



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*

## Chief Rob Winkel Receives Prestigious David H. Hart Award

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented Chief Rob Winkel, formerly with the Bureau of Law Enforcement for the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, its highest annual award, the David H. Hart Award, at the Commission's 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Galloway, New Jersey.

"We are very proud to have someone from our state recognized not only for his contributions in conserving and managing New Jersey's fisheries resources, but also for his efforts to improve fisheries management coastwide," stated Martin J. McHugh, Director for the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. "Chief Winkel has been instrumental in establishing a first-rate, highly efficient and professional law enforcement unit that ensures the conservation of New Jersey's natural resources and fosters public understanding of and compliance with resource management measures."



From left: Hart Award Recipient Chief Rob Winkel, his wife Lynn, ASMFC Awards Chair David Cupka, ASMFC Chair Preston P. Pate Jr., and ASMFC Executive Director John V. O'Shea.

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Chief Winkel's fisheries enforcement career began in 1978 when he became New Jersey's first and, at that time, only officer assigned to marine conservation. Instituting, and eventually supervising, a strong and much-needed conservation enforcement presence in the state's coastal waters, he initially served as the primary contact for fishing constituents and substantiated the importance of strict compliance monitoring to ensure the success of management actions. Ultimately, he turned the state's marine unit into a highly effective fisheries management tool.

When Chief Winkel joined the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee, nearly 20 years ago, he quickly became a leader by establishing subcommittees that monitored and tracked fishery management plans. He was a mentor to countless new committee members and strived to ensure that marine officers, regardless of state affiliation, receive the best available training. His participation in the Commission and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council demonstrated an eagerness to become involved in the management process at all levels. He is highly respected by fishermen, biologists and managers for his in-depth knowledge of fisheries management and science, as well as his ability to identify enforceable harvest methods and restrictions to achieve compliance. Though now retired, he continues to be involved in fisheries management issues, particularly at the state level.

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, who was dedicated to the advancement and protection of marine fishery resources.

**T**he 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.

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## Upcoming Meetings

**12/6 & 7:**

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board, Trump Plaza Hotel & Casino, Boardwalk & Mississippi Avenues, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

**12/12 & 13:**

ASMFC Committee on Economics and Social Sciences, Holiday Inn Downtown, 1155 14th Street, Washington, D.C.

**12/12 -16:**

ASMFC Basic Stock Assessment Training Workshop, Sheraton Oceanfront Hotel, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

**12/13 - 15:**

ASMFC American Eel Stock Assessment Peer Review, Holiday Inn Downtown, 1155 14th Street, NW., Washington, DC.

**12/15 & 16:**

ASMFC Interstate Shellfish Transport Committee, The Sleep Inn, Baltimore, Maryland.

**12/20 (7:00 PM):**

Public Hearing on Draft Addendum XVI to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Marine Headquarters, 333 Ferry Road, Old Lyme, Connecticut.

**1/3 (6:00 PM):**

Public Hearing on Draft Addendum XVI to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP, Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife, University of Rhode Island Bay Campus, Corless Auditorium, South Ferry Road, Narragansett, Rhode Island.

**1/9 & 10:**

NEAMAP Operations Committee, Hotel Providence, 311 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island; (401)861-8000.

**1/17 - 19:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Annapolis Hotel, Annapolis, Maryland.

**1/31 - 2/2:**

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

**2/13 - 16:**

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

Few would argue with the importance of public comment to our Commission management process. This is especially true when the fishery management plans our Commissioners adopt impact both the fish and the people who harvest them. After all, the public should have a say in what happens to them and they should have a say in what happens to their fish. But who is the public and what is public comment? Who do those appearing before our management boards actually represent, and how well informed are their constituents?

For example, scientists have advised that weakfish stocks are collapsing, yet last month in New Jersey dozens of concerned anglers appeared before the management board to urge no new limits be put on harvest. The primary rationale seemed to be the fact that scientists cannot fully explain the cause for the stock decline. Since factors other than fishing could be causing the decline, the impacts of fishing should be ignored.

What the speakers did not make clear was how or why continued harvesting of weakfish would enhance the preservation or promote the recovery of the remaining of the population. By 2006, at its current rate of decline, the stock biomass will be four percent of what it was in 1998. No one mentioned a moratorium or precautionary harvest cap while additional scientific information is gathered. Instead, the message was clear, fishermen should be allowed to harvest the remaining fish.

In the case of summer flounder, scientists report that the latest data show the biomass is not as large as had been expected, probably due to unaccounted for removals from recreational harvest and commercial discards. In order to meet the rebuilding target by 2010 as required by law, 2006 allowable catch needs to be set at less than 23.5 million pounds, a reduction from the 32 million pounds under the old trajectory.

Again, there was a large turnout of concerned anglers along with representatives for various fishing organizations who wanted to share their views. Everyone expressed frustration with the apparent need to backslide on harvest levels. Most spoke in favor of harvest quotas between 26 million and 32 million pounds, essentially continuing overfishing. Many noted the abundance of young fish and recommended lowering the size and increasing the bag limits.

None from the audience spoke in favor of the 23.5 million limit or other more conservative alternatives. No one mentioned the strong demands fishermen have made in previous years to aggressively increase quotas in response to rebuilding progress. No one offered an explanation of how overfishing would achieve rebuilding. None of the speakers expressed concerns about not meeting the rebuilding target by 2010 or of the consequences of a possible partial or full moratorium in 2009. Finally, no one offered any ideas on how to improve harvest estimates. (Although one group is reportedly urging its members to withhold catch information.)

What was clear was that those present were speaking passionately from their individual and short-term perspectives. They want more fish to take home next year and they want more fish for their customers to take home so they can stay in business another year. Many left angered and frustrated when the management board failed to approve the high quotas recommended by public comment.

What was interesting about these meetings was the very visible backdrop of the fantastic striped bass fishing that was available in the waters within sight of our meeting hotel. Great stories and in some cases, impressive pictures, were exchanged in the corridor outside the meeting room and at dinner by those who were able to get away for a few hours to try their luck. By all accounts the fish were fun to catch, large, and plentiful. These anecdotal reports seemed to be confirmed in the Friday edition of the Asbury Park Press, which featured numerous pictures of successful New Jersey anglers and their catch.

Back in the early 80s striped bass were on a clear trajectory towards extinction, with many constituents speaking out in opposition of harvest restrictions. Instead, our Commissioners thought about the fish and the future. They correctly saw the enormous benefit of a healthy stock and recognized an obligation to take action on the one thing they could control, harvest. Those pictures of large striped bass caught in New Jersey suggest we should all be grateful that our past generation of Commissioners listened carefully to public comment, and then did the right thing. Hopefully that is something we could all agree with.



**American Lobster  
*Homarus americanus***

**Interesting Facts:**

- **Lobsters smell food with small hairs covering their body and 4 small antennae**
- **Lobsters' teeth are in their stomachs**
- **In the first year, lobsters molt 10 times to reach a length of 1 - 1 1/2"**
- **A 1 lb female carries ~8,000 eggs, while a 9 lbs female may carry > 100,000 eggs**
- **Eggs are carried internally for 9 - 12 months and then another 9 - 12 months externally, attached to swimmerets under the tail by a glue-like substance**

**Largest Recorded: 44 lbs**

**Stock Status: Overfishing is occurring based on Amendment 3 reference points**

**Fun Facts Sources: Lobster Institute, RI Sea Grant, NMFS**

# Species Profile: American Lobster

## Peer-Reviewed Stock Assessment Presents New Opportunities and Challenges for Lobster Management

### Introduction

With an ex-vessel value of nearly \$317 million in 2004, American lobster ranks as one of the top commercial fisheries along the Atlantic coast. Over the last decade, coastwide landings have increased substantially, rising from 57 million pounds in 1993 to 76 million pounds in 2004. Despite these overall increases, landings in Long Island Sound and the waters off of Rhode Island and southern Massachusetts have been declining over the past several years. These declines were explained in part by the 2005 peer-reviewed stock assessment, which found low abundance and recruitment in Southern New England, and decreased recruitment and abundance in Massachusetts Bay and Stellwagen Bank. These issues, as well as others, will be addressed in an upcoming public information document for American lobster, which will solicit input on the future course of lobster management.

### Life History

American lobster, *Homarus americanus*, is a bottom-dwelling crustacean, widely distributed over the continental shelf of North America. In the inshore waters of the U.S., it is most abundant from Maine through New Jersey, with abundance declining from north to south. Offshore, it occurs from Maine through North Carolina.

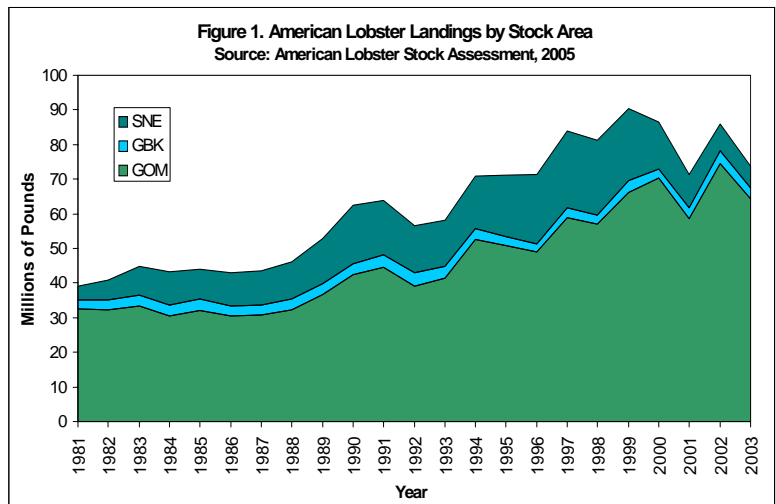
Lobsters are solitary and territorial, living in a variety of habitats as long as there is a burrow or crevice in which they can take cover. Females hatch their eggs from mid-May to mid-June. Larvae transition through five stages. For the first four stages larvae are planktonic, swimming at or near the water surface. At the fifth larval stage, juvenile lobsters sink to the ocean floor where they remain for the rest of their lifetime. Lobsters reach market size in about five to seven years, depending on water temperature.

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

The lobster fishery has seen incredible expansion in effort and landings since the late 1940s and early 1950s, when landings varied around 25 million pounds. The last decade alone has

seen dramatic increases in lobster landings, rising from 57 million pounds in 1993 to 76 million pounds in 2004. In 1999, commercial landings reached an historic high of 89 million pounds, with ex-vessel prices totaling 330 million dollars. Of this catch, approximately 80 percent

are caught in state waters, which extend from zero to three miles from shore. Lobster pots are the predominant commercial gear. Lobster is also taken recreationally with pots and by hand while SCUBA diving.



## Stock Status

The 2005 peer-reviewed stock assessment report indicates the American lobster resource presents a mixed picture, with stable stock abundance throughout most of the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Georges Bank (GBK), low abundance and recruitment in Southern New England (SNE), and decreased recruitment and abundance in Massachusetts Bay and Stellwagen Bank (Area 514). Of particular concern is SNE, where depleted stock abundance, low recruitment, and high fishing mortality rates over the past few years have led the Peer Review Panel to call for additional harvest restrictions.

Overall stock abundance in the GOM is relatively high with recent fishing mortality comparable to the past. There has been a long-term trend of increasing recruitment and spawning stock through 2002. On average the fishable stock is about 60% new entrants (recruits) into the fishery. The one area of concern within the GOM is Area 514, which has exhibited persistent low recruitment in recent years and high levels of fishing mortality since 1999. The majority of the fishable lobsters in this area are new entrants into the fishery.

The GBK stock appears stable, with current abundance and fishing mortality similar to the 20-year average. Forty percent of the fishable stock is new entrants into the fishery and the female proportion of the stock is increasing slightly.

Stock abundance for the SNE stock is low and fishing mortality is relatively high. New entrants into the fishery comprised 61-72% of the fishable stock. Overall, the Peer Review Panel expressed concern regarding each stock area's dependence on new recruits in their current fisheries.

## Recommendations from the Stock Assessment

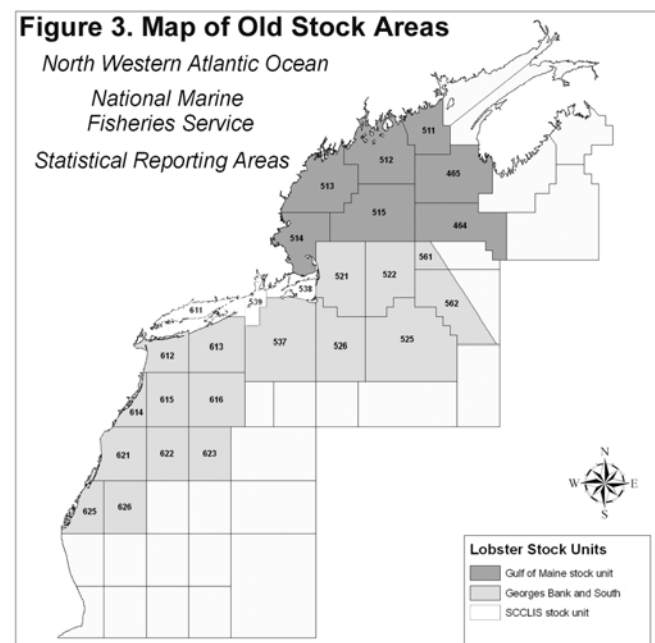
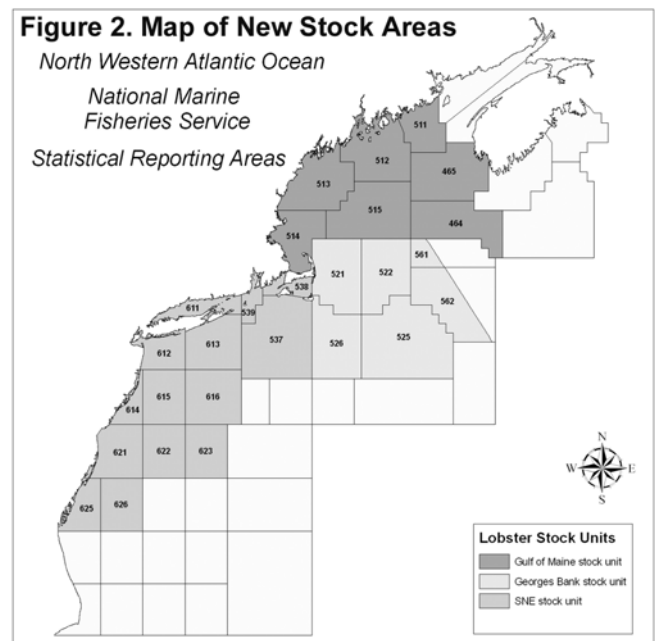
Summing up the Panel's concerns the report stated, "it is the future that leads to the greatest peril for the lobster resource...it would only take a sequence of two to three years of poor recruitment to collapse any component of the lobster resource, and the appearance of extremely low recruitments in recent times in some areas is a cause of concern if not alarm. Until the harvest strategy is revised to provide a buffer of mature adult spawners to cover the bad times, lobster fishery management is a time bomb waiting to explode, its fuse lit by recruitment failure."

Echoing the recommendations of the 2000 Peer Review Panel, the 2004 Model Peer Review Panel, and stock assessment scientists, the 2005 Panel report stated, "the data available are woefully inadequate for the management needs of this fishery and that the primary limitation on the ability to manage is limited data." Additionally, "the most significant improvement for future assessments would be procurement of complete and unbiased catch information." The report calls for the implementation of a standardized mandatory reporting system for American lobster fishermen.

Based on information on lobster maturity, abundance trends, size composition, and anecdotal information from fishermen, the report recommends the adoption of the new stock assessment areas (GOM, GBK and SNE) (see Figures 2 & 3) and a refinement of management boundaries to coincide with the new assessment areas. It also recommends new biological reference points, including abundance and fishing mortality targets and thresholds.

## Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

American lobster is managed under Amendment 3 to the Interstate FMP. Its major provisions include: 3 ¼-inch minimum carapace length (larger minimum lengths in most areas); prohibition on the possession of berried lobsters; prohibition on possession of lobster meat and lobster parts; manda-



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## Species Profile: American Lobster (continued from page 5)

tory escape panels and vents on pots to allow lobsters to escape from old, lost pots; prohibition on spearing lobsters; prohibition on possession of female v-notched lobsters; limits on landings with non-trap gear; and maximum trap sizes.

Amendment 3 establishes seven lobster management areas: Inshore GOM (Area 1), Inshore SNE (Area 2), Offshore Waters (Area 3), Inshore Northern Mid-Atlantic (Area 4), Inshore Southern Mid-Atlantic (Area 5), New York and Connecticut State Waters (Area 6), and Outer Cape Cod. Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs), composed of industry representatives, were formed for each management area. The LCMTs are charged with advising the Lobster Board and recommending changes to the management plan within their areas.

Amendment 3 also provides the flexibility to respond to current conditions of the resource and fishery by making changes to the management program through addenda. Since 1999, the American Lobster Board has approved seven addenda to further the conservation and management goals of Amendment 3; details on those addenda are provided below.

The American Lobster Plan Development Team is currently drafting a public information document (PID) to include recommendations of the stock assessment and peer review, and their possible application to future lobster management activities. Some of the issues to be addressed in the PID include the adoption of the new stock assessment areas (GOM, GBK and SNE), a refine-



Photo courtesy of Carl Wilson, Maine Dept. of Marine Resources

ment of management boundaries to coincide with the new assessment areas, and new biological reference points (abundance and fishing mortality targets and thresholds). The Board will review and consider sending forward for public comment the Draft PID in February. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, FMP Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or tkerns@asmfc.org.

### Amendment 3 Addenda at a Glance

#### Addendum I (August 1999)

- Establishes trap limits in the seven lobster conservation management areas (LCMAs)

#### Addendum II (February 2001)

- Establishes schedule for egg production rebuilding, minimum size increases, and trap reductions

#### Addendum III (February 2002)

- Revises management measures for all seven LCMAs in order to meet the revised egg-rebuilding schedule

#### Addendum IV (January 2004)

- Changes vent size requirements
- Applies the most restrictive rule on an area trap cap basis without regard to the individual's allocation
- Establishes Area 3 sliding scale trap reduction plan and transferable trap program to increase active trap reductions by 10%.
- Establishes an effort control program and gauge increases for Area 2.

#### Addendum V (March 2004)

- Amends Addendum IV overall trap cap to 2200 traps

#### Addendum VI (February 2005)

- Replaces two effort control measures for Area 2 -- permits and eligibility period.

#### Addendum VII (November 2005)

- Revises Area 2 effort control plan to include capping traps fished at recent levels and maintaining 3 3/8" minimum size limit

For more information on the addenda, visit [www.amfc.org](http://www.amfc.org).

### ASMFC Comings & Goings

**Rep. Dennis Abbott** – Rep. Abbott has served in one capacity or another as New Hampshire's legislative representative to the Commission since 1997. He was the state's Legislative Appointee to the Commission from 1997 to 2000. When he chose not to seek reelection to New Hampshire's House of Representatives in 2000, he served as Rep. Mary Ann Blanchard's proxy to the Commission. With his re-election to the House and subsequent re-appointment to the Commission, Rep. Abbott will continue to stay involved in the Commission's species management programs and as Chair of the Advisory Panel Oversight Committee.

**Rep. Mary Ann Blanchard** — In October, Rep. Blanchard

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# ASMFC Approves Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Croaker Plan

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Croaker. The Amendment revises the plan's management goals and objectives, and establishes biological reference points (i.e., biomass and fishing mortality targets and thresholds) to manage the croaker resource (see table below). The Amendment also revises the management of Atlantic croaker to a regional basis (a Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic component).

ass (201 million pounds) and fishing mortality (0.11) are well within the targets and thresholds established by Amendment 1. The stock status for the South Atlantic region (South Carolina through the east coast of Florida) is unknown, due to a lack of data.

While the Amendment does not implement any new management measures for the Atlantic croaker fishery, it establishes, through biological reference points and adaptive management, a

mechanism by which the Technical Committee and Management Board can closely monitor the resource and institute necessary management measures in a timely way. The Amendment also identifies research priorities to bolster future stock assessments and encourages

the states and the federal government to continue ongoing juvenile and adult surveys for data collection purposes. Atlantic croaker is an important resource for commercial and recreational fishermen throughout the Mid- and South Atlantic. In 2003, commercial fishermen landed 28 million pounds, primarily in the states of Virginia, North Carolina, New Jersey and Maryland. Between 1997 and 2003, recreational landings ranged from 9.1 to 13.2 million fish, with Virginia accounting for 68 percent of the total landings.

Amendment 1 will be available by December and can be obtained via the Commission's website

at [www.asmf.org](http://www.asmf.org) under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. For more information, please contact Nancy Wallace, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or [nwallace@asmfc.org](mailto:nwallace@asmfc.org).

## Amendment 1 Biological References Points and 2002 Estimates

	FISHING MORTALITY RATE	SPAWNING STOCK BIOMASS
2002 ESTIMATES	0.11	201 million pounds (91,000 mt)
TARGET	0.29	63.8 million pounds (28,932 mt)
THRESHOLD	0.39	44.7 million pounds (20,252 mt)

Amendment 1 responds to and incorporates information from the latest stock assessment, indicating that Atlantic croaker abundance is high and fishing mortality is low in the Mid-Atlantic region (North Carolina and north). Recent estimates of spawning stock biom-

ass (201 million pounds) and fishing mortality (0.11) are well within the targets and thresholds established by Amendment 1. The stock status for the South Atlantic region (South Carolina through the east coast of Florida) is unknown, due to a lack of data.

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## Northern Shrimp 2006 Fishing Season Set at 140 Days

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section approved a 140-day fishing season for the 2005-2006 northern shrimp fishery, a doubling of last year's season. The approved season was based on recommendations of the Northern Shrimp Technical Committee and Advisory Panel.

"Our efforts to reduce fishing mortality over the last few years have led to a greater abundance of shrimp and record catches in the Gulf of Maine summer survey," stated Section Chair George Lapointe from Maine. "A strong 2001 year-class has allowed the Section to expand the fishing season with the goal of rebuilding northern shrimp markets."

The Section also made a commitment to set a 140-day fishing season for 2007, provided fishing mortality, landings, and the number of directed trips for shrimp do not exceed acceptable levels. Evidence of strong 2003 and 2004 year-classes show promise in continuing to rebuild the stock and enhance market conditions. "The Section is excited to make the commitment for the expanded season for two years, increasing economic benefits and stability to harvesters and processors, while also ensuring that our rebuilding efforts stay on track," continued Mr. Lapointe.

The 2006 fishing season, which is the same for mobile and trap gear, will be open seven days a week from December

12, 2005, through April 30, 2006.

The northern shrimp fishery is jointly regulated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the States of Maine and New Hampshire 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 Amendment 1 to the Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. For more information, please contact Braddock Spear, Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 301 or [bspear@asmfc.org](mailto:bspear@asmfc.org).

## ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Board Initiates Development of Addendum to Consider Harvest Reductions

The Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board authorized development of an addendum to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Horseshoe Crab to reduce or eliminate harvest of Delaware Bay horseshoe crabs. The Draft Addendum will propose a two-year harvest moratorium in New Jersey and Delaware, with an exemption for harvest for biomedical use. It will also present options to restrict harvest of horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin in jurisdictions outside of the Bay.

The proposed action responds to public concern regarding the horseshoe populations and their ecological role in the Delaware Bay. While there are a number of scientific reviews on the status of horseshoe crabs, there is no peer-

reviewed coastwide estimate of horseshoe crab abundance. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Shorebird Technical Committee has indicated that the red knot, one of many shorebird species that feed upon horseshoe crab eggs, is at low population levels. Red knots have shown no sign of recovery, despite a four-fold reduction in horseshoe crab landings since 1998. The Shorebird Technical Committee concluded a moratorium of horseshoe crab harvest could provide more eggs for the birds to feed upon. The Board initiated the addendum process to focus further restrictions on crab harvest in the Delaware Bay region, which is the epicenter of horseshoe crab production along the coast as well as a critical stopover area for many migratory shorebirds including the red knot.

Several recent horseshoe crab population modeling approaches are currently being explored. The Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee conducted a general review of the new models. However, it will critically review the models, particularly the surplus production model, and provide the Board specific recommendations regarding the appropriateness of sending the models forward for peer review.

The Management Board will meet in February 2006 to review and consider approval of the draft addendum for public comment and review. For more information, please contact Braddock Spear, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or <bspear@asmfc.org>.

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## ASMFC Spiny Dogfish Board Approves 4 Million Pound Quota for the 2006/2007 Fishing Year

The Commission's Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Shark Management Board approved specifications for the 2006/2007 fishing year, setting a four million pound annual quota with trip limits of 600 pounds in quota periods one (May 1 to October 31) and two (November 1 to April 30). The specifications are limited to one fishing year to allow for the incorporation of the results from the upcoming 2006 benchmark assessment.

The Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee recommended a two million pound bycatch cap for fishing years 2006/2007, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. As a result of their deliberations, the Board decided to maintain the four million pound quota to allow for the utilization

of dogfish caught incidental to other fisheries.

The federal specifications for the spiny dogfish fishery are still to be determined. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has recommended a two million pound bycatch cap with trip limits of 600 pounds in quota periods one (May 1 to October 31) and two (November 1 to April 30) for the fishing years 2006/2007, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. The National Marine Fisheries Service will set the federal specifications prior to the start of the fishing year on May 1, 2005.

The Board also approved Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Dogfish. Addendum I provides the Board with the authority, but not the requirement, to establish spiny dogfish specifications for up to five

years. The Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils have already taken similar action under Framework 1, recommending the adoption of multi-year management measures without the requirement of annual review to NOAA Fisheries for final approval.

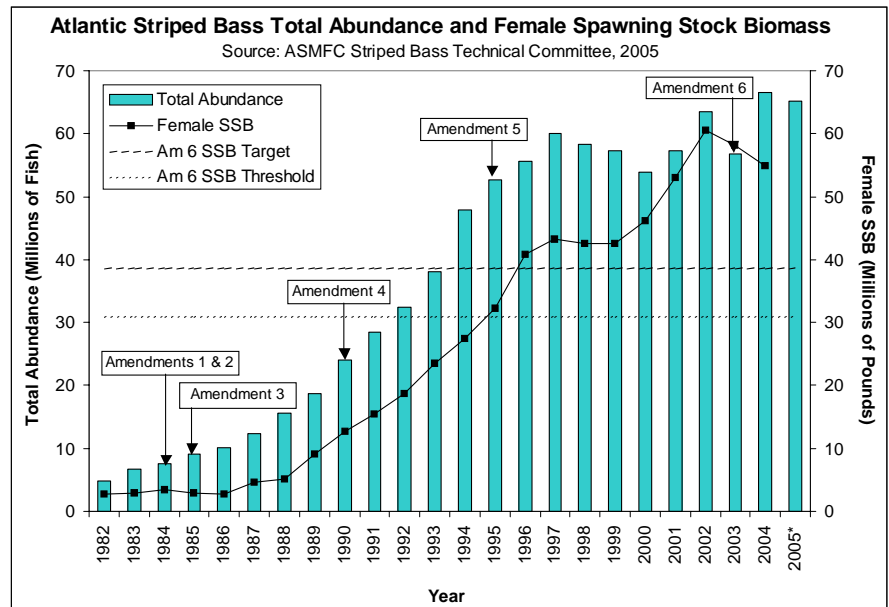
The coastwide spiny dogfish population is considered overfished, but overfishing is not occurring. The 2004 Northeast Fisheries Science Center's trawl survey data shows the seven years of low pup biomass has led to a truncated size range (i.e., low pup and reproductive female biomass) and shows no significant progress towards rebuilding the female spawning stock biomass. The 2004 biomass estimate for spiny dogfish is approximately half of the target biomass. For more information, please contact Ruth Christiansen, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <rchristiansen@asmfc.org>.





## Striped Bass Stock Assessment Indicates Healthy Stock: Total Abundance, Female Spawning Stock Biomass and Recruitment Remain High

Scientific advice presented to the Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board indicates that striped bass management under Amendment 6 to the Interstate Plan continues to be a success. The virtual population analysis (VPA) estimates that the resource remains at a high level of abundance at 65.3 million fish, 10 percent higher than the average stock size for the previous five years. Female spawning stock biomass (SSB) is estimated at 55 million pounds and is well above the SSB target and threshold levels of 38.6 and 30.9 million pounds, respectively. Recruitment of young fish (age 1) at 12.7 million is close to the average recruitment observed since the stock was first declared recovered in 1995. Complementary tagging studies estimate that striped bass abundance may actually be higher than the VPA estimates.



The stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, with 2004 fishing mortality below the Amendment 6 threshold of 0.41. Total catch has risen to 5.2 million fish, a 33 percent increase since implementation of Amendment 6 in 2003. Recreational harvest and discards accounted for 72.5 percent of the total mortality, with the majority of fish harvested by anglers in Virginia, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Maryland and North Carolina. Commercial catch has risen slightly to 1.42 million fish, with Maryland commercial fisheries accounting for half of the harvest.

Based on the advice of the Technical Committee, the Board maintained the states' current management programs. The Technical Committee will continue to monitor the status of the stock and refine stock assessment methodology as necessary. The next peer reviewed stock assessment is scheduled for 2007. Copies of the stock assessment will be available on the Commission website ([www.asmf.org](http://www.asmf.org) under Breaking News) by mid-November. For more information, please contact Lydia Munger, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or [lmunger@asmfc.org](mailto:lmunger@asmfc.org).

## ASMFC Weakfish Board Approves Biological Sampling & Reporting Program: Stock Assessment Slated for Peer Review in 2006

The Commission's Weakfish Management Board has approved the biological sampling and reporting provisions of Addendum I to Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Weakfish to bolster data collection and improve future stock assessments. It also agreed to send the 2005 weakfish stock assessment forward for peer review. The Commission received extensive public comment in opposition to management measures proposed within the Addendum during public hearings and at the Board's meeting.

The collection of weakfish age and length data from the recreational and commercial fisheries is critical for use in conducting stock assessments. The biological sampling program under Addendum I makes several improvements over the Amendment 4 program. The new program was crafted to be more responsive to year-to-year changes in landings, which proportionately affect a state's required level of sampling. Addendum I also establishes criteria for determining non-compliance, consequences of non-compliance, and how states can get

back into compliance with the biological sampling requirement. States are required to implement Addendum I for the 2006 season.

Copies of Addendum I will be available by December and can be obtained via the Commission's website at [www.asmf.org](http://www.asmf.org) under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. For more information, please contact Braddock Spear, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or [bspear@asmfc.org](mailto:bspear@asmfc.org).

## ACCSP Announces 2006 Funding

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), a state and federal partnership for marine fisheries data collection and data management, has allocated \$3.5 million to its state and federal partners for new and ongoing projects to improve fisheries-dependent data for coastal fisheries in 2006.

### Commercial Catch & Effort

Improvement of commercial catch and effort data collection was allotted \$924,724. This includes projects to establish and maintain trip-level reporting through use of the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) by the Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR), the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NY DEC), the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP), and the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NC DMF) will receive grants to assist in maintenance of their trip ticket systems.

A grant to establish electronic vessel trip reporting for the offshore lobster fleet was approved for the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources will receive funds for an in-depth study of the catch, effort, bycatch, and biological data for the recreational and commercial blue crab fishery.

### Recreational & For-hire

The ACCSP provided a total of \$907,415 for continued improvements to recreational and for-hire fisheries data collection on the Atlantic coast. A portion of the funds will support a pilot project by the NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology to evaluate

an alternate sampling allocation strategy in the coastal household telephone portion of the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS), which should improve the precision of the effort and catch estimates for private boat and shore fishing from Maine through Georgia. Funds were allocated to the private boat and shore intercept survey of the MRFSS to increase sampling and improve precision for five key managed species (black sea bass, tautog, vermilion snapper, weakfish, and winter flounder). Funding will continue support to NOAA Fisheries for increased sampling of Atlantic coast charter and head boats through the new for-hire survey. The new survey was first implemented in 2003 and needs to be maintained at the current level through 2006 to allow adequate bench-marking and evaluation of the methodology for head boats. The NC DMF will receive funds to conduct the coastal household telephone survey during wave 1 (January-February). Wave 1 activity has increased in importance in recent years, especially for striped bass, and North Carolina provides funds to conduct the intercept sampling during this wave.

### Biological & Bycatch Sampling

A total of \$273,255 was allocated to biological and bycatch sampling projects that will continue to provide critical management information on several important Atlantic coast fisheries. The ACCSP Coordinating Council approved continuation of work conducted by the ME DMR collecting samples of Atlantic herring and other Northeast fisheries from Maine through New Jersey. The commercial catch and effort grant to the NY DEC also includes the collection of biological samples essential for species managed through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The NJ DEP will receive funds for a biological characterization study of four important species and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources will receive funds for consolidating the



biological data from numerous state systems and transmitting those data to the ACCSP data warehouse.

The remainder of the funding was allocated for administrative activities. The administrative grant supports continued travel for partner participation in the development and evolution of program standards, ACCSP administration and personnel, and operation of the ACCSP Data Warehouse and SAFIS. A proposal was approved to conduct an external peer review of the ACCSP, which is required every five years by the Program Standards.

Actual project proposals and specific funding amounts will be available soon on the ACCSP website at [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org) under Document Archives/Funding/FY06 RFP.

### 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 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org).

## Kristina Ballard Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

In recognition of her excellent work, efficiency, and can-do attitude, Kristina Ballard, longtime Grants and Payroll Administrator, was named the Commission's Employee of the Quarter for the last quarter of 2005. This is the second time Kristina has received the award, which is intended to recognize special contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.

"Kristina vitally contributes to the success of the Commission and its interstate programs by helping to ensure our fiscal health and stability with consistent excellence in managing the general ledger and the financial aspects of our numerous cooperative agreements," states Laura C. Leach, Director of Finance & Administration. "Her behind the scenes efforts play an important part in enabling the Commission and the

states to carry-out their collective vision of healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015."

Despite an ever-increasing workload over the last year, Kristina has continued to keep the Commission's accounting and grants in superb standing. Recently she received high marks for the Commission's annual audit, with the CPA stating that the Commission's books were in excellent shape again this year. One of Kristina's strengths is tenacity, which is an ideal fit for her position since there are myriad details that she is constantly keeping track of! She is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in accounting in addition to being a full-time wife and mom of two pre-teen daughters. As an Employee of the Quarter, she received a \$500 cash award, an engraved pewter pencil cup, and a



letter of appreciation for her personnel record. In addition, her name will be engraved on the Employee of Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Kristina!

### ASMFC Comings & Goings (continued from page 6)

stepped down as New Hampshire's Legislative Appointee to the Commission. During her tenure as Commissioner, she regularly kept abreast of the issues facing the Commission and was in frequent communication with her fellow Commissioners and proxy. Rep. Blanchard has long been a strong advocate for the environment and protection of the state's natural resources and has served on the New Hampshire House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee for many years. We wish Rep. Blanchard the very best.

**Mr. David Cupka** — With best wishes for his future, the Commission regretfully said farewell to Mr. David Cupka after 30 years of service to the Commission. A Hart Award recipient in 1997, Mr. Cupka's contributions to Atlantic coastal fisheries conservation and management have been numerous and varied. He played a leading role in the development and implementation of studies on commercially and recreationally exploited species in South Carolina and throughout the South Atlantic region. As the state's primary liaison to its legislative committees, Mr. Cupka was involved in virtually every piece of fisheries legislation passed in South Carolina throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Most notable was his work on behalf of passage of the landmark South Carolina saltwater sportfishing

license. Mr. Cupka will remain actively involved in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

**Dr. Malcolm McLeod Rhodes** — In October, Dr. Malcolm Rhodes was appointed as South Carolina's Governor's Appointee to the Commission. A practicing pediatrician, Dr. Rhodes lives in Charleston with his wife, Caroline, and their two daughters Caroline and Margaret. He also owns The Charleston Angler, a fly fishing and light tackle shop, where he gets to share his love of fish and fishing. In his spare time he pursues redfish, trout (salt and freshwater), flounder, and jack crevalle. Welcome aboard, Dr. Rhodes!

**Rep. William Wainwright** — Rep. Wainwright joined the Commission in October as North Carolina's Legislative Appointee. He has served on the North Carolina General Assembly since 1991. Over that time, Rep. Wainwright has had a long and productive relationship with the Division of Marine Fisheries, mainly through his co-chairmanship of the state's Joint Legislative Commission on Seafood and Aquaculture, which oversees all of the Division's legislative initiatives and budget needs. Most recently he provided strong support and leadership in amending the state's Saltwater Sportfishing License legislation, helping to make it a sound, workable bill. Welcome aboard, Rep. Wainwright!

## **ASMFC Approves Draft Addendum XVI to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP for Public Comment**

The Commission approved Draft Addendum XVI to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass for public review and comment. The Draft Addendum addresses issues of delayed implementation of required fishery management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries. It responds to an ISFMP Policy Board directive to its management boards to improve the states' timely implementation of all interstate fisheries management plans. The current draft addresses concerns received from public comment on the first draft, most notably that proposed measures do not rely on data from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey.

The management of summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass has repeatedly been affected by delays in implementa-

tion of required regulations. This has undermined the effectiveness of the management program and adversely affected the timely conservation efforts of other states. The Draft Addendum is intended to provide a species-specific mechanism to ensure states meet their obligations under the management program. It proposes disincentives to minimize the probability of delayed implementation of required management measures. The Draft Addendum does not propose to modify the existing compliance review process nor the existing conservation equivalency procedures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass.

Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey will be conducting public hearings on the Draft Addendum in the winter; see page 2 for details on Connecticut's and Rhode

Island's hearings. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies of the Draft Addendum can be obtained via the Commission's website at [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org) under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. Public comment will be accepted until **5 PM on January 13, 2006** and should be forwarded to Julie Nygard, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax) or [comments@asmfc.org](mailto:comments@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Draft Addendum XVI). The Board will meet in February to review public comment on the Draft Addendum and consider its final approval.

**Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**  
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