



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section Launches New Website on Atlantic Herring Area 1A Spawning Monitoring System

In May, the Commission's Atlantic Herring Section approved the continued use of the GS_{130} -based forecast system to predict when the population will be spawning and when spawning closures should be set based on the development of herring gonads (reproductive organs) in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine). GSI stands for gonadosomatic index and in its simplest terms assesses the onset of spawning based on the ratio of the weight of a female herring's ovaries to its body weight. This new system, which was successfully piloted in 2016, uses the observed rate of increase in GSI to predict when spawning will occur and when the fishery will be closed. This replaces an earlier system that simply closed the fishery when the observed GSI was above a threshold value.

Stakeholders can see the spawning forecast model in real time here: <https://www.massmarinesfisheries.net/herring/>.

Atlantic herring spawn in the late summer or early fall of each year. The timing of this event can vary by several weeks, which necessitates sampling the population each year to determine when the spawning closure should occur. Once three samples have been collected that show a positive progression in gonadal development, a forecasted closure date can be determined by projecting forward when the population is likely to cross the spawning threshold (see Figure 2 on page 6). This forecasted closure date is continuously updated as new samples are acquired, and the closure is finally set within 5 days of the forecast date.

If not enough samples can be collected to forecast a closure date, a default closure date will go into effect. This date varies slightly by region:

- Eastern Maine: August 28th
- Western Maine: October 4th
- Massachusetts-New Hampshire: October 4th

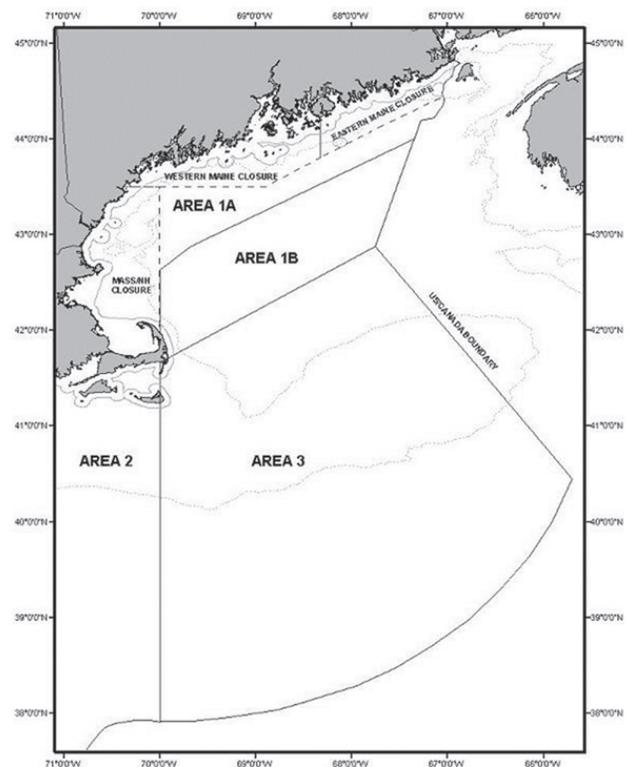


Figure 1. Map of Eastern Maine, Western Maine, and Massachusetts-New Hampshire Atlantic Herring Spawning Areas

continued, see HERRING WEBSITE on page 6

Upcoming Meetings

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 the deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous 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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October 10-12

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hyatt Long Island East End, 451 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY

October 10 (1 - 4 PM)

ASMFC Tautog Technical Committee Conference Call; go here for more details - <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/>.

October 16-19

ASMFC 76th Annual Meeting, Waterside Marriott Hotel, 235 East Main Street, Norfolk, VA

October 26 (10 AM - 4 PM)

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Panel, Philadelphia Airport Marriott, One Arrivals Road, Terminal B, Philadelphia, PA

November 13 (begins at 1 PM) & 14 (ends at 6 PM)

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Management Board, BWI Marriot, 1743 West Nursery Road, Linthicum MD

November 29 (10 - 11:30 AM)

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel, Westin Portland Harborview, Hotel 157 High Street, Portland, ME

November 29 (1 - 3:30 PM)

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section, Westin Portland Harborview, Hotel 157 High Street, Portland, ME

December 4-7

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront, 2717 W. Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, NC

December 5-7

New England Fishery Management Council, Hotel Viking, Newport, Rhode Island

December 11-14

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Westin Annapolis, 100 Westgate Circle, Annapolis, Maryland

January 30-31

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Harborside, Portsmouth, NH

February 6-8

ASMFC Winter Meeting, Westin Hotel, 1800 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA

February 13-15

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Garden Inn Raleigh/Crabtree Valley, 3912 Arrow Drive, Raleigh, NC

March 5-9

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Westin Jekyll Island, 110 Ocean Way, Jekyll Island GA

April 10-12

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Montauk Yacht Club, 32 Star Island Road, Montauk, NY

April 30 - May 3

ASMFC Spring Meeting, Westin Hotel, 1800 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA



ASMFC Discusses Next Steps in State/Federal Management

On July 11th, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross notified the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission that he found the State of New Jersey to be in compliance with Addendum XXVII to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan. This decision is unprecedented and is of serious concern to the Commission's member states. Never before has any Secretary rejected the Commission's determination of noncompliance. Indeed, in all 18 of the noncompliance submittals decided since enactment of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFMCA) in 1993, the Secretary has accepted the Commission's judgment.

Given the importance of the action, this issue was discussed at length during the Commission's Summer Meeting, beginning with a dialogue between the state directors and NOAA Fisheries' leadership, then by the Commission's Executive Committee, and lastly with the Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board. A significant portion of the discussion focused on the technical merits of New Jersey's management program and the lack of transparency in the Secretarial review process. Commissioners also focused on broader issues such as the overall approach to recreational management and the imperative that states come together to address their problems

and cooperatively manage their shared resources. Provided below are some excerpts from those discussions:

One of the biggest criticisms I've heard of the Secretary's decision is that somehow there is a sense that an individual state won here. We all lost; everyone around this table!

*-- Adam Nowalsky, New Jersey
Legislative Proxy*

James Gilmore (NYS DEC) spoke to the issue of the Commission's submitted justification for its noncompliance finding, "...of all the justifications I've seen in my career that was one of the strongest ones I've ever seen. I think the staff for the Commission and the states, even the federal government that were involved, did an exemplary job."

Following up on the issue of adequate justification being provided to the Secretary, Jason McNamee (RI DEM) stated, "What became very apparent to me during the past couple of days is there was nothing to review. We had a really rigorous process. New Jersey put forward a fair effort. I appreciate Representative Abbott's comments earlier about my involve-

ment on the technical review, but there were a lot of other people involved as well – state scientists, NOAA Fisheries scientists, Mid-Atlantic staff; it was not a single person, it was a full technical review. We reviewed their work. We offered our advice on that work, and what happened subsequent to that was a process where the Secretary second guessed what the technical body did, without any evidence or information. There was nothing to review. I was told that bluntly.

I appreciate the idea to meet with the Secretary because I think we really need to emphasize this point that we put forward a technical review, and were offered nothing in return as to why that technical review was deemed insufficient."

With respect to protecting the integrity of the Commission's process and ensuring our management programs are upheld by the states, Ritchie White and Dennis Abbott, NH Governor Appointee and Legislative Proxy, respectively, and Robert Boyles (SC DNR) shared the following:

Mr. White: "I think we have to take the Secretary of Commerce out of our process, and what I mean by that is we have to not have noncompliance findings. The states have to think long and hard before entering into this, and thinking about what I believe will be a short-term gain for a state that may not be a long-term gain for interstate management. I think it's up to us to make sure that this system is solid and goes forward, and that we don't use this change in political decisions to advance what we might perceive as a short-term gain for our individual state."

Rep. Abbott: "In the end, I think that the states really have to consider placing the Compact above their individual state issues. It may be difficult, as it was in this case difficult for Massachusetts and New York to go along with essentially what the federal government agency told us when we had to cut back on summer flounder catch...But the states really have to look at the big picture and look at the damage that was done. We can say that this is a one-issue or one-time thing. But it doesn't work that way. There are always precedents. I'm concerned and I think that at the end of the day it's very important that we place the Compact above all else."

Mr. Boyles: "Representative Abbott, thank you for what I would like to consider a great segue way to my remarks. Mr. Chairman, I think it's important that we recognize that the very Constitution of this great nation holds matters of interstate commerce to be the purview of the federal government. In the early 1940s when the country was engaged in some distractions around the globe, the Congress in its wisdom

continued on page 10

Species Profile: Spot

Introduction

Spot directly support recreational and commercial fisheries in the U.S. Mid- and South Atlantic and function as an important forage species in the region. The range of this short-lived species includes brackish and saltwater habitats predominately between Chesapeake Bay and South Carolina. Annual variation in landings, typically composed of fish belonging to a single year class, is due in part to the prevailing environmental conditions at spawning and nursery sites. Small-sized spot remain a major component of the bycatch (or inadvertent catch of undersized or unwanted fish) associated with seine, trawl, and pound net fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay and North Carolina, as well as that of the South Atlantic shrimp trawl fishery. While substantial reductions in the magnitude of bycatch have occurred in the shrimp trawl fishery since the introduction of bycatch-reducing devices in the 1990s, this fishery continues to be the largest single contributor to removals (harvest and bycatch from all sources) of spot, annually.

Life History

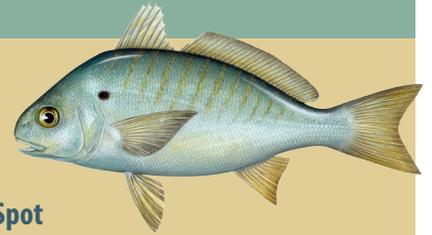
Spot occur along the U.S. Atlantic coast in estuarine and coastal waters from the Gulf of Maine to Florida, although they are most abundant from Chesapeake Bay south to South Carolina. Spot migrate seasonally, entering bays and estuaries in the spring where they remain until late summer or fall when they move offshore to spawn. Spot typically mature between the ages of one and two, at lengths of 5.5 to 8.5 inches. Their maximum life span is about six years, although fish older than three years are uncommon.

Spawning takes place in the ocean from fall to early spring and the post-larvae move into estuaries, utilizing low salinity tidal creeks where they develop into juveniles. As spot grow, they move toward higher salinity areas during the summer and early fall and offshore in the fall as water temperatures decrease. Those that summered in the northern portion of their range also move south in the autumn. Spot are opportunistic bottom feeders, eating mainly worms, small crustaceans and mollusks, and decaying organic material. Post-larvae prey on plankton but become bottom feeders as juveniles or adults. Predators such as striped bass, weakfish, summer flounder, bluefish, and sharks eat them in turn.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Spot support commercial fisheries along the Atlantic coast, particularly from Chesapeake Bay southward. They are harvested by a variety of commercial gears including haul seines, pound nets, gillnets, and trawls. Commercial catches fluctuated widely between 1950 and the early 1980s, ranging from 3.9 to 14.5 million pounds. Such variability is expected because spot are a short-lived species and catch in most years consists of a single year class, the strength of which appears to be determined by environmental conditions that prevail on the spawning and nursery grounds in any particular year. Commercial landings have, overall, decreased from historic levels, with the five lowest years for the entire commercial landings record back to 1950 occurring from 2006-2015.

Species Snapshot



Spot
Leiostomus xanthurus

Common Names: Norfolk spot, flat croaker, golden croaker, spot croaker, silver gudgeon, goody, chub, roach, jimmy

Management Unit: Delaware to Florida

Interesting Facts:

- Spot travel in huge (>100 fish), slow moving schools over sand-mud bottom.
- Spot are the only member of the drum family, which includes weakfish, red and black drum, and croaker, with a forked tail.
- Spot tend to live longer and attain greater size in the northern extent of their range.

Largest Recorded:

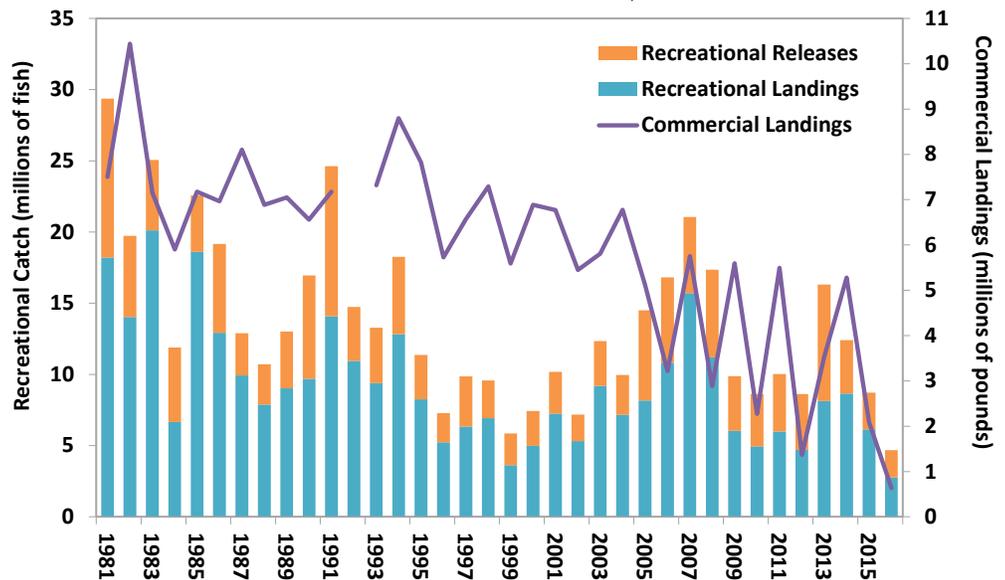
2 pounds, 6 ounces (Poquoson, VA, 1980)

Life Span: 6 years

Stock Status: Unknown

Spot Recreational Catch & Commercial Landings

Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse, 2017



*Commercial landings from 1992 are confidential under current policies.

Timeline of Management Actions: FMP ('87); Omnibus Amendment ('11); Addendum I ('14)

Spot is a popular recreational species sought by anglers from Delaware Bay to northern Florida. Most of the Atlantic recreational harvest is taken within three miles of the coast, from shore or by private or rental boats rather than by party or charter boats. Recreational harvest has fluctuated from a high of 6.9 million pounds in 1981 to a low of 1.6 million pounds in 1999. From 2006-2015, recreational harvest has averaged 3.4 million pounds, and has exceeded commercial landings in five years during this timeframe.

Stock Status

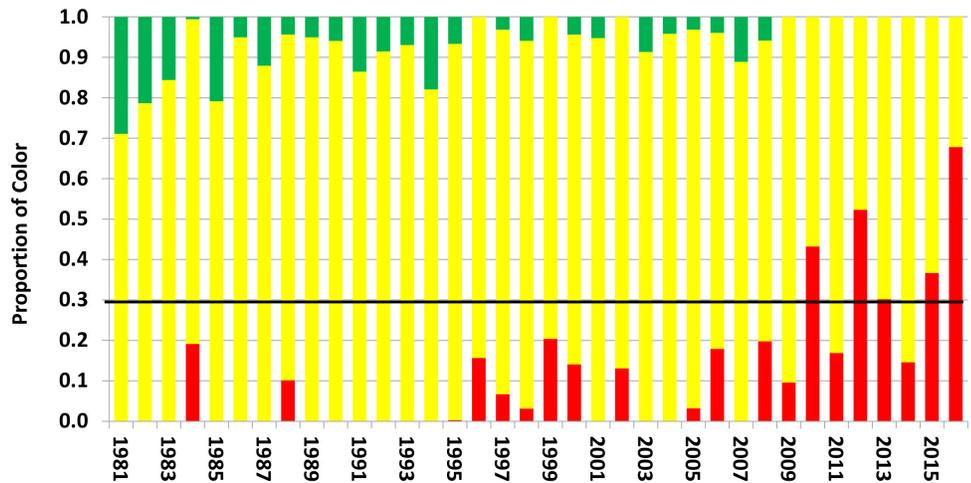
In August 2017, the Commission's South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board received the findings of the 2017 Spot Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report. While the assessment was not endorsed by an independent panel of fisheries scientists (Peer Review Panel) for management use, the Panel agreed with the general results of the assessment that immediate management actions are not necessary. The Panel recommended continued use of the annual traffic light analysis (TLA) that was established in 2014 to monitor fishery and resource trends, and implement management measures, as needed, for spot.

The Panel acknowledged several improvements with regard to the estimation and inclusion of dead discards from the Southeastern US shrimp trawl fishery. Estimates of these discards indicate they account for a large majority of fish removed from the population annually (via directed and non-directed fishing activities) for both Atlantic croaker and spot. The Panel recommended continued monitoring of these discards and potential inclusion or consideration of these discards in the annual TLA conducted for spot.

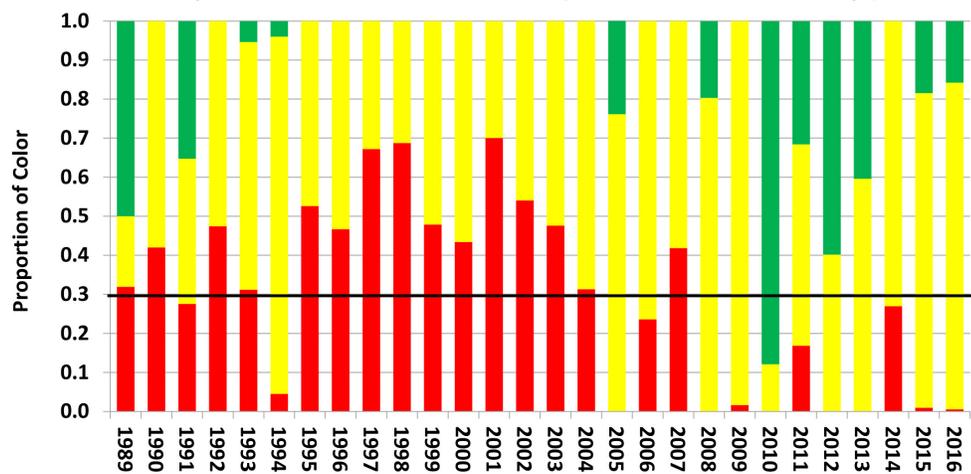
A key issue causing uncertainty in the results of the assessment was the disagreement between recent trends in harvest and abundance. Trends in stock abundance for spot are estimated through several federal and state fishery-independent surveys. Typically, if these surveys catch a relatively large number of spot, that would indicate a greater number of spot available to be harvested by their directed fisheries. Thus, scientists and managers would expect a greater abundance of spot would also be reflected through an increase in harvest for that year. Similarly, a decrease in abundance would be expected to be coupled with a decrease in harvest. However for spot, recent harvest numbers are declining while estimated abundance is increasing.

A similar trend is evident in the 2016 TLA for spot. The TLA assigns a color (red, yellow, or green) to categorize relative levels of indicators of the condition of the fish population (abundance metric) or fishery (harvest metric). For example, as harvest increases relative to its long-term mean, the proportion of green in a given year will increase, and as harvest decreases, the amount of red in that year will increase. Under Addendum II to Amendment 1 for Atlantic Croaker and Addendum I to the Omnibus Amendment for Spot, state-specific management action would be initiated when the proportion of red exceeds the specified thresholds (for both harvest and abundance) over two consecutive years for spot.

Spot TLA Harvest Metric (Commercial and Recreational Landings)



Spot TLA Adult Abundance Metric (NMFS and SEAMAP Surveys)

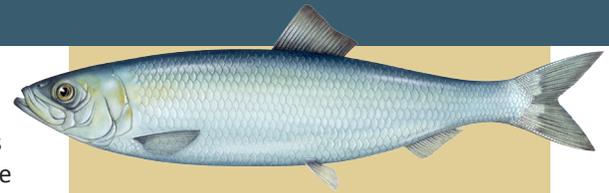


Management response is triggered when proportion of red exceeds the 30% threshold level for two consecutive years in both fishery characteristics (harvest and abundance metrics).

continued, see SPOT on page 15

Whether initiated by the forecast model or a default date, the spawning closure lasts four weeks. If more than 25% of sampled fish are still in spawning condition when the fishery is reopened, the fishery will reclose for another two weeks.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.



KEY TERMS

GSI (Gonadosomatic Index): The ratio of a female fish's ovary weight to its body weight. This value increases in a predictable way as female fish approach spawning.

Forecasted Closure Date: The date when GSI is projected to exceed the GSI trigger value. It is used as the starting date for the spawning area closure (assuming there is enough data to allow for a prediction).

GSI Trigger Value: When the forecasted GSI crosses this value, the spawning area closure begins. A value near the high end of observed GSI for mature female fish was selected by the ASMFC Herring Section because it represents a compromise between protecting pre-spawning fish and providing adequate coverage for the majority of the population.

Default Closure Date: A preselected date at which the spawning closure begins, if not enough samples have been collected to forecast a closure date. This represents the average date when population has crossed GSI Trigger Value in past years.

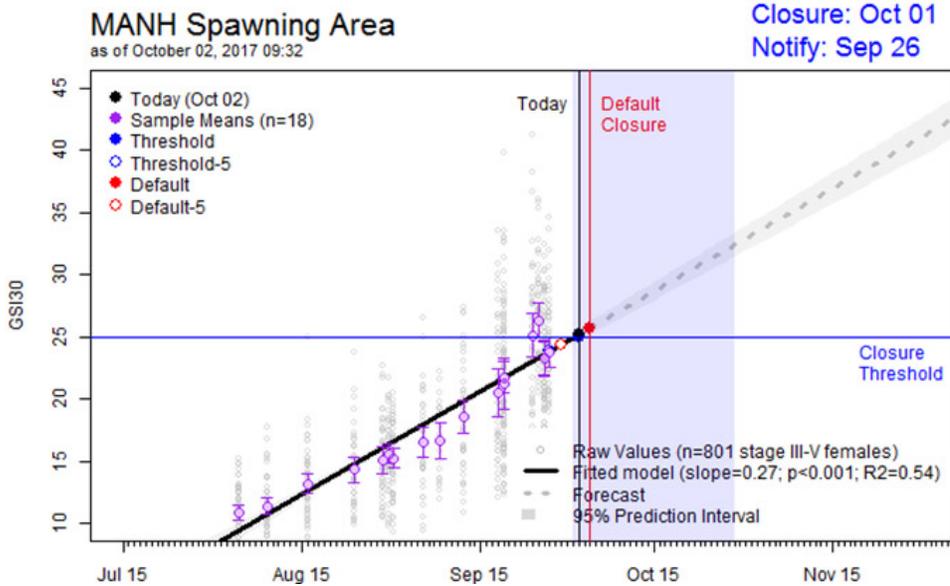


Figure 2. Modeling Projection of the Spawning Area Closure Date for Massachusetts-New Hampshire. Similar projections can be found for Eastern and Western Maine at <http://www.massmarinefisheries.net/herring/>. All projections on this webpage may be updated due to new data.

Key: The purple points show the average GSI of female fish on each day they are sampled and are used to plot a line predicting average GSI for the population over the next couple months. The GSI trigger value (closure threshold) is a preselected GSI value, and when the population's average GSI crosses that threshold, the spawning area closure begins. If not enough samples can be collected by the time the default closure date comes, that is the date used for the start of the spawning area closure.

ASMFC 76th Annual Meeting

Norfolk Waterside Marriott

October 16-19, 2017

The Annual Meeting Final Agenda and public comment guidelines are available on the website at <http://www.asmfc.org/home/2017-annual-meeting>

American Lobster Board Initiates Addendum to Increase Resiliency of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Stock

The Commission's American Lobster Management Board has initiated Draft Addendum XXVII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Draft Addendum seeks to increase the resiliency of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock by considering the standardization of management measures across Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs). This is a proactive management action and is in response to signs of reduced settlement. Initiating an addendum charges the Plan Development Team (PDT) with developing management alternatives for consideration in the Draft Addendum.

The American lobster fishery is one of the largest and most valuable fisheries along the Atlantic coast. In 2016, over 158 million pounds were landed coastwide totaling \$666 million in ex-vessel value. The vast majority of harvest occurs within the GOM/GBK stock area, with over 130 million pounds landed in Maine alone. Since 2012, settlement surveys for the GOM/GBK stock

have indicated a consistent decreasing trend in young-of-year lobster. This decrease could foreshadow a decline in recruitment and landings. Given the high value of the fishery and the economic importance of the fishery to coastal communities throughout New England, the Board initiated Draft Addendum XXVII as a proactive response to build resiliency in the stock.

The Draft Addendum will consider, to the extent possible, the development of consistent management measures for the GOM/GBK stock, including gauge size and v-notch definitions. Currently, disparate regulations allow lobsters protected in one LCMA to be harvested in another LCMA. A uniform set of regulations would add an additional biological buffer to the stock through the protection of spawning stock biomass across LCMAs. In addition, this action may address enforcement concerns, particularly regarding the sale and transfer of lobsters across state lines which are subject to different minimum gauge sizes. The PDT will provide an update on the

development of Draft Addendum XXVII at the Commission's Annual Meeting in October.

Regarding the Southern New England stock, the Board decided to not move forward with Addendum XXV for management use at the current time. After considering the proposals put forth by the Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs) and Technical Committee input, the Board was divided in its support of the Draft Addendum. Some members felt the proposed measures did not go far enough to protect the stock, while others were concerned the majority of LCMT proposals would not achieve the required 5% increase in egg production. Others believed significant reductions have already occurred in the fishery and no further action was needed. Ultimately, the Board decided to establish a Workgroup to discuss ways to manage SNE lobster.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.



ASMFC & MAFMC Modify Scup Specifications for 2018 and 2019

The Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) reviewed previously approved specifications for summer flounder, black sea bass and bluefish fisheries and modified 2018 and 2019 specifications for scup. The Commission's actions are final and apply to state waters. The Council will forward its federal waters recommendations regarding scup specifications to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval.

The accompanying table summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL) for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish (2017 values are provided for comparison purposes). Please note the 2019 scup specifications may be adjusted based on changes in the fishery or new scientific information.

Scup

The scup stock assessment update, which includes data through 2016, indicates the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2016. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be 206% of the biomass target. Given the desire to maintain stable measures and take into account management uncertainty raised by the Monitoring Committee, the Commission and Council approved a commercial quota of 23.98 million pounds (a 30% increase from the 2017 quota), and a RHL of 7.37 million pounds (a 34%

increase from the 2017 RHL) for the 2018 and 2019 fishing seasons. The difference between the increases in the commercial quota and RHL is due to projected discard estimates for the commercial and recreational fisheries.

Summer Flounder

For summer flounder, the Commission and Council received a data update, including catch, landings, and survey indices through 2016. The Council and Board maintained the previously approved 2018 specifications based on stock projections from the 2016 assessment update. A benchmark stock assessment is scheduled for peer review in late 2018. A working group is being formed to develop alternative modeling approaches to be considered in the assessment. The Commission and Council were also presented a range of commercial alternatives for possible consideration in the Draft Summer Flounder Amendment. Based on feedback from both bodies, work will continue on the development of management alternatives for permits and latent effort, as well as commercial allocation. The Board and Council will decide which management alternatives to include in the document at a later meeting.

Black Sea Bass

The Commission and Council received a data update for black sea bass, including catch, landings, and survey indices through

2016. The update indicates black sea bass biomass continues to be high, and the 2015 year class appears to be above average. The Commission and Council maintained 2018 specifications, which were set in February 2017 based on stock projections from the 2016 assessment update. An assessment update is tentatively scheduled for 2018.

Bluefish

The Commission and Council also maintained 2018 specifications for bluefish. The 2018 commercial quota and recreational harvest limit are preliminary and will likely change following release of 2017 final Marine Recreational Information Program harvest estimates. These estimates can impact how much is transferred from the recreational sector to the commercial sector. An assessment update is scheduled for 2018.

For all four species, the Commission and Council actions are consistent with the recommendations of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee based on the best available scientific information. For more information about summer flounder, scup, or black sea bass, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior FMP Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org. For more information about bluefish, please contact Max Appelman, FMP Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org.

Species	Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Commercial Minimum Fish Size (TL)	Commercial Diamond Mesh Size	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
Summer Flounder	2017	5.66	14"	5.5"	3.77
	2018	6.63	14"	5.5"	4.42
Scup	2017	18.38	9"	5"	5.50
	2018	23.98	9"	5"	7.37
	2019	23.98	9"	5"	7.37
Black Sea Bass	2017	4.12	11"	4.5"	4.29
	2018	3.52	11"	4.5"	3.66
Bluefish	2017	8.54	Varies by state		9.65
	2018	7.24	Varies by state		11.58



Photo (c) Bryan Gratwicke

Atlantic Menhaden

In August, the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Menhaden for public comment. The Draft Amendment seeks to manage the menhaden resource in a way that balances menhaden's ecological role as a prey species with the needs of all user groups. To this end, the Draft Amendment considers the use of ecosystem reference points (ERPs) to manage the resource and changes to the allocation method. In addition, it presents a suite of management options for quota transfers, quota rollovers, incidental catch, the episodic events set aside program, and the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery cap.

The 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment Report identified the development of ERPs as a high priority for Atlantic menhaden management. Menhaden serve an important role in the marine ecosystem as prey for a variety of species including larger fish (e.g. weakfish, striped bass), birds (e.g. bald eagles, osprey), and marine mammals (e.g. humpback whales, bottlenose dolphins). As a result, changes in the abundance of menhaden may impact the abundance and diversity of predator populations, particularly if the availability of other prey is limited. ERPs provide a method to assess the status of menhaden within the broad ecosystem context. Draft Amendment 3 provides a variety of reference point options, including the continued development of menhaden-specific ERPs as well as the application of precautionary guidelines for forage fish species.

Draft Amendment 3 also considers changes to the allocation method given concerns that the current approach may not strike an appropriate balance between gear types and jurisdictions. Specifically, under the current allocation method, increases in the total allowable catch (TAC) result in limited benefits to small-scale fisheries, and to several states. Furthermore, the current method may not provide a balance between the present needs of the fishery and future growth opportunities. Draft Amendment 3 considers a range of allocation alternatives, including a dispositional quota (bait vs. reduction), fleet-capacity quota (quota divided by gear type), jurisdictional quota, including a fixed minimum quota for each state, and an allocation method based on the TAC. In addition, the document considers five allocation timeframes including 2009-2011, 2012-2016, 1985-2016, 1985-1995, and a weighted approach which considers both historic and recent landings.

The Draft Amendment is available at http://www.asmf.org/files/PublicInput/AtlanticMenhadenDraftAmendment3_PublicComment.pdf or via the Commission website, www.asmf.org (under Public Input). Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Amendment either by attending state public hearings (see sidebar for schedule) or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on October 24, 2017 and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Amd. 3). Organizations planning to release an action alert in response to Draft Amendment 3 should contact Megan Ware at 703.842.0740.

Final action on the Amendment, as well as specification of the 2018

TAC, is scheduled to occur on November 13-14 at the BWI Airport Marriott, 1743 West Nursery Road, Linthicum, MD. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.

Cobia

In August, the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board approved the Draft Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group (AMG) Cobia for public comment. The intent of the Draft FMP is to complement federal AMG cobia management actions and distribute catches among member states through a proposed allocation strategy.

The Draft FMP was initiated in response to recent overages of the federal annual catch limit (ACL) for AMG Cobia. The Draft FMP addresses immediate management and conservation goals in anticipation of a new benchmark AMG cobia stock assessment in 2018. Management options include size, bag, and vessel limits to complement federal measures along with proposed de minimis options for Mid-Atlantic states (Maryland through New York) whose landings are minimal or episodic.

The most significant change may come in the form of state-specific recreational allocations. The current ACL for AMG cobia is 670,000 pounds (620,000 pound recreational ACL and a 50,000

pound commercial quota). Managing the recreational ACL on a coastwide basis has resulted in federal closures and significant overages in 2015 and 2016, disrupting fishing opportunities and jeopardizing the health of the stock. The Draft FMP contains a number of proposed options to allocate a recreational harvest limit (equal to the



Photo (c) Scott Smith, NC DMF

continued, see FISHERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS on page 16

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK (continued)

decided that there is a lot to be gained by states sitting in a body like this to cooperate, to commit to one another to work together on problems, challenges, and opportunities.

In 1993, Congress established the Atlantic Coastal Act; that really put that idea, that concept, that ideal of interstate cooperation into what I would argue is a more mature, modern, cooperative venue with both the carrot to encourage cooperation, as well as a stick to ensure cooperation once a decision had been made.

Clearly, South Carolina doesn't sit on the Summer Flounder Board, and so our interest in that particular management board may not be as great as other states. But I too share Representative Abbott's concerns about the efficacy of this institution as a place where we can come together and work through problems, work through disagreements, and really provide a stable and a vigorous forum for discussions on how to manage these great resources that we are blessed to have the privilege of being stewards of.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I just would like to quote Dr. Franklin, who just before signing the Declaration of Independence remarked, as he concluded his comments, "We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately." I think I speak for my colleagues in South Carolina that we're disappointed with what has brought us here.

But from our perspective, we remain committed to this Compact. We remain committed to each other in terms of the belief that the states are the best place for these decisions to be made, and we will do our best to ensure that folks around here feel like they get a fair hearing. We are committed to continued cooperation."

Both Tom Fote, New Jersey Governor's Appointee, and Adam Nowalsky, the state's Legislative Proxy, shared New Jersey's perspective on the issue, including challenges with the current recreational fisheries management system.

Mr Fote: "I don't take going out of compliance lightly...As a matter of fact, years ago, because of my role as a legislative proxy on one of the Boards, I voted New Jersey out of compliance. I took it seriously, and felt that they should put in the regulation.

...But I also look at the way the law was written. The law was written for a particular purpose to basically help the Compact work, and it gave us a lot of power, an extreme lot of power to basically shut a state down by automatically going to the Secretary of Commerce. But it also laid on the Secretary of Commerce to be the arbitrator sometimes, to look at what he thinks is the right move to make. I don't think the process failed us. They've supported us all the time. They've sent the

letter to New Jersey every time they agreed with the Commission's finding. But this time they thought there was something valid with the arguments we made.

To say the whole system is broken because of one instance where the Secretary of Commerce looks at an issue, felt that maybe it wasn't, with taking all the facts that were put out.

Mr. Nowalsky: "One of the biggest criticisms I've heard of the Secretary's decision is that somehow there is a sense that an individual state won here. We all lost; everyone around this table! I would make the argument NOAA Fisheries, and even the Secretary of Commerce for being forced to get involved in this, and New Jersey lost.

For the first year in 18 years, I'm not running my own vessel this year. It didn't matter if it was three fish at 19 inches or three fish at 18 inches, with almost a month less season. Neither of those regulations served the public; and worse than that when we put forth a proposal that acknowledges that it kills more fish through discards than harvest. We are certainly not serving the resource we claim so ardently to protect.

The concerns about wanting to protect the process -- that's all well and good, when the process is working. But when it comes to recreational fisheries management, the process is not working. It's not, and it's unfortunate that it's had to come to this, and I certainly understand a lot of the criticisms are coming from those states that have not been as impacted by the recreational problems with data collection.

But sometimes it's okay to go ahead, have those concerns, have a third party step in, which is essentially what happened in this case, say take another look at what we're doing. I hope, I truly hope that we can use this as a stepping stone to something better. I sincerely hope that we can look at the information that was provided by the Secretary, and use that as a building block in making our appeals process stronger. Most importantly, recognizing that second element of the noncompliance findings, are the measures that we seek to enforce truly about conservation of the resource?"

Ultimately, Commissioners agreed to seek ways to protect the process, with the first step being a face-to-face meeting with the Secretary of Commerce. At that meeting, the Commission will request to have the Secretarial review process better defined. Specifically, we will seek a process that makes transparent, fully informed, science-based decisions. The Commission will also seek to work with our federal partners to better address the unique challenges of managing recreational fisheries.

The full Policy Board proceedings can be found on the Commission's You Tube Channel at <https://tinyurl.com/yax4vt5x>.

ASMFC Releases Stock Assessment Updates for Atlantic Menhaden and River Herring

In August, the Atlantic Menhaden Board and Shad and River Herring Board were presented the results of stock assessment updates for menhaden and river herring, respectively. Stock assessment updates differ from benchmark stock assessments in that benchmark stock assessments are a full analysis and review of stock condition, focusing on the consideration of new data sources and newer or improved assessment models. This type of assessment is generally conducted every 3-5 years and undergoes a formal peer review by a panel of independent scientists who evaluate whether the data and the methods used to produce the assessment are scientifically sound and appropriate for management use. In between benchmark assessments, the Commission also conducts stock assessment updates, which incorporate data from the most recent years into a peer-reviewed assessment model to determine current stock status (abundance and overfishing levels).

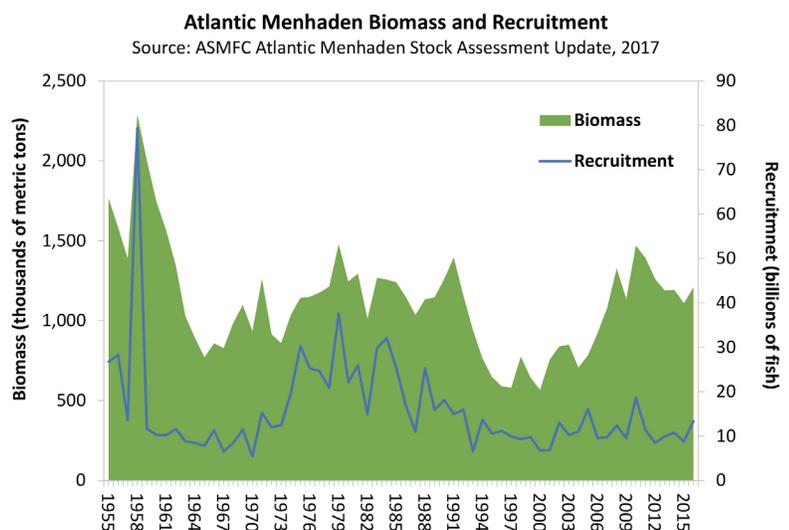
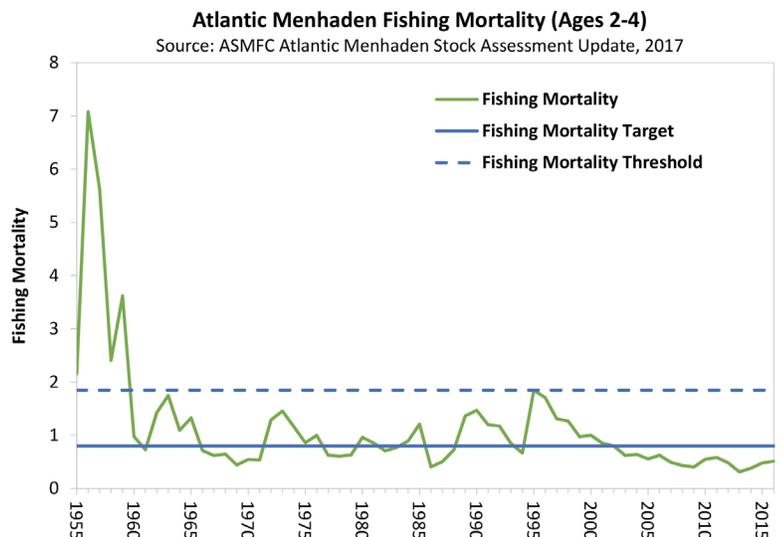
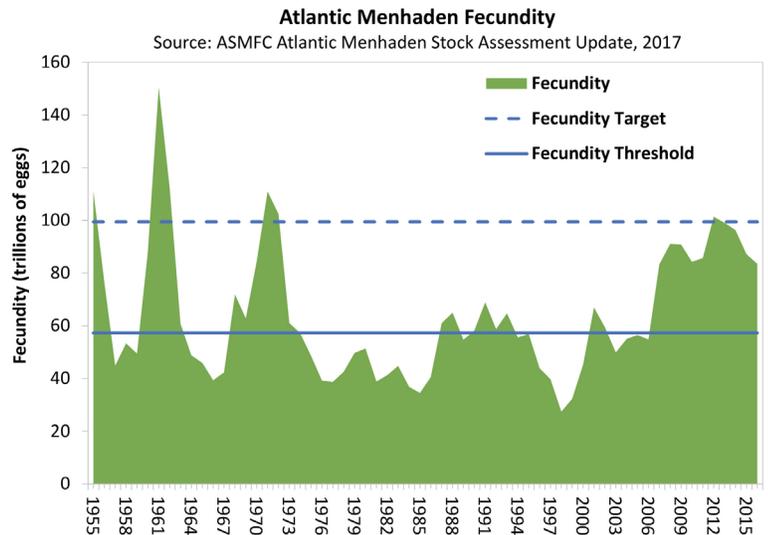
The findings of the Atlantic menhaden and river herring assessment updates are provided below. More detailed overviews of both updates, as well as links to the assessment updates, can be found on the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, on the respective species pages under Stock Assessment Reports.

Atlantic Menhaden: Resource Remains Healthy; Not Overfished Nor Experiencing Overfishing

The results of the 2017 Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Update indicate the resource remains healthy; it is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing relative to the current biological reference points. In 2016, population fecundity, a measure of reproductive capacity, is estimated to be 83,486 billion eggs which is well above the threshold (57,295 billion eggs) but below the target (99,467 billion eggs). Additionally, total fishing mortality is estimated to be 0.51, below both the fishing mortality threshold (1.85) and target (0.80). The stock assessment update uses the same modeling approach as the 2015 Atlantic Menhaden Benchmark Stock Assessment but added additional years of data from 2014-2016.

While the stock status was assessed in the same way as the 2015 benchmark report, the reference point values have changed. Adding additional years of data to the model resulted in generally higher fishing mortality values throughout the times series which changed the scale of the reference points. While the scale is different and

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ACCSP Submits Regional Recreational Implementation Plan to NOAA Fisheries MRIP

ACCSP recently submitted its Atlantic Coast Recreational Implementation Plan to NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) for final review. In the plan, the ACCSP identifies its top six priorities for improving recreational data collection on the Atlantic coast. MRIP will use the plan to allocate resources strategically, addressing the data needs of fishery scientists and managers in the Atlantic coast region. MRIP is responsible for developing and implementing data collection programs used to estimate total recreational catch and effort in U.S. waters. Scientists and managers use these data along with commercial catch and biological research data to assess and maintain sustainable fish stocks. In recent years, controversy surrounding the management of several fisheries, including red snapper in the Gulf and summer flounder in the Atlantic, has highlighted the statistical uncertainty and perception problems associated with recreational data collection and estimate generation. MRIP is working to address this by improving its data collection programs and building stakeholder confidence through outreach.



Photo (c) Dave Bard, NOAA Fisheries

In addition to MRIP, state and regional programs have been developed over time to provide finer-scale recreational data, i.e., for specific species or geographical areas. Considering the heterogeneity of data collection programs across the U.S. coasts, MRIP has adopted a regional approach to recreational data improvement. To gain a better understanding of each region's recreational data needs, MRIP solicited input from the regional Fisheries Information Networks (FINs), requesting each region's recreational data priorities. As the Atlantic FIN, MRIP requested that ACCSP compile the Atlantic coast's priorities. Staff coordinated the first draft of the plan, then presented it to ACCSP's Recreational Technical Committee (RTC) for revision and approval by the ACCSP Coordinating Council.

As a body comprised of state, federal, Commission, and council fisheries managers and data experts, the RTC provides a good mechanism for coordinating cross-jurisdictional discussions on ways to improve the quality and coverage of recreational data. At the committee's annual meeting, RTC members reviewed current

regional data programs and reached consensus on six priorities for improving recreational data collection on the Atlantic coast over the next five years:

1. Improve precision (PSE) of MRIP catch estimates
2. Comprehensive for-hire data collection and monitoring
3. Improved recreational fishery discard and release data (Equal Priority as above)
4. Biological sampling for recreational fisheries separate from MRIP Access Point Angler Intercept Survey
5. Improved spatial resolution and technical guidance for post-stratification of MRIP estimates
6. Improved timeliness of recreational catch and harvest estimates

More details on potential methods for achieving these priorities, as well as estimated costs, are provided in the draft Atlantic Coast Recreational Implementation Plan that has been submitted to MRIP. You can access the draft here - <http://www.accsp.org/content/atlantic-coast-recreational-implementation-plan>.



ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and the integration of those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit www.accsp.org.



Photo (c) NC DMF

the trend differs in some years, the stock status for both fishing mortality rate and fecundity has been similar over the past decade.

Atlantic menhaden is harvested by both commercial reduction and bait fisheries. In 2013, Amendment 2 to the Fishery Management Plan implemented a total allowable catch (TAC) of 170,800 metric tons (mt). The coastwide TAC was increased by 10% to 187,880 mt for the 2015-2016 fishing years and by

another 6.45% to 200,000 mt for the 2017 fishing year. In 2016, reduction landings were 137,400 mt and accounted for approximately 76% of coastwide landings and bait landings were 43,100 mt and comprised 24% of coastwide landings.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or mware@asmfc.org.

River Herring Remain Depleted on a Coastwide Basis Though Improvements Have Occurred in Several River Systems

Also in August, the Shad and River Herring Management Board reviewed the results of the 2017 River Herring Assessment Update, which indicates river herring remain depleted and at near historic lows on a coastwide basis. The “depleted” determination was used instead of “overfished” and “overfishing” because many factors, not just directed and incidental fishing, are contributing to the low abundance of river herring.

Alewife and blueback herring (collectively referred to as river herring) are anadromous species, spending the majority of their life at sea and returning to their natal streams to spawn. While at sea, mixing is believed to occur among multiple river-specific stocks and the incidental catch of river herring in non-targeted ocean fisheries is known to include both immature and mature fish.

The stock assessment update applied the same approaches used in the previous benchmark stock assessment with the incorporation of additional years of data (2011-2015). Of the 54 river herring stocks for which data were available, 16 experienced increasing abundance trends, 2 experienced decreasing abundance trends, 8 experienced stable abundance, 10 experienced no discernible trends in abundance due to high variability, and 18 did not have enough data to assess recent abundance trends (see accompanying table).

Abundance Trends of Select Alewife and Blueback Herring Stocks along the Atlantic Coast from the 2012 Benchmark Assessment and 2017 Assessment Update

State	River	Benchmark Trends (2001-2010)	Updated Recent Trends (2006-2015)
NE U.S. Continental Shelf (NMFS Bottom Trawl) [^]		NA	Increasing ^{A,B}
ME	Androscoggin	Unknown ^A	Increasing ^A
	Kennebec	Unknown ^{RH}	Increasing ^{RH}
	Sebastiancook	Unknown ^A	Increasing ^{RH}
	Damariscotta	Stable ^A	Increasing ^A
	Union	Stable ^A	No Trend ^A
NH	Cocheco	Stable ^{A,B}	Increasing ^{A,B}
	Exeter	Unknown ^{A,B}	Stable ^{RH}
	Lamprey	Increasing ^A	Increasing ^{RH}
	Oyster	Stable ^B	Decreasing ^{RH}
	Taylor	Decreasing ^B	No Returns ^{RH}
	Winnicut	Unknown ^{A,B}	Unknown ^{A,B}
MA	Mattapoissett	Unknown ^A	Increasing ^A
	Monument	Unknown ^A	Increasing ^{A,B}
	Nemasket	Unknown ^A	Increasing ^A
	Parker	Unknown ^A	Stable ^A
	Stony Brook	Unknown ^A	Unknown ^A
RI	Buckeye	Unknown ^A	Increasing ^A
	Gilbert	Decreasing ^A	Stable ^A
	Nonquit	Decreasing ^A	Decrease ^A
CT	Bride Brook	Unknown ^A	Increasing ^A
	Connecticut	Decreasing ^B	Stable ^B
	Farmington	Unknown ^{A,B}	Unknown ^{A,B}
	Mianus	Unknown ^{A,B}	No Trend ^A , Increasing ^B
	Mill Brook	Unknown ^A	No Trend ^A
	Naugatuck	Unknown ^{A,B}	Unknown ^{A,B}
Shetucket	Unknown ^{A,B}	No Trend ^A , Stable ^B	
NY	Hudson	Stable ^{A,B}	Increasing ^{RH}
NJ, DE, PA	Delaware	Unknown ^{A,B}	No Trend ^{A,B}
MD, DE	Nanticoke	Decreasing ^{A,B}	Stable ^A , No Trend ^B
VA, MD, DC	Potomac	Unknown ^{A,B}	Stable ^A , Unknown ^B
VA	James	Unknown ^{A,B}	Unknown ^{A,B}
	Rappahannock	Unknown ^{A,B}	No Trend ^A , Increasing ^B
	York	Unknown ^{A,B}	Unknown ^{A,B}
NC	Alligator	Unknown ^{A,B}	Unknown ^{A,B}
	Chowan	Stable ^{A,B}	No Trend ^A , Stable ^B
	Scuppernong	Unknown ^{A,B}	Unknown ^{A,B}
SC	Santee-Cooper	Increasing ^B	No Trend ^B
FL	St. Johns River	NA	Unknown ^B

[^]NE shelf trends are from the spring, coastwide survey data which encounters river herring more frequently than the fall survey. A = Alewife only; B = Blueback herring only; A,B = Alewife and blueback herring by species; RH = alewife and blueback herring combined.

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While status on a coastwide basis remains unchanged, there are some positive signs of improvement for some river systems, with increasing abundance trends for a number of rivers in the Mid-Atlantic throughout New England region. While abundance in these river systems are still at low levels, dam removals and improvements to fish passage have had a positive impact on run returns. Since the completion of the 2012 assessment, NOAA Fisheries in partnership with the Commission have worked to provide state and local agencies with restoration project funding, leading to dam removals and fish passage improvement projects.

River herring are managed through Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Shad and River Herring, with the goal of conserving and protecting river herring along the coast. The Amendment prohibited state waters commercial and recreational fisheries beginning January 1, 2012, unless a state or jurisdiction had a Sustainable Fishery Management Plan (SFMP) approved by the Board. SFMPs must clearly demonstrate that the state's or jurisdiction's river herring fisheries meet sustainability targets which must be achieved and maintained. Amendment 2 also required states to implement fisheries-dependent and independent monitoring programs, and

contains recommendations to member states and jurisdictions to conserve, restore, and protect critical river herring habitat. As of June 1, 2017, the Shad and River Herring Management Board approved sustainable fishery management plans for Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, and South Carolina. Upon receiving the results of the Stock Assessment Update, the Board did not take any management action at this time.

UPDATE: On August 15th, NOAA Fisheries announced it is initiating a new status review of alewife and blueback herring. The status review will evaluate the best scientific and commercial data available on the current status of the species. NOAA Fisheries uses these reviews to determine whether listing under the Endangered Species Act is warranted. Through its announcement, NOAA Fisheries is requesting submission of information on alewife and blueback herring rangewide, including any information on the status, threats, and recovery of the species that has become available since the previous listing determinations in 2013. Please submit your information by October 16, 2017, either through the [e-Rulemaking portal](#) or by mail to: Tara Trinko Lake, NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930.

Comings and Goings

STAFF

JESSICA KUESEL

On September 5th, the Commission welcomed Jessica Kuesel as its new Fisheries and Administrative Assistant (FAA) to replace Amy Hirrlinger. Jessica



recently graduated from Duke University with a double major in Biology and Environmental Science & Policy, with concentrations in marine biology and marine conservation, respectively. For her senior thesis, she studied the Pacific rockfish fishery and investigated whether current government regulations are sufficiently protecting the stock, especially with regards to market developments.

As FAA, Jessica will be providing general administrative assistance and technical support to our outreach and fisheries management programs.

CAITLIN STARKS

On August 1st, the Commission welcomed Caitlin Starks as its new Fishery Management Plan Coordinator to replace Ashton Harp. Caitlin received her Masters in Environmental



Management from Duke University, and her Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources, with a concentration in wildlife conservation and management from the University of Arizona. Last last summer she worked with small scale fishermen in Mexico to develop an aquaculture project to improve economics and restore fisheries in the area.

As FMP Coordinator, Caitlin will be coordinating species management programs for black sea bass, bluefish, shad & river herring, and tautog.

Welcome aboard, Jessica and Caitlin!



Photo (c) NOAA Photo Library

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The 2016 TLA for spot also shows red proportions of greater than the 30% threshold for the harvest metric (Figure 3) and 0% for the abundance metric (Figure 4), indicative of relatively low harvest and high abundance in 2016. Since thresholds were not exceeded for both metrics over the last two years, no management response is necessary for spot.

Atlantic Coastal Management

The Commission adopted the Spot Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1987. A major problem addressed in the FMP was the lack of stock assessment data for effective management of the resource. Basic data requirements include information on recruitment, age, size, and sex composition, and variations in these characteristics over time and space. In addition, accurate catch and effort statistics are needed from the recreational and commercial fisheries to assess the effect of fishing activities on the population. Progress has been made on collecting these data elements, but more work remains to improve current estimates for population characteristics and expand the number of usable assessment models. Fishery-independent abundance surveys are being reviewed to determine whether changes to the Atlantic croaker stock, fishery, or environmental factors are impacting these surveys' abilities to accurately represent trends in the stock. Another problem referenced in the FMP was the bycatch of spot in the South Atlantic shrimp trawl, pound net, long haul seine, and trawl fisheries. The magnitude



Photo (c) VMRC, 2005 Kiwanis CFC

of the problem was underestimated at the time of FMP development, although it was cited as having potentially significant effect on spot stocks. Since adoption of the original FMP, significant progress has been made in the development of bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) for shrimp trawlers. In some tests, bycatch has been reduced by 50 to 75 percent while still retaining a significant shrimp catch. Although commercial fishermen did not readily accept use of them initially because of their expense and handling problems, the devices are now used by shrimpers throughout the South Atlantic states.

Unlike the majority of the Commission's FMPs, the original Spot FMP did not contain mandatory management measures, as it was adopted prior to passage of the

Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (1993) and adoption of the Interstate Fishery Management Program Charter (1995). As part of managing the spot resource and fishery, the Board initiated an update to the FMP in August 2009, as part of the larger Omnibus Amendment that includes spotted seatrout and Spanish mackerel as well. The Omnibus Amendment, approved by the Commission at its 2011 Summer Meeting, updated all three plans with the requirements of the Act and the Charter. The updated Spot FMP now includes yearly management triggers, using the TLA, to monitor the status of the stock until a full coastwide stock assessment that is suitable for management use can be completed. Further, the plan's adaptive management section provides the states the ability to more quickly implement management changes in the future. Each year, the South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board reviews an assessment of the Spot FMP and the TLA, including the current year's landings and data from fishery independent surveys, to determine whether revised management action is required. Although relatively short-lived compared to other species in its family, spot plays an important role as prey and bait, as well as being a targeted fishery. These updates will ensure continued responsive and responsible management.

For more information, please contact Michael Schmidtke, FMP Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or mschmidtke@asmfc.org.



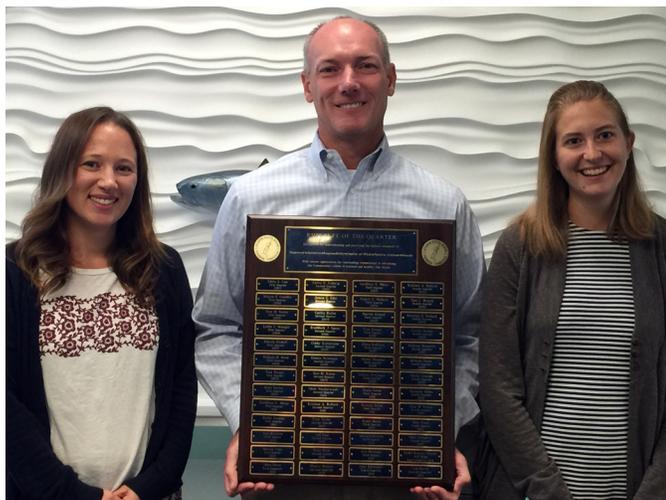
Photo (c) NJ DEP, DE River Seine Survey



Photo (c) NC Division of Parks and Recreation

Kristen Anstead & Megan Ware Named Employees of the Quarter

Each quarter the Commission honors an individual who has made notable contributions to the Commission's mission, vision, programs and activities. This quarter (July – September), due to their impressive individual and collective accomplishments, we had the pleasure of honoring two individuals – Dr. Kristen Anstead, Stock Assessment Scientist, and Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Coordinator. Both are being recognized not only for their combined efforts on the 2017 Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Update, but for the fact that they did so while also juggling multiple projects of equal weight and merit.



Over the past year, Kristen's tireless work ethic, dedication, and perseverance resulted in substantial progress being made on several stock assessments and fish ageing reports simultaneously. Her work on the Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Update helped to provide a timely and robust scientific basis for the development of Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden FMP. As an analyst for the spot and Atlantic croaker benchmark stock assessments, Kristen exhibited ambition, thoroughness, and effective communication skills in vetting data sets, developing surplus production models and, ultimately, bringing the assessments to peer review. At the same time, Kristen has been an analyst on the Atlantic Sturgeon Benchmark Stock Assessment and the American Eel Stock Assessment Update -- the findings of both will be presented at the Commission's Annual Meeting in October. In support of American eel management and science activities, Kristen showed perseverance, professionalism, and negotiating skill in working with power companies to provide their data for the assessment update and in supporting Technical Committee reviews of aquaculture proposals. Kristen also produced two ageing reports this year that will improve the age data used in future

stock assessments for several species.

Like Kristen, Megan possesses an impressive arsenal of tools that allow her to excel at her job. Her strong work ethic, dedication to collaboration and teamwork, and passion for the species she coordinates have resulted in continued improvements to the Jonah crab management program, a thorough vetting of issues and options with regards to the rebuilding of Southern

New England lobster, and early efforts to improve lobster harvester reporting and biological data collection. Additionally, she has begun to work on an addendum to increase the resiliency of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank lobster stock given signs of reduced settlement. All this while also contributing to the Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Update and investing countless hours to the development of Draft Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden FMP. At press time, Megan is on the road conducting state hearings up and down the coast on Draft Amendment 3, which is scheduled to be approved in mid-November. Always seeking new challenges and enthusiastic to share her experiences with others, Megan has also taken on mentoring our new Fisheries Administrative Assistant Jessica Kuesel on the ins and outs of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast.

Both Megan and Kristen epitomize the qualities for which the Employee of the Quarter was established: teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, and positive attitude. As Employee of the Quarter, they both received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in their personal record. In addition, their names are on the Employee of the Quarter plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Kristen and Megan!

*FISHERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS continued
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federal recreational ACL) to the four primary states (Georgia-Virginia) to allow those states more flexibility in developing seasonal options that best suit their specific state's recreational and for-hire interests. At this time, the options for the commercial AMG cobia fishery do not include state specific allocations and generally complement the proposed federal requirements.

The Draft FMP is available at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/DraftCobiaFMP_PublicComment_Aug2017.pdf or on the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, under Public Input. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft FMP either by attending state public hearings (see sidebar for schedule) or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on October 10, 2017

and should be forwarded to Louis Daniel, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Cobia FMP). Final action on the Draft FMP is scheduled to occur in October 2017. For more information, please contact Louis Daniel, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at daniel@asmfc.org or 252-342-1478.