



ASMFC

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FISHERIES *focus*

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

Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015.

ASMFC to Hold Atlantic Menhaden Workshop to Address Ecological Role

On October 12 - 14, 2004, federal, state and academic fishery scientists will participate in a Commission workshop to examine the ecological role of menhaden and explore the possibility of localized depletion in the Chesapeake Bay. The workshop will be held at the Holiday Inn, 625 First Street, Alexandria, Virginia.



Photo courtesy of NC DMF.

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The workshop aims to improve our scientific understanding of menhaden's ecological niche. Experts in the ecological role of Atlantic menhaden, predator-prey interactions, localized depletion, and fisheries ecosystem plans, as well as stakeholders will be giving a series of presentations followed by discussion. During the workshop, participants will:

- Examine the status of Atlantic menhaden with respect to its ecological role;
- Explore the implications of current management reference points with respect to menhaden's ecological role;
- Explore the effects of concentrated harvest in the Chesapeake Bay; and
- Develop recommendations for revised or new directions to the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Management Plan to the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board.

A report, summarizing the findings and recommendations of workshop, will be prepared for presentation to the Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Panel in October, and to the Management Board in November.

This workshop is designed to provide a forum for scientists to explore concerns raised by the public regarding Atlantic menhaden. The public is encouraged to attend and observe the workshop; there will be limited time for public comment on the second day of the workshop, October 13, 2004. If the Management Board decides to take action based on the workshop recommendations, there will be ample opportunity for public comment throughout the management process.

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

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Upcoming Meetings

10/5:

ASMFC Winter Flounder Technical Committee, Radisson Airport Hotel, 2081 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island; 401/739-3000.

10/6:

Joint Meeting of the ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board & Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn, Ronkonkoma, New York.

10/7:

NEAMAP Operations Committee, Holiday Inn Downtown, 1155 - 14th St., NW, Washington, DC 20005.

10/12 - 14:

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Workshop, Holiday Inn, 625 First Street, Alexandria, Virginia; 703/548-6300.

10/21:

ASMFC Protected Species Committee, Holiday Inn Charleston Riverview, 301 Savannah Highway, Charleston, South Carolina; 800/766-4451.

10/24 - 28:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Pawleys Plantation, 70 Tanglewood Drive, Pawleys Island, South Carolina.

10/26 - 28:

ASMFC American Lobster Model Review, Embassy Suites at Logan Airport, 207 Porter Street, Boston, Massachusetts; 617/567-5000.

10/28 (10 AM - 6 PM) & 29 (8:30 AM - 5:00 PM):

USFWS Shorebird Technical Committee, Golden Inn, Oceanfront at 78th Street, Avalon, New Jersey.

10/28:

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Panel, Radisson Plaza Lord Baltimore, 60 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

11/8 - 11:

ASMFC 63rd Annual Meeting, Wentworth by the Sea, 588 Wentworth Road, New Castle, New Hampshire (see pages 9 & 10 for preliminary agenda).

11/16 - 18:

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

11/22 (10 AM - 5 PM) & 23 (9 AM - 4 PM):

Atlantic Sturgeon Workshop: Working Toward Recovery, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, 12100 Beech Forest Road, Laurel, Maryland.

The future health of fisheries resources depends on how wisely we act now, as well as how successfully we teach the importance of stewardship to the next generation. While I have frequently used this space to discuss the first point, I would like to focus this article on the second point.

Throughout his travels around the world, renowned ocean explorer Jean Michel Cousteau has seen the consequences of unconstrained exploitation and pollution on the oceans and their inhabitants. He has become passionate about changing how humans think and care about the sea. You can catch him in a cameo appearance in the DVD version of "Finding Nemo" discussing coral reef habitat with animated fish characters in a segment that is both entertaining and educational. It is cute, clever, and memorable. That is Cousteau's genius. He recognized that the majority of people purchased "Finding Nemo" for their children, creating a perfect audience for ocean education.

Cousteau believes that "Finding Nemo" and other non-conventional educational tools will inspire the public to learn more about marine issues and invest their time and energy in the future of our oceans. Just think about how many times those pre-schoolers will have watched their "Nemo" DVDs and heard Cousteau's message by the time they reach the third grade. And, he is hoping that the next generation does a better job than those who have gone before them.

But Cousteau is not the only one looking forward. Programs around the country tap into the curiosity and potential of young people to create and sustain an ocean-literate society. Various ocean education programs are based at aquariums and academic institutions, including Sea Grant College programs, day sails on research vessels, and semesters at sea for college students.

By giving young people opportunities to explore the ocean and test their own hypotheses such programs can inspire them to pursue marine careers. Engaging exhibits at aquariums, interpretive programs at national seashore visitor centers, pocket seafood safety cards, and naturalists aboard whale watching vessels and cruise ships are all responses to the public's interest in the health of our oceans.

Ocean literacy and education are important to lawmakers. Newly introduced legislation, including the "Oceans-21" Bill call for increased funding for ocean education programs. Among other things it would expand the Sea Grant College Program and create a National Ocean Awareness Media Campaign.

Ocean education must reach students and lifelong learners; we all need to understand how our actions affect the ocean, even if we live many miles from it.

ASMFC contributes significantly to ocean literacy through our outreach program. We included a comprehensive outreach goal and strategies in our action plan this year, and we are actively pursuing the best ways to reach a wider audience. Part of this effort will include a survey to thoroughly evaluate our outreach activities and tools, and ultimately measure our effectiveness in reaching out to and involving our broad constituencies. I hope you will take the time to share your feedback on how we can do a better job.

You're reading our top outreach product right now. *Fisheries Focus* reaches thousands of readers a month, including fishermen, government officials, scientists, and members of the non-fishing public. Our goal is to present understandable and informative articles and provide contact information at the end of each article for those who want to learn more. Our press releases provide timely updates on what's happening with fisheries management. Our website is updated frequently with information on ASMFC species and programs, and provides an easy way for you to submit public comment on proposed fishery management actions.

Less than a generation ago, many people believed that the amount of fish that could be removed from the ocean was limitless. We also assumed that there was no limit to the amount of sewage, oil, chemicals, and garbage the oceans could absorb. Today, most of us recognize this thinking is wrong and the best way to change this in others is through education.

The future of our oceans depends on how responsibly we act now and how well we educate the next generation. It is our task to foster a strong sense of environmental stewardship in our neighbors and our children. I hope that is a job we can all agree to work on together.

Species Profile: Atlantic Sturgeon

Ancient Species' Slow Road to Recovery

Introduction

Once highly valued for their flesh and caviar, wild Atlantic sturgeon stocks are now protected for up to 40 years from harvest and possession through a coastwide moratorium.

Life History

Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*) are ancient fish, dating back at least 70 million years, and can be found along the entire Atlantic coast from Labrador, Canada to Florida. They are anadromous, migrating from the ocean into coastal estuaries and rivers to spawn. Spawning occurs during the spring and individual fish only spawn once every two to six years. After spawning, males may remain in the river or lower estuary until the fall, while females typically leave within four to six weeks. Most juveniles remain in their natal river from one to six years before migrating to the ocean. Little is known about the movements of Atlantic sturgeon when they are in the ocean.

Atlantic sturgeon may live up to 60 years old, with females reaching sexual maturity between the ages of 7 to 30, and males between the ages of 5 to 24. Typically, fish in the northern part of the species range mature at a later age than those in the southern part of the range. Atlantic sturgeon are bottom feeders whose prey include mussels, worms, shrimp, and small bottom-dwelling fish.

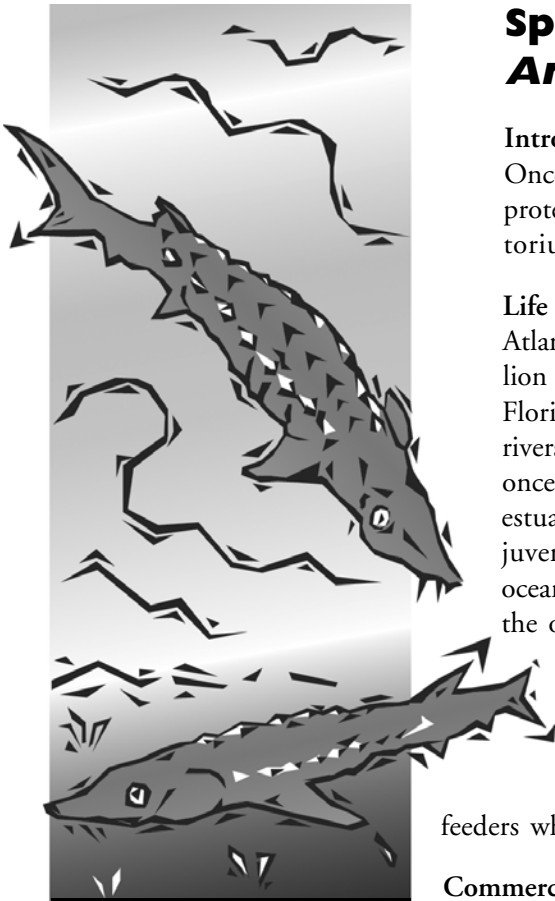
Commercial Fisheries

Since colonial times, Atlantic sturgeon have supported commercial fisheries of varying magnitude. They were the primary "cash crop" of Jamestown, Virginia before tobacco. In the late 1800s, they were second only to lobster among important fisheries. Landings just prior to the turn of the century were estimated at seven million pounds per year. From 1950 through the mid-1990s, landings ranged between 100,000 and 250,000 pounds per year. While a coastwide moratorium on the harvest of wild Atlantic sturgeon stocks was implemented in late 1997/early 1998, cultured Atlantic sturgeon continue to be a valued commercial fish for both its flesh, which consistently brings a higher price per pound than most fish, and their eggs, or roe, which are worth more than \$50 per pound to fishermen and are sold as caviar for more than \$250 per pound.

Stock Status

Very little is known about the stock status of Atlantic sturgeon. Reliable data is difficult to obtain because many river systems have so few fish, and rivers with more fish are often not easy to sample. In 1998, the Commission completed a peer-reviewed coastwide assessment of the population. The assessment was conducted for each river system where Atlantic sturgeon were found historically. All assessed systems held significantly less sturgeon than they did in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and very few signs of recovery were detected. Consequently, the assessment report recommended a moratorium for each stock until the spawning population includes at least 20 protected year classes of females. This translates into a minimum of about 38 years of no harvest for each system.

Undertaken concurrently with the Commission stock assessment in 1998, the federal government investi-



Atlantic Sturgeon *Acipenser oxyrinchus*

Interesting Facts:

* Sturgeon are an ancient fish, originating over 70 million years ago

*A single female may produce up to 2.4 million eggs, which hatch 1 week after they are fertilized.

* Sturgeon have been known for their occasional and inexplicable tendency to jump completely out of the water; colonial records report several incidents of giant sturgeon landing on ships' decks.

Largest Recorded: 15', 811 lbs

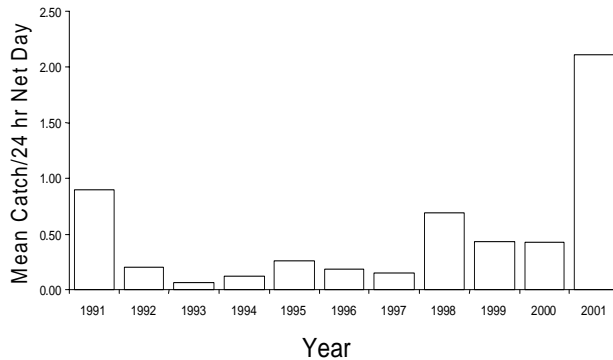
Maximum Age: 60 years

Age & Length at 50% Maturity for Northeast Population: 20 - 25 years/6.53'

Stock Status: Overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

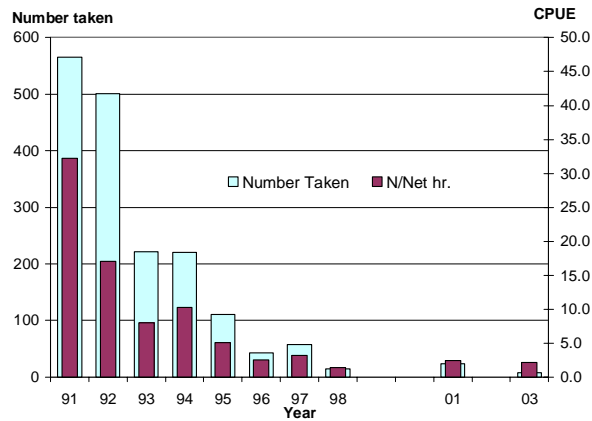
gated the status of the species with regard to listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). That status review concluded that listing was not warranted at the time. In 2003, the Commission and the federal government held a workshop to reestablish discussions about the status of the stock. Findings from the workshop ranged from possible signs of recovery beginning in Albemarle Sound (Figure 1) to signs of decreasing abundance in the Delaware River (Figure 2). It is thought that the biggest im-

Figure 1. Fishery-independent gillnet survey catch rates of Atlantic sturgeon in the Albemarle Sound, NC. (NC DMF 2003)



pediments to Atlantic sturgeon recovery are bycatch and insufficient habitat. A second workshop, scheduled for November 22 & 23, will build upon the find-

Figure 2. Subadults taken in Delaware's tag-recapture program in the Delaware River. [Program was not administered in 1999, 2000 or 2002.] (DE DFW 2003)



ings of the stock status workshop and address issues and strategies to achieve Atlantic sturgeon restoration along the Atlantic coast.

Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

The Commission adopted the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Sturgeon in 1990. All of the 15 member states (Maine to Florida, including Pennsylvania) and two mem-

ber jurisdictions (District of Columbia and Potomac River Fisheries Commission) participate in the FMP. In 1998 the FMP was amended to implement the recommendation of the 1998 peer reviewed stock assessment to prohibit harvest and possession of Atlantic sturgeon and sturgeon parts, including roe, in all participating jurisdictions. In 1999, the federal government complemented state actions by banning the possession and harvest of Atlantic sturgeon in the exclusive economic zone. Amendment 1 also contains provisions to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in other fisheries.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recently received a request to conduct another status review of Atlantic sturgeon. NMFS is in the process of responding to the request and will likely begin a review to determine whether the species should be listed under the ESA. The results of the status review could lead the Commission to draft an addendum to specifically address issues such as bycatch and poor habitat. According to Stein et al., marine bycatch mortality is estimated on the continental shelf of the US Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions at 1,500 fish per year from 1989 to 2000. For more information, please contact Braddock Spear, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or bspear@asmfc.org.

New State Projects Seek to Increase Our Understanding of Atlantic Sturgeon

Over the years, several states have taken actions to improve our understanding of Atlantic sturgeon and explore ways to aid in its recovery. Following are two examples of recent measures taken by the States of Maryland and New York.

Maryland is currently developing a captive broodstock program for sturgeon restoration in its waters. It imported fertilized Atlantic sturgeon eggs from a Canadian supplier and will be rearing them to larval and juvenile sizes for use in marking and nutritional studies. Information gained from this program will help Maryland in future breeding programs and ultimately aid in restoration of the species in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. For more information, please contact Brian Richardson at (410)643-6788.

New York recently obtained several year-classes of hatchery-raised Atlantic sturgeon for use in post-release behavioral studies. Approximately 325 fish were tagged and released in the Hudson River estuary this past year. Monitoring of these fish should provide further insight into habitat use and movement in the Hudson River. New York seeks assistance from fishermen, other states and the federal government to report tagged Atlantic sturgeon as they are encountered. For more information, please contact Andrew Kahnle at (845)256-3072.

ASMFC Withdraws New York Noncompliance Finding: Recommendation Forwarded to the Secretaries of Commerce & the Interior

On July 30, 2004, Commission Chair John I. Nelson Jr., notified the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior that the Commission had withdrawn its noncompliance finding for the State of New York regarding its 2004 recreational summer flounder fishery.

On July 30, New York implemented emergency regulations, raising its summer flounder recreational size limit to 18", and maintaining its three-fish daily limit and May 15 – September 6 open season. These regulations were designed to achieve the required 48.5% reduction in New York's recreational harvest and bring the state back into compliance with the provisions of the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan (FMP). In the event that New York's 2004 recreational harvest exceeds its limit, the state is prepared to work with the Commission to assure its 2005 fishing regulations achieve a harvest level fully consistent with the 2005 total allowable landings limit and Commission decisions on recreational management.

On June 16, 2004, pursuant to the provisions of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act of 1993, the Commission notified the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior that the State of New York was out-of-compliance with the provisions of the Summer Flounder FMP. Specifically, New York had not implemented the required measures to achieve a 48.5% reduction in recreational landings. These measures are necessary to control fishing mortality and maintain the rebuilding schedule contained in the FMP.

On July 19, 2004, the Secretary of Commerce concurred with the Commission's determination of non-compliance and notified the state that the federal government would impose a moratorium on fishing for, possession of, and landing of summer flounder by commercial and recreational fishermen on September 3, 2004. With submission of the Commission's letter to the Secretary regarding New York's compliance, the moratorium will not be imposed. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program, at (202) 289-6400.

ASMFC Initiates Development of Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Croaker Plan: Assessment Yields Good News for Mid-Atlantic Stock Component

The Commission's South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board approved the development of Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Croaker. The Amendment will incorporate information from the latest stock assessment and peer review, as well as revise the plan to comply with the mandates of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act.

"I am very pleased with the results of the croaker stock assessment and peer review process, which brings us good news about the Mid-Atlantic stock component and identifies our challenges in fully assessing the status of the South Atlantic component," stated Board Vice-Chair, Spud Woodward of Georgia. "I particularly want to commend ASMFC

staff, the Stock Assessment Committee and SEDAR Panel for their dedication and thoroughness."

The latest peer-reviewed stock assessment, completed in 2004, found the stock status for the Mid-Atlantic region (North Carolina and north) not overfished and overfishing not occurring. The stock status for the South Atlantic region (South Carolina through the east coast of Florida) is unknown, due to lack of data. The stock assessment shows both fishing mortality and spawning stock biomass (SSB) for the Mid-Atlantic region as exhibiting a pronounced cyclical trend over the time series. Between 1999 and 2002, SSB ranged between 80,000 – 91,000 metric tons, well above the target and threshold recommended by the Technical Committee (TC). Fish-

ing mortality remained relatively stable from 1997 to 2002 at approximately 0.11, well below the TC-recommended target and threshold. Although the stock assessment indicates that the croaker stock is healthy, estimates of fishing mortality and SSB do not include bycatch from the shrimp fishery, a potentially significant source of mortality.

The first step in the Amendment process is the development of a Public Information Document, which presents a general overview of the resource as well as possible management and research issues to be addressed in the Amendment. The Board is scheduled to review and approve the PID in November for public comment in early 2006. For more information, please contact Nancy Wallace at (202)289-6400 or nwallace@asmfc.org.

Atlantic Herring 2005 Fishing Year Specifications Set

On July 12, 2004, the New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) Atlantic Herring Committee met jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Atlantic Herring Section to review the latest stock status information and the recommendations of their respective Atlantic Herring Advisory Panels. The Herring Committee and Section developed recommendations for specifications in the 2005 fishing year (see Table 1).

Table 1. 2005 Specifications Approved by the ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section & the NEFMC's Recommendations for the Regional Administrator

The Area 2 reserve allocation was the only discrepancy between the AP recommendations and those developed by the Committee and Section. The AP suggested 20,000mt in the Area 2 reserve, whereas the Committee and Section decided to eliminate the reserve allocation because the Area 2 total allowable catch (TAC) has never been fully harvested. The Regional Administrator will release the Area 2 reserve TAC only if the available Atlantic herring in Area 2 is solely from the offshore spawning component and the Area 2 TAC is fully harvested.

Allowable Biological Catch (ABC)	220,000 mt
Total Allowable Catch (TAC)	180,000 mt
Area 1A	60,000 mt
Area 1B	10,000 mt
Area 2	50,000 mt
Area 2 Reserve	0 mt
Area 3	60,000 mt
U.S. Optimal Yield (OY)	180,000 mt
Domestic Annual Harvest (DAH)	180,000 mt
Domestic Annual Processing (DAP)	176,000 mt
Border Transfer (BT)	4,000 mt
Total Joint Venture Processing (JVPT)	0 mt
Joint Venture Processing (JVP)	0 mt
Internal Water Processing (IWP)	0 mt
US At-Sea Processing (USAP)	0 mt
Total Allowable Level of Foreign Fishing (TALFF)	0 mt

The NEFMC and ASMFC specification processes differ in that the Section's 2005 specification decisions are final. The Herring Committee's decisions are forwarded to the NEFMC for consideration. On July 13, 2004, the Council reviewed the Herring Committee's recommendations and approved them for submission to the Regional Administrator. These recommendations are identical to those approved by the ASMFC Herring Section (see Table 1). The Regional Administrator will take action on the NEFMC's specification recommendations prior to the 2005 fishing year.

Days Out

Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts agreed to modify the implementation of the days out provision by shifting the days of the week that have a landing prohibition (Table 2).

Table 2. State Regulations for the Atlantic Herring Days Out Provision

	May 1 to September 5	September 9 – December 31 or Area 1 TAC is taken
Maine	Friday 6 pm – Sunday 6 pm	Thursday 6 pm - Saturday 6 pm
New Hampshire	Saturday 12:01 am – Sunday 12 am	Friday 12:01 am - Saturday 12 am
Massachusetts*	Saturday 12:01 am – Sunday 12 am	Friday 12:01 am - Saturday 12 am

*Massachusetts' regulations require the landing prohibition whenever the Area 1A fishery is open, whereas the other states negotiate the start time depending on the catch rates in the early part of the fishing year.

When setting the days out provision earlier this year, some industry members appealed to the three states to change the days that have the landing prohibition due to the negative economic impact to the operation of their businesses. Weighing all of the industry concerns, the states compromised and agreed to implement the shift after the Labor Day Weekend.

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ASMFC & MAFMC Approve 2005 TALs for Bluefish, Summer Flounder, Scup & Black Sea Bass

On August 11, 2004, the Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met this week to finalize a multi-year specification setting process for summer flounder, scup and black sea bass, set total allowable landing (TAL) limits for all three species and bluefish, and establish 2005 commercial management measures for the respective fisheries.

The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XIII, allowing the use of a multi-year total allowable landings (TAL) specification process for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The Addendum complements similar action under the Council's Framework 5, approved in May 2004. Both Addendum XIII and Framework 5 enable the Board and Council to set TALs for up to three years. In the event that a multi-year TAL is implemented, formal review of updated fishery information would not occur until the final year of the TAL. This multi-year system is intended to enhance fishermen's ability to account for future landing levels in their business plans and increase administrative efficiency.

The Board and Council approved 2005 TALs for black sea bass, scup, and bluefish, as well as 2005 & 2006 TALs for summer flounder. With the summer flounder stock conditions continuing to improve and the new ability to set multi-year TALs, the Commission and Council increased the 2005 and 2006 summer flounder TALs by seven and nine percent, respectively. Black sea bass quota increased by three percent, while the scup quota remains unchanged. Bluefish fisheries will undergo a four percent reduction due to limited information on stock condition.

Below are the 2004-2006 TALs for bluefish, summer flounder, black sea bass and scup in millions of pounds.

Species	2004 TAL	2005 TAL	2006 TAL
Bluefish	31.9	30.8	NA
Summer Flounder	28.2	30.3	33.0
Black Sea Bass	8.0	8.2	NA
Scup	16.5	16.5	NA

The latest stock assessment for summer flounder indicates the resource is no longer overfished but overfishing is occurring. Stock biomass increased substantially in 2003 and is 27 percent above the biomass threshold. The fishing mortality rate estimate ($F=0.29$) is slightly above the threshold of $F=0.26$. With the biomass significantly above its threshold level and fishing mortality slightly above the overfishing limit, the Board and Council endorsed the recommendation of the Summer Flounder Technical Monitoring Committee and approved a 30.3 and 33.0 million pound TAL for 2005 and 2006, respectively.

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Black Sea Bass State-by-State Allocation System Approved for 2005-2007

On August 12, 2004, the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XII to the Fishery Management Plan for Black Sea Bass. The Addendum extends the current state-by-state black sea bass commercial allocation system for the 2005 – 2007 fishing years. State-specific shares are as follows: Maine – 0.5%, New York – 7%, New Hampshire – 0.5%, New Jersey – 20%, Massachusetts – 13%, Delaware – 5%, Rhode Island – 11%, Maryland – 11%, Connecticut – 1%, Pennsylvania – 0%, Virginia – 20%, and North Carolina – 11%.

The current state-by-state allocation system was first established in 2002 to mitigate lengthy closures and significant quota overages that resulted under quarterly quota management in the black sea bass fishery. This system provided states the flexibility of managing their quota for the greatest benefit to their commercial black sea bass fishery by ensuring a continuous and steady supply of product over the season. It also provided states the ability to transfer or combine quota, allowing increased responsiveness to year-to-year variations in fishing practices or landing patterns. However, the current plan implemented the system for the 2003 and 2004 fishing years only. Addendum XII extends that system for 2005 – 2007.

The Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council jointly manage summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass, meeting annually to establish commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits. The Commission's actions regarding Addendum XII are taken exclusively under the states' management authority. Copies of the Addendum can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202)289-6400. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 330 or tkerns@asmfc.org.



ASMFC 63rd Annual Meeting November 8 - 11, 2004



**Wentworth by the Sea
588 Wentworth Road
New Castle, New Hampshire
(603)422-7322**

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Below is the preliminary agenda for the Commission's 63rd Annual Meeting in New Castle, New Hampshire. All of the business meetings scheduled during this week are open to the public, free of charge. If you plan on attending any of the social events (e.g., Monday evening reception, Tuesday dinner, Wednesday luncheon and reception), please help us plan for your attendance by registering on-line at <http://www.asmfc.org/breakingNews.htm> (click on Registration Form).

Sunday, November 7

2:30 PM - 6:00 PM Registration
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM New Commissioner Orientation

Monday, November 8

7:30 AM - 4:00 PM Registration
8:00 AM - 1:00 PM Northern Shrimp Section
8:00 AM - 1:00 PM Habitat Committee
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board
9:30 AM - 11:00 AM Welcome Tea for Spouses
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM NEAMAP Board
2:15 PM - 6:15 PM Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Welcome Reception

Tuesday, November 9

7:30 AM - 1:00 PM Registration
7:30 AM - 10:30 AM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM Spouse Tour
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM Law Enforcement Committee
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM Management & Science Committee
10:45 AM - 12:45 PM Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board



Photo courtesy of NOAA Photo Library

ASMFC 63rd Annual Meeting Preliminary Agenda (continued from page 9)

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM	American Lobster Management Board
4:15 PM - 6:15 PM	Action Plan Workshop
7:00 PM	Annual Dinner

Wednesday, November 10

8:00 AM - 9:30 AM	American Eel Management Board
8:00 AM - Noon	Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel
9:45 AM - 11:45 AM	Winter Flounder Management Board
Noon - 1:15 PM	Captain David H. Hart Award Luncheon
1:30 PM - 2:30 PM	Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board
2:45 PM - 5:30 PM	Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

Thursday, November 11

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Executive Committee
8:45 AM - 12:45 PM	ISFMP Policy Board
12:45 PM - 1:15 PM	Business Session
1:30 PM - 4:30 PM	Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council

Atlantic Herring 2005 Fishing Year Specifications Set (continued from page 7)

According to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring, states are required to implement the days out provision (landing prohibition) for an area where the TAC is regularly fully harvested. The later months of the herring fishing year coincide with the peak demand to supply herring to the lobster bait market; the days out provision was designed to slow the catch rate of herring to ensure the maintenance a sufficient supply. The provision was also designed to allow vessels to fish in an open area when another area is closed, moving effort out of the areas where catches are approaching the TAC. Additionally, incidental catches (up to 2,000 pounds) of herring can be landed from an area with the days out provision in effect.

Update on Amendment 2 Development
During its May meeting, the Atlantic Herring Section made several critical decisions regarding the content of Amendment 2 to the Interstate FMP. The most significant decision was to eliminate limited access from Amendment 2. The Section agreed to keep the Commission's amendment progress in-step with the federal amendment. Progress on the federal amendment has been delayed due to a recent Council decision revising the organization of the options to be presented and analyzed. The Section will continue to monitor the federal amendment process while developing draft Amendment 2. The Commission intends to have Amendment 2 implemented for the 2006 fishing year.

For more information, please contact Megan Gamble, Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or <mgamble@asmfc.org>.



Nancy Wallace Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

In less than a year in a half, Nancy Wallace has become an invaluable addition to the Commission staff, significantly contributing to the Commission's vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." In recognition of her efforts, Nancy was awarded Employee of the Quarter (July - September 2004). The award is intended to recognize special contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.

Two major accomplishments during her time here have been the completion of benchmark stock assessments for Atlantic menhaden and croaker. As the first ASMFC assessments to be developed and peer reviewed through the SEDAR process, Nancy did an outstanding job of ensuring that the new process meshed

with the ASMFC assessment and peer review process. She also took the initiative to draft major sections of the assessments in order to ensure their timely completion. It was time well spent since the results of these assessments will provide the basis for future management of Atlantic menhaden and croaker.

In addition to coordinating the management programs for menhaden, croaker and several other South Atlantic species, Nancy has provided valuable staff support to the Commission's multispecies assessment efforts and several habitat projects.

Nancy has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Fairfield University in Connecticut and a Master of Arts in Marine Affairs and Policy from the University of Miami.



As an Employee of the Quarter, Nancy received a 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, Nancy!

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Approves Addendum I

The Commission's Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved Addendum 1 to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum modifies the plan's biological reference points, schedule for stock assessments, and habitat provisions.

The Addendum is based in part on the recommendations of the Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee in its 2003 stock assessment, which found that menhaden are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring on a coastwide basis. Peer-reviewed in October 2003 by the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review Panel, the assessment uses a new modeling approach (Forward Projection Model) and fecundity-based biological reference points to determine stock status. These reference points are more accurate and take into account the num-

ber of mature ova (eggs). This is a significant departure from the way menhaden assessments have been conducted in the past. The Addendum also changes the plan's fishing mortality target and threshold levels as recommended by the Menhaden Technical Committee and supported by the peer review. The new reference points follow:

	Fecundity-based Biomass (mature eggs)	Fishing Mortality
Target	26.6 trillion	.75
Threshold	13.3 trillion	1.18

Rather than conducting a full-scale annual assessment, the Addendum establishes a three-year assessment cycle to allow for the increased complexity and data requirements of the new model. The Technical Committee will continue to meet annually to review the current year's landings and survey indices. A

new assessment may be initiated if there are indications of a significant change in stock status.

The Addendum also updates the plan's habitat section and includes descriptions of spawning, larval and juvenile habitat, as well as recommendations for the conservation and restoration of menhaden habitat.

The Addendum can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org or by contacting the Commission at (202)289-6400. For more information, please contact Nancy Wallace at nwallace@asmfc.org.



ACCSP to Coordinate 2005 Proposals with Pacific and Gulf Coasts for National FIS Funds

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) recently issued a Request for Proposals to the regional cooperative statistics programs to find quality projects to fund with its National Fisheries Information System (FIS) appropriation.

The FIS funds were in the federal budget in 2002, and are expected to be available in 2005. NOAA Fisheries used the funds to support data collection and data management activities for the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts. The Office of Science and Technology informally coordinated with regional statistics programs and states on how to best spend the funds.

When NOAA Fisheries decided a more formal funding process was needed, it consulted the regional statistics programs. Ms. Maury Osborn, ACCSP Director, suggested that NOAA Fisheries issue an annual request for proposals with objective criteria and national program priorities to allow agencies to submit large-scale projects with regionally and nationally distributed benefits. NOAA Fisheries subsequently adopted a process similar to that of the ACCSP.

Proposals must support FIS goals: continuing development of a national metadata system; developing of cross-regional applications; reducing duplicative effort; enhancing existing systems; supporting electronic data submission; and promoting efficient information access. A committee, including regional program representatives, will evaluate the proposals.

“The ACCSP is glad to see NOAA Fisheries include the regional programs in funding decisions,” says Ms. Osborn.

The ACCSP submitted two proposals from its 2005 funding process for consideration: (1) a requirements analysis for statutory and regulatory metadata and (2) development of an application for coastwide conversion tables. 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. For more information please visit www.accsp.org or call Abbey Compton at (202) 216-5690.

Proposals for 2005 Projects Under Review by ACCSP Committees

The ACCSP's partners have submitted 28 proposals totaling more than \$6 million for data collection and data management projects for 2005. Most of the proposals are for commercial catch and effort projects or some combination of commercial catch and effort and biological sampling, bycatch, or information systems development. The Advisory Committee and the Operations Committee will each evaluate the proposals before they go to the Coordinating Council for final decisions in November.

Former Commission Staff Becomes ACCSP Systems Administrator

In August, Geoff White joined the ACCSP staff as Systems Administrator to help continue development of the Program's online data warehouse and other information systems.

The Systems Administrator position is new for the ACCSP and involves assisting the Information Systems Manager and the Developer with various operations, including network maintenance, ORACLE and Java programming, quality control, and documentation.

Mr. White is uniquely qualified for

the position with his blended experience in fisheries biology and information systems. He joined the Commission's Research and Statistics staff in 1998 and worked on numerous stock assessment projects while taking classes and attending workshops on database design and programming. His training proved invaluable when the Commission began the lobster database in 2002, and he will continue to be the ACCSP's liaison on that project.

During his six years with the Commission, Mr. White was an important

contributor to the ASMFC's programs and activities. He coordinated SEAMAP-SA and NEAMAP, created and oversaw the activities of the Interstate Tagging Committee, and played a key role in the Commission's single species and multispecies assessment efforts.

Mr. White earned his Masters degree in Fisheries Science from the College of William and Mary's Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences and a Bachelors degree from Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He can now be reached at geoffrey.white@accsp.org

ASMFC Withdraws New Jersey Noncompliance Finding Recommendation Forwarded to the Secretaries of Commerce & the Interior

On September 28, 2004, ASMFC Chair John I. Nelson Jr., notified the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior that the Commission has withdrawn its noncompliance finding for the State of New Jersey regarding its striped bass recreational fishery.

Effective September 27, 2004, the State of New Jersey has implemented regulations consistent with the requirements of Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass. The new recreational measures for New Jersey's state waters are a daily two fish bag limit — one striped bass greater than or equal to 24 inches and less than 28 inches, and a second striped bass 34 inches and over. These

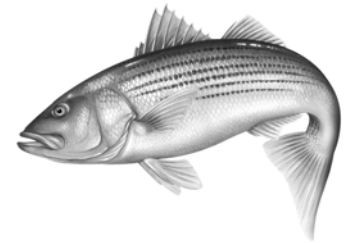
regulations are conservationally equivalent to the requirements of Amendment 6.

On August 19, 2004, pursuant to the provisions of the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act of 1984, the Commission notified the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior that the State of New Jersey was out-of-compliance with the provisions of the Striped Bass FMP. Specifically, New Jersey had not implemented the recreational measures requiring a two fish bag limit with a minimum size of 28 inches or measures deemed to be conservationally equivalent to this standard. These measures are necessary to maintain population abundance and control the fishing mortality

rate below the target established in the FMP.

With submission of the Commission's letter to the Secretaries regarding New Jersey's compliance, a moratorium will not be imposed on the state's striped bass fishery.

For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program, at (202) 289-6400.



2005 TALs for Bluefish, Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Approved (continued from page 8)

Commercial minimum fish and mesh size requirements remain the same, 14-inch minimum size total length (TL) and 5.5-inch mesh size.

Black sea bass have also shown improvements. The 2004 stock assessment specifies the stock is no longer overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The Board and Council increased the 2005 TAL, approving a coastwide quota of 8.2 million pounds for 2004. Commercial minimum fish size and mesh requirements remain status quo, 11-inch minimum size TL and 4.5-inch mesh throughout the net.

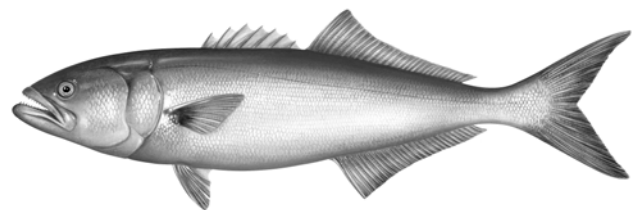
Scup remain not overfished, but an assessment of overfishing cannot be determined due to poor discard estimates. The Board and Council approved the Technical Monitoring Committee recommended 2005 TAL of 16.5 million pounds. Commercial minimum fish

size remains unchanged from 2003 regulations, 9-inch minimum size TL. The Board and Council approved new mesh size requirements. The minimum mesh size for the scup fishery in 2005 will be 5" with a minimum length of 75 meshes from the terminus of the net. For small nets with less than 75 meshes codend the entire net will be 5". The threshold level used to trigger the new minimum mesh size is 200 lbs from May 1 to October 31.

The 2004 bluefish assessment was not approved by the peer review process. Consequently, the Board and Council reduced the overall TAL by four percent, maintaining the commercial TAL of 10.5 million pounds and the recreational bag limit of 15 fish per person, as recommended by Bluefish Tech-

nical Monitoring Committee. The Board and Council determined the current regulations are sufficient to ensure the new TAL will not be exceeded.

The Commission's actions are final and apply in state waters. The Council will



be forwarding its recommendations to NOAA Fisheries for final approval. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <tkerns@asmfc.org>.



ASMFC 63RD ANNUAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 8 - 11, 2004
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