



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1444 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

August 2002 Meeting Week August 26 - 29, 2002

Swissotel Washington
The Watergate
2650 Virginia Avenue, NW
Washington, DC
(202)965-2300

Final Schedule

Monday, August 26, 2002

9:00 AM - 1:00 PM American Lobster Trap Tag Transferability Workshop

Noon - 6:00 PM Habitat Committee

- Review & approve Beach Nourishment Paper
- Report from the SAV Subcommittee on SAV State Reports
- Review Molluscan Shell Substrate Paper
- Review SAV brochure

2:00 PM - 6:00 PM American Lobster Management Board

- Advisory Panel Report
- Update on status of New York and Massachusetts Compliance
- *De minimis* discussion/motion to table
- Review Draft Technical Addendum 1 to Addendum III
- Discuss Most Restrictive Rule Issue Paper
- Review & discuss Draft Amendment 4 status
- Reports of the Law Enforcement Committee & Technical Committee
- Discuss issues for inclusion in Addendum IV
- Discuss LCMT concerns
- NMFS status update/discussion of tag issuance concerns
- Discuss Addendum III gauge size and marketing issues
- Election of Vice-Chair

Tuesday, August 27, 2002

8:00 AM - 1:00 PM Endangered Species Act Workshop "Working Towards Greater State/Federal Cooperative Efforts in Marine Endangered Species Management"

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Magnuson Subcommittee

- Discuss reauthorization of Magnuson-Stevens Act

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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 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.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Susan Shipman (GA), Chair
John I. Nelson (NH), Vice-Chair
John V. O'Shea, Executive Director
Robert E. Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program
Dr. Lisa L. Kline, Director of Research & Statistics
Laura C. Leach, Director of Finance & Administration

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Upcoming Meetings

8/6 (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM):

ASMFC Shad Technical Committee, Holiday Inn BWI, 890 Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, Maryland; (800)810-0271.

8/6 - 8:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Society Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

8/18 - 22:

132nd American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting, Turning the Tide: Forging Partnerships to Enhance Fisheries, Baltimore, Maryland.

8/26 - 29:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Watergate Swissotel, 2650 Virginia Avenue, N.W., Washington DC. (see pages 1 & 6 for the final agenda).

8/31 - 9/1:

ASMFC Management & Science Committee/Habitat Committee Aquaculture Subcommittee, Holiday Inn BWI, 890 Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, Maryland; (800) 810-0271.

10 - 12:

New England Fishery Management Council, Providence Biltmore, Providence, Rhode Island.

9/16 - 20:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, South Carolina; (800)334-6660.

10/1 - 3:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn Select, Claymont, Delaware.

11/5 - 7:

New England Fishery Management Council, Tavern on the Harbor, Gloucester, Massachusetts.

11/16- 21:

ASMFC 61th Annual Meeting, Williamsburg, Virginia.

12/2 - 6:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Grand New Bern, 100 Middle Street, New Bern, North Carolina; (800)325-3535.

While we usually think of summer as the time for relaxation and vacations, I thought it would be of interest to report on some of the activities we here at the Commission have been working on. We are particularly excited about the three workshops scheduled for the August Meeting Week, later this month, in Washington, DC, at the Watergate Swissotel.

On August 26, the Commission will be hosting a workshop on transferable trap programs for lobster management. The workshop is intended to educate participants on trap transferability as a lobster resource management tool. Presentations will focus on potential conservation benefits, enforcement, administration, capitalization, and equity issues. Existing transferable programs, as well as those that might be proposed in the future to the Commission for use in lobster conservation management areas, will be described and discussed.

Then, on August 27, we will be conducting a workshop on State/Federal Cooperative Efforts in Marine Endangered Species Management. The goal of this workshop is to bring together state and federal managers to review current programs for endangered species management under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, and look for ways to improve that process. This initiative responds directly to problems coastal managers face in dealing with right whale conservation plans, as well as sea turtle interactions with various coastal fisheries.

The next day, we have lined up Dr. James Kirkley from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science to lead a two-hour seminar for Commissioners, providing a broad overview of the role of economic data in the fisheries management process. He intends to explain the various types of economic analyses available for use by fisheries managers, and walk us through two case studies involving striped bass and American lobster. This program continues an initiative started last year to bring in various experts to help Commissioners better understand the complex scientific and economic data being provided in Commission decision documents.

Also in preparation for the August Meeting Week, Commissioners and staff have held a total of nine public hearings from Massachusetts to North Carolina on the Draft Interstate Plan for Spiny Dogfish. Public comments received through the hearing process, as well as written correspondence will be presented to the Management Board on August 29. The Board will use that information to de-

cide on what measures to include in the second draft of the plan.

These activities, along with the meetings of the various management boards and committees also scheduled for Meeting Week, highlight an important Commission function -- bringing people together to look for solutions to problems. In some cases, like a technical committee, the purpose is to review scientific data and provide advice to Commissioners. In other instances, the purpose is to make tough decisions regarding harvest levels and allocations. Our public hearings provide an opportunity to explain proposed management actions and to hear directly from interested stakeholders. In the case of our workshops, the purpose is to help participants make better use of the complex data presented from plan development teams and technical advisors.

It strikes me that while we call the process fisheries management, we are really talking about people management. We are attempting to control human interaction with fisheries resources and habitat. These are often emotionally and economically charged issues; frequently complex and all too often controversial. Understandably, solutions are not always apparent, and sometimes even painful. This is especially true when the issue relates to allocation, deciding who gets what size of the so called fish pie. Hopefully, the tools of knowledge, understanding, and communication can help us work through these issues. By our collective knowledge of fisheries resources, our understanding of the dependence of the various stakeholders for the resource, and our ability to communicate and compromise with each other we should be able to deal with these issues.

One of the principles of the Commission and the purpose for its founding was that the member states could achieve more collectively, than if they attempted to act independently with regard to the management of shared fisheries resources. We here at the Commission strongly believe that by helping to improve in the areas of knowledge, understanding, and communication, we are facilitating better decision making and helping to support the Commission's key mission of cooperation in marine resource management. We hope you agree and you will join us in making the collective whole stronger through your participation in the Commission's programs and activities.



ASMFC Releases Draft Amendment 1 to the Northern Shrimp FMP for Public Comment: State Hearings Scheduled for ME, NH & MA

The New England States of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts have scheduled the dates and times of their public meetings in order to gather public comment and input on the recently released Public Hearing Draft of Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Northern Shrimp. Following are the details of the scheduled meetings.

September 3, 2002; 7:00 PM

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
Annisquam River Marine Fisheries Station
30 Emerson Avenue
Gloucester, MA 01930
Contact: Paul Diodati at (617)626-1528

September 4, 2002; 7:00 PM

New Hampshire Fish & Game
Urban Forestry Center
45 Elwyn Road
Portsmouth, NH 03801
Contact: Clare McBane at (603)868-1095

September 5, 2002; 7:00 PM

Maine Department of Marine Resources
Holiday Inn by the Bay
Kennebec-Lincoln Room
88 Spring Street
Portland, ME 04101
Contact: George Lapointe at (207)624-6553

September 6, 2002; 7:00 PM

Maine Department of Marine Resources
Samoset Resort
Schooner Room
Warrenton Avenue
Rockport, ME 04856
Contact: George Lapointe at (207)624-6553

“The Public Hearing Draft of Amendment 1 represents over two years of hard work by the North Shrimp Section, Advisory Panel and Plan Development Team,” stated Paul Diodati, Section Chair from Massachusetts. “The Public Hearing Draft offers the public with an extensive suite of management options upon which to comment on. These options are intended to provide greater flexibility in managing the northern shrimp fishery and assessing the status of the stock.”

The Amendment, when fully implemented, is designed to prevent a population collapse due to overfishing, minimize the risk of recruitment failure, and maintain a healthy and productive northern shrimp resource and fishery. The Draft Amendment provides numerous options for the long-term management of the northern shrimp fishery. The primary issues addressed in the Draft Amendment include the establishment of management targets and additional commercial fishery management measures. The document also provides a mechanism for monitoring the northern shrimp population and maintaining an efficient management regime and structure that is flexible and encourages public involvement in the management process.

The northern shrimp fishery is jointly regulated by the States of Maine and New Hampshire, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Northern Shrimp Section. The cooperative management program has been in place since 1972 and is currently managed under the 1986 FMP. The tentative schedule is for the Northern Shrimp Section to review the comments received from this public hearing process and approve the final document in the fall of 2002. Implementation of Amendment 1 will take place in 2003 or 2004, depending on the management program approved by the Section.

Copies of the Public Hearing Draft and its summary document can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400 or via the Commission’s website at www.asmfc.org. Public comment on the document will be accepted until **September 23, 2002** and should be forwarded to Michael Lewis, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at 1444 Eye Street, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC, 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax); or at mlewis@asmfc.org. For more information, please contact Mike Lewis at (202) 289-6400.

ASMFC Establishes Guidelines & Protocols for Technical Support Groups

During the Commission's Spring Meeting Week in May, the Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board adopted a Guidance Document and Orientation Manual for Commission Technical Support Groups. The purpose of these documents is to improve the functioning of technical committees and other technical support activities for the management boards under the ISFMP. The information contained in these documents can be categorized under four broad topics -- training, workload, communication and policy.

Roles & Responsibilities Clarified

Guidance is provided to assist committee members in understanding their roles and responsibilities, including expectations and time commitments. The report specifically states that although members have been appointed to the technical committee by their respective agencies, they are responsible to use the best science available in an objective manner, and not represent the policies and/or politics of their agency. Clarification of officer duties, committee representation, and committee size are also provided.

Recommendations by Consensus

The Policy Board adopted a process for technical support groups to develop recommendations through consensus to insure that the best scientific advice possible is provided to management boards. The standard for reaching consensus is that all committee members can "live with" the proposed recommendation. The Commission and its management boards do not view "voting" as an appropriate or constructive vehicle for technical support group deliberations. It tends to create divisiveness and conflict within the committee. The strongest committee recommendations are those that represent the collective voice of the committee. If the committee cannot reach full consensus, the committee chair and vice-chair should attempt to resolve substantive differences of opinion. If all substantive differences of opinion cannot be resolved, minority opinions should be documented in order to provide the management board with all possible recommendations. All recommendations and minority opinions must include specific technical and/or scientific justification to support the opposing viewpoints. Minority

opinions should focus on major non-editorial issues.

Guidelines for Training Seminars & Workshops

Specific guidance is provided to the Commission on developing and conducting technical training seminars and materials for all technical committee members. The Commission has conducted stock assessment training workshops in the past and is encouraged to continue to conduct these and other relevant workshops. These workshops are intended to improve familiarity with stock assessment techniques so that committees can have more effective discussions and review of technical and assessment information.

The Commission was also encouraged to conduct meetings management and consensus building training seminars for chairs and vice-chairs of all technical support groups, and others as appropriate. This will improve the chair's and vice-chair's ability to conduct and facilitate efficient meetings.

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ASMFC to Conduct Lobster Transferability Workshop August 26, 2002; 9AM - 1PM

In August 2002, the Commission will be hosting a workshop on transferable trap programs for lobster management. The workshop will be held in Washington, D.C. at the Watergate Swisshotel.

This workshop stems from an Advisory Panel recommendation to the American Lobster Management Board and is intended to educate participants on the topic of trap

transferability as a lobster resource management tool. Specifically, the workshop will include presentations focused on potential conservation benefits, enforcement, administration, capitalization and equity issues. Attention will be given to existing national and international transferability programs, as well as those that may be proposed to the Commission for use in lobster conservation management areas in the future. A facilitated discussion will follow the presentations

to address concerns and answer important questions relative to implementation of transferable fishing rights programs under the current lobster management regime.

For more information, please contact Heather Stirratt, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 ext. 301 or <hstirratt@asmfc.org>.

ASMFC August 2002 Meeting Week Final Agenda (continued from page 1)

Tuesday, August 27, 2002 (continued)

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM Shad and River Herring Advisory Panel

- Technical Committee update
- Review & comment on Draft Addendum I
- Review & comment on state effort reduction plans
- Elect Vice-Chair

2:00 PM - 5:00 PM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Report of the Technical Committee on status of fishery, stock assessment review, and multispecies assessment update
- Report of the Advisory Panel
- Report of the Plan Review Team on state implementation plans and 2002 FMP Review

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Commissioner's Economic Seminar

10:00 AM - Noon Shad & River Herring Management Board

- Review reports of the Technical Committee and Advisory Panel
- Review & approve PRT Report for 2001, 2001 FMP Review, state effort reduction plans, and Addendum I
- Select peer review process for 2003 stock assessment
- Review habitat reports
- Elect Vice-Chair

10:00 AM - 1:00 PM Committee on Economics and Social Sciences

- Brief history of CESS
- Discuss & approve CESS Guidelines and Procedures
- Discuss Commissioner's Economic Seminar and plan for November Social Seminar
- Discuss 2003 CESS activities
- Discuss policy issues paper and preliminary work
- Update on Striped Bass Bioeconomic Modeling Project
- Review recent technical committee nominations
- Review CESS listserv purpose and participants
- Discuss MAFAC Task Force Report
- Elect Chair & Vice-Chair

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM Weakfish Management Board

- Review reports of the Technical Committee and Advisory Panel
- Review & approve Draft Amendment 4 for Public Hearing

Thursday, August 29, 2002

8:00 AM - Noon Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Shark Management Board

- Review reports of the Technical Committee and Law Enforcement Committee
- Review public comment on the Draft Interstate FMP for Spiny Dogfish
- Select management options for the Final FMP
- Update on scientific research/public display permits for sharks

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM ISFMP Policy Board

- Review Compliance Efficiency White paper and Decision Document
- Review noncompliance recommendations (if necessary)

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM Business Session (if necessary)

- Review recommendations for approval of FMPs or Amendments (if necessary)
- Review noncompliance recommendations (if necessary)

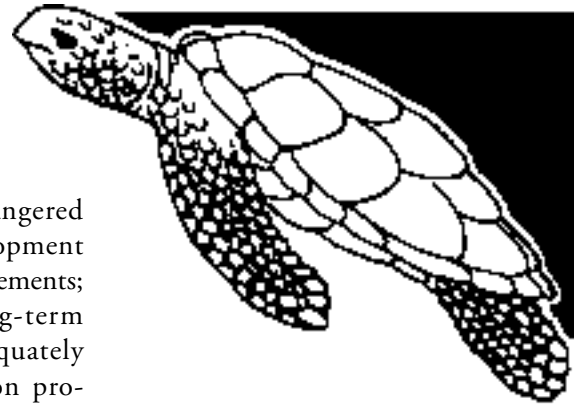
ASMFC ESA Workshop Seeks to Improve State/Federal Communication & Cooperation

On August 27, 2002, the Commission will bring together state and federal marine fishery and endangered species agency representatives along the Atlantic coast to review and discuss current programs for marine endangered species management under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The workshop entitled, "Working Towards Greater State/Federal Cooperative Efforts in Marine Endangered Species Management," will focus on the current program for developing and implementing state/federal Section 6 agreements under the ESA and how this program can be improved to better meet the needs of both state and federal partners. Suggested areas for improvement include increased state/federal coordination and communication on existing and new Section 6 agreements; increased coordination and communication between

state fishery and marine endangered species programs in the development and implementation of state agreements; and expanded short and long-term funding and resources to adequately conduct Section 6 conservation programs.

The workshop will be a combination of presentations and facilitated discussions. The focus of the presentations will be to provide enough background information so that the workshop participants share a common information base. The facilitated discussion will focus on three aspects: (1) defining success – what would a successful program look like; (2) identifying obstacles to achieving success from both the state and federal perspective; and (3) identifying the full range of options to address state and federal issues and concerns, overcome obstacles and achieve success. Through-



out the facilitated discussion, workshop participants will be asked to share their experiences in state/federal cooperative Section 6 agreements and endangered species management in general, with a particular emphasis on highlighting program successes. A summary report will be developed following the workshop for presentation to the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board in November 2002.

For more information, please contact Tina Berger, Public Affairs Specialist, at (202)289-6400 or <tberger@asmfc.org>.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Commissioners

John Connell -- From 1996 through the summer of 2002, John Connell served as New Jersey's Governor's Appointee to the Commission. Over that time, John became increasingly involved in Commission activities, from its fisheries management planning process to its advisory panel and public participation processes. John was an active member of nearly a dozen management boards and the committee of Legislators and Governors' Appointees. Noteworthy, he was also one of only two LGAs nominated to serve as the Chair of a species management board, namely the Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Shark Management Board. John also took a keen interest in working to improve the

Commission's advisory panel and public input process. As such, he was very involved in the December workgroup meeting geared to evaluate and seek ways to improve the Commission's advisory panel process. As a LGA, he believed that he was responsible for cultivating industry input within his state, and ensuring that this input was integrated into the Commission's decision-making processes. John's strong commitment and dedication to Atlantic coastal fisheries conservation and management will be missed.

Tom Fote -- This summer, Tom Fote joins the Commission once again as New Jersey's Governor's Appointee. Tom previously held this position from 1991 to 1996. Tom, a longtime advocate of the recreational fishing sector, brings to the Commission years of experience in At-

lantic coastal fisheries management issues. Welcome back, Tom.

Assemblyman Robert Smith -- This past June, Assemblyman Robert Smith was appointed to the Commission as New Jersey's legislative representative, replacing Assemblyman John Gibson. We welcome Assemblyman Smith and look forward to his participation in Commission activities.

Staff

Lydia Munger -- This July, Lydia joined the Commission as our newest FMP Coordinator. In August, Lydia will be taking over the coordination responsibilities for Ameri-

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State Commitment to Horseshoe Crab Conservation & Management Remains Strong

Four years ago, through the adoption of an interstate fishery management plan (FMP), Atlantic coastal states from Maine through Florida committed to the conservation and management of horseshoe crab populations coastwide. Over that time, the states and federal government have made significant strides in the management of this species. These strides have included the establishment of a federal horseshoe crab reserve, innovations in bait bags to reduce landings, and focused monitoring efforts to assist in the understanding of stock status. Following are some recent efforts by the states, federal government and academia to improve the conservation and management of this important resource.

Reductions in Landings

In 2000, through Addendum I to the FMP, the States of Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey committed to maintaining their conservative landings requirements for horseshoe crabs while other states agreed to reduce coastwide landings by 25 percent. Due to even further restrictions by many states, coastwide landings were reduced by nearly 40 percent in 2000. Now, recent data suggest that 2001 landings have dropped even further to nearly 66 percent of the reference period landings. The Horseshoe Crab Technical Com-

mittee indicates this decline in landings could be due to bait bags as well as a change in the market for horseshoe crabs.

On-going Research

In 2001, researchers with the Virginia Technical Institute conducted a pilot benthic trawl survey which extended from Cape May, New Jersey to Ocean City, Maryland. The intent of the pilot survey was to determine the feasibility of using a benthic trawl survey to accurately assess horseshoe crab populations.

The Management Board had a chance to review the results of the 2001 survey at its last meeting in May. At that meeting, the Board concurred with the opinions of the Horseshoe Crab Plan Review Team and Technical Committee that the pilot study was a success. Further, it believes that, over the long-term, the benthic survey can help provide information necessary to assessing horseshoe crab population estimates.

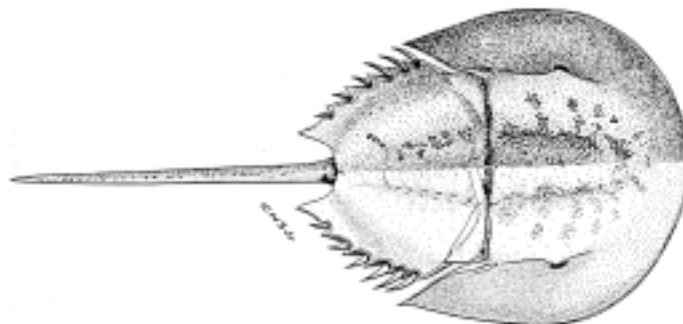
What is lacking, however, is the long-term funding to conduct this survey. In an effort to maintain the survey at least through 2002, several Atlantic states, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have dedicated funds and resources for its continuation. These funds also in-

clude monies to expand the geographic scope of the survey so that it extends from waters off of New York to waters off of Virginia. Congress is also in the process of looking into appropriating funds for this survey, as well as other important horseshoe crab research initiatives over the next five years.

The Shorebird Connection

It is clear that there is a strong relationship between migratory shorebirds along the East Coast and horseshoe crab populations of the Delaware Bay. To further our understanding of the extent of this relationship, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has established a Shorebird Technical Committee. The Committee, composed primarily of shorebird biologists from the states, federal government and non-governmental organizations, is currently producing a peer-reviewed report that synthesizes current literature and data on the status of shorebirds in Delaware Bay and their energetic dependency on horseshoe crab eggs. This document should be available by the spring of 2003.

For more information, please contact Carrie Selberg, Horseshoe Crab Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <cselberg@asmfc.org>.



ASMFC Establishes Guidelines & Protocols for Technical Support Groups (continued from page 5)

Technical Committee Meeting Week Pilot Program

During 2003, Commission staff will conduct a pilot study to assess the feasibility of conducting technical committee meeting weeks, much like current ASMFC meeting weeks are conducted. Following this pilot study, the Commission will evaluate potential improvements in the development and transfer of information, and savings in both time and money. In particular, overall benefits to the Commission, as well as to members of multiple committees, will be evaluated.

Species Stock Assessment Protocols

The Policy Board approved the development of specific protocols for scheduling species stock assessments and reviews. This will insure that appropriate survey and landings data are included in the assessment for a set period of time. For example, a species assessment may rely on the National Marine Fisheries Service winter trawl survey for abundance indices. The time period for the assessment of this species should be set for April/May to allow for complete inclusion of data from this survey. Following this deadline, no new data would be included in the assessment until such time as a new assessment is conducted. This will promote stability and timeliness in the decision-making process and reduce confusion.

The Policy Board approved the development of protocols that provide for longer planning windows and periods between stock evaluations. This will allow for fewer assessments and more stability in the management decision-making process. When stocks are determined to be in good condition, the stock evaluation period should be conducted every three to five years. Benchmark stock assessments should also be conducted every three to five years, with annual updates to evaluate stock trends in

the intervening years. For those stocks being rebuilt, stocks of great concern or species with short life-spans, benchmark assessments and stock evaluation periods could be set at shorter intervals of time. However, trend reports in the off years could also be used to determine the need for a new benchmark assessment. This will assist in managing the workload and allow species of lower priority to be assessed.

Stock Assessment Committee Established

The Policy Board also approved the appointment of a Stock Assessment Committee (SAC) to assist in setting realistic assessment priorities and timelines for conducting all Commission stock assessments, and providing guidance on broad assessment issues. The SAC will report directly to the ISFMP Policy Board. Species stock assessment subcommittees will be jointly appointed by the SAC and the technical committee, with membership consisting of a combination of SAC members and technical committee members.

The species stock assessment subcommittee will be responsible for conducting the species assessment and would report directly to the species technical committee. The SAC will provide overall guidance to the development of the species assessment, but will not be involved in peer review of the assessment. Annual assessments will be conducted by the species stock assessment subcommittee, with input on assessment modeling theory from the SAC upon written request. The SAC will provide input and advice to the species stock assessment subcommittees mainly during a benchmark assessment, when a model change and/or a major revision of the data is conducted.

The species management board will maintain the responsibility for deter-

mining that a stock assessment should be conducted. The SAC will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Provide input to the ISFMP Policy Board on species stock assessment priorities in relation to workload issues.
- Develop realistic timelines for conducting all priority species stock assessments, given current workloads.
- Appoint species stock assessment subcommittees to conduct specific species assessments.
- Provide overall guidance and input to species stock assessment subcommittees on proposed stock assessment methods based on available data. This input should be provided at the beginning of the assessment. It should be noted that the SAC is not responsible for overall peer review and/or approval of the species stock assessment. Approval is the responsibility of the species technical committee and management board.
- Provide broad review and input on stock assessment methods, biological reference points, sampling targets, and other assessment issues in order to address technical issues common to multiple Commission-managed species.

The Guidance Document and Orientation Manual are currently being published by the Commission and will be distributed to all Commission committees upon completion. For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa L. Kline, Director of Research & Statistics, at (202)289-6400 or lkline@asmfc.org.



Rhode Island Pioneers Web-based Reporting Part One: Surveying the Issues

Eight Rhode Island seafood dealers are assisting the state's Department of Environmental Management (DEM) to design and beta-test an innovative web-based reporting system that will better meet the data needs of the industry and resource managers.

As a partner in the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), the Rhode Island DEM is working to collect and manage data necessary to foster sustainable coastal fisheries. In keeping with the ACCSP's standard of trip-level commercial catch and effort reporting, the state began collecting trip-level catch and effort data from its state-licensed lobstermen in June of 2001. Now the state is taking the next steps to bring all fisheries up to the standard.

Most of the ACCSP's partners currently collect data on paper logs or dealer reports, manually enter them into local databases, and electronically feed the data to the ACCSP. Looking to simplify the process, the Rhode Island DEM has asked the ACCSP Information Systems staff and a panel of eight seafood dealers to develop a web-based reporting system.

"Rhode Island and the National Marine Fisheries Service have challenged the ACCSP staff to create a timely, inexpensive system that will meet both state and federal reporting needs on a limited budget, and contain built-in validation and quota monitoring capabilities," says Mike Cahall, ACCSP Information Systems Manager. "While this sounds like a Herculean task, it's much easier to create such a system from scratch than to retrofit. It's also extremely helpful to have industry input from the onset, so we can clearly understand their needs while developing it."

Some of the dealers on the panel have expressed frustration with the current reporting requirements for quota species and the subsequent availability of quota status. In Rhode Island, federally-permitted dealers report landings three times each week through IVR systems, twice to the DEM and once to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries).

"The IVRs are extremely slow, and they don't give me the information that I need to run my business efficiently," says Eric Reid, of Deep Sea Fish of Rhode Island. "If this new system will streamline the reporting process and take the guesswork out of quota monitoring, it would save me a great deal of time and save the whole industry from scrambling to reorganize when fisheries are suddenly closed."

Rhode Island's seafood dealers and the DEM also want the new comprehensive data collection system to tighten controls on "gray market" activity. When a fisherman who has already landed his limit with one dealer tries to land more with another dealer, the system may either halt the transaction or notify proper authorities. This improvement would make quota enforcement much simpler and relieve dealers from the burden of validating each fishing license against quota allowances.

Maury Osborn, ACCSP Director, hopes this developing system will serve as a prototype for future electronic reporting systems. "We still have several partners who do not report to the ACCSP's standard. Providing them cost-effective and multifunctional systems will certainly expedite the achievement of our goal of coastwide reporting of all species commercially harvested."

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 coastwide, 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 contact Abbey Compton, ACCSP Outreach Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <abbey.compton@accsp.org>.

Asian Oyster Workshop Views Introductions with Extreme Caution

During the ASMFC May Meeting Week, the Commission conducted a workshop to review and discuss the potential benefits and risks of introducing the Asian oyster, *Crassostrea ariakensis*, into the Chesapeake Bay. Workshop presenters and participants included ASMFC Commissioners, scientists and academia, as well as industry representatives.

The impetus for the workshop stems from the on-going debate among scientists, managers, environmentalists and the oyster industry regarding the benefits and risks of introducing the Asian oyster into the Chesapeake Bay given the serious and widespread decline of the Bay's native eastern oyster, *Crassostrea virginica*, by MSX and Dermo. This decline has not just effected the Chesapeake Bay region, but has caused large scale economic losses to harvesters, processors, and other support businesses throughout the entire Mid-Atlantic.

East Coast Oyster Industry Struggles to Survive

From the perspective of the oyster industry, a great deal of time and money has been invested in the restoration of native oyster in the Chesapeake Bay, with little to no return. It has been suggested that the infrastructure to support the oyster industry for the native oyster will collapse in five to six years. Industry is interested in pursuing Asian oyster as a means to restore the Chesapeake Bay oyster industry. To this end, the Virginia Seafood Council has proposed to conduct field trials with one million oysters in 2002.

Field Studies Show Promise

The results of studies conducted by Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) and the Virginia Seafood Council suggest that hatchery-reared Asian oysters hold promise for rebuilding the commercial oyster industry in Virginia and Maryland through aquaculture production. Field trials conducted by VIMS

in 1998 and 1999 indicated that the Asian oyster was faster growing than the native oyster, reaching market size in about a year (as compared to two to four years for the native oyster). The Asian oyster also tolerated MSX and Dermo much better than the native oyster, with mortalities ranging from 14 to 16 percent, as compared to 81 to 100 percent mortalities for the native oyster. Taste tests conducted by the Virginia Seafood Council indicated that the Asian oyster is almost indistinguishable in taste from the native oyster.

Concern Remains for Non-native Introductions

Even with these optimistic results, several groups have expressed serious concerns regarding the use of a non-native species for aquaculture production, as well as the lack of scientific knowledge concerning the life history of Asian oyster.

Workshop participants agreed that more information is needed to fully identify the potential benefits and risks of introducing the Asian oyster into the Chesapeake Bay or other coastal systems. For one, a great deal of information is still unknown concerning this species even in its natural environment. Another concern is that the introduction of Asian oysters into Chesapeake will allow them to spread unchecked to surrounding areas. Potential pathogens, parasites, and other organisms associated with the introduced species may also be a problem, although quarantine and other processes may resolve some of these issues. However, it was noted that the impacts of a non-native introduction are unpredictable and once they occur are virtually irreversible.

Workshop participants felt that the risk of doing nothing needs to be considered, as well as the risks of non-regulated introductions of any non-native oyster species. The potential for non-regulated introductions will be influ-

enced by the timetable for taking action - the longer the delay,

the more chance that it will occur. Finally, it was recognized that there is a need for coordination among all states, since introduction by any one state may affect all states on the Atlantic coast.

In summary, the workshop identified several major issues that still must be resolved before any introductions can occur. Industry is concerned about the amount of time and money that has been expended to restore native oysters given the limited success of these efforts and the declining oyster industry. Managers are concerned that the proposed industry timeline for small-scale introductions (i.e., 2002) is too ambitious and poses too much potential risk. Most participants believe that restoration efforts for the native oyster should continue, while the benefits and risks of introducing into the Chesapeake Bay are further evaluated.

NAS Study Slated for 2002/2003

In 2002/2003, the National Academy of Sciences will be conducting a study to examine the ecological and socioeconomic risks and benefits of open water aquaculture or direct introduction of the non-native oyster in the Chesapeake Bay. This study should provide further information on these issues. The Commission has provided a nomination to the NAS to represent the Commission and Atlantic coast issues in this study.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the Asian oyster workshop report, please contact Dr. Lisa L. Kline, Director of Research & Statistics, at (202)289-6400 or <lcline@asmfc.org>.



ASMFC Comings & Goings (continued from page 7)

can eel, shad & river herring and winter flounder.

Lydia comes to us with a B.A. in Marine Science from Boston University and a Master of Environmental Management from Duke University. While this is Lydia's first permanent position, she has participated in a number of internships and research positions with the Habitat Protection Section of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, the marine laboratories of Duke University and North Carolina University, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. We are excited to have Lydia join our staff and we all look forward to working with her. Welcome aboard, Lydia!

Fishing and Benthic Habitats 2002 Symposium Planned for November: Fishing Industry Participation Sought

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Geological Survey in concert with the American Fisheries Society and the Ecological Society of America are sponsoring a Symposium on the Effects of Fishing Activities on Benthic Habitats to be held November 12-14, 2002, in Tampa, Florida.

The workshop is designed to facilitate communication among scientists, managers, and fishing industry representatives who share a common interest in sustainable fisheries and healthy diverse ecosystems. The Symposium will feature three days of plenary sessions covering management and livelihood issues, characterization and understanding the natural change to bottom habitats, un-

derstanding the ecological and economic effects of fishing, and minimizing the adverse effects of fishing on benthic habitats.

Anticipated symposium participants include marine, estuarine, and large lake biologists, geologists, and economists studying the effects of fishing and associated science; fishery managers representing state, federal, tribal, and international entities; commercial and recreational fishing representatives; and environmental groups. The workshop sponsors especially welcome participation by members of the fishing industry. Details of the symposium and can be accessed at <http://walrus.wr.usgs.gov/bh2002> or write/call ESA at lori@esa.org for a preliminary program.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
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