



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

John H. Dunnigan Receives Prestigious David H. Hart Award



From left: Outgoing ASMFC Chair Preston P. Pate Jr. (NC), John H. Dunnigan and ASMFC Executive Director John V. O'Shea.

On October 25, 2006, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented John H. Dunnigan, NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Oceans and Coastal Services, its highest annual award, the David H. Hart Award, at the Commission's 65th Annual Meeting in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

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.

Mr. Dunnigan has exemplified the ideals of the award throughout his career in fisheries management. That career began in a leadership role on the staff of the NOAA Office of General Counsel and the New England Fishery Management Council in the 1980s. From 1991 – 2002, Mr. Dunnigan served as the Executive Director of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, building coalitions among member states to develop and implement mutual conservation programs for shared coastal and marine fishery resources. While at the Commission, he was the lead architect behind the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, the landmark fisheries legislation that set high standards for successful fisheries management. Upon the Act's enactment, Mr. Dunnigan was the primary force behind developing and implementing guiding documents for the Commission's fisheries management program, as well as its first Strategic Plan. His dedication to cooperative fisheries management forged a renewed commitment among the Atlantic states to manage their shared fishery resources, firmly placing the Commission in the forefront of the management of Atlantic coastal ocean resources.

In 2002, Mr. Dunnigan left the Commission to serve as Director of NOAA's Office of Sustainable Fisheries. In recognition of the skills he demonstrated in that position he was appointed by the Secretary of Commerce as NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Oceans and Coastal Services. Mr. Dunnigan's extensive list of accomplishments, his ability to bring diverse groups together for a common purpose, and his long-standing dedication to the sustainable management of Atlantic fisheries resources to make him a worthy and appropriate recipient of the David H. Hart Award.

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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

George D. Lapointe (ME), Chair
Robert H. Boyles, Jr., (SC), Vice-Chair

John V. O'Shea, Executive Director
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Upcoming Meetings

11/28 (10 AM - 4 PM):

ASMFC NEAMAP Board, Hotel Providence, 311 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

12/4 - 5:

ASMFC Shad and River Herring Technical Committee Meeting, Hotel Providence, 311 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

12/4 - 8:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel, 2717 West Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina; 800-624-8875.

12/9 - 13:

Forging the National Imperative: Third National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration, Hilton Riverside Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana.

12/11 (10 AM - 5 PM):

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board, Skyline Hotel, 725 Tenth Avenue, New York, New York.

12/11- 15:

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

12/12 - 14:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Skyline Hotel 725 10th Avenue, New York, New York; 212-586-3400.

12/12 - 14:

ASMFC American Eel Young-of-Year Workshop, Embassy Suites (Historic District), 337 Meeting Street, Charleston, South Carolina.

2007

1/29 - 2/1:

ASMFC Winter Meeting Week, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; (800) 333-3333.

2/6 - 8:

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Harborside, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

3/26 - 30:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

Reflections on the ASMFC's 65th Annual Meeting

We just finished the 65th Annual Meeting of the Commission in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina. Reflecting back on this busy week, it seems that our annual meetings keep getting better and better. Each year one of our states hosts the annual meeting, giving Commissioners, staff, and extended Commission family the opportunity to visit a different coastal area, and see firsthand how important healthy fisheries are to the local communities and their residents.

Our Annual Meeting also provides a special opportunity for state residents to attend Commission proceedings without incurring the expense of traveling to the Washington area. Those in attendance were able to observe the meeting between the Commission's Special Ad Hoc Committee and the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission. The two groups met in response to concerns brought forward by North Carolina's commercial fishermen to their state Commission.

After receiving an overview of the fishermen's concerns from North Carolina's Secretary of Natural Resources, William Ross, the two groups exchanged views on how the ASMFC is structured and conducts its business. North Carolinians were able to hear the views of a diverse group of ASMFC Commissioners, consisting of commercial fishermen, state directors, and legislators who collectively represented more than 60 years of serving on the Commission. Not surprisingly, attendees heard that the problems of loss of infrastructure and waterfront access, foreign imports, and economic hardships incurred through regulatory actions are not unique to North Carolina. This extraordinary meeting was a reflection of the importance the Commission puts on the concerns of its member states, and was intended to be the start of an ongoing dialog on the issues.

We also took time during the week to give special recognition to the important achievements of others. The Commission's Annual Award of Excellence was presented to an investigatory unit of the Florida Marine Patrol for its work in establishing an undercover sting operation focusing on illegal harvest and sale of seafood products. Since its inception, that program has resulted in charges against hundreds of harvesters and dealers. The award reminds us of the hard work and dedicated service of law enforcement professionals and their important contributions to effective fisheries management.

The Commission presented Jack Dunnigan, NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Oceans and Coastal Ser-

vices, with this year's Captain David H. Hart Award in recognition of his outstanding career contributions to the betterment of marine fisheries along the Atlantic coast. Jack served as our Executive Director for 11 years, and is widely acknowledged as the lead architect behind the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. This innovative legislation provided our states with both the administrative tools and fiscal resources to implement an effective fisheries management program. In his current position, Jack is responsible for 1,700 employees, who are charged with delivering important products, services, and information that promote safe navigation, support coastal communities, sustain marine ecosystems, and mitigate coastal hazards.

The Annual Meeting is also when Commissioners attend to the important business of electing our leadership. This year, George D. Lapointe, Maine's Commissioner of Marine Resources, was elected Commission Chair and Robert H. Boyles, Jr., South Carolina's Deputy Director of Marine Resources, was elected Vice-Chair. Commissioner Lapointe has served as our Vice-Chair for the past two years, and previously distinguished himself as Director of the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program in the mid-90s. George projects a sense of energy, enthusiasm, and commitment in whatever he undertakes, qualities that will serve the Commission well. We all look forward to working with him.

Commissioner Lapointe's election was also an important opportunity to recognize the dedicated and tireless leadership of our past Chair, Preston P. Pate, Jr., from North Carolina. Under Pres' guidance the Commission has successfully navigated a number of contentious issues, carving out practical and sustainable solutions. Perhaps most significantly, his tenure as Chair was marked by his unrelenting commitment to take a fair and balanced approach to problem solving marked by an overarching element of common sense and practicality. It was especially fitting that Pres was able to preside over our Annual Meeting as both our outgoing Chair and host.

Like most of our meeting weeks, this Annual Meeting was marked by long days, and at times contentious discussions. Despite this, as the week drew to a close, those in attendance drew a renewed sense of value in the Commission and the strength of its process that enables the states to exchange views and work constructively to solve problems. Hopefully, that is something we can all agree to support.



Winter Flounder
Pseudopleuronectes americanus

Common Names: Blackback, lemon sole, flounder, flat fish, mud dab, black flounder

Interesting Fish Fact
•Name derived from its tendency to move during the winter months to shallower inshore waters

Largest Recorded: 25 inches, 8 lbs, 2 oz.

Oldest Recorded: 20 years

Stock Status:
•GOM - not overfished & overfishing is not occurring
•SNE - overfished & overfishing is occurring

Age at Maturity:
•GOM - 86% mature @ age 4
•SNE/MA - 95% mature @ age 4

Age at Recruitment:
•GOM - fully recruited @ age 5 (12")
•SNE/MA - fully recruited at age 4 (12")

Species Profile: Winter Flounder

Current Plan Seeks to Rebuild Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Stock and Sustain Gulf of Maine Stock

Introduction

Winter flounder are an important commercial and recreational fish throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic. Inshore habitat degradation and overfishing have contributed to serious stock declines throughout the species' range leaving both fisheries at a fraction of their historical numbers. Efforts of the Atlantic coastal states and the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) to reduce fishing mortality and identify essential habitat have allowed stocks to begin recovery.

The Gulf of Maine (GOM) stock has shown the greatest improvement, with the current estimate of spawning stock biomass well above the target established in the federal plan. The Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) stock still has a long way to go, but passage of the Commission's Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Inshore Species of Winter Flounder and the Council's Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan are allowing for new cooperative management systems.

Every January, winter flounder migrate from offshore federally managed areas to inshore state controlled spawning grounds making joint management a necessity. These amendments have prioritized cooperative management between state and federal agencies to protect the fish in both areas. The stock is divided into three management units (1) the GOM unit, ranging north of Cape Cod, (2) the SNE/MA unit, extending from south of Cape Cod to the Delaware-Maryland border; and (3) the Georges Bank unit, occurring in federal waters.

Life History

One can identify winter flounder from three distinguishing characteristics; the eyes are located on the right side of the body, the lateral line is straight, and they are the darkest of all the flatfish. Coloring often varies in accordance with the bottom on which they lie, ranging from muddy to slightly reddish brown, olive green, dark slate, to an almost black upper. Their underside is white. Dorsal and anal fins are often tinged with pink, red, or yellow on the eyed side.

Winter flounder are named so because of their annual spawning migrations into shallow inshore water in winter and early spring. Spawning occurs from January to May in cool water temperatures (32-42°F). Following their migration, females will deposit negatively buoyant eggs on sandy bottom and algal mats at nighttime. This event occurs on average forty times per spawning season. Adults tend to return to the same spawning grounds every year. Females usually produce between 500,000 to 1.5 million eggs, but up to 3.3 million have been reported.

Proper temperature and salinity conditions are essential for survival of eggs during the two to three months of larval development. Five to six weeks after hatching, larvae will settle to the bottom to begin metamorphosis. After eight weeks, the left eye migrates



to the right side of the body to complete metamorphosis. Young-of-the-year and some one year-old fish remain in natal estuaries throughout the year while adults will return to their offshore feeding grounds. Juvenile flounder prefer sand or sand-silt bottoms and tolerate a wide range of salinity (from fresh to saltwater) and temperature (32-77°F).

Predatory fish such as striped bass, bluefish, toadfish, and summer flounder, as well as birds, invertebrates, and marine mammals prey on larvae and juveniles. Atlantic cod, spiny dogfish, goosefish, and winter skate are the main predators of adult winter flounder. Little skate, smooth dogfish, hakes, sea raven, striped sea robin, striped bass, bluefish, and wrymouth also consume adult winter flounder in smaller amounts.

Winter flounder diet is limited by their small mouth size, with adults feeding primarily on small invertebrates, shrimp, clams, and worms. Feeding occurs solely during the day because they depend on sight to locate prey (a behavior called sight feeding), with the activity becoming more intense during ebbing and flooding tides. At night, winter flounder lie flat with their eye turrets retracted until sunrise.

Adult winter flounder utilize a wide range of habitat types, depths, and temperatures. Inshore, they seem to prefer muddy sand -- especially when it is broken up by patches of eelgrass. Winter flounder are also distributed over clean sand, clay, and even pebbly and gravelly ground. Fish that occupy muddy bottom will bury their whole body except for the eyes. Offshore populations inhabit hard bottom habitat. Winter flounder size generally increases with an increase in depth with the largest individuals typically inhabiting the deeper Georges Bank waters and the smaller individuals inhabiting the shallower in-shore waters. Research has found substantial variability in length and age of winter flounder by region, with the fastest growth occurring in southern waters.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries *Gulf of Maine*

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, commercial landings from the GOM stock fluctuated around 2.2 million pounds. In 1982, landings peaked at six million pounds and then declined steadily to a time series low of 557,770 pounds in 1999. This decline may be attributed to extended spring closures in the Gulf of Maine. Landings have averaged 1.1 million pounds since 1999, with a maximum catch of 1.5 million pounds in 2003. Landings in 2004 were approximately 1.1 million pounds (see Figure 1).

Recreational landings from the GOM stock fluctuated around 4.4 million pounds in the early 1980s before declining to under 200,621 pounds in 1991. Recreational landings have remained below 220,000 pounds since 1994. On average, recreational landings comprised 40 percent of the total catch from 1979-1990. Since 1991, recreational landings have comprised between five and 19 percent of the total landings, averaging 8.4% of total catch.

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic

Commercial landings from the SNE/MA stock averaged 18.7 million pounds from 1964 to 1972 before declining to around 10.6 million pounds throughout the mid- to late 1970s. Landings increased in the early 1980s to a record high of 24.6 million pounds, but then declined to 4.7 million pounds in 1994 (see Figure 2). From 1995 to 2003, landings ranged from 10.3 to 5.4 million pounds, reaching a time series low of 3.2 million pounds in 2004.

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Figure 1. GOM Winter Flounder Commercial & Recreational Landings
Source: NEFSC Groundfish Assessment Review, 2005

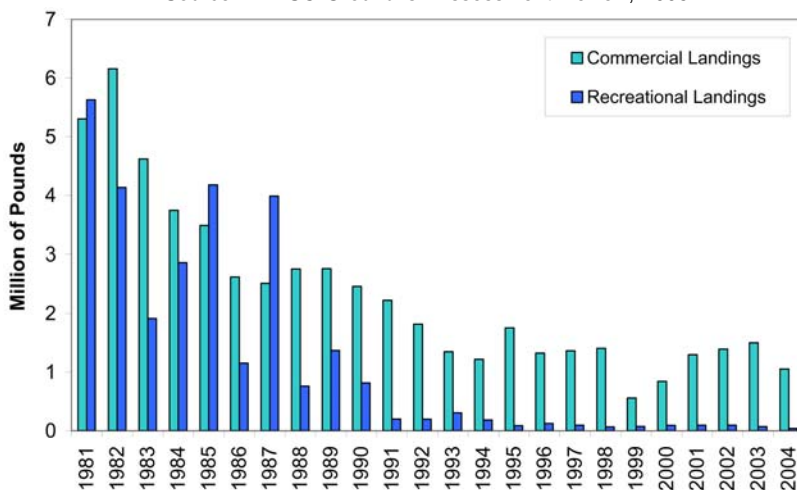
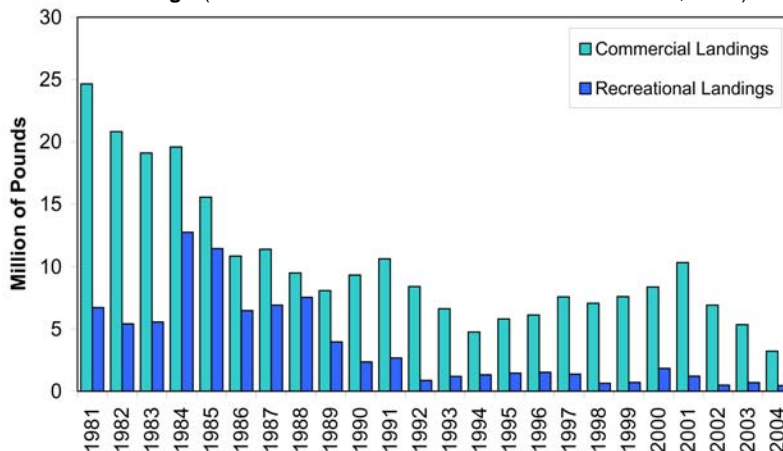


Figure 2. SNE/MA Winter Flounder Commercial & Recreational Landings
(Source: NEFSC Groundfish Assessment Review, 2005)



Species Profile: Winter Flounder (continued from page 5)

Recreational landings from the SNE/MA stock peaked at 12.7 million pounds in 1984 before declining to a low of 866,417 pounds in 1992. Landings have ranged between 450,000 pounds and 1.8 million pounds in recent years, with 2004 landings estimated at 454,152 pounds. On average, recreational landings comprised 21 percent of the total landings (1981-2004).

Stock Status

Gulf of Maine

The latest stock assessment update, conducted by the Groundfish Assessment Review Meeting (GARM) in 2005, concluded that GOM winter flounder stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Fishing mortality (F) in 2004 was well below the estimate of F_{msy} , and spawning stock biomass in 2004 was estimated to be about 67 percent above the estimate of spawning stock biomass (SSB) threshold (see Figure 3). Recruitment to the stock has been above or near average since 1995.

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic

The 2005 GARM update concluded that the SNE/MA winter flounder stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring. Fishing mortality in 2004 was .38, 19% higher than the F threshold. Spawning stock biomass in 2004 was only 26% of the threshold value of 33.2 million pounds SSB (see Figure 4). The average recruitment from 1981 to 2001 was 23.9 million age-1 fish. Recruitment to the stock has been below average since 1989. The 2002 year class, with only 4.4 million fish, is the smallest in the 22-year time series.

Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

Historically, the Council and Commission have chosen different approaches to managing winter flounder stocks, but the unique biology of winter flounder makes cooperation essential. When winter flounder migrate to inshore spawning grounds, they become concentrated in certain areas, making it easy for anglers to locate and remove a substantial portion of them. Proximity of the spawning grounds to land also creates a number of problems as well. For starters, recreational fishermen can easily access the spawning areas. The nearshore spawning grounds are also vulnerable to water pollution and habitat loss. Recent tagging studies have shown spawning-site fidelity in winter flounder, meaning that individuals will often return to the location where they were hatched, or close by. What this suggests is that there is the possibility for subpopulations of winter flounder that may be particularly vulnerable to extinction -- if you wipe out a breeding ground or spawning subpopulation, the stock may never rebuild. Flounder are vulnerable to commercial fishing from June through December when they are found further offshore which is where the majority of the catch takes place.



Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, focused on offshore commercial fisheries, aims to rebuild overfished fisheries by reducing fishing mortality and minimizing adverse effects on all essential fish habitat. Winter flounder are managed as a "large mesh species" employing seasonal closures, gear restrictions, minimum size limits, trip limits, limited access, and days-at-sea restrictions to reduce fishing pressure on the stocks. The success of Amendment 13 in rebuilding depleted stocks is un-

Figure 3. GOM Winter Flounder Total & Spawning Stock Biomass
Source: NEFSC Groundfish Assessment Review, 2005

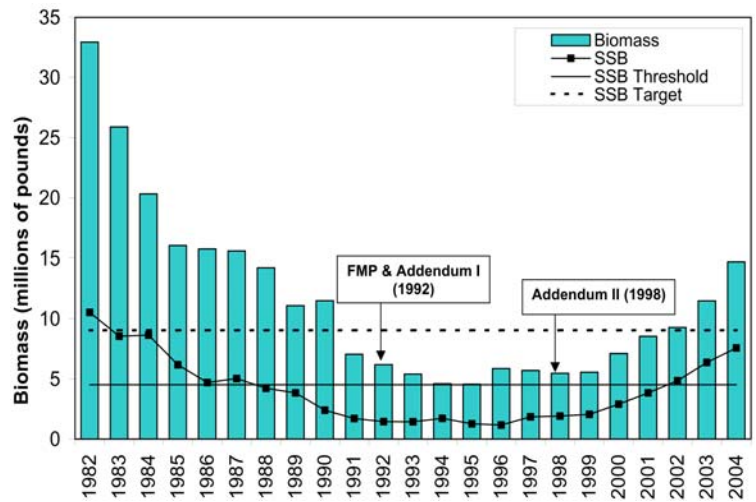
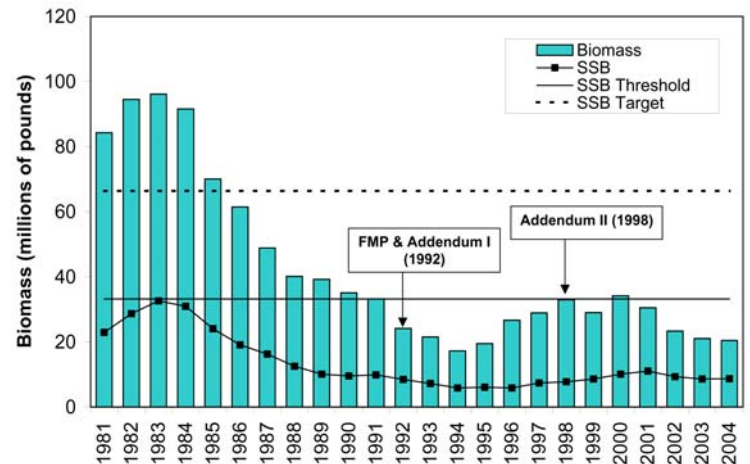


Figure 4. SNE/MA Winter Flounder Total & Spawning Stock Biomass
Source: NEFSC Groundfish Assessment Review, 2005



continued on page 10

George D. Lapointe Elected ASMFC Chair

On October 26, 2006, Commission member states acknowledged the many accomplishments of outgoing Chair Preston P. Pate, Jr. of North Carolina and elected Commissioner George D. Lapointe of Maine as its new Chair.

In assuming the chairmanship, Commissioner Lapointe spoke enthusiastically about his new position, "I am honored to be elected and look forward to working with my colleagues from the 15 Atlantic coast states, federal marine fishery management agencies, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and the District of Columbia to ensure the continued conservation and management of Atlantic coast marine fishery resources."

"Pres Pate has left me an impressive legacy to follow," stated Commissioner Lapointe. "Over his two-year tenure as Chair, he was a strong proponent of science-based management, encouraging enhanced data collection and research programs for American lobster, American eel, striped bass, and Atlantic menhaden so as to improve our information base on landings, bycatch and local stock conditions. To ensure proper man-

agement in the absence of robust data, Pres promoted the Commission's use of a precautionary approach to management though the development and implementation of risk-adverse management programs for horseshoe crab and Atlantic menhaden while further data is collected. He also worked with the states to promote the long-term conservation of summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass by ensuring the states' timely implementation of the respective fishery management plans through the establishment of species-specific disincentives to minimize delayed implementation of required management measures. During my two-year term, I hope to build upon these accomplishments, furthering the Commission's long-term vision for healthy, self-sustaining marine fishery resources by 2015, which in turn allows for healthy fisheries from these stocks."

Commissioner Lapointe is a veteran state and interstate marine fisheries manager. For the past eight years, he has served as Commissioner of the Maine Department of Marine Resources, overseeing the management responsibilities of the Department at local, state, regional, fed-



eral, and international levels. He is a member of the Federal Advisory Committee on Marine Protected Areas, the US Commissioner on the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization, a Commissioner on the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission, the Chair of the Land for Maine's Future Board, and sits on numerous committees for the ASMFC and the New England Fishery Management Council. He received his B.S. in Wildlife Biology from the University of Massachusetts and holds a M.S. in Wildlife from the University of Minnesota. Commissioner Lapointe currently resides in Hallowell, Maine with his wife and two sons.

The Commission also elected Mr. Robert H. Boyles, Jr., from South Carolina as its Vice-Chair.

Northern Shrimp 2007 Fishing Season Set at 151 Days

On November 6, 2006, the Commission's Northern Shrimp Section approved a 151-day fishing season for the 2006-2007 northern shrimp fishery, an 11-day increase from 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 in the early 2000s have led to a greater abundance of shrimp and record catches in the Gulf of Maine summer survey," stated Section Chair Ritchie White from New Hampshire. "By expanding the upcoming the fishing season, we are able to pass on the benefits of an improved resource by providing new harvesting and marketing opportunities."

The Section also made a conditional commitment to set a 151-day fishing season for 2007/2008, provided fishing mortality, landings, and the number of directed trips for shrimp do not exceed acceptable levels and the 2007 stock assess-

ment remains favorable. Reappearance of strong 2003 and 2004 year-classes show promise in maintaining relatively high stock abundance and enhancing market conditions. "The Section is encouraged by the prospect of continued abundance levels that should support increased economic benefits and stability to harvesters and processors," continued Mr. White.

The 2007 fishing season, which is the same for mobile and trap gear, will be open seven days a week from December 1, 2006, through April 30, 2007.

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.

ASMFC Tautog Board Approves Draft Addendum IV for Public Comment: States Schedule Hearings for late November/early December

States from Massachusetts through Virginia have scheduled their hearings to gather public comment on Draft Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Tautog. The dates, times and locations of the scheduled meetings follow:

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

November 28, 2006: 6:00 PM

Radisson Hotel

180 Water Street

Plymouth Harbor, Massachusetts

Contact: Melanie Griffin at (617) 626-1528

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

November 29, 2006; 6:00 PM

Narragansett Town Hall

Second Floor Conference Room

25 Fifth Avenue

Narragansett, Rhode Island

Contact: Jason McNamee at (401) 423-1943

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

November 30, 2006; 7:00 PM

Marine Headquarters Boating Education Center (Rear Building)

333 Ferry Road

Old Lyme, Connecticut

Contact: Dave Simpson at (860)434-6043

New York Department of Environmental Conservation

December 6, 2006; 7:00 PM

Bureau of Marine Resources

205 North Belle Mead Road

East Setauket, New York

Contact: Steve Heins at (631)444-0436

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

December 7, 2006; 7:00-10:00 PM

Ocean County Administration Building

Public Hearing Room #119

101 Hooper Avenue

Toms River, New Jersey

Contact: Peter Himchak at (609)748-2020

Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control**

November 27, 2006; 7:00-9:00 PM

University of Delaware College of Marine Studies, Cannon Laboratory

Pilottown Road

Lewes, Delaware

Contact: Roy Miller at (302)739-9914

**Hearing to be held jointly with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

December 4, 2006; 6:00 PM

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

2600 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor

Newport News, Virginia

Contact: Jack Travelstead at (757)247-2247

The Draft Addendum proposes a definition for target and threshold spawning stock biomass (SSB), and a new fishing mortality rate to achieve stock rebuilding. The Addendum was developed in response to the findings and recommendations of the 2006 peer-reviewed stock assessment, as well as those of the recently updated virtual population analysis (VPA). The assessment indicates that the tautog resource remains at low biomass levels. Since the mid-1980s, tautog has undergone a substantial decrease in total and spawning stock biomass. Both indicators are currently at levels about one-third as high as their early time series average. Based on the current fishing mortality target ($F = 0.30$) and the recent fishing mortality estimates for the last two years, overfishing is not occurring.

In addition to defining a coastwide biomass target, the Draft Addendum proposes allowing individual states or groups of states to determine their own fishing mortality rates and SSB reference points more appropriate for their geographic region than the coastwide assessment. These regional reference points would require Technical Committee review and Management Board approval before they could be implemented at the state or regional level.

The Board will meet in late January to review public comment on the Draft Addendum and consider its final approval. Copies of the Draft Addendum can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400 or via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM on January 16, 2007** and should be forwarded to Christopher Vonderweidt, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 289-6051 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line:Tautog). For more information, please contact Christopher Vonderweidt at cvonderweidt@asmfc.org or (202) 289-6400.

Correction

In the August 2006 issue of *Fisheries Focus* on page 4 (Species Profile: Spanish Mackerel) under "Interesting Fish Facts" (left side-bar), we incorrectly stated that Spanish mackerel can reach a maximum size of 9'. The correct maximum size for the species is 3'.

Atlantic Menhaden Board Approves Addendum III: Addendum Caps Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery at 109,020 MT

On October 25, 2006, the Commission's Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved Addendum III to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. The Addendum establishes a five-year annual cap on reduction fishery harvests in Chesapeake Bay of 109,020 metric tons, a number derived from the average of harvests from 2001 – 2005. The cap will be implemented in 2006 and extend through 2010. Harvest for reduction purposes will be prohibited in the Chesapeake Bay when 100% of the cap is landed. Overharvest in any given year would be deducted from the next year's quota. The Addendum also includes a provision allowing under-harvest in one year to be credited only to the following year's harvest, not to exceed 122,740 metric tons.

Prior to taking action, the Board received a stock assessment update from the Technical Committee indicating that menhaden are not overfished and overfish-

ing is not occurring on a coastwide basis. Given the lack of available data, the Technical Committee was not able to determine menhaden's Bay-wide status. Due to this uncertainty, the Management Board has implemented a precautionary cap to limit the expansion of menhaden reduction landings from Chesapeake Bay.

The Commonwealth of Virginia and Omega Protein have also entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to conduct a research program to determine the status of menhaden in the Bay and assess whether localized depletion is occurring. The research program will address the following priorities: (1) determine menhaden abundance in the Chesapeake Bay; (2) develop estimates of menhaden removal by predation; (3) evaluate the rate of exchange of menhaden between the Bay and coastal systems; and (4) conduct larval studies to determine recruitment to the Bay. The



Commonwealth of Virginia and Omega Protein will work together to secure additional funding for menhaden research.

The Addendum will be available by mid-November. Copies can be obtained by contacting the Commission at 202-289-6400 or via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News. For more information, please contact Braddock Spear, Senior Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator for Policy, at bspear@asmfc.org or (202) 289-6400.

ASMFC Spiny Dogfish Board Revises 2006/2007 Quota and Sets Specifications for 2007/2008 Fishing Year

The Commission's Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Shark Management Board approved changes to 2006/2007 quota and trip limits, and set specifications for the 2007/2008 fishing year. The Board modified the 2006/2007 fishing year (May 1, 2006 – April 30, 2007) specifications by increasing the quota to six million pounds, with 58% of the quota allocated to states from Maine through Connecticut and 42% allocated to New York through North Carolina. States were given the prerogative to set their own trip limits. For the 2007/2008 fishing year (May 1, 2007 – April 30, 2008), the Board approved a six-million pound quota with trip limits to be determined at the winter 2007 Board meeting.

This action was taken based on the findings of the 2006 benchmark stock assessment and peer review, which indicated that spiny dogfish are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Further, the Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee reported that a modest increase in the annual quota would not have a significant impact on total mortality or stock rebuilding.

The federal specifications for the spiny dogfish fishery remain at four million pounds per fishing year with trip limits of 600 pounds for quota periods one (May 1 to October 31) and two (November 1 to April 30). Federal specifications

were first set in 2005 for the 2006/2007, 2007/2008, and 2008/2009 fishing years.

For more information, please contact Christopher Vonderweidt, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or cvonderweidt@asmfc.org.



ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section Sets Area 1A TAC at 50,000MT for 2007 – 2009

On October 24, 2006, the Commission's Atlantic Herring Section voted to reduce the amount of herring available to the fishery for 2007-2009 in Area 1A, an inshore region off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. The total allowable catch for Area 1A is now set at 50,000 metric tons. The Section committed to review stock status annually to determine if quota adjustments are necessary.

The specifications are consistent with those recommended by the New En-

gland Fishery Management Council to NOAA's Northeast Regional Administrator in late September 2006. The table below outlines the Commission's final herring specifications for 2007-2009 and the Council's recommended measures for the same period. The Council's measures await approval by the Northeast Regional Administrator.

While the herring resource is considered fully rebuilt and overfishing is not occurring, scientific models have suggested that total herring biomass may be over-

estimated and fishing mortality underestimated. In addition, abundance survey trends in the inshore Gulf of Maine are declining. Given these findings, the Section opted to manage the fishery in a more cautious manner, limiting the Area 1A TAC to 50,000 metric tons – a 10,000 metric ton reduction from the initial specification that the Section set back in September. For more information, please contact Christopher Vonderweidt, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or cvonderweidt@asmfc.org.

Summary of ASMFC Atlantic Herring Specifications and the NEFMC Recommendations for 2007-2009.

SPECIFICATIONS	ASMFC Specifications for 2007- 2009	NEFMC Recommendations for 2007-2009
ABC	194,000	194,000
U.S. OY	145,000	145,000
TAC Area 1A	50,000 (5,000 available Jan-May)	50,000 (5,000 available Jan-May)
TAC Area 1B	10,000	10,000
TAC Area 2	30,000	30,000
TAC Area 3	55,000	55,000
Research Set-Aside	3% from each area TAC (2008 and 2009 FY only)	3% from each area TAC (2008 and 2009 FY only)

ASMFC Comings & Goings



Staff:

Christopher Vonderweidt -- In October, Chris joined the Commission staff as its newest FMP Coordinator, assuming coordination responsibilities for Atlantic herring, tautog, and winter flounder. Chris has a Master of Environmental Management from Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences and a Bachelor of Arts

from Ithaca College in New York. Before coming to the Commission, Chris worked as a consultant to the Duke University Marine Lab in Beaufort, North Carolina, comparing ecology of four major eastern boundary current upwelling systems. In the summer of 2005, Chris worked at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute's Marine Policy Center as a Stanback Intern, where he assisted in writing two reports on Large Marine Ecosystems for submission to the United Nations Development Programme. Welcome aboard, Chris!

Species Profile: Winter Flounder (continued from page 6)

known at this time because stock assessment updates have not been conducted since its provisions became effective in May 2004.

The Commission's Amendment 1, passed in November 2005, focuses on joint management between the Commission and the Council due to the life history of winter flounder. It is intended to rebuild and then maintain spawning stock biomass at or near target biomass levels. In addition, Amendment 1 prioritizes restoration and maintenance of essential winter flounder habitat. Specific provisions are listed below. Since this amendment is barely one year old, it is too early to tell how well its provisions are working.

For more information, please contact Christopher Vonderweidt, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or cvonderweidt@asmfc.org.

ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence to the Investigators of “No More Back Door”

Lieutenants Don McMillen and Camille Soverel, and Investigators Tony Howell and Al Corfield of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Law Enforcement, were presented the Commission's Awards of Excellence at its Annual Meeting in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina. They received awards for their contributions to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast.

“Every year a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence recognizes outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries,” stated ASMFC Chair, Preston P. Pate, Jr. of North Carolina. “Today, we honor a team of outstanding individuals for their contributions to the management and conservation of Atlantic coast fisheries.”

The recipients were nominated for their collective efforts in the planning and execution of an undercover detail (“No More Back Door”) that targeted people and businesses illegally buy-

ing, selling, packaging, or mislabeling seafood products. The officers posed as recreational fishermen attempting to buy or sell illegal saltwater food products. Numerous restaurants, charter boats, commercial fishermen and recreational anglers were approached to either illegally purchase or sell saltwater products.

The operation resulted in 50 arrests state violations and two arrests for federal fisheries violations. Since the conclusion of the initial operation in December 2005, an additional 123 investigations, 210 attempted sales, 64 successful sales, 158 citations and 44 warnings have occurred.

Additionally, working with agents from the National Marine Fisheries Service, the team was able to locate, identify and seize 324 pounds of illegal snook fillets imported by a market in Orlando, Florida from Guyana in Central America. These fillets were being sold in violation of state law. Due to the team's

diligent efforts, arrests were made, cases were successfully prosecuted, and illegal saltwater products were recovered. The team's work with a wide range of local, state, and federal agencies was a vital component in the successful prosecution of the cases.



From left: ASMFC Executive Director John V. O'Shea, Outgoing ASMFC Chair Preston P. Pate Jr. (NC), Award Recipients Lieutenant Camille Soverel and Investigator Al Corefield, and Incoming ASMFC Chair George D. Lapointe (ME).

The Commission established the Annual Awards of Excellence in 1998 to recognize the important contributions of individuals to the success of the organization. For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance and Administration, at (202) 289-6400.

ASMFC to Conduct American Eel YOY Workshop In December

Since 2001, all Atlantic coastal states and jurisdictions have been required to perform annual young-of-the-year (YOY) abundance surveys as described in the American Eel FMP. To date, these YOY surveys have been conducted by in all of the Atlantic coastal states, as well as the Potomac River Fisheries Commission and the District of Columbia. The value of these surveys to serve as an index of abundance of glass eel and elver along the Atlantic coast has been affirmed by the American Eel Technical Committee, the American Eel Stock Assessment Committee, and the 2005 American Eel Stock Assessment Peer Review Panel.

In recognition of the value of the surveys with respect to assessing the status of the stock and developing management measures, the Commission is holding an American

Eel YOY Workshop in December 2006. The purpose of the workshop is to: solve problems that individual states may be encountering in their annual sampling; streamline data collection by identifying ways of shortening time spent in the field; improve data collection; and discuss new and different field methods for sampling glass eels and elver.

The workshop is an opportunity for members of the Technical Committee, Stock Assessment Subcommittee, and experts in the field of American eel YOY sampling to come together and create solutions that promote the collection of high quality data. The American Eel YOY Workshop will be held in Charleston, South Carolina on December 12 - 14, 2006. For more information, please contact Erika Robbins, FMP Coordinator, at erobbins@asmfc.org.

ACCSP Announces 2007 Funding and Other News

ACCSP Announces 2007 Funding

ACCSP 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 2007. Eight state, two federal and three ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee proposals were recommended for funding.

Improvement of commercial catch and effort data collection projects were allotted \$706,954. These projects will help the states of Maine, New Jersey, and Rhode Island implement and maintain commercial fisheries mandatory trip level reporting, implement electronic vessel trip reporting, and continue coordination and implementation of Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System.

The ACCSP provided a total of \$791,766 for continued improvements to recreational and for-hire fisheries data collection on the Atlantic coast.

The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) will continue to collect recreational trip and catch data for Wave 1 (January – February) 2007. Funds were also allocated to three ACCSP Recreational Technical committee proposals: (1) to conduct an independent review of the Headboat survey methodology analysis that will be conducted by the For-Hire Subcommittee; (2) reduce catch and effort variances for important managed fisheries on the Atlantic coast; and (3) increase intercept sampling levels for the for-hire survey of the charter boat and headboat fishery on the Atlantic coast.

A total of \$421,156 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 Maine Department of Marine Resources that samples Atlantic herring and Atlantic mackerel fisheries from

Maine to New Jersey. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation project will collect biological samples essential for species managed through the ASMFC. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources will continue sampling for hard part/aging from the commercial fishery for snapper/grouper complex in South Carolina. Depending on federal grant fees and possible rescissions, the NCDMF may be funded to expand an estuarine commercial gillnet observer program that will obtain effort, catch and bycatch information in North Carolina commercial fisheries

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 personnel and administration, and operation of the ACCSP Data Warehouse, and SAFIS.

A summary of actual project proposals and specific funding amounts will be available soon on the ACCSP web site at www.accsp.org under Document Archives—Funding—FY07 RFP.

ACCSP External Peer Review

A panel of six scientists, with expertise in a variety of disciplines, convened on September 19-21, 2006 in Baltimore, Maryland, to conduct an external peer review of the ACCSP Program, emphasizing a broad evaluation of how ACCSP is meeting the goals and mission of the program.

The Peer Review Panel reviewed the ACCSP structure, including governance, operating environment, mission goals and priorities, and the 2002 - 2007 strategic plan. They outlined successes, important lessons learned, and made recommendations for the future.

Peer review recommendations have been shared with ACCSP committees and Coordinating Council, and the next

year will be devoted to addressing these suggestions.

Presentations given at the peer review meeting and the final report are available on the ACCSP website at <http://www.accsp.org/accspeereview2006.htm>.

ACCSP to Deploy New Data Warehouse Queries

The ACCSP will deploy a new web query interface for the data warehouse using Oracle Discoverer the week of November 6, 2006. These new queries summarize data and create reports from the commercial and recreational catch and effort warehouse databases.

The new queries offer many benefits, including:

- Ability to create and display more queries for end users;
- User-selected parameters are displayed at top of each query clarifying which data are displayed;
- Ability to “drill” down to display more detailed summaries;
- Options to export data, print as PDF, or email results;
- Improved control over user access, both confidential and non-confidential;
- No additional cost for software or support (savings of \$30K annually); and
- No special software required.

Non-confidential users are required to request a new account via the ACCSP website in order to use the new interface. The old version will continue to be available until spring 2007. Current users will be notified of the change via email, and given instructions on how to request a new account.

ACCSP staff will provide demonstrations and training on the new interface at upcoming ASMFC technical meeting weeks. For more information, please check the Users Guide on the ACCSP website www.accsp.org. Questions may be directed to support@accsp.org.

States Schedule Public Hearings on Draft Addendum X: Addendum Proposes Establishment of Landing Data Collection

The Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved sending forward for public comment Draft Addendum X to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island have scheduled their public hearings to gather comment on the Draft Addendum. The dates, times and locations of the scheduled meetings follow:

Maine Department of Marine Resources

November 27, 2006; 6:00 PM

University of Maine at Machias,
Science Building, Room 102
9 O'Brien Ave.
Machias, Maine

November 28, 2006; 6:00 PM

Rockland City Hall,
Council Chambers
270 Pleasant Street
Rockland, Maine
Contact: Terry Stockwell at (207)633-9556

November 29, 2006; 6:00 PM

Ellsworth City Hall
Council Chambers
1 City Hall Plaza
Ellsworth, Maine

November 30, 2006; 6:00 PM

Eastland Park Hotel, Longfellow Room A
157 High Street
Portland, Maine

Contact: Terry Stockwell at (207)633-9556

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

November 29, 2006; 6:00 - 9:00 PM

Holiday Inn
55 Ariadne, US 1A & I 95/128
Dedham, Massachusetts
Contact: Melanie Griffin at (617)626-1528

Rhode Island Division of Fish & Wildlife

December 6, 2006; 6:00 PM

URI Narragansett Bay Campus
Corless Auditorium
South Ferry Road
Narragansett, Rhode Island
Contact: Tom Angel at (401)423-1931

The Draft Addendum proposes the establishment of a landings data collection program that is consistent with the standards of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program and responds to the recommendations of the 2005 Lobster Stock Assessment and Peer Review Advisory Report.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on Draft Addendum X, either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202)289-6400 or via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM on December 15, 2006** and should be forwarded to Toni Kerns, Senior Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator for Management, 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; 202-289-6051 (FAX) or at tkerns@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Addendum X).



Lobster Board Adopts Area 2 Trap Transfer Program

On October 23, 2006, the Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum IX to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Addendum establishes a 10% conservation tax under the Area 2 trap transfer program.

The trap transfer program, once fully developed, will allow Area 2 (Southern New England) lobstermen to increase or decrease the number of traps they fish as long as they stay within the maximum allowable limit of 800 traps. The conservation tax will serve as a passive reduction strategy, requiring fishermen to retire 10% of the traps with every trap transfer within the transfer program. The trap transfer program shall take effect for the 2007 fishing year.

The Lobster Board may review annually the effectiveness of the effort control plan for Area 2 and may modify the transfer tax if it is no longer deemed necessary because the Area's conservation goals are met or alternative management strategies are adopted, or further analyses identifies that the tax needs to be increased.

The Addendum can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400 or via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Senior Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator for Management, at tkerns@asmfc.org or (202) 289-6400.

Nontraditional Stakeholders Sought for Participation in ASMFC Advisory Panels for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board is in the process of reconfiguring its three species advisory panels. As part of that process, the Board is seeking nominations from nontraditional stakeholders to fill two seats on each of the three advisory panels (summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass). Examples of such stakeholders include, but are not limited to, nongovernmental organizations, grassroots organizations, and individuals/groups with an interest in fisheries and habitat conservation.

The intent of this action is to broaden the scope of public input to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council as they develop Amendments 14 & 15 to the Fishery Management Plans for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass. Amendment 14 focuses on scup rebuild-

ing while Amendment 15 deals with a wide-range of management issues affecting all three species. The Commission believes that input from nontraditional stakeholders will strengthen its efforts in successfully managing these species. Individuals interested in serving as advisors can obtain an advisory panel nomination form by contacting the Commission at (202)289-6400 or downloading the nomination form via the Commission's website at <http://www.asmf.org/breakingNews.htm>. A completed nomination form must be submitted to the Commission by 5:00 PM on December 15, 2006.

The Commission's advisory panel process was established to address its increasing responsibilities under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. The Act mandates, among other considerations, that the Commission provide adequate public

participation in its fishery management planning process, including at least four public hearings and procedures for submission of written comments to the Commission. In 2002, the Commission established the Advisory Panel Oversight Committee, comprised of a subset of legislative and governor-appointed Commissioners and Advisory Panel Chairs, to provide oversight to its advisory panel process. Advisory Panels have been developed for Atlantic croaker, Atlantic herring, Atlantic menhaden, American eel, American lobster, black sea bass, bluefish, coastal sharks, horseshoe crab, northern shrimp, red drum, scup, shad & river herring, spiny dogfish, striped bass, summer flounder, tautog, weakfish, and winter flounder. For more information, please contact Tina Berger, Public Affairs Specialist, at (202)289-6400 or tberger@asmfc.org.

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