COMMISSIONER MANUAL

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
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Cobia
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Northern Shrimp
Red Drum
Scup
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Spanish Mackerel
Spiny Dogfish
Spot
Spotted Seatrout
Summer Flounder
Tautog
Weakfish
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Benchmark Stock Assessment Overviews
American Eel
American Lobster
Atlantic Croaker
Atlantic Menhaden
Atlantic Striped Bass
Black Drum
River Herring
Scup
Tautog
Weakfish

Science Program
Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership
Assessment Science Committee
Committee Economics and Social Sciences
Fishing Gear Technology Workshop
Fish Passage Working Group
Habitat Program
Habitat Committee
Artificial Reef Subcommittee
Interstate Shellfish Transport Committee
Interstate Tagging Committee
Management and Science
Multispecies Technical Committee
Management and Science
Multispecies Technical Committee
NEAMAP
SEAMAP - South Atlantic

ACCSP
Welcome to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission! Thank you for your desire and willingness to take on the public trust responsibility of managing and restoring the public’s coastal marine fisheries resources. This manual is designed to support you in this important job by providing the information you need to be an effective Commissioner. Key topics include:

- How and why the Commission was formed
- Our mission, vision and goals
- How the Commission functions and is organized
- What our major programs, activities, and funding sources are
- Who the people are within the Commission (fellow Commissioners and ASMFC staff).

This manual is a product of the hard work of a special committee of our Commissioners, some of whom are still current while others have moved on – Steve Bowman, Bernie Pankowski, April Price, Malcolm Rhodes and Ritchie White. They worked closely and tirelessly with staff members Laura Leach and Tina Berger to produce this completely revised Commissioner Manual. Their insight, creativity and attention to detail were invaluable. They all deserve our heartfelt thanks for both their efforts and a product that is well done.

I think you will find this manual to be a useful tool in quickly bringing you up to speed on the Commission and your role. We welcome your feedback on its contents and your recommendations for improvements. This is a dynamic document and will be revised as necessary through updates distributed via email and posted to our website at http://www.asmfc.org/about-us/commissioners-manual. Our website is intended to be a user friendly, one stop source for all critical Commission information, including almost all Commission publications. I suggest you visit it as soon as you can.

Your first opportunity to see what the Commission does, and observe how Commissioners interact, will be at the next quarterly meeting of the Commission. You will be seated with the other two Commissioners from your state. I would encourage you to contact them prior to your first meeting for any advice they might offer. Please contact me if you have any questions that are not readily answered in this manual or on the website – we can be reached at (703) 842-0740.

Our Commission was formed in 1942 by the 15 member states for the purpose of protecting and managing marine fisheries within the states’ jurisdiction. Our states recognized that they could accomplish far more through cooperation than through their individual efforts. That founding principle has been maintained through the years thanks to the selfless dedication of citizens like you who have stepped forward to share their time, expertise, and judgment to advance our vision of sustainably managing Atlantic coastal fisheries!

Welcome aboard!

Robert E. Beal
Executive Director

The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased and not impaired in value. – THEODORE ROOSEVELT
Important Notes for New Commissioners

1. Status counts. We depend on written notification from the appropriate authority within the state to advise us of changes to a Commissioner’s status. Legislative Commissioners’ status, and that of their proxies, expires the day they resign, or if not re-elected, the day the new Legislature convenes. Proxy designations for all Commissioners must be made in writing.

2. A Commissioner and his/her on-going proxy may sit together at a Board meeting; however, only one may speak during that Board meeting. Any Commissioner is authorized to seek recognition from the Chair to speak at the public microphone.

3. Meeting-specific proxies cannot vote on final action. This rule was adopted following complaints from the public about perceived conflicts of interest of issue-specific proxies.

4. The Commission has been engaged in a series of lawsuits challenging Commission action. These cases are tried on the Administrative Record, that is, what is said on the record during Board meetings and deliberations. The majority of Commission meetings are recorded and transcribed. Commissioner words become permanent.

5. The Commission amended its Regulations to specify that a two thirds vote of board members is required to amend or rescind a previous action, regardless of whether prior notice is given of such action. This reflected concerns about backsliding on important and difficult decisions.

6. Species management board meetings have little flexibility to exceed their allotted time. Public comment is purposely taken through hearings held within the states and through written public comment period. All information collected is available for Commissioner review. Summaries are provided to each Board prior to their deliberations. Last minute testimony from advocates at Board meetings has raised questions of fairness and efficiency.

7. Commission staff is prepared to enable Commissioners to make best use of their time during board and Commission meetings. Staff can and will help with drafting motions to avoid the need for boards to wordsmith motions on the run. Having pre-drafted motions reduces the chances of errors and allows Commissioners to focus on understanding what the motion will do and exchange views on the merit of the proposal.

8. Given the large number of members for most boards, chairs will use various methods to provide the opportunity for all members to speak. One technique will be to alternate recognizing speakers for and against a motion. Another is to ask if anyone’s mind will be changed by further discussion or debate.

9. A recommended reading list in prioritized order follows (all of which can be found in the Commissioner Manual or on the Commission website):
   - Compact – Rules and Regulations (Compact, Rules and Regulations tab of Commissioner Manual)
   - Chairman’s Report from 2018 Annual Meeting (following Preface of Commissioner Manual)
   - Overviews of fish species that your state has declared an interest in (Interstate Fisheries Management Program tab of Commissioner Manual)
   - Meeting Summary from last Meeting Week available at: [http://www.asmfc.org/home/meeting-archive](http://www.asmfc.org/home/meeting-archive)

Key staff to assist you if you have any questions or require assistance are: TONI KERNS for fisheries management issues at tkerns@asmfc.org, LAURA LEACH for finance and administration issues at lleach@asmfc.org, PAT CAMPFIELD for science related issues at pcampfield@asmfc.org, GEOFF WHITE for data collection and management issues at geoff.white@accsp.org, and TINA BERGER for outreach and general information at tberger@asmfc.org.

January 2018
It was my pleasure and honor to present this, my Chair’s Report, to my fellow Commissioners as both their Chair and host of the Commission’s 77th Annual Meeting in New York City in October 2018. The meeting held special meaning for me. As a New Yorker, born and raised, and someone who has worked in the city (and in the South Tower of the Twin Towers), I am profoundly proud of this city and its people, who have had to come together to deal with one of the nation’s worst tragedies. As horrible as 9/11 was, the ability of New Yorkers to set aside their differences and personal losses to come to each other’s aid was inspiring and uplifting. It renewed my faith in the goodness of people and their ability to unite and accomplish great feats for a common cause.

My fellow New York Commissioners and I felt so strongly about this notion of strength through unity – the ability of people with diverse interests and backgrounds to unify for a greater good – that we chose to use the image of the One World Trade Center as our Annual Meeting logo.

New York also has immense historical significance to the Commission. It was one of a handful of states that came together through the Eastern States Conservation Conference in 1937 to discuss the concept of forming an interstate commission for the purpose of coordinating state marine fisheries activities along the Eastern Seaboard. Upon the Commission’s establishment in 1940, New York served as its headquarters with Wayne Heydecker, New York State Regional Representative for the Council of State Governments, serving as the Commission’s Secretary-Treasurer, a position he would hold for the next two decades. The Roosevelt Hotel itself played an important part in the Commission’s history, serving as the meeting place for 11 out of the first 17 Annual Meetings. It’s at the Roosevelt Hotel where Commissioners solidified their commitment to seek solutions that were in the best interests of their shared fishery resources.

So now we find ourselves back at the Roosevelt Hotel 60 years later, dealing with many of the same issues – declining fish stocks, changing environmental conditions, and growing stakeholder demands. And, I’m here to tell you, as it was so many years ago and throughout the evolution of the Commission, we are all in this together. We are all inextricably connected and it’s reflected in our shared interests and the challenges we face. Just look at the resources we manage. They show no loyalty to one region or state. They move up and down the coast, inshore and offshore. Filling the roles of predators and prey, seeking optimal environmental conditions to maximize their survival, and striving to produce more offspring than are removed - all part of one big interconnected ecosystem. No one piece of it belongs to New York, or Maine, or North Carolina. And yet we divvy up the resources, each of us seeking the biggest piece of pie we can get. I don’t blame us, I’m in there with the next guy trying to do what I think is right for our fishermen. But, in doing so, in our struggle to ensure that we get our fair piece, I think we can easily lose sight of the larger picture, of all the reasons why we all choose to be in fisheries management: our love of the ocean and its marine resources, and the deep desire to be effective stewards and ensure that these resources are available to those who want to use them now and over the long-run.

As your Chair, I see it as my responsibility to remind you why we are all here and why now, more than ever, we need to reenergize ourselves and recommit to our shared vision of sustainable Atlantic coastal fisheries. Our greatest strength is in our ability to work cooperatively for the benefit of the fishery resources under our care and those that depend on these resources – recreational anglers and the industries they support, commercial fishermen and processors, who enable consumers to purchase and eat fresh fish, as well as those who place value in the non-consumptive aspects of our coastal resources.

Report from the Chair

James J. Gilmore

While the issues may seem daunting, they are not insurmountable. What is required is a renewed commitment by all of us to work through our challenges with respect for each other and the integrity of our process.
The issues before us are great. They include changing ocean conditions and their effect on species distribution and survival; reallocation of resources between recreational and commercial sectors, as well as between the states; increased fisheries/protected species interactions; responding to recent changes in recreational catch estimates; competing ocean uses; and the challenge of maintaining an engaged membership given the ebb and flow of veteran and new Commissioners, in addition to always present fiscal limitations. While the issues may seem daunting, they are not insurmountable. What is required is a renewed commitment by all of us to work through our challenges with respect for each other and the integrity of our process. When we stray from our intended goal, we need to remind ourselves to take a step back and refocus our energies for the common good. We also must remember to not get caught up in us versus them when we do not get what we want. Let’s not lose sight of the fact that we are the Commission. What happens to one state ultimately impacts us all.

Fortunately, we have the continued support of Congress and our federal partners, and an outstanding staff to arm us with the needed resources and information to make informed, balanced decisions. And, we have each other – intelligent, dedicated, passionate, innovative stewards of our Atlantic coastal fisheries. Together, there is nothing we cannot accomplish.

It has been a great honor to serve as your Chair this past year. I am excited about the opportunities and challenges ahead and look forward to working with you all in the coming year.