



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Upcoming Meetings
page 2

From the Executive Director's Desk
Looking Back and Reviewing the Year Ahead
page 3

Species Profile
Atlantic Croaker
page 4

ACCSP Launches Redesigned Website
page 9

Science Highlight
Habitat Bottlenecks and Fisheries Management
page 10

On the Legislative Front
page 11

ASMFC Comings & Goings
page 11

ASMFC Winter Meeting

February 2-4, 2016

The Westin Alexandria
400 Courthouse Square
Alexandria, VA
703.253.8600

Final Agenda

Please note: The agenda is subject to change. 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.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

9 AM - Noon

American Lobster Management Board

- Discuss Future Management of Southern New England Lobster Stock
Possible Action
- Technical Committee Report (*B. Glenn*)
- Review and Discuss Catch and Landings Records for Jonah Crab-only Trap Fishermen (*M. Ware*)
- Consider Draft Addendum I to the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan for Public Comment (*M. Ware*) **Action**
- Review Catch Records from Jonah Crab Claw Fishermen and Discuss Action to Create a Standard for Claw Landings (*M. Ware*) **Possible Action**
- Approve Implementation Plans for the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan (*M. Ware*) **Action**
- Update on New England Fishery Management Council Deep Sea Coral Habitat Amendment (*D. Grout*)
- Update on State/Federal American Lobster Observer Programs (*M. Ware*)

1 - 2:30 PM

Atlantic Herring Section

- Draft Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (*A. Harp*) **Final Action**
 - Review Options (*A. Harp*)
 - Public Comment Summary (*A. Harp*)
 - Advisory Panel Report (*J. Kaelin*)
 - Consider Final Approval of Amendment 3 (*R. White*)
- Overview on the Research Set-Aside Program

continued, see WINTER MEETING FINAL AGENDA 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

Douglas E. Grout (NH)
Chair

James J. Gilmore, Jr. (NY)
Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal
Executive Director

Patrick A. Campfield
Science Director

Toni Kerns
ISFMP Director

Laura C. Leach
Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor
Director of Communications
tberger@asmfc.org

703.842.0740 Phone
703.842.0741 Fax
www.asmfc.org
info@asmfc.org

February 2 - 4

ASMFC Winter Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA.

February 8 - 10

Atlantic Croaker and Spot Stock Assessment Workshops, Francis Marion Hotel, 387 King Street, Charleston, SC.

February 9 - 11

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, DoubleTree by Hilton New Bern-Riverfront, New Bern, NC.

March 3 - 5

Maine Fishermen's Forum, Samoset Resort, Rockport, ME.

March 6 - 8

Seafood Expo North America, Boston Convention Center, Boston, MA.

March 7 - 11

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

March 21 - 25

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

April 12 - 14

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Montauk Yacht Club, Montauk, NY.

April 19 - 21

New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Hotel, Mystic, CT.

May 2 - 5

ASMFC Spring Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA.

June 13 - 17

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Cocoa Beach Oceanfront, 1550 N. Atlantic Avenue, Cocoa Beach, FL.

June 14 - 16

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Courtyard Marriott, Newark, DE.

June 20 - 24

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

June 21 - 23

New England Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland, ME.

August 2 - 4

ASMFC Summer Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA.

August 8 - 11

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton, Virginia Beach, VA.

August 20 - 24

American Fisheries Society 145th Annual Meeting, Kansas City, KS.

September 12 - 16

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Marina Inn at Grande Dunes, 8121 Amalfi Place, Myrtle Beach, SC.

September 12 - 16

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

September 20 - 22

New England Fishery Management Council, DoubleTree by Hilton, Danvers, MA.

October 23 - 27

ASMFC 75th Annual Meeting, Harborside Hotel, 55 West St, Bar Harbor, ME.



Looking Back and Reviewing the Year Ahead

2015 was another busy year for the Commission and our member states. One of the most visible achievements was the completion of six benchmark stock assessments for Atlantic menhaden, black drum, tautog, American lobster, scup, and bluefish. Stock assessments are the foundation upon which Commission management decisions are made, and for three of these species (Atlantic menhaden, tautog, and American lobster) we will consider new management approaches to address the stocks' needs. Though the benchmark assessments are labor intensive and time consuming (they can take up to 2 years prepare and peer review), we demonstrated our commitment to consistently pursuing the best science to ensure management is sound.

2015 also featured important management decisions, most notably for Atlantic striped bass and Atlantic menhaden. New Atlantic striped bass harvest reductions were implemented this year to rebuild the stock to target levels following a number of years with below average spawning success. For Atlantic menhaden, the total allowable catch was increased by 10% in tandem with continued development of ecological-based reference points to reflect Atlantic menhaden's role as a forage species. The Commission is currently funding an unprecedented socioeconomic study of the Atlantic menhaden fishery to provide a better understanding of the reduction and bait fisheries. These management decisions struck the difficult balance between differing stakeholder interests and the biological status of these iconic stocks.

2015 was also a noteworthy year for American eel. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made a determination to not list the species under the Endangered Species Act. This decision affirms the efficacy of the Commission's management plan and our ability to handle particularly challenging management issues in a responsible way. However, this does not mean we can become complacent about eel management; this stock will require continued vigilance to ensure the stock rebuilds to healthier levels.

Over at ACCSP, our member states are about to begin conducting the catch estimate portion of MRIP, known as APAIS, where they will oversee and manage field collection of catch data. ACCSP has been working for over a year on this effort and we look forward to increased state involvement and improved stakeholder confidence in the data.

With 2015 behind us, there is a lot in store for 2016. We expect to complete benchmark stock assessments for four South Atlantic species – red drum, weakfish, spot, and Atlantic croaker. Each assessment will provide us new insight in the status of these resources as well as an opportunity to revisit,

and adjust as necessary, the species' management programs. One of the biggest challenges for 2016 will be the changing dynamics of the marine environment. Warming waters along our coast are already affecting the black sea bass, northern shrimp, and American lobster fisheries. Commissioners will work to adapt management to this new reality by finding opportunities to protect the resource while also providing new opportunities to meet our stakeholders' needs.

We are grateful for continued congressional support we received this year. Appropriators prevented reductions to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act and boosted Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act grants by 20%. We are also grateful to Representatives John Carney (D-DE) and Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), and Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) for successfully including budget language to revive the Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Survey in 2016. Working with our partners on Capitol Hill requires constant work and thanks are due to all Commissioners who assisted our efforts last year.

While we bid farewell to a number of long-serving Commissioners this year, including Paul Diodati, Tom O'Connell, Senators Robert Venables, Richard Colburn, and Clark Jenkins, Representative Jon Burns, and Bill Cole, we were also impressed with the new faces around the table and know the collective hand on the rudder will remain steady in 2016. This includes new leadership elected at our Annual Meeting in Saint Augustine, Florida. I have no doubt Doug Grout will be an effective and fair Chair and Jim Gilmore will provide strong support as Vice-Chair. A big thank you to Dr. Louis Daniel for his leadership as Chair these past two years.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the contributions of staff from our member states and federal partners. Their service on our species technical and stock assessment committees is critical to provide the scientific foundation of our management actions.

Finally, I am grateful for the dedication and strong work ethic of the Commission staff. We replaced three FMP coordinators and one stock assessment scientist this year and did not miss a beat. Beyond science and management, our numbers grew significantly this year due to expanding ACCSP for the APAIS transition. New human resources staff also came on board to account for the growth spurt. Our program directors' sound leadership and guidance ensure we are firmly on track to achieve our annual objectives and Vision in 2016 and beyond.

When all's said and done, 2015 was a success because of the people that are part of the Commission. The states, the staff, and our federal partners were all dedicated to manifesting its success. May 2016 be as memorable and productive as 2015.

Species Profile: Atlantic Croaker

New Stock Assessment Seeks to Clarify Recent Trends in the Fishery

Introduction

Atlantic croaker, *Micropogonias undulates*, is a bottom-dwelling species which occurs in coastal waters from the Gulf of Maine to Argentina. The fishery is predominately commercial; however, the species supports a sizable recreational fishery, especially in the Mid-Atlantic. The species is managed under Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and its Addenda (I-II). While Amendment 1 does not establish specific measures restricting the recreational or commercial harvest, it does establish assessment triggers and ensures data collection. Fishery managers are concerned about recent declines in the total catch which may suggest a decrease in abundance. The species is currently undergoing a benchmark stock assessment which seeks to illuminate recent trends in the fishery and provide an update on the stock status. It is expected that the stock assessment will be completed in late 2016.

Life History

Atlantic croaker can be found in U.S. coastal waters from the Gulf of Maine to Florida, although they primarily occur south of New York. Seasonal migrations of croaker have not been well defined, but the fish appear to move northward and inshore during warmer months and southward and into the ocean during late fall or winter. Spawning occurs from July through December with fish located in both the lower Chesapeake Bay and in coastal oceanic waters. The larvae move into estuaries and develop into juveniles in low salinity waters before moving into higher salinity waters in the summer and fall. Croaker grow rapidly during their first year and mature between the ages of one and three. Recent data indicate they may be as small as five inches upon maturity, but the average size at 50% maturity is closer to seven inches, meaning at least half of all seven inch fish in the population are sexually mature. Size at age varies throughout the species' range, although most growth is completed during the first two years. The oldest caught croaker was aged at 17 years. Very young croaker eat small planktonic organisms, while juveniles and adults feed on bottom organisms such as marine worms, mollusks, crustaceans, and occasionally fish. Croaker are eaten by many species, including striped bass, flounder, weakfish, and spotted seatrout.

Recreational & Commercial Fisheries

Atlantic croaker support commercial and recreational fisheries along the Atlantic coast, particularly in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. The fish have been part of a mixed stock commercial fishery since the 1880s. Commercial landings of croaker exhibit a cyclical trend; in some years the catch is almost 30 million pounds, while in other years it is less than two million pounds. Between 1997 and 2003, commercial croaker landings were at the high end of a cycle, averaging 28 million pounds. Since 2004, commercial landings have declined, falling below 10 million pounds in 2013. Commercial landings of Atlantic croaker in 2014 were just over 7 million pounds. The dominant commercial fishing gears are trawls and gillnets, although haul seines and pound nets also contribute heavily.

Recreational landings of Atlantic croaker similarly increased from 1981 to the early 2000s but have declined in recent years. Recreational landings peaked in 2001 with over 11 million pounds harvested but

Species Snapshot

Atlantic Croaker
Micropogonias undulates



Common Names:

- Croaker, hardhead, King Billy, grumbler

Family: Sciaenidae (along with weakfish, spot, spotted seatrout, black drum and red drum)

Interesting Facts:

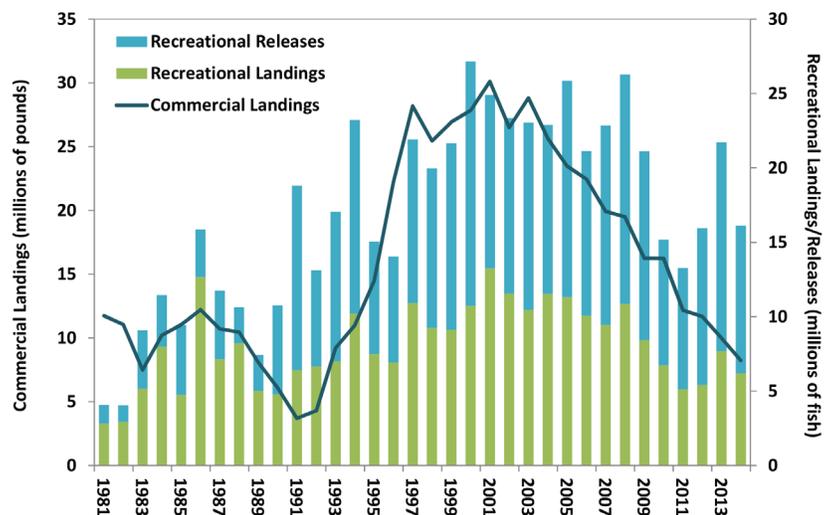
- The characteristic croaking sound is produced by the vibration of the swim bladder and special muscles.
- Croaker's spawning period varies based on latitude, peaking in the fall for fish north of Cape Hatteras and in the winter for fish further south.
- The largest caught croaker, nicknamed "Big Boy" weighed 8 pounds 11 ounces and was 27" inches.

Maximum Age: 5 years

Stock Status: Overfishing is not occurring, overfished status is unknown

Atlantic Croaker Commercial Landings & Recreational Landings/Releases

Source: NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, Silver Spring, MD, 2015



Timeline of Management Actions: FMP ('87); Amendment 1 ('05); Addendum I ('11); Addendum II ('14)

have slowly declined since, with roughly 3 million pounds harvested in 2014. The majority of these recreational landings came from Virginia (55%) and Maryland (17.5%). The percentage of croaker released in the recreational fishery has approximately doubled, increasing from 31% in 1981 to 62% in 2014.

Status of the Stock

Stock Assessment

The latest stock assessment was completed and peer-reviewed in 2010. Unlike the previous assessment, it evaluates the status of the resource as a single coastwide population. Stock status is based on comparison of model estimates to biological reference points (i.e., spawning stock biomass and fishing mortality targets and thresholds). Revised biological reference points were adopted as part of the assessment. These reference points are ratio-based, and compare estimated fishing mortality and spawning stock biomass to the levels of each needed to produce maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}).

Atlantic croaker is not experiencing overfishing. It is not possible to determine if the stock is overfished based on the model results, but it is unlikely. This statement is based on information from the data compiled for the assessment, namely increasing indices of relative abundance and expanding age structure in the catch and indices. Model estimated values of fishing mortality (F), spawning stock biomass (SSB), and biological reference points are too uncertain to be used to determine stock status. Only the ratio of F to F_{MSY} is considered reliable and can be used to determine that overfishing is not occurring.

Work on a new benchmark stock assessment began in June 2015. The assessment will focus on updated modeling approaches to better estimate Atlantic croaker bycatch in the shrimp trawl fishery, a major source of uncertainty in the last assessment. The stock assessment will also illuminate recent trends in the fishery and update the stock status, including a sound determination of whether the population is overfished. A data workshop was held in September 2015. It is expected that the stock assessment will be completed by late 2016.

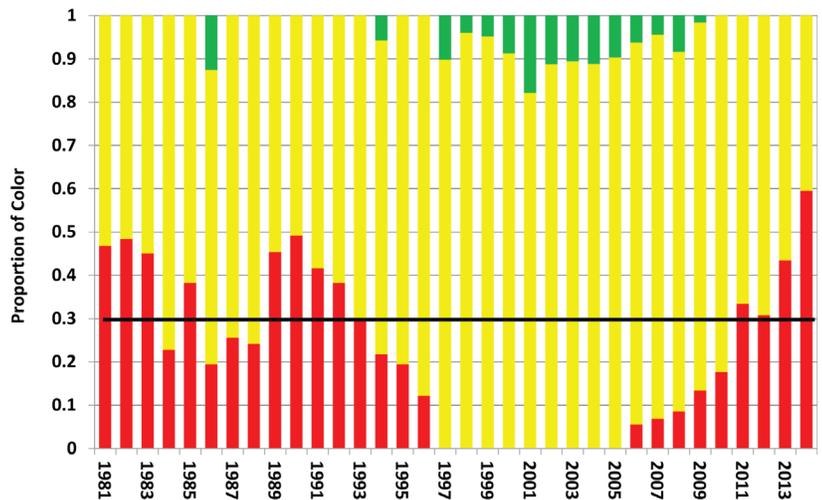
Traffic Light Approach

In 2014, the South Atlantic State/federal Fisheries Management Board approved the Traffic Light Approach (TLA) as the new precautionary management framework to evaluate fishery trends and develop management actions in the absence of a current stock assessment. The name comes from assigning a color (red, yellow, or green) to categorize relative levels of population indicators. When a population characteristic improves, the proportion of green in the given year increases. Harvest and abundance thresholds of 30% and 60% represent moderate and significant concern for the fishery. If thresholds for both population characteristics achieve or exceed a threshold for a three year period, then management action is enacted.

Results of the 2014 TLA showed declines in the harvest and abundance of Atlantic croaker. The harvest index, which is comprised of fishery dependent data, did surpass the 30% threshold; however the abundance index, which is comprised of fishery-independent data,

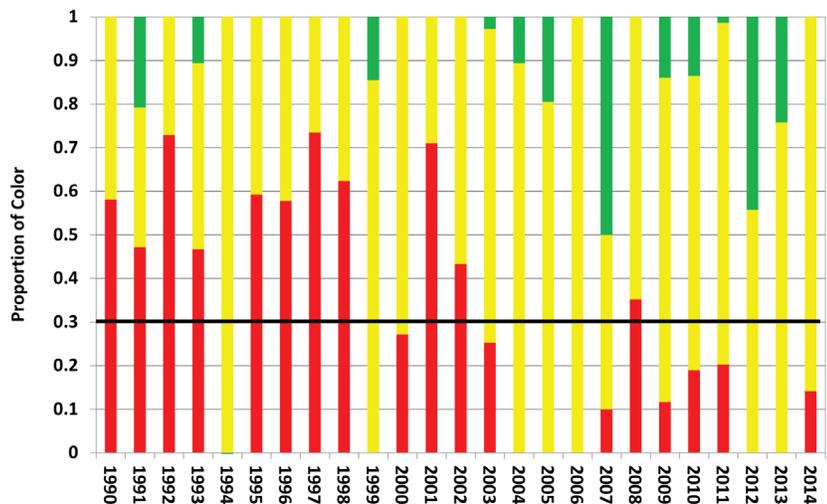
Traffic Light Analysis of Atlantic Croaker (Harvest Metric)

Solid line represents 30% threshold



Traffic Light Analysis of Atlantic Croaker (Abundance Metric)

Solid line represents 30% threshold



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

continued, see ATLANTIC CROAKER on page 8

Winter Meeting Final Agenda (cont'd)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

2:45 – 4:15 PM

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board

- Review 2016 Black Sea Bass Commercial Quotas (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)
- Draft Addendum XXVII for Final Approval **Final Action**
 - Review Options (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)
 - Public Comment Summary (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)
 - Advisory Panel Report (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)
 - Law Enforcement Committee Report (*M. Robson*)
 - Consider Final Approval of Addendum XXVII
- Set Scup 2016 Recreational Fishery Specifications (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Final Action**
- Update on Black Sea Bass and Summer Flounder Amendment Process (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)

2:45 – 4:15 PM

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Executive Committee

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

- Program Status Updates (*M. Cahall*)
 - Program Status
 - APAIS
 - Seafood Traceability
- Governance Update (*C. Patterson*)
- Consider Approval of Executive Committee Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) **Action**
- 2016 Calendar
 - Discuss Executive Committee Meeting Frequency **Action**
- Review Action Items from Previous Meeting
 - Executive Committee SOP Edits Submitted to C. Patterson in January In Progress
- Closed Executive Session

4:30 – 6 PM

ACCSP Coordinating Council

- ACCSP Status Report
 - Program Update (*M. Cahall*)
 - APAIS Update (*M. Cahall*)
- Committee Updates (*P. Campfield*)
- Independent Program Review Update (*M. Cahall*)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

8 – 10 AM

Executive Committee

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

- Overview of Commission Guidance Documents and Consider Recommendations to the ISFMP Policy Board for Changes
- Discuss ACCSP Governance (*R. Beal*)
- Future Annual Meetings Update (*L. Leach*)
 - 2016-Bar Harbor, Maine
 - 2017-Virginia
 - 2018-New York
 - 2019-New Hampshire

10:15 – 11 AM

Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Consider Conservation Equivalent Management Proposals from Maryland and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission (*L. Fegley/M. Gary*) **Action**
 - Technical Committee Report (*J. McNamee*)
 - Law Enforcement Committee Report (*M. Robson*)
- Review Draft Amendment 3 Development Timeline (*M. Waine*)
 - Ecosystem Reference Points
 - Revisiting Fishery Allocation and Socioeconomic Analysis
- Discuss Timeline for Setting 2017 Fishery Specifications (*R. Boyles, Jr.*)

11:15 – 11:45 AM

Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board

- Update on 2017 Benchmark Stock Assessment (*K. Drew*)
- Review and Populate Stock Assessment Subcommittee Membership (*M. Appelman*) **Action**
- Overview of NOAA Fisheries Critical Habitat Designation Process for Atlantic Sturgeon (*K. Damon-Randall*)
- Elect Vice-Chair (*J. Clark*) **Action**

Noon – 12:30 PM

Spiny Dogfish Management Board

- Review and Set 2016-2018 Fishery Specifications **Final Action**
 - Review Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council 2016-2018 Specifications (*J. Didden*)
 - Review New England Fishery Management Council 2016-2018 Specifications (*A. Harp*)
- Elect Vice-Chair **Action**

1:30 – 2:15 PM

Coastal Sharks Management Board

- Discuss Differences in State and Federal Smoothhound Catch Composition Regulations for Processing at Sea (*A. Harp*)
- Review and Set the 2016 Smoothhound Quota (*A. Harp*) **Final Action**

2:30 – 3:30 PM

Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Review Scope of Work to Consider Changes to the Adaptive Resource Management Framework (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)
- Review Alternative Bait Trial Results (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)
- Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Action**

3:45 – 4:30 PM

South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

- Progress Update on Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Desk Review (*J. Kipp*)
- Progress Update on the Spot and Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessments (*J. Kipp*)
- Discuss Recommendation to the ISFMP Policy Board Regarding Spotted Seatrout Management (*L. Daniel*) **Possible Action**
- Consider 2015 FMP Review and State Compliance for Spot (*M. Ware*) **Action**
- Elect Vice-Chair **Action**

4:45 – 5:45 PM

Tautog Management Board

- Progress Update on Draft Amendment 1 Development (*A. Harp*)
- Progress Update on University of Connecticut Long Island Sound and New York/New Jersey Stock Assessments (*A. Harp*)
- Review the Law Enforcement Subcommittee Commercial Harvest Tagging Program Objectives (*M. Robson*)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4

8 – 9 AM

Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Consider Tabled Motions from November 2015 (*J. Gilmore*) **Action**
 - *Move to initiate an Addendum to reconsider management options in the Chesapeake Bay from Addendum IV for 2016 based on the stock assessment update in 2015 and retrospective projections.* Motion made by Mr. Luisi and second by Mr. O'Reilly. Motion tabled until February 2016.
 - *Move to amend to remove the words "in the Chesapeake Bay."* Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion tabled until February 2016.
- Consider Conservation Equivalent Management Proposals from Maryland and Potomac River Fisheries Commission (*M. Luisi/M. Gary*) **Action**
 - Technical Committee Report (*M. Appelman*)
 - Law Enforcement Committee Report (*M. Robson*)
- Update on 2016 Cooperative Winter Tagging Program (*W. Laney*)
- Elect Vice-Chair **Action**

9:15 – 10:15 AM

Winter Flounder Management Board

- Technical Committee Report on the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder Fishery and Management Program Under Zero Possession Limits (*P. Nitschke*)
- Overview of Federal Management Measures (*J. Cournane*)
- Discuss Future Management of Winter Flounder (*M. Gibson*)
- Review and Set 2016-2018 Specifications (*A. Harp*) **Final Action**

10:30 a.m. – Noon

American Eel Management Board

- Review and Consider North Carolina's Aquaculture Plan **Action**
 - Technical Committee Report (*S. Eyler*)
 - Advisory Panel Report (*M-B. Delucia*)
 - Law Enforcement Committee Report (*M. Robson*)

*continued, see WINTER MEETING FINAL
AGENDA on page 12*

ATLANTIC CROAKER continued from page 5

did not. Overall, management triggers were not tripped in 2014 since both indices were not above the 30% threshold. Nonetheless, the analysis shows declining trends in the fishery.

Atlantic Coastal Management

The original FMP for Atlantic croaker was approved in 1987, with the states of Maryland through Florida participating. In the mid-1990s, the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board and the ISFMP Policy Board reviewed the FMP and found it to be vague and without any mandatory management measures. Thus, they recommended that an amendment to the FMP be prepared to define a new management program.

Developing an appropriate management program, complete with biological reference points, required a new stock assessment to be completed. After approving the 2004 assessment's findings for use in management decisions, the Management Board initiated the development of an amendment to come into compliance with the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act

and perpetuate a sustainable resource to generate the greatest economic and social benefit.

The Commission approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Croaker in November 2005. Among other things, the Amendment revises the plan's management goals and objectives, expands the management unit to include the resource off of Delaware and New Jersey, establishes biological reference points to manage the croaker resource, allows for management on a regional basis (Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic component), and requires states to submit annual compliance reports to the Commission. There are no regulatory or monitoring requirements, although they may be implemented through adaptive management if deemed necessary.



Juvenile Atlantic croaker captured as part of New Jersey's Delaware River Seine Survey. Photo (c) New Jersey Fish and Wildlife.

Amendment 1 was fully implemented January 2006.

The Board initiated Addendum I following the 2010 stock assessment in order to address the proposed reference points and management unit. The stock assessment evaluated the stock based on a coastwide unit, rather than the two management units established under Amendment 1. In approving Addendum I, the Management Board endorsed the consolidation of the stock into one management unit, as proposed by the stock assessment.

Addendum II, which was approved by the Board in 2014, established the TLA as the new management framework for Atlantic croaker. The TLA framework replaces management triggers stipulated in Amendment I, which were limited in their ability to illustrate long-term trends. In contrast, the TLA approach better illustrates trends in the fishery overtime through changes in the proportion of green, yellow, and red coloring. The TLA framework is to be used between stock assessments so that annual updates on the status of the stock can inform Board decisions.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.



Atlantic croaker commercially harvested as part of the mixed stock fishery. Photo (c) Steve Doctor, MD DNR

ACCSP Launches Redesigned Website at www.accsp.org

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) announces the release of its redesigned website at www.accsp.org. With a completely new look, improved navigation and functionality, and expanded content, the website provides our partners, fishery managers, scientists, fishermen and the public with clear, straightforward access to information on data collection and dissemination on the Atlantic coast. The new website is a launching pad for future Program projects in 2016 such as a redesigned Data Warehouse and SAFIS visioning.

"We are very excited about our new site. It provides live data from our warehouse and makes it so much easier to give access to our users and information to the public," states ACCSP Director Michael Cahall.

New website features include:

- Clear, straightforward access to information on SAFIS, the Data Warehouse, and partner projects, the three primary focal points of the Program;
- Direct logins to the Public Data Warehouse, Login Data Warehouse and SAFIS through buttons found on every page;
- Expanded pages on the Program partners that include feature on-the-ground projects funded through ACCSP, partner related queries, and the current partner SAFIS implementation status;
- Streamlined Data Warehouse pages that present information on the status of available data, data caveats, FAQs, the data load process, confidentiality, and custom data requests;
- Restructured SAFIS pages provide simplified login to and information on the suite of SAFIS applications in addition to requirements and contacts;
- Real-time charts and graphs that pull from the Data Warehouse and SAFIS; and
- A resource section that provides access to data collection standards, guiding documents, funding information, outreach material and other news.

Visit our redesigned website at www.accsp.org.

The screenshot shows the ACCSP website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for SAFIS, LOGIN DATA WAREHOUSE, and PUBLIC DATA WAREHOUSE, along with a search bar and social media icons. The main header features the ACCSP logo and the tagline "Good Data. Good Decisions." Below this is a secondary navigation bar with tabs for WHO WE ARE, DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING, RESOURCES, and CALENDAR. The central content area displays a bar chart titled "Top Five Atlantic Coast Species in Last Full Year" with a y-axis labeled "Pounds" ranging from 0 to 500,000,000. The chart shows five species: WIPHAETIDAE, I. NECTER, ANFRICAN, and two others. To the right of the chart is a section titled "UPCOMING MEETINGS" listing several events in January 2016, including IPR Review Panel, Bycatch Fleet Call 19, 20, and 21, and APAIS NE Field Training. Below the chart and meetings are three featured project cards: SAFIS, DATA WAREHOUSE, and FEATURED PROJECT, each with a brief description and a "LEARN MORE" button.

Sarah Rains

In December, Sarah Rains joined the ACCSP staff as Scan Specialist. In her new position, Sarah is responsible for the capture, processing, and validation of fisheries survey data for the Marine Recreational Information Program Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (MRIP APAIS) from Maine to Georgia.



Sarah has previous experience as the ACCSP Maryland State Coordinator and as an Analyst for Environmental Science and Policy at Cadmus Group, Inc.. She earned her Master's degree in Marine Estuarine and Environmental Science from the University of Maryland and a Bachelor's degree in Art Education from Penn State University. Welcome Sarah!



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.

Science Highlight: Habitat Bottlenecks & Fisheries Management

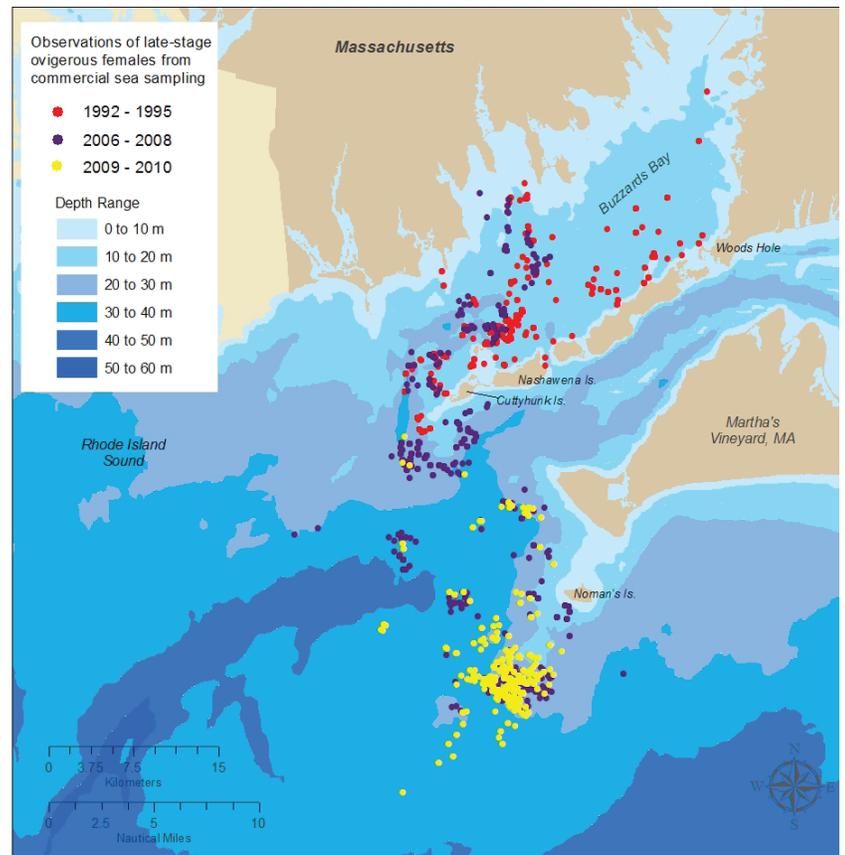
There are many factors that can influence the productivity and resilience of fishery stocks such as harvesting pressure, natural mortality, changes in reproduction and growth rates, and habitat availability. This latter factor, while widely recognized by fishery management scientists, is often difficult to quantify and bottlenecks to critical habitats can have significant impacts on the sustainability of many harvested species. The Habitat Committee has defined a habitat bottleneck as “a constraint on a species’ ability to survive, reproduce, or recruit to the next life stage that results from reductions in available habitat extent and/or capacity and reduces the effectiveness of traditional fisheries management options to control mortality and spawning stock biomass.” Such constraints can come in the form of either environmental and/or structural bottlenecks. Structural bottlenecks in the form of dams that block access to historical spawning habitat are obvious problems that can seriously affect highly migratory anadromous species such as Atlantic sturgeon. Management efforts to alleviate some of the problems associated with these barriers can include fish passage measures. Environmental bottlenecks, on the other hand, such as temperature changes affecting habitat usage of critical life stages are much more problematic.

Scientific evidence now indicates that the American lobster is one species being impacted by thermal stresses through direct mortality in some areas and reduction of suitable thermal habitats for certain life stages in other areas. Laboratory studies have demonstrated that lobsters show a distinct and abrupt response to water temperatures above 20°C (Crossin et al. 1998) which field studies have shown can double observed mortality rates, making temperature a true bottleneck for this species. Ventless trap surveys and surface drogue studies carried out in offshore waters (ASMFC 2010) showed displacement of egg-bearing females out of traditional near-shore breeding grounds, which have recently warmed, into deeper water resulting in newly hatched planktonic larvae being carried on currents out to open ocean waters where their survival rate is diminished.

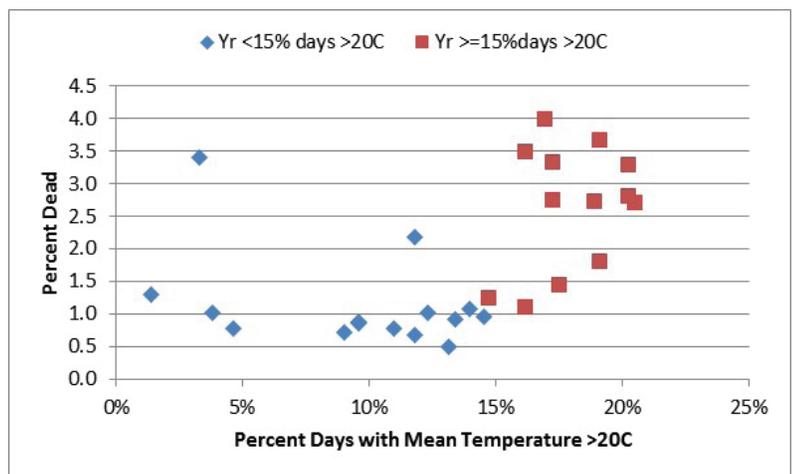
For more information on habitat bottlenecks, see the latest installment of the Commission’s Habitat Management Series, *Habitat Bottlenecks and Fisheries Management*. The report provides examples of environmental and physical bottlenecks facing managed species along the Atlantic coast, highlighting bottlenecks that threaten lobster, horseshoe crab, summer and winter flounder, and Atlantic sturgeon. The report is available at

http://www.asmfc.org/files/Habitat/HMS13_Habitat_Bottlenecks2016.pdf.

This article is reprinted from the 2015 issue of *Habitat Hotline Atlantic* and was written by Robert VanDolah (retired), SC Division of Natural Resources and Penny Howell, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.



Map of distribution shift in late-stage egg bearing female lobsters in Southern New England that has been related to changes in temperature. Image (c) MA DMF



Relationship between the observed annual frequency of dead lobsters in research traps versus the percent of days that year with a mean bottom water temperature above 20°C. Data provided by Millstone Environmental Laboratory, Dominion Nuclear Resources, Waterford, CT.

Federal Funding for Atlantic States Fisheries Management

Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations

On December 18th, President Obama signed an omnibus appropriations bill for the remainder of fiscal year 2016 (October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016). Up until then the federal government was operating under a continuing resolution at fiscal year 2015 levels. The omnibus includes \$849 million for NOAA Fisheries Operations, Research, and Facilities, which is \$27.4 million above last year's levels. The "Regional Councils & Fishery Commissions" line, which funds the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, was increased by \$732 thousand from last year to \$33.47 million. "Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants" are funded at \$3 million, or an increase of \$500 thousand from last year. The omnibus also contains a policy provision for the Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey in 2016. The horseshoe crab provision was included at the request of Representatives John Carney (D-DE) and Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), and Senator Chris Coons (D-DE).



Wallop-Breaux Funding Reauthorized through 2020

On December 4th, President Obama signed into law H.R. 22, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The five-year, \$305 billion surface transportation bill reauthorizes the Sport Fish Restoration Act through Fiscal Year 2020. The Sport Fish Restoration Act, also known as Dingell-Johnson and Wallop-Breaux, levies an excise tax on sportfishing equipment and motorboat fuels that is distributed to the states for management and restoration of fish. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service distributed \$625 million under the program in fiscal year 2015. Funds are made available based on a formula which includes land area and number of paid license holders.

For more information, please contact Deke Tompkins, Executive Legislative Assistant, at dtompkins@asmfc.org.

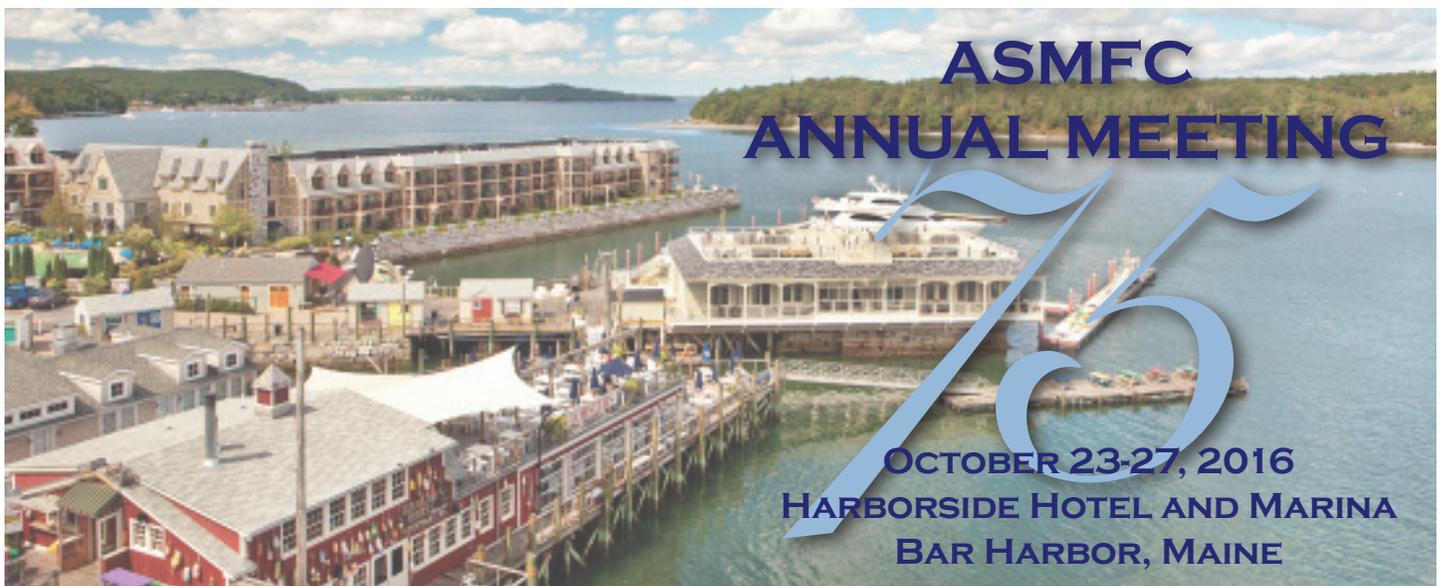
Comings and Goings



Rep. Chad Nimmer

In January, Rep. Chad Nimmer became Georgia's Legislative Commissioner to the ASMFC, replacing Rep. Jon Burns who served in that capacity since 2011. Rep. Nimmer was elected by special election in 2011 and represents Pierce and Brantley counties as well as parts of Wayne and Appling counties in the Georgia House of Representatives. He currently serves on the Natural Resources and Environment, Transportation, and the Information and Audits Committees. He began his professional career in forestry with Georgia Pacific in 1998. In 2001, he joined the family-owned dealership of Pierce Timber Co. as a procurement forester. In 2005, Rep. Nimmer started his own business, Suwannee Forest Products, and currently serves on the board of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. He is a member of the 2012 Class of Leadership Georgia, the Georgia Forestry Association, Southeast Woods Producers Association, the

Georgia Agribusiness Council, and the Georgia Cattlemen's Association. Rep. Nimmer and his wife, Amy, have three children and reside in Blackshear. Welcome aboard, Rep. Nimmer.



**Atlantic States Marine
Fisheries Commission**

1050 North Highland Street
Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Return Service Requested

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
MERRIFIELD, VA
PERMIT NO. 1149

WINTER MEETING FINAL AGENDA continued from page 7

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4

10:30 a.m. – Noon

American Eel Management Board (continued)

- Consider South Carolina's Survey Sampling Proposal **Action**
- Technical Committee Report (*S. Eyler*)
- Consider Maine's Conservation Equivalent Management Proposal **Action**
 - Technical Committee Report (*S. Eyler*)
- Initiate Discussion to Consider Changes to Addendum IV Yellow Eel Allocations (*J. Gilmore*) **Possible Action**

12:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board

- Executive Committee Report (*D. Grout*)
- Review and Discuss 2015 Commissioner Survey Results (*T. Kerns*)
- Review and Consider Revisions to the ASMFC Guidance Documents (*T. Kerns*) **Final Action**
- Discuss Direction of Management when Stocks are not Responding to Management Due to Climate Impacts or Other Reasons (*D. Grout*)
- Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Report (*L. Havel*)
- South Atlantic Board Report (*J. Estes*) **Possible Action**
- Update on the Weakfish Stock Assessment (*K. Drew*)

3:15 – 3:45 p.m.

Business Session

- Consider Final Approval of Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Herring FMP (*R. White*) **Final Action**
- Consider Amending the Commission's Rules and Regulations (*R. Beal*) **Action**
- Review Non-compliance Findings (if necessary)

Want to Go Paperless?

Please help us reduce printing and mailing costs, and minimize paper waste by receiving our information via email. Contact us at info@asmfc.org (Subject line: Subscribe to Email) to sign up to receive ASMFC Fisheries Focus, meeting announcements, and press releases electronically.