



**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*

## **Atlantic Menhaden Board Approves Draft Addendum III for Public Comment: Addendum Proposes Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap of 109,020 MT**

The Commission's Atlantic Menhaden Management Board has approved sending forward for public comment Draft Addendum III to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. The Addendum proposes the establishment a five-year annual cap on reduction fishery harvests in Chesapeake Bay of 109,020 metric tons, based on the mean harvests for 2001 – 2005. The cap would be implemented beginning in 2006 and extend through 2010. Harvest for reduction purposes would 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 Draft Addendum also proposes an option to allow underharvest in one year to be credited to the following year's harvest, not to exceed 122,740 metric tons.

This action responds to a proposal submitted by the Commonwealth of Virginia that essentially mirrors the intent and provisions of Addendum II but allows for a possible slight increase in annual harvest, and proposes the transfer of underharvest to the following year's harvest.

"Draft Addendum III is a product of the combined efforts of Virginia and Maryland, working in consultation with their diverse stakeholders, to seek a solution that will meet the needs of the Bay's resources and fishing constituents," stated Menhaden Board Chair A.C. Carpenter of the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. "The Management Board carefully considered Governor Kaine's proposal as presented by Secretary Preston Bryant before it agreed to accept the proposal in the form of the Draft Addendum. Notably, no states voted against sending the Draft Addendum forward for public comment."

### **Inside This Issue**

**Species Profile: Striped Bass**  
Page 4

**ASMFC 65th Annual Meeting Preliminary Agenda** Page 6

**EEZ Remains Closed to Striped Bass Fishing** Page 7

**Weakfish Documents Available for Public Comment** Page 8

**Lobster Amendment 5 PID Available for Public Comment** Page 8

**ASMFC Comings & Goings** Page 9

**ACCSP External Review** Page 10

**ASMFC Employee of the Quarter Named** Page 11

**Kerns & Spear Receive Promotions** Page 12

The Commonwealth of Virginia and Omega Protein have also entered into a Memorandum of Agreement 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 research priorities: (1) determine menhaden abundance in the Chesapeake Bay; (2) determine estimates of menhaden removal by predators; (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. These priorities mirror those contained in Addendum II. The Commonwealth of Virginia and Omega Protein will work together to secure funding for menhaden research.

The Commonwealth of Virginia and the States of Maryland and New Jersey have scheduled public hearings for mid-September. Copies of the Draft Addendum can be obtained via the Commission's website at [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org) under Breaking News. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM on October 10, 2006 and should be forwarded to Braddock Spear, Senior FMP Coordinator for Policy, 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; 202-289-6051 (FAX) or at [comments@asmfc.org](mailto:comments@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Menhaden Draft Addendum III). The Board will meet in October at the Commission's Annual Meeting in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina to review public comment and consider final approval of the Addendum.

**T**he Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

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Laura C. Leach, Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor  
tberger@asmfc.org

(202)289-6400 Phone • (202)289-6051 Fax  
www.asmfc.org

## Upcoming Meetings

**9/25 - 29:**

ASMFC Shad Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Clarion Downtown Raleigh, 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, North Carolina.

**9/25 - 27:**

7th Coastal and Estuarine Shallow Water Science and Management Conference, Holiday Inn on the Boardwalk, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

**9/26:**

Joint ASMFC Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee and MAFMC Spiny Dogfish Monitoring Committee, Sheraton Providence Airport Hotel, 1850 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island; 401/824-0670.

**9/26 - 28:**

New England Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn, Peabody, Massachusetts.

**9/27 & 28:**

ACCSP Advisory Committee, Radisson Airport Hotel Providence, 2081 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island.

**9/28 (10 AM - 5 PM) & 10/10 (10 AM - 5 PM):**

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Technical Committee, New Hampshire Fish & Game Office, 225 Main Street, Durham, New Hampshire.

**10/3 (9:00 AM- 4:30 PM):**

ASMFC American Lobster Advisory Panel, New Hampshire Fish & Game Office, 225 Main Street, Durham, New Hampshire.

**10/4 - 5:**

ACCSP Operations Committee, Radisson/Doubletree Hotel, 210 Holiday Court, Annapolis, Maryland.

**10/10 - 12:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Garden Inn, Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

**10/19 - 20:**

5th Annual Sea Grant Science Symposium, " The Evolution of Ecosystem Based Management: From Theory to Practice," Roger Williams University Ralph R. Papitto School of Law, Bristol, Rhode Island.

**10/23 - 26:**

ASMFC 65th Annual Meeting, Sheraton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina (see preliminary agenda on page 6).

It is hard to find a fisherman along the Mid-Atlantic coast who is not aware of the terrible situation we now face regarding summer flounder (fluke) management. Scientists report that the stock is not responding as hoped. The most recent recruitment year appears to be the second lowest on record and removals have been higher than anticipated. With the mandatory 2010 rebuilding date close at hand, the balloon payment many have been worried about now seems to be a real possibility.

The current situation is driven by a requirement for managers to rebuild fluke to 204 million pounds by 2010. The latest estimate of biomass is 105 million pounds, indicating the stock needs to grow by 99 million pounds in the next three years. This cannot happen without curtailing removals due to fishing. The total allowable landings (TAL) being discussed for 2007 range from 20 million pounds to five million pounds. The 2006 TAL was 23 million pounds (to be shared by recreational and commercial fishermen). Many have indicated such drastic cuts could have a devastating economic impact on those businesses and individuals who depend on fluke.

Some have suggested the current scientifically derived and peer-reviewed biomass target of 204 million pounds is too high and should be lowered. They argue that the target could then be met by 2010 with less drastic cuts. From a process standpoint, this approach moves target setting away from a scientific basis towards a more arbitrary policy call. Targets could then become the product of the constituents, be they harvesters or conservationists. In the case of fluke the target has already been reduced once with hardly a single objection from harvesters. It is not clear if they understood that a decision to reduce the target is a tacit decision to limit the size of the recovered fishery.

Others have recognized the above implications of changing the target and have instead suggested extending the rebuilding deadline. In 1996, Congress inserted a provision in the Sustainable Fisheries Act requiring fishery management plans to comport with a 10-year rebuilding schedule. Environmentalists frustrated with the perceived foot dragging over the previous 15 years of certain regional fishery management councils wanted a requirement to rebuild as fast as biologically possible. Fisheries managers and harvesters pleaded for more flexibility

to accommodate socioeconomic concerns. While some have called the 10-year period arbitrary, it was in fact a deliberate solution by Congress to accommodate two very different and strongly held public policy views. As a result, the Secretary of Commerce and the regional fishery management councils now have a legal obligation imposed by Congress. Relief would therefore have to come from Congress.

Unfortunately, the public policy debate over rebuilding schedules did not go away in 1996. In fact, it has grown. One of the key findings of both the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy has been to highlight the lack of progress on rebuilding, suggesting that managers lack the political will to make the difficult decisions needed to rebuild stocks. Proposed solutions include the establishment of more strict rebuilding schedules and the requirement for scientists to set total harvest quotas instead of managers. Managers and harvesters have argued that such approaches do not provide the system with the needed flexibility to address the resultant economic hardships associated with drastic quota cuts. Congress has been wrestling with this issue for the past two years and is expected to pick it up again in the fall as it works towards reauthorizing the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

It is important to recognize that, with this backdrop, attempts to introduce federal legislation to relax the rebuilding date for fluke will have significant public policy implications regarding the entire federal fishery management system. Both harvesters and environmentalists could be expected to weigh in on this important issue.

Those dependent on the summer flounder fishery are understandably concerned about the pending economic impacts of a large cut in the quota. Given the difficulties of trying to provide relief through the fishery management process, it may be time for federal, state, and local legislators to look at creative options to provide economic relief.

Obviously, a large fleet with no fish to catch makes little sense. Having large stocks of fish with no one to catch them is not a good outcome either. If legislators and fishermen can find a way to keep folks afloat long enough for us to rebuild fluke, we can have both fish and fishermen. Hopefully, that is a goal we could all agree with.



## Species Profile: Atlantic Striped Bass The Challenges of Managing a Restored Stock

### Introduction

Striped bass have formed the basis of one of the most important fisheries on the Atlantic coast for centuries. They have been regulated since European settlement of North America. Early written accounts recorded their great abundance. Striped bass were once so plentiful they were used to fertilize fields. Like those earlier years, today's Atlantic striped bass population is thriving. After numbering less than five million fish in 1982, the resource was rebuilt to over 65 million fish in 2005. The payoff for the years of restricted harvest has been big. Recreational fishing for striped bass is at an all-time high. Commercial fisheries have also benefited with increases in commercial quotas, yielding greater economic profits. Now the Commission's focus is to manage a restored stock and address emerging challenges such as disease and discard mortality.

### Life History

The Commission's striped bass management program centers on the migratory population and spawning stocks from Maine through North Carolina, but the species can be found as far north as the St. Lawrence River in Canada and as far south as the St. John's River in Florida. A long-lived species (at least up to 30 years of age), striped bass typically spend the majority of their adult life in coastal estuaries or the ocean, migrating north and south seasonally and ascending to rivers to spawn in the spring.

Mature females (age six and older) produce large quantities of eggs (see side-bar), which are fertilized by mature males (age two and older) as they are released into riverine spawning areas. While developing, the fertilized eggs drift with the downstream currents and eventually hatch into larvae. The larvae and post-larvae begin feeding on microscopic animals during their downstream journey. After their arrival in the nursery areas, located in river deltas and the inland portions of coastal sounds and estuaries, they mature into juveniles. They remain in coastal sounds and estuaries for two to four years and then join the coastal migratory population in the Atlantic Ocean. In the ocean, fish tend to move north during the summer and south during the winter. Important wintering grounds for the mixed stocks are located from offshore New Jersey to North Carolina. With warming water temperatures in the spring, the mature adult fish migrate to riverine spawning areas to complete their life cycle. The majority of the coastal migratory stock originates in the Chesapeake Bay spawning areas, with significant contributions from the spawning grounds of the Hudson and Delaware Rivers.

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Commercial fishermen harvest striped bass with a variety of gears including gill nets, pound nets, haul seines, and hook-and-line. Commercial harvest peaked at almost 15 million pounds in 1973, then declined to 3.5 million pounds in 1983, a 77 percent decrease. During the early to mid-1980s, a number of states closed their striped bass fisheries in order to initiate rebuilding of the stocks. The commercial fishery grew slowly under a partial reopening of state waters in the early 1990s, with coastwide harvest rising from 825,000 pounds in 1990 to 2.01 million pounds in 1994. Most of this growth resulted from the fact that Maryland was permitted to impose flexible quotas that have risen with increasing stock size.

Under restored status, the striped bass commercial harvest steadily grew from 3.4 million pounds in 1995 to peak at over seven million pounds in 2003 and 2005

### Striped Bass *Morone saxatilis*

#### Interesting Fish Facts:

- Average Chesapeake Bay 6-year old female produces 500,000 eggs, while a 15-year old produces 3 million eggs
- Bass tagged in the Bay have been recaptured in Canadian waters, over 1,000 miles away

**Largest Recorded: 125 pound female, NC, 1891**

#### Age at Maturity:

- Females - 50% mature at age 6 (25 - 26"); 100% mature at age 9 (32")
- Males - 100% mature at age 3 (18")

#### Age at Recruitment:

**Chesapeake Bay Fishery = age 4 (18")**  
**Coastal Fishery = age 8 (28")**

#### Stock Status:

**Not overfished, overfishing is not occurring**

(Figure 1). Beginning in 2003, the commercial quotas increased under Amendment 6 allowing the states to implement coastal commercial quotas equivalent to the average harvest during 1972-1979.

The growing popularity of saltwater recreational fishing since the 1960s and 1970s, and the lack of recreational harvest caps in most states, led the sport fishing sector to land a larger percentage of the total catch. Recreational harvest grew from 3.1 million pounds in 1990 to over 26 million pounds in 2005 (Figure 1).

Striped bass discard mortality is estimated to account for more than 36% of the overall fishing-related removals in 2004. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of striped bass landings and discard losses by fishing sector in 2004. Draft Addendum I, now out for public review and comment, intends to address the issue of discard mortality by proposing the establishment of a data collection program to assess the accuracy of current fishery discard estimates and their overall impact on the striped bass population.

### Stock Status

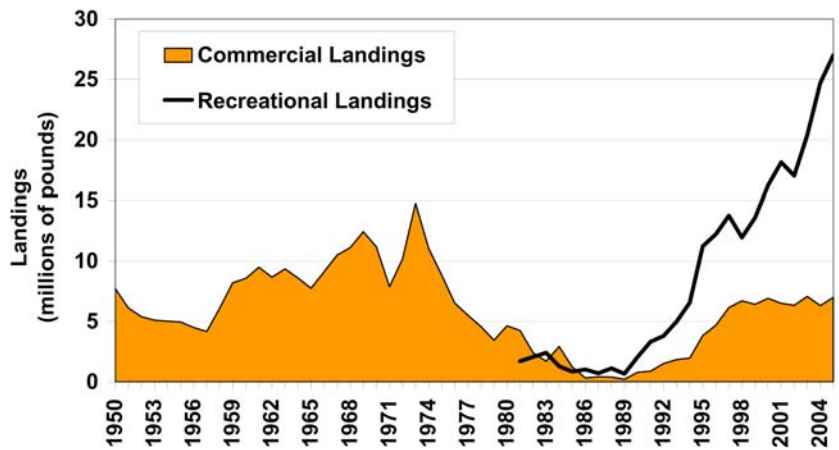
The latest annual assessment, conducted in late 2005, determined that striped bass are not overfished and overfishing did not occur in 2004. Not only is female spawning stock biomass nearly 20 times greater than the levels seen in the early 1980s, but since 1996 it has been above both the threshold and target levels set in Amendment 6 (Figure 3). Female spawning stock biomass peaked in 2002 at 60.6 million pounds. Since the moratoria in the mid-1980s, fishing mortality generally has trended upward. The 2004 average fishing mortality rate for ages 8 to 11 equaled 0.40, which is above the Amendment 6  $F_{target}$  of 0.30, but below the  $F$  threshold of 0.41. However, it was the consensus of the Technical Committee members that this was likely an overestimate.

Overall, the Atlantic stocks of striped bass appear to be abundant in number, capable of producing strong incoming year classes, and are being fished at levels within the bounds of the current fishery management plan (FMP). The population is considered fully exploited.

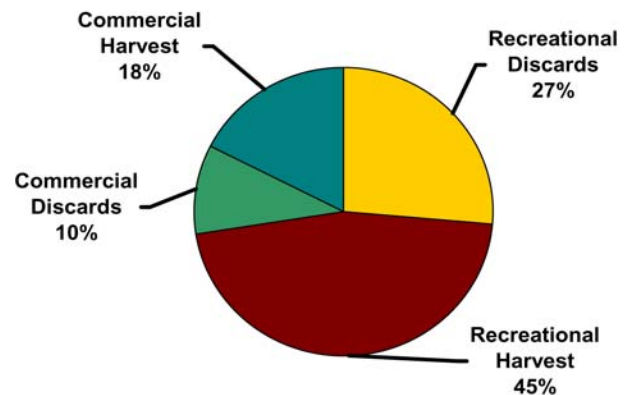
### Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

Before the Interstate FMP for Striped Bass (1981), states independently promulgated regulations (i.e. minimum size limits) to constrain the fishing mortality on the Atlantic coast striped bass population. Striped bass fisheries would not be where they are today, however, without the support of the 1984 Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act. This Act, which was the precursor to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, provided Atlantic coastal states with the necessary tools to co-

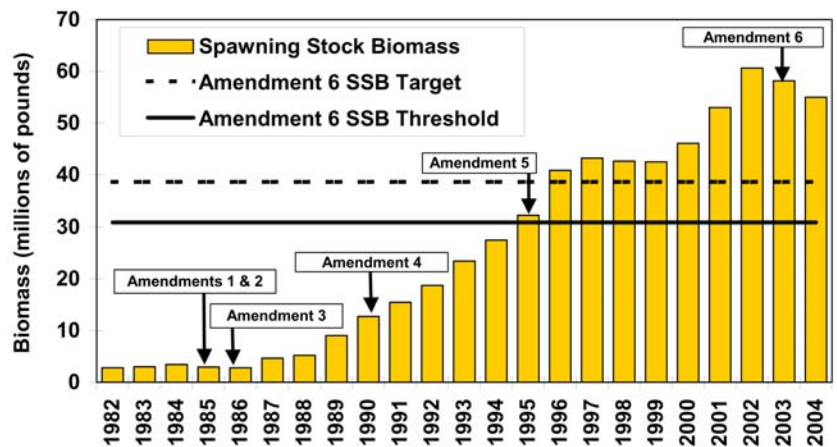
**Figure 1. Annual Coastal Atlantic Striped Bass Landings**  
Source: NOAA Fisheries Website, 2006



**Figure 2. Atlantic Striped Bass Catch in 2004 (5.2 Million Fish Total)**  
Source: ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee, 2005



**Figure 3. Atlantic Striped Bass Female Spawning Stock Biomass**  
Source: ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee, 2005



*continued on page 7*



# ASMFC 65th Annual Meeting

## October 23 - 26, 2006

**Sheraton Atlantic Beach Hotel**  
**2717 Fort Macon Road**  
**Atlantic Beach, North Carolina**

**(800)214-0258**



### PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

The preliminary agenda is subject to change. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of meetings. Interested parties should anticipate meetings starting earlier or later than indicated herein. A final agenda will be available two weeks prior to the meeting and can be accessed at <http://www.asmfc.org/65thAnnualMeeting.htm>.

#### Monday, October 23, 2006

8:30 AM - 11:30 AM American Lobster Management Board

12:30 PM - 1:15 PM Shad & River Herring Management Board

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

2:00 PM - 6:00 PM Management & Science Committee (MSC)

2:00 PM - 6:00 PM Law Enforcement Committee (LEC)

2:45 PM - 5:45 PM Meeting of the Special Ad-Hoc Committee of ASMFC and NC Marine Fisheries Commission

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Welcome Reception at Pine Knoll Shores Aquarium

#### Tuesday, October 24, 2006

7:30 AM - 9:30 AM South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

8:00 AM - 12:30 PM MSC/Habitat Committee Workshop

8:30 AM - Noon LEC (continued)

9:45 AM - 11:45 AM Action Plan Workshop

Noon - 1:00 PM LGA Luncheon Meeting

1:15 PM - 4:00 PM Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Sharks Management Board

1:30 PM - 5:00 PM MSC (continued)

1:30 PM - 5:00 PM Habitat Committee

4:15 PM - 6:00 PM American Eel Management Board

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Dinner at The Dunes Club

#### Wednesday, October 25, 2006

7:30 AM - 10:30 AM Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board

10:45 AM - 12:15 PM Tautog Management Board

12:30 PM - 1:30 PM Captain David H. Hart Award Luncheon

1:45 PM - 4:15 PM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM Weakfish Management Board

#### Thursday, October 26, 2006

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM Executive Committee

9:15 AM - 12:15 PM ISFMP Policy Board

12:30 PM - 1:00 PM Business Session

1:00 PM - 1:30 PM Buffet Lunch for Commissioners

1:30 PM - 4:30 PM Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council

## Striped Bass Species Profile (continued from page 5)

operatively and more effectively conserve and manage striped bass stocks.

In an effort to regenerate the scarce mature adult portion of the population, many of the jurisdictions implemented moratoria in the mid-1980s to protect the 1982 and subsequent year classes. As a result of Amendments 4's stringent management program, the Commission declared Atlantic coastal striped bass stocks fully recovered in 1995.

### Amendment 6

Since Amendment 4, the foundation of the striped bass management program has been to maintain harvest below a target fishing mortality rate (F). While Amendment 6, approved in 2003, modified the F targets and thresholds, it also introduced a new set of biological reference points to more effectively monitor the status of the population. On an annual basis, the female spawning stock biomass is monitored to ensure this portion of the population remains above the threshold of 30.9 million pounds to avoid an overfished status. These reference points, as well as new management triggers, have enabled the Management Board to be more responsive to changes in the stock.

In addition to the control rule, Amendment 6 phases in new regulations for both the commercial and recreational fisheries. In 2003, the coastal commercial quota for striped bass was restored to the states' historical average landings during the 1972-1979 base period, a 43 percent increase from the 2002 coastal commercial quotas. For the 2006 fishing year, the coastal commercial quota is set at over 3.7 million pounds. In the recreational fisheries, all states were required to implement a two fish bag limit with a minimum size limit of 28 inches, except for the Chesapeake Bay fisheries, Albemarle-Roanoke fisheries, and states with approved conservation equivalency proposals. The Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle-Roanoke regulatory programs differ from the coastal migratory stock because these programs are predicated on a more conservative F target than the coastal migratory stock. The independent F target allows these jurisdictions to implement separate seasons, harvest caps, and size and bag limits as long as they remain under that target.

### Emerging Challenges

Despite the success of the striped bass management program, there are some concerns about the species' health. One disease of particular concern is mycobacteriosis, a bacterial infection resulting in a variety of external and internal symptoms including skin lesions, stunted growth, inflammation, tissue destruction, and formation of scar tissue in one or more organs. The infection progresses slowly in fish and has been characterized as a "wasting disease" due to loss of body mass. Recent Maryland Department of Natural Resource surveys indicate that as many as 60 percent of striped bass in the

## Offshore Waters to Remain Closed to Striped Bass Fishing

After carefully examining a proposal to reopen offshore marine waters in the Atlantic Ocean for striped bass fishing, NOAA has announced it will maintain the 1990 federal closure.

NOAA closed marine areas between three and 200 miles offshore to recreational and commercial striped bass fisheries to complement a rebuilding plan instituted by the Commission in 1981. The rebuilding plan, supported by the federal closure, was successful and scientists declared striped bass populations fully rebuilt in 1995. In April 2003, the Commission asked NOAA to evaluate available scientific information to determine if the federal ban should be lifted.

After a 2005 stock assessment confirmed that the species is at a sustainable population size and not being overharvested, NOAA issued an options paper in April 2006 outlining potential management strategies to allow striped bass fishing to resume in offshore waters. These strategies included a range of options, from reopening the fisheries with minimum size and catch limits, to maintaining the federal ban.

NOAA's proposal did not call for an increase in the annual catch quota for striped bass, established by the Commission to maintain the population size. Even though the annual cap on catches would have remained the same, regardless of whether the fish were caught in nearshore or offshore waters, the majority of those who commented believed that reopening offshore fisheries would result in higher catches.

NOAA based the decision on a review of trends in the fishery and the species' stock status. The data show that there has been an increase in fishing mortality of striped bass and a slight decrease in female spawners since the Commission requested a reevaluation of the federal ban. Although the stock as a whole is not being overharvested, any increased fishing pressure would likely result in over fishing before NOAA and the Commission could respond with a new regulation. Since these issues would undermine the long-term conservation of Atlantic striped bass, the agency has determined that offshore waters should remain closed at this time.

*continued on page 11*

## **Weakfish Draft Addendum II & Supplement Approved for Public Review & Comment**

In response to a significant decline in stock abundance and increasing total mortality, the Commission's Weakfish Management Board has approved sending forward Draft Addendum II and its Supplement for review and comment. Concern over declining commercial and recreational catches requires the Board to consider reductions in recreational bag limits, commercial and recreational seasons, and bycatch allowances.

Draft Addendum II proposes five options for reducing fishing mortality: 0% (status quo), 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% (moratorium) based on a 2003-2004 reference period. These options were first released for public comment in the spring of 2005 as part of Addendum I, along with proposed biological sampling provisions to bolster data collection and improve future stock assessments. In November 2005, after receiving extensive public input through public hearings and written comment, the Board approved only the biological sam-

pling program contained in Addendum I. At the same time, it sent the 2005 weakfish stock assessment forward for peer review and committed to revisiting management measures to reduce fishing mortality following the peer review.

The most recent stock assessment was not upheld by the peer review panel; however, the Weakfish Technical Committee has significant evidence for five conclusions that the Board has accepted for management use: (1) the stock is declining; (2) total mortality is increasing; (3) there is not much evidence of overfishing; (4) something other than fishing mortality is causing the decline in the stock; and (5) there is a strong chance that regulating the fishery will not, in itself, reverse stock decline.

In response to these findings and in anticipation of the potential impacts of a harvest reduction, the Board requested that a Supplement to Draft Addendum II also be prepared for public review and

comment. The Supplement includes pertinent information from the Technical Committee update, a better description of what changes a mandated 25% reduction in landings would effect for the states and their commercial and recreational fisheries, reconsideration of de minimis state requirements, and an updated implementation schedule.

The Board will meet in mid-October to review public comment on the Draft Addendum and its Supplement and consider final management action. Copies of the documents can be obtained via the Commission's website at [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org) under Breaking News. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM on October 10, 2006** and should be forwarded to Nichola Meserve, Weakfish Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax) or [comments@asmfc.org](mailto:comments@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Weakfish).

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## **ASMFC Lobster Board Releases Draft Amendment 5 PID for Public Comment**

The Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved sending forward for public comment the Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 5 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. States from Maine through New Jersey will be conducting public hearings on the PID throughout September; information on those hearings can be obtained via the Commission's website at <http://www.asmfc.org/meetings.htm>.

The PID was developed to address several issues raised by the 2005 lobster stock assessment, peer review, and Board members to improve lobster management. These issues include (1) changes to the boundaries for the Lobster Con-

servation Management Areas; (2) uniform application of a V-notch definition and maximize size restrictions across all LCMAs; (3) more uniformity of minimum sizes across LCMAs; (4) restrictions on permits to control effort; (5) amending the non-trap sector daily allowances; and (6) adding a new objective to the management plan promoting more consistent regulations across all LCMAs.

As the first step in the development of an amendment, the PID presents a broad overview of the issues facing American lobster resource, as well as a range of potential management measures affecting the stock and dependent fisheries. It provides the public with the

opportunity to identify major issues and alternatives relative to the management of lobster.

Following the initial phase of information-gathering and public comment, the Commission will evaluate potential management alternatives and develop a draft amendment with management options identified for public review. Following that review and public comment, the Commission will specify the management measures to be included in the new amendment. A tentative schedule for the completion of the amendment is included in PID.

*continued on page 11*



## ASMFC Comings & Goings

### Commissioners

**Steven Bowman** -- With his recent promotion from Deputy to full Commissioner of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, Steve Bowman joins the ASMFC as Virginia's Administrative Commissioner. No stranger to the Commission, Mr. Bowman has been a member of several committees and has worked with his agency's Fisheries Management Division preparing fishery management plans and various regulatory amendments over the past decade. Mr. Bowman brings with him extensive experience in law enforcement, having served as a state trooper, Chief Deputy Sheriff, and Chief of the VMRC's Law Enforcement Division. Mr. Bowman lives in Smithfield, Virginia with his family. Welcome aboard, Mr. Bowman!



**William Pruitt** -- As he steps down from both the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC), William A. Pruitt of Gloucester County leaves behind an impressive legacy. He is one of the longest serving members of the ASMFC and holds the record for the longest tenure as Commissioner of Marine Resources in his department's 131 year long history. Mr. Pruitt was first appointed to these organizations in 1983, and was subsequently reappointed by the next six governors. Awarded a Bronze Star Medal for his service in the army, Mr. Pruitt is well known for a long history of public service, having worked as a teacher, a law enforcement planner, and county administrator before entering a career in fisheries management. His work with the ASMFC and VMRC connects him to his early experiences working in his grandfather's crab house and on his father's menhaden boat. We wish Mr. Pruitt a healthy and happy retirement.

### Staff

**Megan Caldwell** -- Megan Caldwell has joined the Commission as our new Science Director, responsible for overseeing the Commission's marine science program, including stock assessment activities, fisheries data collection programs, and scientific support to the states. Many of you will likely remember her as Megan Gamble when she first worked for the Commission as FMP Coordinator from 2000 - 2004. Megan distinguished herself by writing the first fishery management plan for spiny dogfish and volunteering to take over coordination for Atlantic striped bass in the middle of the Amendment 6 process. Besides her Commission experience, Megan brings a strong work ethic, great people skills, and high standards for quality. As Science Director, she will focus on strengthening the link between the Commission's science processes and its FMP activities. Welcome aboard, Megan!



**Ruth Christiansen** -- Ruth Christiansen has tendered her resignation to the Commission in order to move back to California to help care for her grandparents. Since March 2005, Ruth has been the FMP Coordinator for Atlantic herring, spiny dogfish and coastal sharks, winter flounder, and tautog. One of her major accomplishments was the completion and passage of Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring. She also spearheaded the development of the Public Information Document for the Interstate FMP for Coastal Sharks. We wish Ruth the very best.

**William Most** -- William Most has joined the Commission staff as Assistant to the Executive Director. William has a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Harvard University. Last winter, he worked for Saltwater Inc. as a fisheries observer on commercial fishing vessels in Alaska, as part of NMFS's North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program. William was attracted to the position for the opportunities it would provide him to learn about public policy and natural resource management. Welcome aboard, William!



**Erika Robbins** -- Erika Robbins has joined the Commission staff as our newest FMP Coordinator, taking over coordination responsibilities for shad and river herring,

*continued on page 12*



## ACCSP External Peer Review and Other News

### ACCSP External Peer Review

The external peer review for ACCSP will occur September 19-21 in Baltimore, Maryland. With assistance from the Operations Committee ad hoc workgroup ACCSP staff has assembled a panel of six scientists from a diversity of disciplines. The panel includes Harry Blanchet, the Marine Fisheries Finfish Program Manager for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; Darrell Brannan, a consultant who retired as the chief economist for the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and did a lot of work with the Alaska Fisheries Information Network and trip tickets; Dan Georgianna, Chancellor Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, with one field of concentration being marine resource economics; Daniel Orth, the Department Head for Fisheries and Wildlife Department of Virginia Polytechnic University; Karen Sender, an information technology specialist with the NMFS Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center and creator of the InPort metadata application; and Jon Volstad, principal biometrician for Versar, Inc., ESM Operations, who has consulted on a variety of fisheries issues and surveys.

The meeting will include presentations from each ACCSP committee chair on their membership, tasks, accomplishments, and perspectives on the program; presentations from the Coordinating Council Chair and the ASMFC; and a panel discussion of implementation projects by various partners. That panel includes Operations Committee members Greg Power (NMFS NERO), Dave Van Voorhees or Tom Sminkey (NMFS Division of Science and Technology),

Bruce Joule (ME), Cheri Patterson (NH), Harley Speir (MD), Dee Lupton (NC), Kathy Knowlton (GA), and ACCSP and ASMFC staff (Maury Osborn, Mike Cahall, and Bob Beal).

### SAFIS News

Although Maine is issued an annual summer flounder quota, all landings are reported directly to NOAA Fisheries. In years past, the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) did not have a way to access real-time data and Maine suffered the consequences of exceeding the quota because it could not be properly monitored. Now that dealers must report electronically on a timely basis and because DMR has instant access to this data through SAFIS, this year DMR was able to take the appropriate steps to regulate landings before the quota was exceeded. The real credit should go to the dealers who are reporting electronic data on a timely basis, allowing DMR to monitor the fishery.

The ACCSP IT staff are completing the new electronic vessel trip reporting application within SAFIS. New Hampshire and Connecticut plan to deploy this in January 2008, which will complete implementation of ACCSP commercial fisheries standards for those states. Other states are also planning to deploy the E-VTR application in 2008.

Development of this application within SAFIS completes a large phase of providing tools for our partners that are still implementing commercial reporting standards. While some work will continue to customize the application for other partners in 2008, the IT staff will have more time to populate the ACCSP data warehouse with legacy commercial catch and effort data and biological sampling data from 1981 to the present. The plans are to load all the legacy NMFS holdings, then work with each

state partner to include additional data. This will take extensive cooperation with all our partners to build the most complete data sets with the highest possible spatial and geographic resolution, and to solve compatibility issues for a variety of state and federal conversion codes.

### New Staff

The third try to hire an Outreach Coordinator has been successful. Thanks to Forbes Darby and Kim Amendola who helped with reviewing resumes and interviewing of the candidates. Katherine Fleming will join the ACCSP staff September 25. Kate has a Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs from George Washington University (magna cum laude) and has excellent work experience in public affairs and communications. In addition, her long-term career goals are to move into the natural resource/conservation arena.

### About the ACCSP

The ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program to design, implement, and conduct marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and to integrate those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, including the Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the DC Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org) or call 202.216.5690 during business hours.

## Tina Berger Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

Tina Berger has been a part of the Commission staff for more than 12 years and her efforts over the years have directly contributed 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 a number of accomplishments throughout the year, Tina was awarded Employee of the Quarter (July - September 2006). The award is intended to recognize special contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.

During her tenure at the Commission, Tina has worked diligently on getting the Commission's message out. In the past year, she has focused on a number of products and activities that convey the Commission's message articulately and with excellence, reflecting very well on the Commission. These products include the Commission's website, 2005 Annual Report, and *Fisheries Focus*, as well as an American lobster stock assessment poster and factsheet, and horseshoe crab primer. Tina has also focused on increasing the Commission's participation at fishing industry tradeshows, including Fish Expo Workboat Atlantic, New England Saltwater Fishing Show, and Georgia Coastfest.

Not one to back away from complicated issues, Tina seeks new ways to promote the public's understanding of and participation in the Commission's activities. She is very supportive of the Commission's staff, leadership, and programs, and is a valuable contributor to the Commission's success. Tina has a Bachelor of Arts in Marine Biology from Boston University and a Master of Arts in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island. As Employee of the Quarter, she received a \$500 cash award, an engraved pewter pencil cup, and a letter of appreciation for her personnel record. In addition, her name will be engraved on the Employee of Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Tina!



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### Lobster Draft Amendment 5 PID (continued from page 8)

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the PID, either through 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](http://www.asmfc.org) under Breaking News. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM on September 27, 2006 and should be forwarded to Toni Kerns, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; 202-289-6051 (FAX) or at [tkerns@asmfc.org](mailto:tkerns@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Amendment 5 PID). For more information, please contact Toni Kerns at 202-289-6400.

### Striped Bass Species Profile (continued from page 7)

Chesapeake Bay may have this disease, which does not appear to be common in any other species in the Bay. First diagnosed in the Chesapeake Bay in 1997, at least 10 species of mycobacteria have been isolated from striped bass lesions. Fish are probably exposed to these bacteria early in life with infection rates increasing with age: 11 percent in one year olds and 60 percent in three to five year olds. The recovery and mortality rates resulting from this disease within the Chesapeake Bay are not currently known. Scientists from both Maryland and Virginia continue to study this issue and monitor the situation.

Concern has also been raised over the nutritional needs of striped bass. A number of studies are being conducted to evaluate prey availability and what relation, if any, it might have to the prevalence of disease in the striped bass population. A multispecies model, incorporating predator-prey and competitor interactions between striped bass, Atlantic menhaden, bluefish, and weakfish, is under development. Fisheries scientists and managers will use this model to help determine interspecies relationships and help forecast multiple species abundance trends. For more information, please contact Nichola Meserve, FMP Coordinator, at [nmeserve@asmfc.org](mailto:nmeserve@asmfc.org).



## Kerns and Spear Receive Promotions



Toni Kerns and Braddock Spear, two veteran FMP Coordinators, have been promoted to the positions of Senior FMP Coordinator for Management and Senior FMP Coordinator for Policy, respectively. The positions were created to improve support to the states' important and complex work. Both positions fall under oversight of the Director of the Interstate Fisheries Management Program.



As Senior FMP Coordinator for Management, Toni Kerns will be responsible for assisting the ISFMP Director with the various day-to-day activities associated with the ISFMP, including the mentoring of new hires. As Senior FMP Coordinator for Policy, Brad Spear will help coordinate the formulation of Commission positions on key legislation and policy issues. He will also provide primary staff support to the Legislative and the Legislator/Governor Appointees Committees. This change will provide key assistance to these important commissioner activities, and is made in recognition of the potential contributions these committees can make to the Commission process.

Congratulations Toni and Brad!

**Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**  
1444 Eye Street, N.W., 6th Floor  
Washington D.C. 20005

*Return Service Requested*

## ASMFC Comings & Goings (continued from page 9)

sturgeon, American eel and bluefish. Erika has a Master in Environmental Management from



Duke University and a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. Last summer, she worked for NOAA's Southwest Region Habitat Conservation Division, where she developed a species and habitat guide to assist managers in writing essential fish habitat conservation recommendations for projects in southern California's major bays. Welcome aboard, Erika!