendum V is scheduled for August. For updates or more information, please visit the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org.

ASMFC Explores Fish Passage Issues (continued from page 1)

Workshop recommendations include:

- Develop a policy for passage efficiency for diadromous fishes in cooperation with USFWS and NOAA
- Help design and implement monitoring protocols to measure fish passage success
- Support fish passage projects as they come up for public comment
- Provide training (in partnership with USFWS, NMFS, etc.) on FERC re-licensing issues and process, dam removal, instream flow assessments, conflict resolution, project negotiation techniques, etc.
- Develop a tool to evaluate positive and negative consequences of providing fish passage so that managers can make appropriate decisions and lobby effectively for a project
- Develop an East Coast Fish Passage Plan, whereby each state partner could work with federal agencies to develop a roadmap of fish passage priorities in each state, and develop criteria to rank which sites are highest priority for involvement

Next Steps for Commission Involvement

On May 8, 2008, the full list of workshop recommendations were brought to the ISFMP Policy Board for its consideration. The Policy Board requested that staff prioritize the list of recommendations from the workshop, and present them at the Commission's next meeting in August 2008.

Later this summer, workshop proceedings, including abstracts, full presentations, and a complete list of recommendations, will be posted to the Commission's website under Breaking News (http://www.asmfc.org/breakingNews.htm). For more information, please contact Jessie Thomas, Habitat Coordinator, at JThomas@asmfc.org, or call (202) 289-6400.

ASMFC Summer Meeting
August 19 - 21, 2008

Crowne Plaza Hotel Old Town
901 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia
(703) 683-6000

Preliminary Schedule

Please note: The preliminary agenda is subject to change. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of meetings. Interested parties should anticipate meetings starting earlier or later than indicated herein. The detailed final agenda will be posted on the Commission website (http://www.asmfc.org/summer08Mtg.htm) two weeks prior to the meeting.

Tuesday, August 19, 2008

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM	American Lobster Management Board
10:15 AM - 11:30 AM	Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board
12:45 PM - 1:45 PM	Weakfish Management Board
2:00 PM - 4:30 PM	Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board
4:45 PM – 5:45 PM	Atlantic Herring Section

Wednesday, August 20 , 2008

8:00 AM - 9:30 AM	American Eel Management Board
9:45 AM - 11:15 AM	Atlantic Menhaden Management Board
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	ISFMP Policy Board (continued)
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	ISFMP Policy Board (continued)

Thursday, August 21, 2008

8:00 AM- 9:30 AM	Shad and River Herring Management Board
9:45 AM - 12:45 PM	Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Sharks Management Board
12:45 PM	Buffet Lunch for Commissioners and Proxies
1:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Horseshoe Crab Management Board
3:45 PM - 4:15 PM	ISFMP Policy Board
4:15 PM - 4:30 PM	Business Session

On The Legislative Front: *The Massachusetts Ocean Act*

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed the nation's first comprehensive ocean management program on May 28, 2008, when Governor Deval Patrick signed state bill S 2699, The Massachusetts Ocean Act, into law.

The Act requires the state's Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs to develop, oversee, and implement a comprehensive ocean management plan to coordinate conflicting uses of ocean and coastal waters—ranging from fishing to scientific research to offshore natural gas terminals—by the end of 2009.

Under the new law, the Secretary will establish:

- An ocean advisory commission with 17 members from governmental, environmental, energy, and commercial fishing groups,
- A nine-member ocean science advisory council to assist development of the plan, and
- An Ocean Resources and Waterways Trust Fund, which will receive and manage fees for the goals and implementation of the plan.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Commissioners:

Eric Smith -- This July, with his retirement from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Eric Smith will be stepping down as the state's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Eric held this position since 2003, during which time he served as chair and vice-chair on numerous committees, including the Atlantic Herring Section, Management Boards for Sturgeon and Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks, and the ACCSP Coordinating Council. During his chairmanships, he oversaw development and implementation of Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Herring, and initiated development of the Coastal Sharks FMP (to be approved this August). From 1992 - 2003, he served as proxy to then Administrative Commissioner Ernie Beckwith. Prior to that, he was an active member of the Management and Science Committee (MSC), serving on the MSC for 11 years. In the mid-1990s, he was one of a small working group that wrote the majority of the ISFMP Charter, formally establishing the standards and procedures for the Commission's interstate fisheries management program. We wish Eric the very best!

Staff:

Bess Gulliver -- In June Bess Gulliver joined the Commission staff as Assistant to the Executive Director. Bess has a Bachelor of Arts from George Washington University, with an emphasis in international affairs and Middle Eastern studies. Prior to coming to the Commission, Bess was a Governmental Affairs Specialist with the Emergency Committee for American Trade. She also worked as Legislative Correspondent/Staff Assistant for Senator Lincoln Chafee. Welcome aboard, Bess!

William Most -- For the past 22 months, William was a critical nexus between the Executive Director, Commissioners, Hill staff, and ASMFC stakeholders and partners, significantly improving coordination and communication, and enhancing staff efficiency. Respected by both ASMFC leadership and staff for his intelligence, dependability, strong work ethic, and his positive, even tempered manner, Will earned the Commission's Employee of the Quarter for the first quarter of 2008. His efforts included strategic planning for the Commission's 2009 - 2013 Strategic Plan, and work on appropriations and legislative issues. In June William left the Commission to pursue a law degree from George Washington Law School. We wish William the very best in his future endeavors!

Science Highlight: *Protected Species News*

MMPA Proposals Sought -- The U.S. Marine Mammal Commission is seeking proposals for research and related activities that will further the conservation and management goals of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Proposals should be tailored to address either of two focused research topics: (1) conservation of critically endangered marine mammal species or populations and (2) indirect effects of fisheries on marine mammals.

Photo courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Dept. of Commerce

Potential applicants are directed to the Marine Mammal Commission website, http://www.mmc.gov, for more detailed information on the focused research topics and the proposal process. Applicants without Internet access may obtain copies of the request for proposals by contacting Ms. Mina Innes, Scientific Program Officer, Marine Mammal Commission, 4340 East-West Highway, Room 700, Bethesda MD 20814 USA; phone: (301) 504-0087, email: minnes@mmc.gov. **The deadline for submitting proposals is July 15, 2008.**

Photo courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Dept. of Commerce

Modifications to Atlantic Large Whale Regulations Proposed -- NOAA's Fisheries Service published a proposed rule to amend the regulations implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP). The proposed rule, out for public comment until July 7, 2008, would provide an additional six months (through April 5, 2009) for trap/pot fishermen along the Atlantic coast to comply with the broad-based sinking groundline requirement. NOAA believes that the extension will occur during months when trap/pot fisheries are less active, so less gear is being used. Further, whales are not aggregating at this time in areas where the majority of pot/trap gear is set. Additionally, the proposed rule would delete the "neutrally buoyant line" term and definition from the ALWTRP regulations, so that only the "sinking line" term and definition would remain. To obtain a complete copy of the proposed rule and Regulatory Impact Review, please contact Holly Morin (978-281-9300 ext. 6516 or Holly.Morin@noaa.gov) or visit the ALWTRP web page (www.nero.nmfs.gov/whaletrp/).

Public Comment Sought on Draft Recovery Plan for Northwest Atlantic Loggerhead Sea Turtle Population -- NOAA's Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are seeking public input on the draft revised recovery plan for the northwest Atlantic population of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*). The draft revised plan reviews and discusses the species ecology, population status and trends, and identifies threats to the loggerhead turtle in the northwest Atlantic. It lays out a recovery strategy to address the threats, based on the best available science, and includes recovery goals and criteria. In addition, the plan identifies substantive actions needed to address the threats to the species and achieve recovery.

Agencies will accept public comments on the draft plan until close of business on **July 29, 2008**. Comments can be sent by any one of the following methods: (1) Email to seaturtle@fws.gov (Include in the subject line "Comments on the NW Atlantic Loggerhead Recovery Plan." Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.); (2) Mail to NMFS National Sea Turtle Coordinator, Attn: Draft Loggerhead Recovery Plan, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13657, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or USFWS National Sea Turtle Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 6620 Southpoint Drive South, Suite 310, Jacksonville, FL 32216; or (3) FAX to (301) 713-0376, Attn: NMFS National Sea Turtle Coordinator.

Photo courtesy of NOAA's Estuarine Research Reserve Collection

The plan is available online at http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/SeaTurtles/loggerhead-recovery/development-schedule.htm or http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/recovery/plans.htm.

ACCSP Source of Data for Fisheries of the U.S.

Comprehensive 2007 Data Available

ACCSP Provides Partner Data for Fisheries of the U.S.

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has completed gathering preliminary data from its Northeast and Mid-Atlantic partners for 2007. These data will be used by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in the 2007 publication of Fisheries of the United States (FUS). FUS is a publication put out by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) each year to provide important fisheries information to industry and government for management purposes.

ACCSP provided data for ten partners from Virginia to Maine. The collaborative process began in November 2007 when the ACCSP first met with staff from NMFS and state partners to determine available data and establish timelines. Primary data submission occurred in March 2008. In order to create a comprehensive data set, the ACCSP utilized trip-level data from its Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), a real-time web-based reporting tool for commercial landings on the Atlantic coast. These data were supplemented with data sent from partners, including NMFS.

Data sets were reviewed by state and federal partners to ensure accuracy and to provide partners with an opportunity to approve final statistics. This process allowed both the ACCSP and its partners to audit data, identify data glitches, and improve processing procedures. The collaborative approach to this project allowed partners to be more involved in the data verification process, which lead to higher levels of confidence in both the data and the process.

The arrangement, which is different from years past because states have previously submitted their own data directly to NMFS, is mutually beneficial to ACCSP and NMFS. NMFS does not have to spend vital staff time merging and combining data sets from different sources for ten Atlantic coast states, and ACCSP obtained data earlier than in previous years and strengthened relations with its partners. It is expected that ACCSP will continue to provide FUS data on behalf of its Northeast and Mid-Atlantic partner states in years to come.

ACCSP recognizes that compiling, merging, and verifying all these data would not have been possible without the hard work and cooperation of its partners. ACCSP staff is most grateful to all those involved in the process and is looking forward to working with them again in the future on this and other endeavors. It is through collaborative efforts such as this that datasets for the fisheries of the Atlantic coast will continue to expand in scope and achieve higher degrees of validity and efficacy.

Comprehensive 2007 Data Available

Comprehensive datasets for 2007 are currently available through the ACCSP website. Data for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic partners have been verified through the FUS process. ACCSP is currently in the process of verifying the 2007 data for its Southeast partners. Data updates will be performed in the future, as necessary.

For more information on Fisheries of the U.S. please visit http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/publications.html.

About the ACCSP

The 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 coast wide, including the Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the DC Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

For more information, please visit www.accsp.org or call (202) 216-5690.

ACCSP Upcoming Meeting

7/29 & 30:

ACCSP Operations Committee, Best Western Coastline Inn and Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington, North Carolina.

NOAA Proposes Rule to Require Saltwater Angler Registration

NOAA's Fisheries Service is seeking comment on a proposed rule that requires anglers and spearfishers who fish recreationally in federal ocean waters to be registered before fishing in 2009. The rule would also require registration by those who may catch anadromous species anywhere, including striped bass, salmon, and shad that spawn in rivers and streams and spend their adult lives in estuaries and the ocean.

The proposed rule satisfies the National Academy of Science National Research Council (NRC) recommendations to establish a national database of saltwater anglers, and meets the requirements under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The proposed rule is a part of a larger initiative of NOAA's Fisheries Service to improve the quality and accuracy of data on marine recreational fishing and catches. The registry will also help measure the economic effects of recreational fishing on the national and local economies.

NOAA may exempt anglers from registration if they already have a state-issued saltwater fishing license or registration, and the state provides sufficiently complete information to place in the national registry. In certain instances, anglers in states participating in regional surveys of marine recreational fishing may also be exempted. The new rule allows states to apply for exemptions. States on the West Coast (including Alaska), the Gulf Coast, and the South Atlantic offer saltwater fishing licenses. Hawaii and the states from New Jersey to Maine do not.

Fishermen would be required to be registered annually and NOAA will not charge a registration fee in the first two years. Beginning in 2011, the annual fee will be an estimated $15 to $25 per angler. Anglers under the age of 16 would be exempt from registering and fees would be waived for indigenous people, such as members of federally recognized tribes. NOAA's Fisheries Service recognizes that many indigenous people fish for food as part of ancient cultural traditions. Anglers who fish only on licensed party, charter, or guide

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2008 Northeast Regional Tagging Symposium Planned for Mid-October

The 2008 Northeast Regional Tagging Symposium is scheduled to be held at the University of New Hampshire on Friday, October 17, 2008. The Symposium will provide a public forum to discuss the incorporation of fish tagging data into fishery stock assessments and management. Northeast regional tagging programs of several species will be highlighted, including Atlantic cod, haddock, yellowtail flounder, striped bass, and tuna; and one keynote speaker will provide perspectives from the West Coast.

The meeting will be geared to a multi-stakeholder audience of fishermen, scientists, fishery managers, students, and others with an interest in tagging and population structure and dynamics. Keynote speakers will include:

- Dr. David Welch, President, Kintama Research Corp., Nanaimo, British Columbia. Dr. Welch will discuss the "Pacific Ocean Shelf Tracking Array" and the observation and management of Pacific salmon and sturgeon (www.postcoml.org)
- Dr. Molly Lutcavage, Director, Large Pelagics Research Lab, University of New Hampshire. Dr. Lutcavage will discuss the latest in bluefin tuna tagging research and connecting data to management (www.tunalab.unh.edu).

Registration for the Workshop is now open and can be made online at www.fishtagging.org. (Please note: Commercial fishing industry members may request a waiver of the registration fee; please contact Ken LaValley at ken.lavalley@unh.edu.) The Workshop Organizing Committee will be accepting abstracts for the poster session through October 3rd. If you would like to participate in this session please submit a brief (500 words or less) abstract to Ken LaValley, New Hampshire Sea Grant, at ken.lavalley@unh.edu.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
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NOAA Proposes Rule to Require Saltwater Angler Registration
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boats would also be exempt, since these vessels are surveyed separately from the angler surveys. Also, persons who hold commercial fishing licenses or permits, and are legally fishing under them, will be exempt from the registration requirement. Registrations will include an angler's name, address, telephone number, and the regions where fishing is conducted. This information will not be made public; it will be used only by NOAA to conduct surveys.

The NRC advised NOAA's Fisheries Service in 2006 to redesign its surveys of recreational fishermen for more accuracy, precision, and transparency. The NRC's independent scientific review resulted in more than 200 recommendations for improving marine recreational surveys, including the recommendation to establish a national database of saltwater anglers. This recommendation became law in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the primary fisheries law for U.S. ocean waters, which was reauthorized in 2007. Please see http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/mrip for additional information on this effort, the Marine Recreational Information Program.

For the last 28 years, NOAA's Fisheries Service has conducted recreational fishing surveys through random telephone interviews with residents living in coastal counties. NOAA and its regional and state partners conduct an extensive program of dockside interviews of anglers to obtain data on their catch. The national saltwater registry will enable surveyors to interview only those people who fish, and will reach all anglers, not only those who live near the coast.

To read the proposed rule, go to http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov. Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until **August 11, 2008.** They can be mailed to John Boreman Director, Office of Science and Technology, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (Attn.: Gordon Colvin). Comments can also be submitted electronically at http://www.regulations.gov.