

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.*

David V.D. Borden Receives Prestigious David H. Hart Award

On November 20, 2002, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission proudly recognized the enormous commitment of David V.D. Borden, Assistant Director for Natural Resource Development and Protection, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, to the conservation and management of Atlantic coast fisheries. The award was presented at the Commission's 61st Annual Meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia.



2002 Hart Award Recipient, David V.D. Borden of RI DEM (second from left) with the respective incoming and outgoing ASMFC Chairs, John I. Nelson, Jr. of NH Fish & Game (far left) and Susan Shipman of GA Coastal Resources, and ASMFC Executive Director, John V. O'Shea (far right)

This year's David H. Hart Award recipient has been involved in marine fisheries management for nearly a quarter of a century and, over that time, he has left an indelible mark on the way fisheries conservation and management is conducted along the Atlantic coast. David began his career as a Senior Marine Fisheries Biologist for the Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife. Showing innovation and creativity, David designed and implemented a computerized catch reporting program for one of the most

important Atlantic coastal fisheries -- American lobster. He soon became Rhode Island's Principal Marine Fishery Biologist, administering the mandates of the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (now known as the Magnuson-Stevens Act).

In 1987, David was promoted to Deputy Chief of Marine Fisheries, coordinating activities between and among various programs to assure compatibility with marine management and enforcement at both the state and federal level. He worked on the preparation and implementation of many research and development projects that have significantly improved the economic return for Rhode Island fishermen. During that time David was also appointed by the Governor of Rhode Island to be the state's representative to the New England Fishery Management Council, where he has served on numerous committees and chaired the Council for an unprecedented three terms. David has been and continues to be a strong advocate of measures to improve the enforcement capabilities of federal agencies in order to provide greater incentives for compliance with fishing regulations.

From 1992 to 1994, David served as Chief of the Rhode Island Division of Fish, Wildlife and Estuarine Resources,

leaving a lasting impression during his tenure. He conducted an in-depth review of all programs, restructured operations to promote efficiency, restored the chain of command, oversaw numerous new initiatives, developed new grant and federal aid programs, and improved public relations. During that time, David was appointed as Rhode Island's Administrative Commissioner to the Commission, where he served as Vice-chair and Chair. As Vice-chair, David was instrumental in the development

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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

John I. Nelson, Jr. (NH) , Chair
Preston Pate, Jr. (NC), 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

1/7 - 9:

Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, Washington, DC.

1/13 (10 AM - 4 PM):

ASMFC American Lobster Board Workgroup on Trap Transferability, Providence, Rhode Island (specific location to be determined).

1/14 (9 AM - 1 PM):

ASMFC American Lobster Board Area 2 Subcommittee, Providence, Rhode Island (specific location to be determined).

1/15 (11 AM - 4 PM):

ASMFC American Lobster Database Subcommittee, Manchester, New Hampshire (specific location to be determined).

1/21 (10:30 AM - 3 PM):

ASMFC American Lobster Technical Committee, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, 333 Ferry Road, Old Lyme, Connecticut.

1/21 - 22:

ACCSP Computer Technical Committee, Hilton Tampa Westshore, 2225 North Lois Avenue, Tampa, Florida.

1/21 - 23:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Trump Plaza, The Boardwalk & MS Avenue, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

1/27 (9:30 AM - 3:30 PM):

ASMFC American Lobster Advisory Panel, Providence, Rhode Island (specific location to be determined).

1/28 - 30:

New England Fishery Management Council, Courtyard by Marriot, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

2/23 - 26:

RecFish II Symposium, St. Petersburg, Florida.

2/24 - 27:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Doubletree Crystal City, 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia; 703/416-4100.

2/27 - 3/1:

Maine's Fishermen's Forum, Samoset Resort, Rockport, Maine.

3/3 - 7:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Jekyll Island, Georgia.

This year has been one of transition and growth for the Commission. Since my arrival I continue to be delighted with the strength and talent of our staff. They have done a superb job of breaking in a new boss while not missing a beat in carrying out their important work at the Commission. I have also watched folks move on to bigger and better things and I am thrilled for the new opportunities they have in store for them. Their departure is not a loss for the Commission but a gain for fisheries management, since most have left to work with our partners. It has been exciting to watch our new people come aboard with energy and enthusiasm. We can all take pride in the fact that the Commission continues to attract such talented people.

Our 61st Annual Meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia was a terrific event. Commissioner Bill Pruitt and his staff did a wonderful job hosting us throughout the week. I was especially pleased that so many spouses were able to join us. There are long hours of meetings and travel involved with the Commission process; I was glad I could meet and say thank you to those who usually stay behind and support our Commissioners in their important work. Their presence was a great addition to our social events, where they were able to share with us in our celebration of several important transitions.

In this spirit of celebration, we congratulated our outgoing Chair, Susan Shipman, Director of Georgia Coastal Resources Division. Over her two-year tenure as Chair, the Commission, through its member states, has made significant progress in promoting and protecting the valuable resources of the Atlantic coast. Susan has strongly fostered an environment of mutual partnership and cooperation. Above all else, Susan believed in the commitment that the states have to one another to identify common challenges and seek shared solutions through clear communication and reasonable deliberation. The accomplishments of the past two years speak to the power of that commitment. During her chairmanship, Susan guided the Commission in appointing a new executive director and implementing various fisheries management decisions to protect and rebuild stocks. She oversaw improvements to the Commission's peer review and stock assessment processes, including consideration of multispecies/ecosystem assessments. She empowered our legislators and governors' appointees as the primary stewards of the Commission's advisory panel and public input process. Through her wisdom, energy

and enthusiasm she has left an important and lasting mark of improvement on the Commission.

We all were excited to welcome our new Chair, John I. Nelson Jr., Chief of New Hampshire Marine Fisheries Division. John's achievements within his own state speak directly to his leadership talents and abilities. For the last two decades, he has brought a steadfast commitment to the conservation and management of New Hampshire's marine resources. He streamlined the state's fishery regulatory process, enhanced ecosystem monitoring of marine resources, protected important habitats within the state's largest estuary, and conducted outreach efforts to substantially improve communication and interaction with commercial and recreational fishing constituents. Those of you who have worked with John before know the Commission will greatly benefit from his knowledge and ability to work with others. He has already indicated his first order of business will be to lead his fellow Commissioners in the development of our next five-year strategic plan.

Assisting John will be Preston Pate, Jr., Director of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, the Commission's new Vice-chair. In his home state Pres is responsible for regulating North Carolina's billion dollar saltwater fishing industry. A resource management professional since 1971, Pres brings to the Commission years of wisdom and experience, as well as dedication to sustainable fisheries management. He will be a great addition to our leadership team, and a person we can all learn from.

You can see from our cover we also recognized David Borden as this year's Hart Award recipient. You can read the details about the award in the article dedicated to that topic, so I will not repeat them here. But, I will say congratulations to David and note that he joins an impressive list of prior recipients, a real hall of fame of East Coast fisheries managers.

As we close this year, I encourage you all to take pride in our many accomplishments in advancing responsible stewardship of marine fisheries resources. Your support and enthusiasm for the work we all do is a source of constant inspiration for me and our staff. During this time of transition and growth, I look forward to working with you all in what I hope will be a productive and happy New Year. Best wishes for a safe and enjoyable holiday.

ASMFC Approves Amendment 4 to the Fishery Management Plan for Weakfish

On November 21, 2002, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Weakfish. Amendment 4 aims to ensure a healthy spawning stock biomass, restore the age structure of the population, and expand the geographic range of weakfish. To achieve these goals, Amendment 4 includes a new overfishing definition with fishing mortality targets and thresholds, as well as a spawning stock biomass threshold.

"I am very pleased with the final document that we have approved and I am confident that Amendment 4 will continue to build upon the stock recovery benefits that have been achieved under Amendment 3," stated Weakfish Board Chair, Gordon Colvin of New York. "The Amendment is the result of the collective efforts and input of the Management Board, Technical Committee and Advisory Panel, all of whom have worked hard to develop a plan that continues to rebuild the weakfish stock while allowing for high quality commercial and recreational fisheries. The Weakfish Advisory Panel, led by Chair Clarence W. Lee, deserves particular recognition. They provided invaluable assistance to the Management Board in

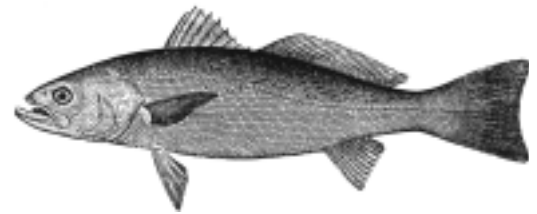
the development of Amendment 4, with the Board adopting many of the Advisory Panel's recommendations for inclusion in the plan."

Amendment 4 includes minimum size/bag limit options for the states to manage their recreational fisheries. States may choose from a range of minimum sizes and corresponding bag limits from the following options: 12" minimum size/7 fish bag limit, 13" minimum size/8 fish bag limit, 14" minimum size/9 fish bag limit, 15" and higher minimum size/10 fish bag limit. States will be determining which combination is the most appropriate for their fishermen over the next couple of months.

Amendment 4 maintains the majority of commercial fishery management measures that have been successful under Amendment 3, including closed areas and seasons, and mesh size regulations. The primary changes to the commercial management program under Amendment 4 address bycatch issues. Specifically, the bycatch allowance during closed seasons was increased to 300 pounds with additional language indicating that this allowance is permitted provided that there is at

least an equal poundage of other species on board the vessel. Additionally, Amendment 4 encourages states to provide incentives for the use of escape panels in commercial pound nets.

Amendment 4 also takes strides to ensure that the necessary information is being collected for future weakfish stock assessments. States that land at least 2.5 percent of the coastwide weakfish landings will be required to collect age and length information from their weakfish commercial and recreational landings.



Copies of the Amendment will be available by the end of the year and can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400 or via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org. For more information, please contact Braddock Spear, Weakfish Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 301 or bspear@asmfc.org.

David V.D. Borden Receives Prestigious David H. Hart Award (continued from page 1)

of the Commission's first five-year strategic plan and presided over the implementation of the first Action Plan during his chairmanship. As Chair, David made tremendous strides to increase the efficiency in the way the Commission conducts its business.

Overseeing the Commission's transition to four meeting weeks a year, he challenged his fellow Commissioners to be more responsible in the way they par-

ticipate in and run meetings, and provided training to improve their individual and collective skills. He was also instrumental in the development of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, with his state leading the way with a state of the art data collection and management program for commercial fisheries.

The Commission instituted the "Captain David H. Hart Award" in 1991 to

recognize individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the betterment of marine fisheries on the Atlantic coast. The award is named for the Commission's oldest and longest-serving member, a Governor's Appointee from New Jersey who was dedicated to the advancement and protection of marine fishery resources. For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance and Administration, at (202) 289-6400.

ASMFC Approves Spiny Dogfish FMP: Plan Implementation Slated for May 1, 2003

On November 21, 2002, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Spiny Dogfish. The FMP, which complements existing federal regulations for spiny dogfish, employs a constant fishing mortality (F = 0.03) strategy and directs the Management Board to establish an annual commercial quota. This quota is based on the status of the stock and is allocated between the same two periods in the federal fishery (May 1 – October 31 and November 1 – April 30). To control the rate of harvest, trip limits are also set annually (see the table below).

In addition to the above measures, the Board added a provision that allows states to issue exempted fishing permits for the purposes of supplying the biomedical industry. States are limited to 1,000 fish per year. Prior to the start of the fishing year, states must notify the Commission of all spiny dogfish exempted permits issued within their state.

The Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Shark Management Board first initiated development of the FMP in 1999, with the intent of coordinating on-going federal actions in the exclusive economic zone. Under the federal plan, the fishery is

managed through a constant fishing mortality strategy, which currently allows for a four million-pound quota, divided into two semiannual periods (Period 1 = 57.9 percent and Period 2 = 42.1 percent).

Since August 21, 2000, the states have regulated the spiny dogfish commercial fishery through a series of emergency actions, closing state waters to the commercial harvest, possession and landing of spiny dogfish when there is a closure in federal waters. The final extension of the Spiny Dogfish Emergency Action will expire January 31, 2003. Until state implementation of the plan by May 1, 2003, the FMP requires states to maintain their current regulations and close state waters to the commercial harvest, possession and landing of spiny dogfish when the federal quota is harvested. State implementation proposals are due February 1, 2003 and will be implemented by May 1, 2003, the start of the 2003-2004 fishing year.

Copies of the FMP can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400 or via the Commission's website at www.asmf.org. For more information, please contact Megan Gamble, Fisheries Management Plan

Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or <mgamble@asmfc.org>.

States Close Waters to Spiny Dogfish Fishery

Beginning at 12:01 AM, November 21, 2002, the Atlantic coastal states closed their waters to the harvest, possession and landing of spiny dogfish. The closure, which extends for the remainder of quota period 2 (through April 30, 2003), complements similar action taken by NOAA Fisheries in federal waters.

Under the terms of the Commission's Spiny Dogfish Emergency Action approved by the Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Shark Management Board on August 21, 2000 and extended by the Board through January 31, 2003, all states are required to close their fisheries when the federal fishery is closed. While implementing the provisions of the Interstate Spiny Dogfish Plan, states are required to maintain their current state regulations for spiny dogfish. Continuing through January 31 (the expiration of the emergency action) and until May 1, 2003 (state implementation deadline), states are required to maintain regulations prohibiting the commercial harvest, possession and landing of spiny dogfish in state waters.

The spiny dogfish fishery is scheduled to reopen on May 1, 2003. For more information, please contact Megan Gamble, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <mgamble@asmfc.org>.

Summary of Interstate Spiny Dogfish Management Measures

Fishing Year	Period I	Period II
May 1 – April 30	May 1 – October 30	November 1 – April 30
Annual Quota	To be determined annually based on stock status	
Percentage of Coastwide Quota	57.9%	42.1%
Quota Overages	Deducted from Period I in the following fishing year	Deducted from Period II in the following fishing year
Possession limits	To be specified on an annual basis	
Exempted Permits for Biomedical Supply	1,000 fish per state per year <i>If requested in the state implementation plan and/or the annual state compliance report</i>	
Prohibition on Finning	Prohibited in all state waters at all times of the year <i>Finning = removing the fins and returning the remainder to sea</i>	



Weakfish
Cynoscion regalis

Family: Sciaenidae

Stock Status: Not overfished; overfishing is not occurring

Age at maturity: 90% mature at age 1

Amendment 4 Stock Rebuilding Goals:

- **F target = 0.31**
- **F threshold = 0.5**
- **SSB threshold = 31.8 million pounds**

Species Profile: Weakfish

Coastwide Reductions in Fishing Mortality & Bycatch Reduction Devices Yield Big Results

Introduction

Under Amendment 3 to the Weakfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), weakfish have experienced significant stock growth with increases in spawning stock biomass and the number of recruits entering the fishery each year. Combined, these factors have resulted in the weakfish fishery moving from an overfished condition to a recovering stock. These improvements are primarily the result of significant declines in fishing mortality rates over the last six years and the commitment of recreational and commercial fishermen to forgo short-term benefits for the long-term success of the fishery.

Amendment 4 to the FMP, which was approved in November, intends to continue to build upon these gains by establishing stock assessment benchmarks, such as threshold levels for fishing mortality and spawning stock biomass.

This article will provide a brief overview of weakfish – its stock status, commercial and recreational fisheries, and management considerations.

Stock Status

The weakfish stock assessment was updated in 2002 with data through 2000. Current estimates of spawning stock biomass are well above the threshold recently approved in Amendment 4 (Figure 1). Since 1992, recruitment has been above 30 million fish, with peak years over 60 million (Figure 2). Large year classes were produced in 1984, 1985, 1993, 1995, 1998 and 1999. Fishing mortality rates have also been below the Amendment 4 target of 0.31 (approximately 27 percent exploitation rate). However, estimates of spawning stock biomass, recruitment and fishing

mortality for the most recent year of the assessment should be viewed with caution given the uncertainty of these estimates. As new data is added to the assessment, fishing mortality is expected to rise and spawning stock biomass is expected to decrease.

There also appears to be an increase in the age and size structure of the weakfish fishery. In 1982, the estimate of the proportion of age six plus fish was one percent of the total. This proportion has been increasing in recent years to 6.8 percent of the total in 2001; this trend is expected to continue under Amendment 4.

Figure 1

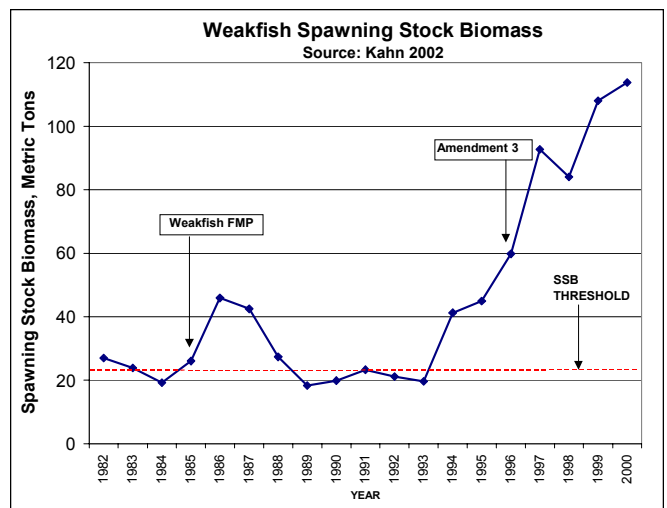
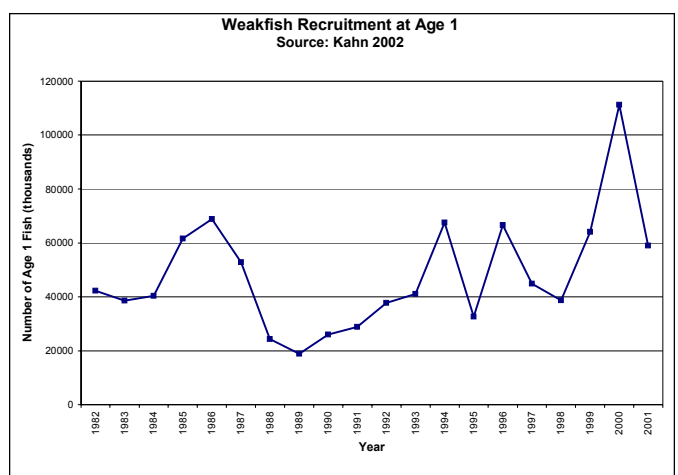


Figure 2

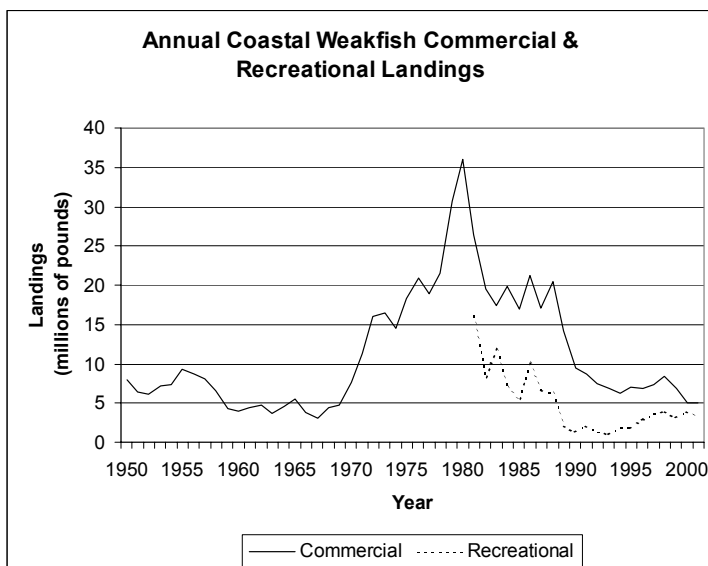


Recreational & Commercial Fisheries

Weakfish have supported fisheries along the Atlantic coast since at least the 1800s, and are highly sought after by both commercial and recreational fishermen. From 1950 to the late 60s, commercial landings fluctuated without trend, ranging from three to nine million pounds (Figure 3). The early 70s began a period of tremendous growth in the commercial fishery, with landings peaking at 36 million pounds in 1980. The commercial fishery declined steadily throughout the 1980s, dropping to a low of six million pounds in 1994. Since then, the fishery has maintained itself at around seven to eight million pounds, largely in response to harvest restrictions under the Commission plan. The primary commercial gear for weakfish are trawls and gillnets, although weakfish are also landed using pound nets and haul seines.

Recreational landings have followed a similar trend to that of commercial landings, with harvest peaking at 16 million pounds in 1980 and steadily decreasing over the next 10 years to a low of one million pounds. In the early 1990s, recreational landings fluctuated between one and two million pounds. Since 1996, landings have ranged between three and four million pounds.

Figure 3



Atlantic Coast Management Considerations

In 1985, as a result of population declines and limited biological information, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission initiated the development of its first FMP for Weakfish. The Plan prescribed only two specific management measures: (1) promote the use of trawl efficiency devices in the southern shrimp fishery; and (2) reduce catches of weakfish one year or less in age.

While the goals of the plan, as well as its two subsequent amendments, were well intentioned, the states were unable to stop the continued decline of weakfish stocks. It was not until 1996 that the states, armed with the compliance mandates of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, were able to develop and implement a plan (Amendment 3) to recover overfished weakfish stocks. Under this plan, stocks began to rebound as a result of conservative fishing mortality targets. Other measures that have contributed to the stock's continuing recovery are the use of gear modifications to reduce bycatch of juvenile weakfish in the southern shrimp fisheries and closure of the flynet fishery south of Cape Hatteras.

Measures required under Amendment 4, which will be implemented by July 2003, will allow for further stock expansion to historical size and age structures and geographic ranges, with the ultimate goal of providing greater benefits to commercial and recreational fishermen along the Atlantic coast.

Weakfish Life History

Weakfish occur along the Atlantic coast of North America from Nova Scotia, Canada to the east coast of Florida, but are most common from New York to North Carolina. Warming of coastal waters in the spring prompts an inshore and northerly migration of adults from their offshore wintering grounds to nearshore sounds, bays and estuaries. Spawning occurs shortly after the inshore migration, peaking from late April to June, with some geographic variation in timing. In the fall, an offshore and southerly migration of adults coincides with declining water temperatures. The continental shelf from Chesapeake Bay to Cape Lookout, North Carolina appears to be the major wintering ground for weakfish.

Growth in weakfish is particularly rapid in the first year and they mature at a young age. Most fish are spawning at the end of their first year and all fish are mature by their second year. The size of a weakfish is not a particularly good indicator of age as a 14-inch weakfish can range in age from one to six years old. Size at age one is variable but most fish are ten to eleven inches long.

Surveys along the Atlantic coast indicate that estuaries provide feeding areas and spawning grounds for adult weakfish and are equally important as nursery areas for juveniles. Adult weakfish are often found near the periphery of eelgrass beds, perhaps because weakfish primarily feed on shrimp, other crustaceans, and small fish that are found near the beds.

ASMFC Comings & Goings

Jeffrey Brust -- For the past six years, Jeff has worked for the Commission as a Research Specialist in the Research and Statistics Program. During that time, Jeff was instrumental in developing the Commission's Stock Assessment Training Workshops and User Manual, both of which are geared at providing the necessary training and knowledge to state technical staff so that they may become more proficient at stock assessment analyses. He assisted in the Commission's external peer reviews of American shad, Atlantic sturgeon and horseshoe crab, as well as serving on many other ASMFC species stock assessment subcommittees. Over the last couple of years, Jeff took the lead in developing the Commission's Aquaculture Guidance document and coordinating the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program.

Jeff left the Commission at the end of November to begin his new job with Entrix, a private consulting firm based out of Dover, Delaware. Jeff has been a great asset to the Commission staff and we will miss his enthusiasm and hard work. Congratulations and much success, Jeff!

Joseph Desfosse -- When Joe first came to the Commission in April 1995 it was as the original coordinator for the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program. And as such, he helped to lay the foundation for the premier fisheries data collection and management program that it is today. After a year or so, Joe moved into the position of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) Coordinator.

Over his six years as FMP Coordinator, Joe provided primary oversight and coordination responsibilities for a great many Atlantic coastal species, including Atlantic croaker, Atlantic menhaden, Atlantic herring, red drum, Spanish mackerel, spiny dogfish, spot, spotted seatrout, and winter flounder. In this capacity, Joe was also the primary author of three interstate fishery management plans, namely, Atlantic Herring Amendment 1, Atlantic Menhaden Amendment 1 and Red Drum Amendment 2.

In late November, Joe began his new job as Fisheries Management Specialist with NOAA Fisheries' Highly Migratory Species Division, where he will be working on species such as tuna, billfish and sharks. Joe's hard work and attention to detail has left a lasting impression on the work he has accomplished at the Commission, and he will be missed. We wish you the very best!

Laura Huggins -- For over a year and a half, Laura (also known as Lil' L) provided administrative support to the Commission's Research & Statistics and Interstate Fisheries Management Programs. In November, she left the Commission to begin her career as an Emergency Services Specialist for Chemtrec. Good luck, Laura, and much success!

Braddock Spear -- On October 21, 2002, Brad joined the Commission as an FMP Coordinator. Since then, he has begun to assume the coordination responsibilities for Atlantic sturgeon, horseshoe crab and weakfish. Brad brings to his work a B.S. in Marine Bi-

ology from the University of Maryland (College Park) and an M.A. in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island. His master's thesis was on analyzing past federal fisheries litigation. More recently, Brad worked for the National Academy of Public Administration, as part of a research team which reviewed the management of the National Marine Fisheries Service. Welcome aboard, Brad!

Heather Stirratt -- For more than three years, Heather provided primary oversight and coordination of the interstate fisheries management programs for American eel, American lobster, Atlantic sturgeon, shad & river herring and tautog. Most notably, she assumed the coordination responsibilities for American lobster from Amy Schick without skipping a beat, and thereby allowing all those involved in the lobster management program to move steadily forward in the development and implementation of Addenda II and III of the plan. Other significant contributions included facilitation of workshops on American Lobster Transferable Traps and American Eel Sexing and Aging. In everything that she did, Heather brought her keen sense of order and detail, enthusiasm and commitment to doing a job well done.

In mid-October, Heather joined the staff at NOAA Fisheries' Highly Migratory Species Division as Fisheries Management Specialist, where she will be working on species such as tuna, billfish and sharks. We will miss you Heather and wish you much success!

Staff	Species Coordination Responsibilities
Robert Beal, <i>ISFMP Director</i>	Atlantic herring, Atlantic menhaden, Atlantic striped bass and South Atlantic species (Atlantic croaker, red drum, Spanish mackerel, spot, spotted seatrout)
Megan Gamble, <i>FMP Coordinator</i>	Spiny dogfish & coastal sharks, and Atlantic striped bass (as of January 2003)
Michael Lewis, <i>FMP Coordinator</i>	Northern shrimp, bluefish, summer flounder, scup and black sea bass
Lydia Munger, <i>FMP Coordinator</i>	American eel, shad & river herring, tautog and winter flounder
Carrie Selberg, <i>FMP Coordinator & Habitat Specialist</i>	American lobster, horseshoe crab and weakfish, as well as habitat issues
Braddock Spear, <i>FMP Coordinator</i>	Horseshoe crab and weakfish (as of January 2003), and Atlantic sturgeon

Northern Shrimp 2003 Fishing Season Set at 38 Days

On November 13, 2002, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section approved a 38-day fishing season for the 2003 northern shrimp fishery, a 14-day increase from last year's season. The longer season was based on a modest improvement in stock status and an attempt to preserve the northern shrimp commercial fishery. The Commission's Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel advocated a 47-day fishing season during January, February, and March, while the Northern Shrimp Technical Committee recommended that there be no fishing season in 2003.

"The most recent stock assessment indicates that while stock biomass is still low, the 2001 year-class is among the largest ever seen," stated Section Chair, Paul Diodati from Massachusetts. "The season, though short, is longer than last year in recognition of the improved

stock status and continued economic hardship experienced by the New England shrimp industry. I am pleased that the Section was able to work with industry to craft a season that has a good chance of protecting both the egg-bearing females and the smaller shrimp that represent the future of the fishery. We hope that it will provide fishermen and processors with enough shrimp to maintain the commercial fishery infrastructure. The Section is encouraged by the strong 2001 year-class which, if left to grow, may provide an excellent opportunity for stock recovery."

The fishing season will be in one period, January 15, 2002 through February 27, 2002, with Fridays off. The season is the same for mobile and trap gear.

In other business, the Section anticipates meeting this winter to review and possibly approve Amendment 1 to the

Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The primary goal of the amendment will be to provide additional management options to regulate and promote the recovery of this species, while also taking into consideration the historical participation and importance of the fishery.

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.

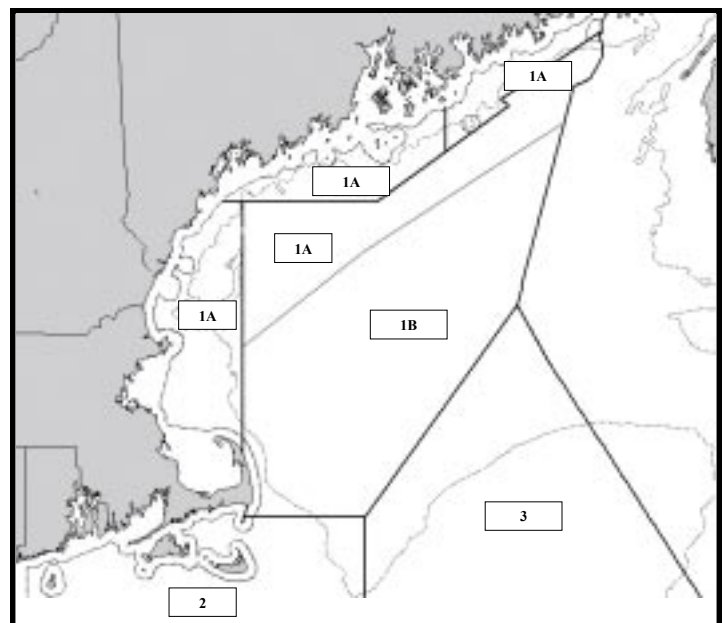
For more information, please contact: Michael Lewis, Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, Interstate Fisheries Management Program, at (202)289-6400, ext. 330.

Atlantic Herring Management Area 1A Closed to Fishing

On November 22, 2002, NOAA Fisheries announced that as of 0001 hours, December 1, 2002, vessels issued federal permits for Atlantic herring may not retain or land more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring from Area 1A per trip or calendar day for the remainder of the 2002 fishery. This announcement was made based on projections that 95 percent of the Atlantic herring total allowable catch (TAC) allocated to Management Area 1A for the 2002 fishing year (January-December) would be harvested by December 1, 2002. The federal catch limit restriction will cease at 0001 hours, January 1, 2003.

Under the Commission's Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring, states must prohibit the landing of herring from a closed area and prohibit directed fishing for Atlantic herring in state waters of a closed area once a closure has been announced by the Regional Administrator/NOAA Fisheries. During a closure, vessels participating in other fisheries may retain and land an incidental catch of herring from a closed area that does not exceed 2,000 pounds per trip. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program, at (202) 289-6400.

Map of Atlantic Herring Management Areas





**ASMFC RESOLUTION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM
ON THE OCCASION OF ITS CENTENNIAL**

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission resolves as follows:

Whereas, the states along the Atlantic coast, from Maine through Florida, work together in close partnership to promote and protect the valuable marine fishery resources that they share; and

Whereas, these states share public trust responsibilities for these resources with each other, and also with the federal government; and

Whereas, the National Wildlife Refuge System, under careful management by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, provides important habitat for our nation's fish and wildlife species, including the marine fishery resources of the Atlantic coast; and

Whereas, there are more than 60 national wildlife refuges located along the Atlantic coast that provide nearly 700,000 acres of habitat for fish and wildlife species; and

Whereas, national wildlife refuges along the Atlantic coast provide essential habitat for coastal and marine fisheries that support a multi-billion dollar industry of commercial and recreational fisheries; and

Whereas, the national wildlife refuges have made and are continuing to make substantial contributions to the management, restoration, recovery and sustainability of coastal fisheries resources; and

Whereas, national wildlife refuges provide numerous opportunities for recreational anglers, with over 1.1 million visitor use-days for salt water fishing; and

Whereas, the National Wildlife Refuge System will celebrate its centennial on March 14, 2003, marking 100 years since President Theodore Roosevelt established the first national wildlife refuge at Pelican Island, Florida.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

That the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission congratulates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System on 100 years of conservation success through carefully applied fishery and wildlife managed principles; and

That the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission commends the United States Congress on passage of the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act of 2000, and encourages increased funding and support of the National Wildlife Refuge System by the Congress to support management assistance for coastal fisheries, cooperative conservation programs for anadromous species, conservation and enhancement of valuable coastal fisheries habitat, and research to provide information for state and federal agencies to secure the public trust in coastal fishery resources; and

That the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission recognizes the National Wildlife Refuge System's key role in the conservation and management of the valuable coastal fisheries resources of this nation.

Done this 21st day of November, 2002, in Williamsburg, Virginia.





RI Pioneers Web-based Reporting Part Two: Building an Application for a Specialized Industry*



As a partner in the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) is working with ACCSP staff to develop and manage an online trip-level reporting system that meets data collection standards and utilizes cost-effective state-of-the-art technology.

Rhode Island has been collecting trip-level catch and effort data from its state-licensed lobstermen since June of 2001. The state will take the next step soon to bring all fisheries up to the ACCSP's standards with mandatory dealer reporting of trip-level data. Partner and ACCSP staff began developing an online application to serve this function during the summer of 2002.

"We've been listening carefully to the dealers who have assisted us in building this application," said Barry Brasseaux, Information Systems Programmer for the ACCSP. "They stressed from the beginning that their time to perform data entry is limited, and that it should be designed to minimize typing. I think we've found several ways to do that."

When users log-on to the Rhode Island Fisheries Information System (RIFIS), they will need to enter a username and password assigned to them by the administrator for protection of their sensitive information. Once logged-in, dealers will see daily communications from DEM on pertinent information, such as quota status and fisheries closures. The advance warning of fisheries closures will make transitioning less troublesome for fishermen and dealers.

Within RIFIS, dealers and other industry members will enter trip data using online forms similar to the common paper forms. Users may also select data, such as names, addresses and permit numbers, to automatically populate fields when beginning a new logbook entry. The application will also create receipts and run reports for transactions, recalling the dealers' data of record. The report function will provide the industry with a process to confirm that its data are being accurately transmitted and stored.

The web-based software is written in Oracle Forms, using Oracle JInitiator to download the application, which services directly with Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer on Windows 98, Windows 2000, Windows NT4.0, and Windows XP platforms. No CDs will be necessary for users who are already online. The application does require relatively high monitor resolution to accommodate the application's detailed on-screen logbook images. DEM expects to make the application available to its dealers in January of 2003, making catch and effort reporting for finfish, shellfish and crustaceans simpler, more complete and relatively inexpensive.

"This system will be much more efficient for resource managers and members of the industry who use it," says Maury Osborn, ACCSP Director. "Rhode Island dealers will soon begin doing much of the data entry that partners have traditionally employed staff to do. It will streamline the data collection process and save much needed state and federal funds."

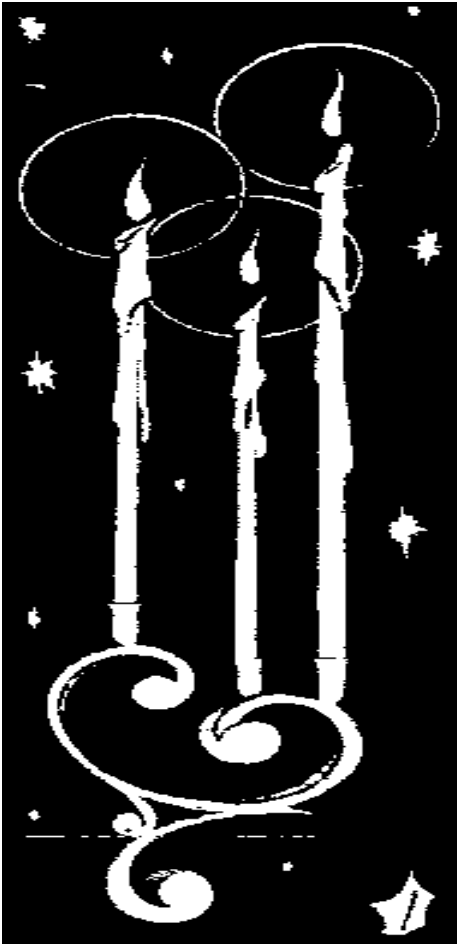
To view an online demonstration of the RIFIS, visit <http://www.accsp.org/mainnews.html>.

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 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.

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*The Staff of the Atlantic
States Marine Fisheries
Commission joins in
wishing you the
happiest of holidays and
a healthy and prosperous
New Year!*

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