



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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October 28-31
Wentworth by the Sea

Preliminary Agenda

The agenda is subject to change. Bulleted items represent the anticipated major issues to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. The final agenda will include additional items and may revise the bulleted items provided below. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Atlantic Herring Management Board

- Progress Update on 2019 Atlantic Herring Area 1A Fishery Performance
- Progress Update on Development of Georges Bank Spawning Protection Discussion Document
- Review and Set Atlantic Herring Fishery Specifications for 2020/2021 Season

ANNUAL MEETING PRELIMINARY AGENDA, continued on page 6

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N • Arlington, Virginia 22201 • www.asmfc.org

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

James J. Gilmore, Jr. (NY), *Chair*
Patrick C. Keliher (ME), *Vice-Chair*

Robert E. Beal,
Executive Director

Patrick A. Campfield,
Science Director

Toni Kerns,
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September 24 - 26

New England Fishery Management Council, Beauport Hotel, Gloucester, MA

October 1 (5:30 PM)

Coastal Sharks Advisory Panel Conference Call, go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/10/2019/coastal-sharks-advisory-panel-conference-call/1454> for more details.

October 8 - 10

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Durham Convention Center, 301 W. Morgan Street, Durham, NC

October 10 (10 AM - 12:30 PM)

Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee Webinar, go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/10/2019/atlantic-striped-bass-technical-comm-webinar/1452> for more details

October 16 (10 AM - 3 PM)

Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel, Courtyard Baltimore BWI Airport, 1671 West Nursery Road, Linthicum, MD

October 28 - 31

ASMFC Annual Meeting, Wentworth by the Sea, 588 Wentworth Road, New Castle, NH

November 4 (begins at 9 AM) - 8 (ends at 1 PM)

SEDAR 69 Atlantic Menhaden Single-Species and Ecological Reference Points Review Workshop, Town and Country Inn and Suites, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC, go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/11/2019/sedar-69-atlantic-menhaden-and-ecological-reference-points-review-workshop/1447> for more details

November 19 - 21

SEDAR 58 Atlantic Cobia Peer Review Workshop, Beaufort Hotel, 2440 Lennoxville Road, Beaufort, NC, go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/11/2019/sedar-58-atlantic-cobia-assessment-review-workshop/1448> for more details

November 2 - 6

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington, NC

December 3 - 5

New England Fishery Management Council, Hotel Viking, Newport, RI

December 10 - 12

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

December 11 (begins at 1 PM) - 12 (ends at 1 PM)

ASMFC Tautog Ageing Workshop, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, 30 Emerson Avenue, Gloucester, MA

January 28 - 30

New England Fishery Management Council, Portsmouth Event Center, Portsmouth, NH



ACCSP: Transitions in Leadership

As many of our readers are already aware, there have been some recent changes in leadership within the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program over the past several months. In mid-May, former ACCSP Director Michael Cahall retired after two decades of service. Under his leadership, ACCSP enjoyed tremendous growth, truly becoming the principal source of marine fishery statistics for the U.S. Atlantic coast. Both innovative in his problem solving and deft at seeking funding, Mike was able to spearhead projects that significantly advanced

ACCSP's mission and objectives, including tablet and mobile data entry apps for dealers, commercial fishermen and the for-hire industry.

In August, Geoff White was named the new ACCSP Director based on his long-standing dedication to the Commission and ACCSP, combined with his outstanding record of accomplishments over two decades. Geoff began with the Commission in 1998 as a Fisheries Specialist, working on ASMFC and SEAMAP Strategic Plans, and coordinating the development of two multispecies assessments, the lobster

assessment database, and an assortment of fisheries research programs. Looking for a change, Geoff became ACCSP's System Administrator in 2004, and was subsequently promoted to Data Team Lead/System Administrator in 2008 and promoted again to Recreational Program Manager in 2015.

As Recreational Program Manager, Geoff was particularly impressive in overseeing the transition of MRIP's Access Point Angler Intercept Survey from a federal contractor to state conduct for the states of Maine through Georgia. He also brings to the position an extensive background in both

fisheries science and information technology. He understands the absolute necessity for high quality, dependable, and timely fisheries data, as well as the need to leverage technological innovations to improve efficiencies at all levels of data collection and management. I am excited to see what further technological innovations and efficiencies ACCSP will achieve under Geoff's leadership.

Joining Geoff in a new leadership position is Julie Defilippi Simpson as ACCSP Deputy Director. Julie is another ACCSP veteran, having joined the Program in November 2007 as a Fisheries Data Coordinator. Like Geoff, Julie has risen through the ranks to become a Senior Fisheries Data Coordinator in 2013 and more recently Data Team Lead in 2015. Major accomplishments over those 12 years include leading the annual data compilation process for Fisheries of the United States since 2008. As a result of Julie's efforts, data have been provided earlier each year to accelerate production of the report. Julie also redesigned the Data Warehouse web application to improve data access and has been instrumental in providing data to dozens of stock assessments conducted by the Commission and the SouthEast Data Assessment and Review process. As Deputy Director, Julie will coordinate the annual request for proposals process as well as staff the Operations Committee. She will also continue to lead the Data Team, providing guidance on all data-related activities including standards, warehousing, and dissemination.

In accepting the Director position, Geoff stated, "I am honored and privileged to direct a program I feel so passionate about. I'm very proud to have been part of the progress ACCSP has made to date and I am excited to work with Julie to maintain our rigorous program standards while exploring opportunities to improve data collection and access. One of our goals will be to more fully integrate ACCSP's activities with partner needs."

In 1995, recognizing the need for consistency across Atlantic coast fishery-dependent data collection efforts, the 23 state, regional, and federal agencies responsible for fisheries management on the Atlantic coast established the ACCSP. Using a committee-based approach, ACCSP works with its partners to increase data utility by: (1) developing and implementing coastwide data standards; (2) providing electronic applications that improve partner data collection; (3) integrating and sharing partner data via a coastwide repository; (4) facilitating fisheries data access while protecting confidentiality; and (5) supporting further technological innovation. Since the Program's inception, the Commission has played an important role in its creation and administration. In 2016, ACCSP officially became a Commission program.

"I am honored and privileged to direct a program I feel so passionate about. I'm proud to have been part of the progress ACCSP has made to date and I am excited to work with Julie to maintain our rigorous program standards while exploring opportunities to improve data collection and access."

-- Geoff White

Species Profile: Summer Flounder

Joint Management Action Adapts to Changing Conditions in the Summer Flounder Fishery

Introduction

Highly valued by both commercial fishermen and recreational anglers from Massachusetts to North Carolina, summer flounder are often considered the most important flounder along the Atlantic coast. In addition to commercial fishing, enterprises such as recreational charters, party boats, bait and tackle stores, and any number of businesses associated with boating and angling view summer flounder as an essential component of their livelihood. Because of this importance, there has been considerable debate and concern over the status of the resource and the need for management to respond to changing conditions in the summer flounder fishery.

The Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), which jointly manage summer flounder, set the 2019-2021 specifications at a 7.69 million pound recreational harvest limit (RHL) and an 11.53 million pound commercial quota. Both represent a substantial change from the 2018 fishing season and respond to the inclusion of the recalibrated estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) in the 2018 stock assessment, which indicates the resource is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. Recent additions to the fishery management program aim to maintain and enhance the stock's condition while balancing the economic importance of the fishery to both the commercial and recreational sectors.

Life History

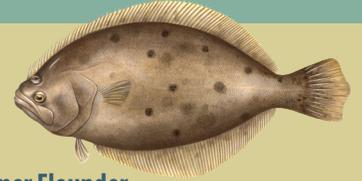
Summer flounder are found in inshore and offshore waters from Nova Scotia, Canada to the east coast of Florida. In the U.S., they are most abundant in the Mid-Atlantic region from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Cape Fear, North Carolina. Summer flounder usually begin to spawn at age one at lengths greater than 12 inches. Spawning occurs in the fall and winter while the fish are offshore. Spawning migration is linked to sexual maturity, with the oldest and largest fish migrating first. Seasonal migrations of spawning summer flounder vary regionally as well. Summer flounder in the northern portion of the range spawn and move offshore (depths of 120 to 600 feet) earlier than those in the southern part of the range. Larvae migrate to inshore coastal and estuarine areas from October to May. The larvae, or fry, move to bottom waters upon reaching the coast and spend their first year in bays and estuaries. At the end of their first year, some juveniles join the adult offshore migration. Recent research has indicated a northward shift in the center of biomass linked to an expansion of age structure of the population and possibly to changes in sea surface temperatures. Adults spend most of their life on or near the sea bottom burrowing in the sandy substrate. Flounder lie in ambush and wait for their prey. They are quick and efficient predators with well-developed teeth allowing them to capture small fish, squid, sea worms, shrimp, and other crustaceans. Skilled anglers take advantage of their ambush behavior by fishing near the bottom with moving bait.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Summer flounder are one of the most sought after commercial and recreational fish along the Atlantic coast, with total landings at approximately 14 million pounds in 2018 (see Figure 1). Using the base years of 1980 to 1989, the current plan allocates the summer flounder quota on a 60/40 percent basis to commercial and recreational fisheries, respectively.

Two major commercial trawl fisheries exist — a winter offshore and a summer inshore. Summer flounder are also commercially harvested by pound nets and gillnets in estuarine waters. Throughout the 1980s, commercial landings ranged from 21 to 38 million pounds. By 1990, landings reached a

Species Snapshot



Summer Flounder

Paralichthys dentatus

Management Unit

Massachusetts to North Carolina

Interesting Facts

- Left-eyed flatfish (both eyes on the left side of its body when viewed from above with the top fin facing up).
- Fluke begin with eyes on both sides of their body; the right eye migrates to the left side in 20-32 days.
- Summer flounder are called chameleons of the sea because of their ability to match the color of the bottom on which they are found.

Largest Recoded

27.9 lbs (Ocean City, MD)

Maximum Age

14 years old

Age at Maturity

50% mature by age 1; ~10" for males and 11.5" for females

Stock Status

Not overfished nor experiencing overfishing



Photo (c) MA DMF

low of 9 million pounds and have since fluctuated between 9 and 17 million pounds. In 1993, the coastwide quota was implemented for the first time, setting a commercial landings limit of 12.4 million pounds. Since then, commercial landings, which are limited by the quota, have ranged from approximately 10 to 18 million pounds. Over the past five years, commercial landings have been on the decline, in part due to annual quota limits, dropping from approximately 11 million pounds in 2015 to 6 million pounds in 2018.

Summer flounder are also highly prized in the recreational fishery. Anglers catch summer flounder from the shore, piers, and boats with hook and line. Estimates of recreational effort and catch, generated by MRIP, were improved through a 2015 transition from a phone-based survey to a mail-based survey to estimate fishing effort. Old catch estimates prior to 2015 were subsequently calibrated to new estimates from the improved mail-based survey.

As a result of the survey improvements, new recreational landings estimates increased, on average, about 1.5 times in the early 1980s and about 3 times in the most recent 5 years (see Figure 2). These new MRIP estimates result in a larger stock abundance than previously estimated using old MRIP estimates. From 1981 through 2004, recreational landings varied widely from a high of 37 million pounds in 1981 to a low of 6 million pounds in 1989. Starting in 1993, harvest limits were implemented for the recreational fishery. Beginning in the mid-2000s, recreational harvest began to decline, in part due to decreases in the coastwide recreational harvest limit (RHL). In 2018, recreational anglers harvested 7.6 million pounds of summer flounder.

Figure 1. Summer Flounder Commercial and Recreational Landings and Discards

Source: 66th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop, 2018

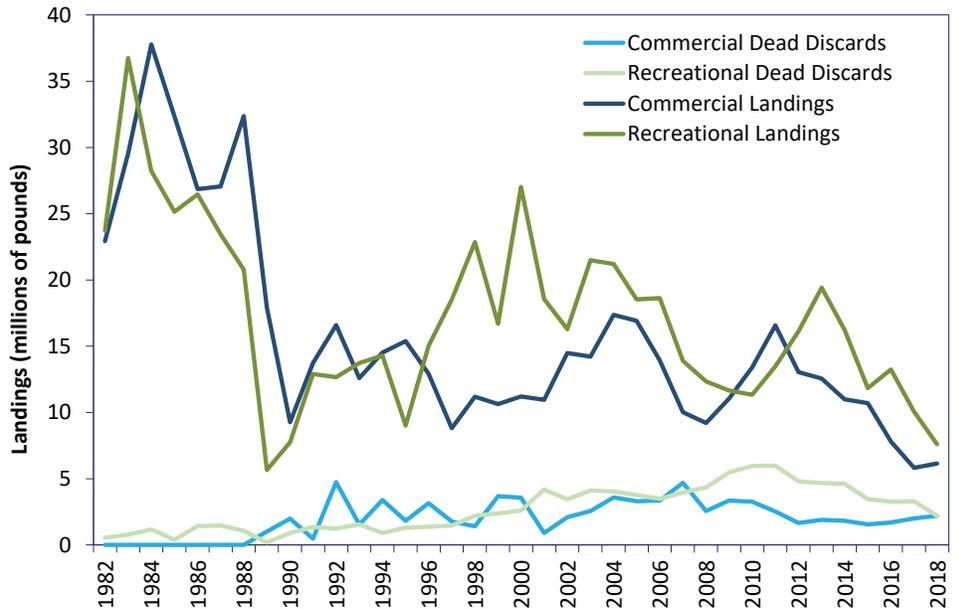
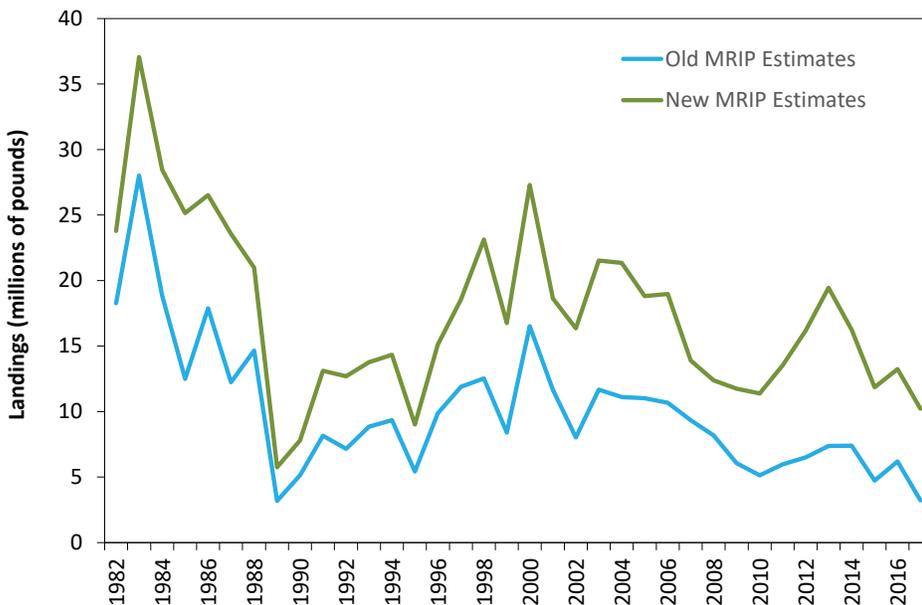


Figure 2. Comparison of Old & New MRIP Estimates of Summer Flounder

Recreational Landings

Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse, 2019



Stock Status

The 2018 stock assessment indicates summer flounder is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. Female spawning stock biomass (SSB) is estimated at 98 million pounds, below the SSB target of 126 million pounds, but above the SSB threshold of 63 million pounds. While total fishing mortality is estimated at 0.334, below the fishing mortality threshold of 0.448, mortality from all sources is greater than current levels of recruitment. This means that total mortality is removing more fish than the stock can produce (recruitment) over the long-term to sustain itself, resulting in declining abundance.

To a large extent, increases in MRIP catch estimates from the new survey method have led to an increase in estimates of abundance relative to earlier stock assessments. Summer flounder recruitment, or the number of age-0 fish, has experienced significant

continued, see SUMMER FLOUNDER on page 12

78th Annual Meeting Preliminary Agenda (cont'd)

- 9:45 – 10:30 a.m. American Lobster Management Board**
- Progress Update on Resiliency in the Gulf of Maine
 - Progress Update on 2020 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment
- 10:45 – 11:45 a.m. Tautog Management Board**
- Progress Update on Commercial Tagging Program
- 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) Steering Committee**
- Develop Action Plan for 2020-2021
 - Finalize Recommendations for FY2020 National Fish Habitat Partnership-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Funding
 - Progress Update on Northeast Fish Habitat Conservation Mapping Prioritization
 - Develop Strategy for Sub-regional Project Fundraising
- 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Management and Science Committee**
- Review Commission Success in Rebuilding and Sustaining Stocks
 - Consider Climate Change Impacts on Stock Distributions and Productivity
 - Consider Use of Management Strategy Evaluations (MSE)
 - Discuss Offshore Wind and Fisheries Interactions
 - Discuss Implementation of New Recreational Data in Fisheries Management
- 1:15 – 2:45 p.m. Atlantic Menhaden Management Board**
- Progress Update on the 2019 Atlantic Menhaden Single-Species and Ecological Reference Point Benchmark Stock Assessments
 - Update on Reduction Fishery Harvest from the Chesapeake Bay
- 3:00 – 5:30 p.m. Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Coordinating Council**
- Funding Subcommittee Report
 - Consider Approval of Recommendations of FY2020 Submitted Proposals
 - Discuss Changes to ACCSP Committee Structure
 - Formulation of Data Coordination Committee
 - Program/Committee Updates
- 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Welcome Reception**

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29

- 8:00 – 9:30 a.m. Spiny Dogfish Management Board**
- Consider Approval of Addendum VI
 - Review and Revise (if Needed) Spiny Dogfish Fishery Specifications for 2020/2021 Season
 - Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance
- 8:30 a.m. – Noon Management and Science Committee (continued)**
- 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. ACFHP Steering Committee (continued)**
- 9:45 – 11:45 a.m. Horseshoe Crab Management Board**
- Review Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Subcommittee and Delaware Bay Ecosystem Technical Committee Recommended Updates for the ARM Model
 - Review and Set Horseshoe Crab Harvest Specifications for 2020 Season

Public Comment Guidelines

For issues that are not on the agenda, management boards will continue to provide opportunity to the public to bring matters of concern to the board's attention at the start of each board meeting. Board chairs will use a speaker sign-up list in deciding how to allocate the available time on the agenda (typically 10 minutes) to the number of people who want to speak.

For topics that are on the agenda, but have not gone out for public comment, board chairs will provide limited opportunity for comment, taking into account the time allotted on the agenda for the topic. Chairs will have flexibility in deciding how to allocate comment opportunities; this could include hearing one comment in favor and one in opposition until the chair is satisfied further comment will not provide additional insight to the board.

For agenda action items that have already gone out for public comment, it is the Policy Board's intent to end the occasional practice of allowing extensive and lengthy public comments. Currently, board chairs have the discretion to decide what public comment to allow in these circumstances.

In addition, the following timeline has been established for the submission of written comment for issues for which the Commission has NOT established a specific public comment period (i.e., in response to proposed management action).

1. Comments received 3 weeks prior to the start of a meeting week will be included in the briefing materials.
2. Comments received by 5 PM on Tuesday, October 22nd will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.
3. Following the October 22nd deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for management board consideration at the meeting (a minimum of 50 copies).

The submitted comments must clearly indicate the commenter's expectation from the ASMFC staff regarding distribution. As with other public comment, it will be accepted via mail, fax, and email.

- Consider Postponed Development of Draft Addendum VIII
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance

12:30 – 5:00 p.m. Law Enforcement Committee

(A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Committee members only)

- Review Circle Hook Regulations and Enforcement
- State and Federal Agency Reports
- Review Action Plan for 2020
- Discuss State Compliance Reporting Process
- Review ASMFC Managed-Species as Needed
- Elect Chair and Vice-chair

1:15 – 2:15 p.m. American Eel Management Board

- Draft Policy on Coastwide Cap Overages for Board Approval
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance

2:30 – 4:00 p.m. Weakfish Management Board

- Progress Update on 2019 Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Consider Management Response to the 2019 Weakfish Benchmark Stock Assessment Update
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance

4:15 – 5:15 p.m. Business Session

- Review and Consider Approval of 2020 Action Plan
- Elect Chair and Vice-Chair

6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Annual Dinner

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Executive Committee

(A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Committee members and Commissioners only)

- Report of the Administrative Oversight Committee
- Review and Consider Approval of FY19 Audit
- Review Policy Addressing Non-payment of State Assessments
- Future Annual Meetings Update

8:00 a.m. – Noon Law Enforcement Committee (continued)

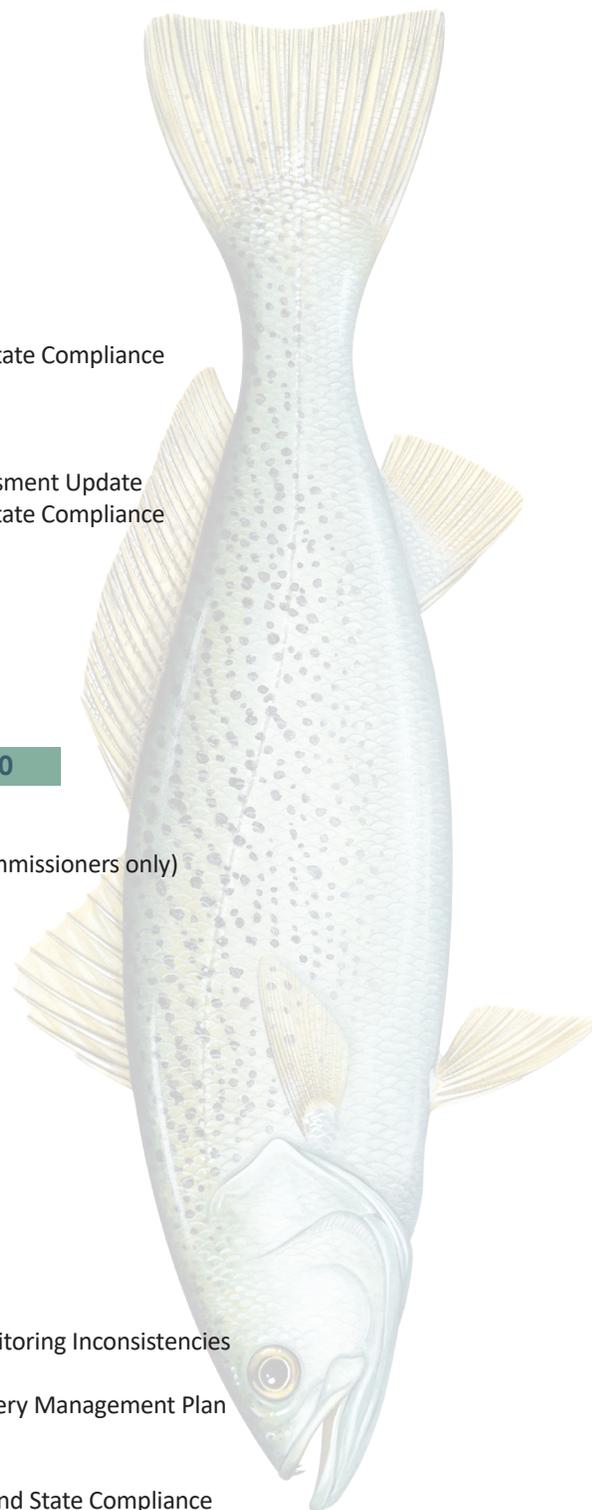
8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Habitat Committee

- Discuss Progress on ASMFC Fish Habitats of Concern
- Review Success of Species Assignments
- Progress Update on Acoustics Impacts Document, Aquaculture Document, and *Habitat Hotline Atlantic*

10:15 – 11:45 a.m. Shad and River Herring Management Board

- Review Technical Committee Recommendations on Management and Monitoring Inconsistencies with Amendments 2 and 3
- Consider Approval of Revisions to the Maine River Herring Sustainable Fishery Management Plan
- Discuss Updates to Shad Habitat Plans
- Progress Update on Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. Captain David H. Hart Award Luncheon



ANNUAL MEETING PRELIMINARY AGENDA, continued on page 14

Atlantic Cobia

The Commission approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia (Atlantic cobia). Amendment 1 establishes management measures that transition the FMP from complementary management with the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils to sole management by the Commission. Amendment 1 to the FMP was initiated in anticipation of the Councils' Regulatory Amendment 31 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) FMP, which was approved earlier this year and removed Atlantic cobia from the Councils' oversight.

Amendment 1 changes several portions of the Commission's FMP that were previously dependent on the CMP FMP and institutes a long-term strategy for managing in the absence of a federal plan. Several of these changes establish processes for the Commission to carry out management responsibilities previously performed by the South Atlantic Council, including setting of harvest quotas and sector allocations, defining stock status criteria, and recommending management measures to be implemented by NOAA Fisheries in federal waters. Additionally, Amendment 1 transitions responsibilities of monitoring and closing (if necessary) commercial harvest to the Commission.

Moving forward, the Commission will recommend to NOAA Fisheries that fishing in federal waters be regulated according to the state of landing. If a vessel has licenses for multiple states with open seasons, they must follow the most restrictive license's regulations. If a vessel has licenses for multiple states, only one of which has an open season, they may fish under the regulations of the open state. Regulations resulting from this recommendation would only apply in federal waters. Fishermen would still be required to follow state possession or landing limits in state waters.

Amendment 1 establishes a harvest specification process, which allows the Board to specify a limited set of management measures for up to 3 years. One of the mea-

asures that may be set through this process is a coastwide harvest quota. However, until the first specification process occurs, after completion of the ongoing stock in 2020, the current coastwide quota (670,000 pounds) remains in effect.

The Amendment also changes the units used to measure and evaluate the recreational fishery from pounds to numbers of fish. To accommodate this change, the recreational harvest quota in pounds (620,000) is converted to numbers (22,142 fish) and allocated among the states, resulting in the following state recreational harvest targets:

- Virginia: 8,724 fish
- North Carolina: 8,436 fish
- South Carolina: 2,679 fish
- Georgia: 2,081 fish
- 1% *De Minimis* Set Aside: 222 fish

States still may set their own seasons and vessel limits to achieve their respective targets.

Finally, Amendment 1 establishes a *de minimis* status for the commercial sector that exempts states with small commercial harvests from in-season monitoring requirements. States are required to implement measures of Amendment 1 by July 1, 2020.

For more information, please contact Dr. Michael Schmidtke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mschmidtke@asmfc.org.

Atlantic Menhaden

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board maintained the total allowable catch (TAC) of 216,000 mt for the 2020 fishing season with the option to revisit the 2020 TAC following review of the 2019 single-species and ecological reference

2020 ATLANTIC MENHADEN QUOTAS			
		Metric Tons	Pounds
TAC		216,000	476,198,486
1% Set Aside*		2,160	4,761,985
TAC After Set Aside		213,840	471,436,501
STATE	ALLOCATION	QUOTA (MT)	QUOTA (LBS)
ME	0.52%	1,106	2,437,866
NH	0.50%	1,069	2,357,313
MA	1.27%	2,725	6,008,565
RI	0.52%	1,107	2,440,542
CT	0.52%	1,103	2,431,491
NY	0.69%	1,477	3,256,768
NJ	10.87%	23,250	51,257,740
PA	0.50%	1,069	2,357,183
DE	0.51%	1,096	2,416,467
MD	1.89%	4,038	8,901,558
PRFC	1.07%	2,295	5,060,296
VA	78.66%	168,213	370,846,528
NC	0.96%	2,044	4,507,320
SC	0.50%	1,069	2,357,183
GA	0.50%	1,069	2,357,183
FL	0.52%	1,108	2,442,500
TOTAL	100%	213,840	471,436,501

*1% of the TAC is set aside for episodic events, the remaining TAC is allocated to the states per the provisions of Amendment 3. Quotas may be adjusted pending final 2019 landings and the redistribution of any relinquished quota.

point benchmark stock assessments and peer-review reports. The TAC will be made available to the states based on the state-by-state allocation established by Amendment 3 (see accompanying table).

The 2019 benchmark stock assessments are scheduled for peer review at the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review process (SEDAR 69) in early November. It is expected the benchmark assessments and peer-review reports will be available for Board review in February 2020. The assessments will be used to evaluate the health of the stock and inform the management of the species in an ecological context. Should the Board determine a change in the quota is necessary after review of the assessments, a two-thirds vote would be required for reconsideration of the 2020 TAC.

For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org.

Atlantic Striped Bass

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board approved Draft Addendum VI for public comment. The Addendum was initiated in response to the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment which indicates the resource is overfished and experiencing overfishing. The Draft Addendum explores a range of management alternatives designed to end overfishing and reduce fishing mortality to the target level in 2020.

“The Draft Addendum is a critical first step to stem overfishing as quickly as possible and begin efforts to rebuild the biomass,” said Board Chair Dr. Michael Armstrong with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries. “Following approval of the Addendum, the Board will likely initiate a new amendment to consider a longer term strategy to fully rebuild the resource.”

The Draft Addendum proposes management options for both commercial and recreational sectors in the ocean and in Chesapeake Bay in order to reduce total fishery removals by 18% relative to 2017 levels. The proposed measures include reduced quotas for commercial fisheries, and changes in bag limits, minimum sizes, and slot size limits for the recreational sector. Since catch and release practices represent a significant component of overall fishing mortality, the Draft Addendum also explores the mandatory use of circle hooks when fishing with bait to reduce release mortality in recreational striped bass fisheries.

Atlantic coastal states from Maine through North Carolina will be conducting public hearings throughout September and early October. Check the Commission's website

calendar at <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more information. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. The Draft Addendum is available at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/StripedBassDraftAddVI_PublicComment_Aug2019.pdf. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on October 7, 2019 and should be forwarded to Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Addendum VI).

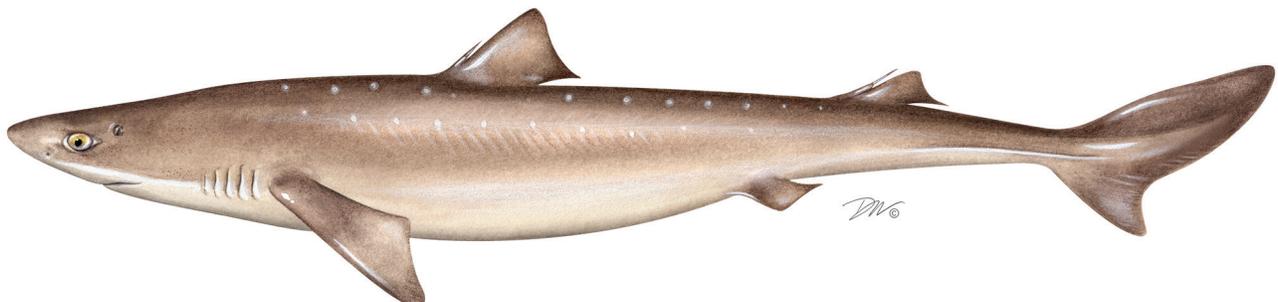
Spiny Dogfish

The Spiny Dogfish Management Board approved Draft Addendum VI to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Spiny Dogfish for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes allowing commercial quota to be transferred between all regions and states to enable the full utilization of the coastwide commercial quota and avoid quota payback for unintended quota overages. The Commission's FMP allocates the coastwide quota to the states of Maine-Connecticut as a regional allocation and to the states of New York-North Carolina as state-specific allocations. Currently, the FMP only allows quota transfers between states with individual allocations, with regions excluded from benefitting from quota transfers. The 2019-2020 coastwide quota was reduced by 46% due to declining biomass. If landings in the 2019-2020 fishing year remain the same as 2018-2019 landings, the coastwide quota may not be exceeded but some states could face an early closures due to

reaching their allocation and being unable to access available unused quota from the northern region through quota transfers.

The Draft Addendum also includes a scoping question on whether the federal commercial trip limit should be eliminated and replaced by state and regional trip limits. This issue is under consideration due to concern that the coastwide quota has been substantially underutilized over the past seven years and the federal commercial trip limit is viewed by some as an additional constraint on the fishery beyond the commercial trip limits implemented for state permit holders. The Commission does not establish the federal commercial trip limit, but it can make recommendations to the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries on this management measure during the federal specifications process. The public is encouraged to provide comments on this question to help inform future recommendations from the Commission to the Councils and NOAA Fisheries on the management of spiny dogfish in federal waters.

Draft Addendum VI is available at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/SpinyDogfishDraftAddVI_PublicComment_Aug2019.pdf. Fishermen and other stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on Draft Addendum VI either by attending state public hearings, ASMFC webinar, or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until 5 PM (EST) on September 23, 2019 and should be sent to Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Spiny Dogfish Draft Addendum VI).



Where Have All the Weakfish Gone?

Effective rebuilding of harvested fish stocks requires accurate fishing and natural mortality estimates. The fishing mortality rate (F) allows management to meet stock rebuilding goals through comparisons with target and threshold fishing levels based on biological reference points, whereas the natural mortality rate (M) affects estimates of stock size and productivity, which ultimately determine harvest rates. Stock assessments typically estimate F by relating catch-at-age data to changes in stock abundance, whereas M is difficult to measure since natural deaths (predation, disease) are rarely observed. Natural mortality is often estimated using life history characteristics and environmental variables, and used as a constant value in stock assessment models. However, estimates of M are often uncertain, and do not account for differences across time or locations.

Mortality estimates can be derived through acoustic telemetry and tag-return experiments. In acoustic telemetry studies, estimates of survival can be determined from capture-recapture models that calculate the probability a fish is present in a given area and its chances of survival. Tag-return models divide total mortality rate (Z) into estimates of F and M , although the precision of the estimates depend on a number of factors, including tag-reporting rate, tag loss, and survival from the tagging procedure. Multi-year tagging studies of rigorous design can generate reliable estimates of mortality. Both approaches provide insight into the timing and causes of mortality. For example, estimates can be applied to any time-scale and matched with seasonal stock locations, whereas most traditional stock assessments lack the enhanced spatiotemporal resolution.

Historically, weakfish supported vibrant commercial and recreational fisheries at the height of its spawning stock biomass (SSB) in the 1970s and 80s. SSB has since declined to record lows in 2008, with no appreciable recovery thereafter, despite management efforts to reduce harvest. The lack of stock recovery is surprising because weakfish can reach sexual maturity at age-0, facilitating a rapid stock rebuild. The reduced harvest combined with the lack of rebuilding prompted management to hypothesize that M has increased in

recent years. In the latest stock assessment time-series from 1982-2014, the statistical catch-at-age model estimated a time-varying M (natural mortality changing across years), which increased through the time-series and peaked in 2008, when an estimated 61% of the population perished from natural mortality. Total mortality matched the increasing trends of M , and peaked in 2007 when an estimated 97% of the population died. However, the mortality estimates contain uncertainty, because the model may attribute changes in other factors such as recruitment or fishery selectivity to changes in M . Therefore, reliable empirical estimates of survival, along with their

spatial and temporal variability, are vital for understanding the lack of stock recovery.

Survival models depend on high numbers of acoustically-tagged animals. From 2006 to 2016, weakfish with acoustic tags ($n=324$; Figure 1) were released in five estuaries between New Jersey and North Carolina by researchers at North Carolina State University (NCSU), Rutgers University Institute for Marine and Coastal Sciences, and the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center James J. Howard Marine Sciences Laboratory. These weakfish encompass the core of the stock's distributional range and the time-period of the population decline (2004 to 2016). From 2013 to 2017, an additional 3,672 conventionally tagged weakfish were released by NCSU in North Carolina (Figure 2). A majority of fish were double-tagged to estimate tag loss, and each tag had a \$100 reward to ensure 100% reporting.

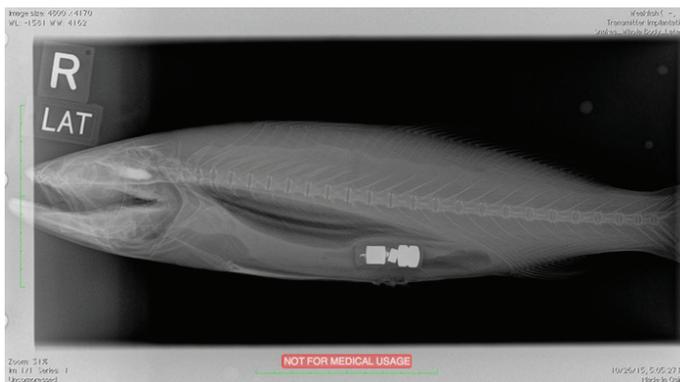


Figure 1. Radiograph of an acoustically-tagged weakfish. Photo (c) Craig Harms, DVM at North Carolina State University.



Figure 2. A conventionally-tagged weakfish with a high-reward internal anchor tag. Photo (c) Benjamin Almond.

Telemetry and tag-return studies both indicated extremely high mortality that peaked during the weakfish overwintering migration. Weakfish leave estuaries in the fall to overwinter on the continental shelf, then return to their natal estuaries to spawn the following spring. At least 61% of acoustically-tagged weakfish emigrated from estuaries, but only 2 out of 149 with long-lived batteries were detected alive after their overwintering migration. For conventionally tagged fish, only 4 out of 140 tag returns occurred in subsequent years after the overwintering period. Both tagging models estimated an annual population loss greater than 99% over multiple years,

SCIENCE HIGHLIGHT continued on page 13

SAFIS eTRIPS/mobile Migrates to Version 2

WHAT IS IT?

The Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) is a coastwide fisheries data collection system that uses various online applications that allow fishermen to create and submit commercial, party/charter, or recreational trip reports via a web browser. Interactive reports can be made to illustrate progress and history of catch and effort.

WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN?

August 31, 2019

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- SAFIS eTRIPS/mobile v2, which is GARFO certified, is available and offers
 - Ease of transfer from v1 to v2 (see Useful Information)
 - Expanded platforms and operating systems, including phones
- SAFIS eTRIPS/mobile v1 will no longer be available for download in the app stores.
- ACCSP will not be providing updates or maintenance for eTRIPS/mobile v1.
- IMPORTANT: Applications that exist on individual devices will still be functional. However, SAFIS eTRIPS/mobile v1 will no longer be acceptable for use by all partners, please be sure to check with your administrator.

USEFUL INFORMATION

- How do I know which version I have?
 - Go to Settings => About. If you see iOS/Android Release 1.34 or any number beginning with 1, then you have version v1.
- If you would like to migrate to SAFIS eTRIPS/mobile v2, all of your data and favorites can be transferred.
 - Use the 'Settings' --> 'Support' --> 'Backup Data for import to eTrips/mobile 2' button in v1 to backup your information
 - Use the 'About --> Restore eTRIPS 1 Data' button in v2 to download it again
- You can get SAFIS eTRIPS/mobile v2 here:
 - iOS version: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/etrrips-mobile-2/id1457132829>
 - Android version: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.accsp.et2&hl=en_US
 - Windows 10 version: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/etrrips-mobile-2/9pcpdxwkwtb?activetab=pivot:overviewtab>
- Help Desk: 1.800.984.0810



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.

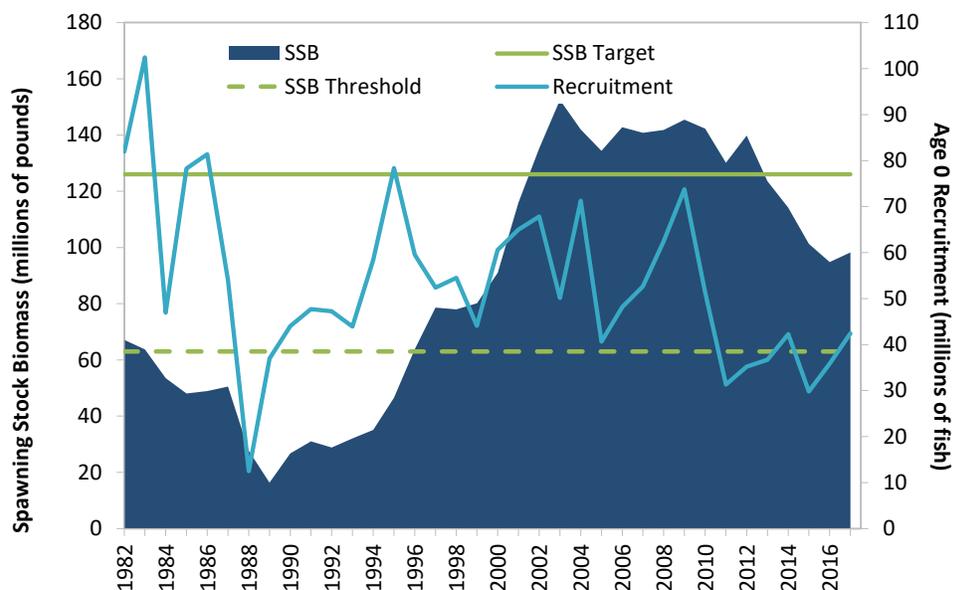
variability since 1982, the first year included in the age-structured stock assessment model. Recruitment has averaged 53 million fish over the 36 year time span, with higher levels in the 1980s and earlier 1990s and below average levels since 2011. Recruitment in 2017 was estimated at 42 million fish. The assessment indicates increasing relative abundance of older fish and an expanding age structure since about 2000. However, the assessment also shows decreasing trends in average lengths- and weights-at-age for both sexes, suggesting slower growth and delayed maturity. Lastly, the assessment found the spatial distribution of the resource is continuing to shift northward and eastward. The next benchmark stock assessment is tentatively scheduled for completion in 2021.

Atlantic Coastal Management

The Commission approved the first Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1982, followed by a similar FMP approved by the Council in 1988. Since then, both groups have made significant revisions to the plan, from allowing states to craft regional recreational management measures through conservation equivalency, to instituting accountability measures for evaluating annual landings to coastwide catch limits. The commercial fishery is managed by annual state-by-state quotas that are controlled through trip limits, gear specifications, and permit requirements. On the recreational side, annual harvest limits are managed through the implementation of minimum size limits, possession limits, and season lengths. In recent years, a regional management approach has allowed states within a region to implement consistent measures and improve equitable access to the resource. This approach has come with tradeoffs, where the boundary waters of neighboring regions have created situations where anglers are subject to different regulations while fishing within the same waterbody. The Commission is continuing to seek solutions to address this dilemma.

Based on the 2018 stock assessment findings, the Commission and the Council revised the 2019 specifications and set new specifications for 2020 and 2021, with the intent to maintain regulatory stability. For the 2019-2021 fishing seasons, the commercial quota is set at 11.53 million pounds and the RHL is set at 7.69 million pounds. Specifications for fishing seasons beyond 2019 may be adjusted based on changes in the fishery or new scientific information. While the revised RHL represents an approximate 49% increase over the previously set 2019 RHL, the Board chose to maintain recreational measures, which are projected to achieve a harvest level close to the revised RHL based on the calibrated

Figure 3. Summer Flounder Spawning Stock Biomass & Recruitment
Source: 66th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop, 2018



MRIP recreational harvest data. Under authority of Addendum XXXII, New Jersey and Rhode Island made minor adjustments to their recreational measures, which still holds projected 2019 harvest at 2018 levels.

In May 2019, the Board and Council approved the Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment. The Amendment revises the management program's goals and objectives specific to summer flounder and implements new state-specific commercial allocations. The new state commercial allocations are based upon a 9.55 million pound trigger point. When the annual coastwide commercial quota is at or below 9.55 million pounds, the formula for allocating the quota to the states will remain status quo, i.e., the same state-specific percentages that have been in effect since 1993. When the annual coastwide quota exceeds 9.55 million pounds, additional quota above 9.55 million pounds will be distributed as follows: 0.333% to the states of Maine, New Hampshire and Delaware and 12.375% to Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. As a result, state allocations will vary over time based on overall stock status and the resulting coastwide commercial quotas. These measures are expected to go into effect for the 2021 fishing season.

The Board and Council will meet in October to revisit previously established catch limits for 2020, and consider whether any changes are needed. In addition, the decision to continue recreational regional management for 2020 will be considered at the joint meeting in December.

For more information, please contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at dleaning@asmfc.org.

and the tag-return study found that M consistently and significantly exceeded F.

Discerning the sources of mortality is essential for effective stock rebuilding. Fishing mortality is directly attributed to commercial and recreational fisheries based on harvest, whereas M encompasses the removal of fish from the stock due to causes unrelated to fishing such as predation. For weakfish, predation was hypothesized in the 2009 weakfish stock assessments as a cause for the increased natural mortality. In this study, predation of weakfish was estimated by assessing the product of the predators' biomass, amount of weakfish in their diet, their daily prey consumption, and their spatial and temporal overlap with weakfish. Data were derived from literature review, including predator stock assessments, collaborations between NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center Beaufort Lab and NCSU and examining the diet of stranded common bottlenose dolphins. The predation estimates can be compared with fishery landings to assess the magnitude of predation. In addition, the estimated biomass attributable to M from a stock assessment can be compared with independent estimates of biomass consumed by predators to ascertain the relative proportion of predation to total natural mortality.

The sum of the stock assessment biomass attributable to M and total predator consumption were similar, indicating that predation is largely responsible for the increase in M observed in the weakfish population in recent years. Predators consumed on average 6,767 mt (14.9 million pounds) of weakfish from 1982 to 2014, of which the leading predator, common bottlenose dolphin, consumed 55%, followed by striped bass at 21%, bluefish at 17%, summer flounder at 4%, and spiny dogfish at 3% (Figure 3). Predator consumption has increased through the time series as many of the predator populations have increased (Figure 4), and the average predator consumption was over 29 times greater than the average combined commercial and recreational harvest (7,656 t to 259 mt or 16.9 million to 571,095 pounds; respectively; Figure 4), during the years of marked weakfish stock decline (2004 to 2014). The predation study also indicated as the majority of biomass in the weakfish population has shifted toward age-0s, predators consuming late age-0s have resulted in a recruitment bottleneck. As such, while the number of age-0 weakfish remained largely unaltered throughout the high SSB of the 1980s and the low SSB of the 2000s, predation has caused a decline in age-1 weakfish, perpetuating poor stock rebuilding.

It appears predation currently is an important driver of weakfish population dynamics. Therefore, further reductions in weakfish harvest alone may be ineffective for stock rebuilding. Although weakfish are often categorized as a mid-level predator, our work highlights their importance as a forage species at younger ages for our modeled predators, especially common bottlenose dolphins. With increases in many fish-eating marine mammal and finfish predator populations, explicit incorporation of predation and ecosystem considerations in the weakfish stock assessment may enhance effective management and stock rebuilding.

The Commission would like to thank Dr. Jacob Krause with North Carolina State University for contributing this article. More information on this research can be found in Dr. Krause's dissertation at <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.20/36684>. For questions about the project,

Figure 3. Cumulative Consumption of Weakfish by all Modeled Predators

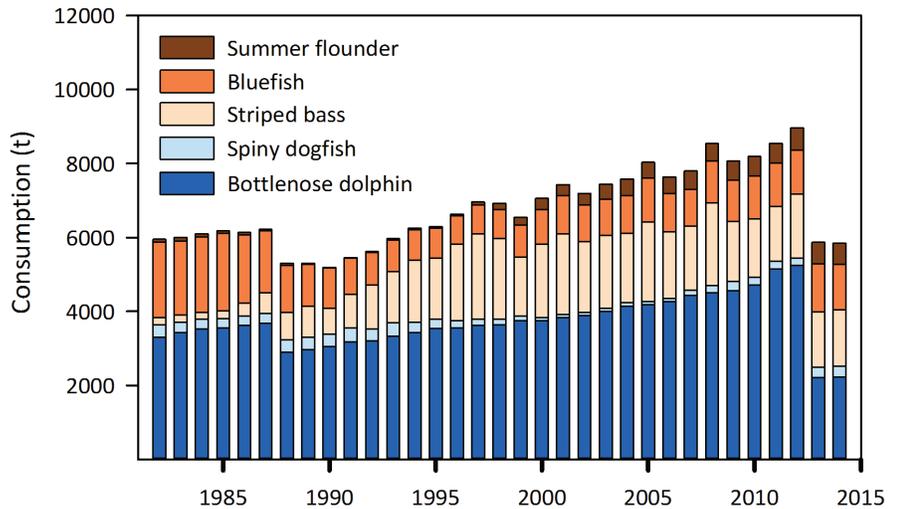
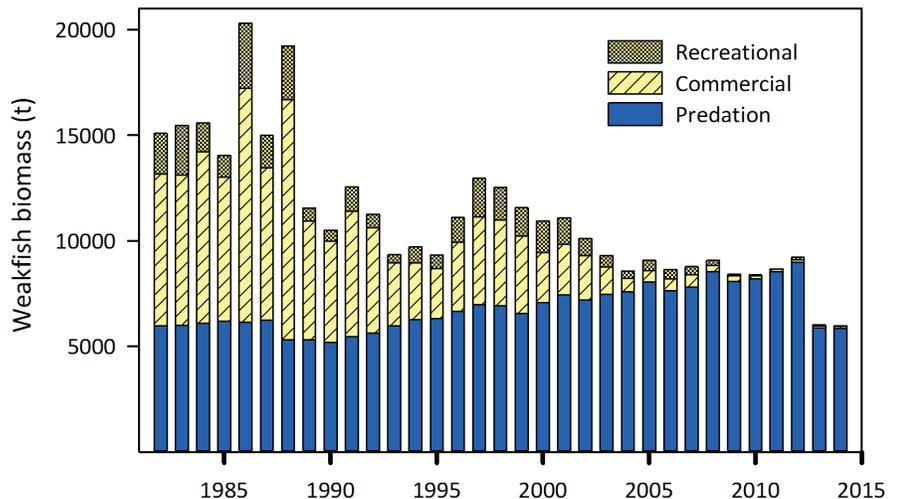


Figure 4. Cumulative Weakfish Biomass Removed by Predator Consumption as Compared to Recreational and Commercial Harvest (Landings and Dead Discards) from the 2016 Weakfish Stock Assessment



1:15 – 2:30 p.m. Coastal Sharks Management Board

- Consider Postponed Motions from May 2019:
Move to require, for state waters, the use of circle hooks on lined intended to catch sharks.

Move to postpone until the Board has received feedback from the Law Enforcement Committee and the Advisory Panel with the intention of considering the motion at the Annual Meeting.

- Set Coastal Sharks Fishery Specifications for 2020
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance
 - Status Update on State Implementation of North Atlantic Shortfin Mako Measures

2:45 – 5:45 p.m. Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Consider Approval of Addendum VI

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31

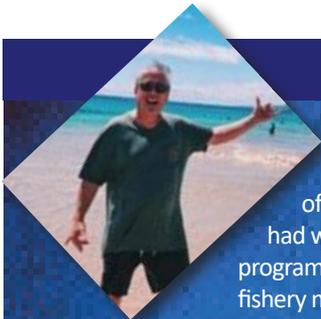
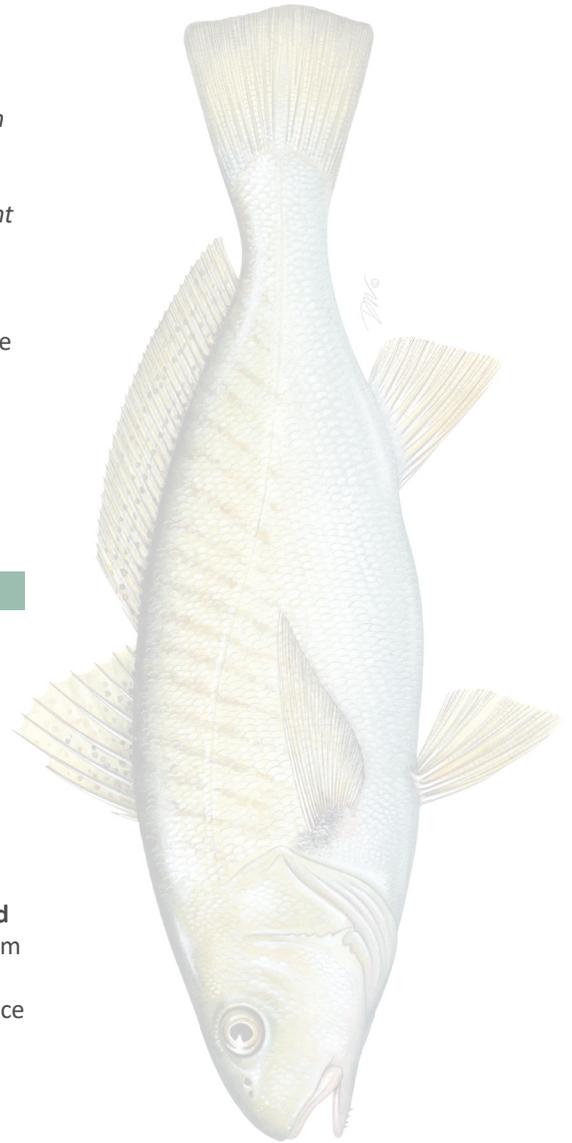
8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board

- Discuss Commission Strategy to Address Changing Ocean Conditions
- Review Draft Stock Status Definitions
- Committee Reports from ACFHP, Assessment Science, Habitat, Law Enforcement, and Management and Science

10:00 – 10:15 a.m. Business Session (continued)

10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

- Consider Approval of Atlantic Croaker Draft Addendum III and Spot Draft Addendum II for Public Comment
- Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Reviews and State Compliance for Red Drum, Black Drum, Spotted Seatrout, and Spanish Mackerel



IN MEMORIAM

JOSEPH DESFOSSE died Monday, August 19, 2019, in Gulfport. He had been a longtime resident of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and was employed with NOAA Fisheries at its Pascagoula Laboratory. A graduate of Rutgers College and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Graduate School of William and Mary, Joe had worked for the Commission from 1995 to 2002. Over that time, he worked in the research and statistics program and later on for the fisheries management program, where he was instrumental in revising a number of fishery management plans to be compliant with the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. After leaving the Commission, Joe worked for NOAA Fisheries' Highly Migratory Species Division. He was an exceptional coworker and colleague who brought his fisheries expertise and humor to every team effort and task. Those of us who knew him are very saddened by his passing.

Joe is survived by his wife, Lisa Desfosse; his daughter, Jamie Desfosse; brother, Jeff Desfosse; and his parents, Joseph and Dorothy Desfosse. He also leaves behind his four beloved pet dogs, Dakota, Cheyenne, Mercedes, Bandit and guinea pig Saint.