



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Presents 2023 Annual Awards of Excellence

Arlington, VA - The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented its Annual Awards of Excellence to a number of individuals for their outstanding contributions to congressional/legislative issues, fisheries science, and law enforcement along the Atlantic coast. Specifically, the 2023 award recipients were Miranda Peterson for congressional/legislative contributions; Carol Hoffman for technical and scientific contributions; and Region 3 New York State Department of Conservation Police from for law enforcement contributions.

“Every year a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission’s Annual Awards of Excellence recognize outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries,” said ASMFC Chair Spud Woodward of Georgia. “I am humbled by the breadth and extent of accomplishments of the recipients and am grateful for their dedication to Atlantic coast fisheries.”



From left to right: ASMFC Executive Director Bob Beal, Environmental Conservation Officer Lieutenant Sean Reilly, Carol Hoffman, Awards Committee Chair Jim Gilmore, and ASMFC Chair Spud Woodward

Congressional and Legislative Contributions

Miranda Peterson, Legislative Assistant for Representative Frank Pallone

As a Legislative Assistant in Representative Frank Pallone’s office, Miranda Peterson has consistently gone above and beyond to help secure funding for the Virginia Tech Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey. Understanding the importance of the sustainable management of this species, Miranda has worked diligently to help fund this program. In 2023, she secured the signatures of seven U.S. Representatives on a Dear Colleague letter, which was an all-time high in signatories who support funding the survey.

The Virginia Tech Trawl Survey is necessary for the effective and timely management of horseshoe crabs in the Delaware Bay. The survey has been in operation since 2002, but lost funding for several years which complicated

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 a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

the stock assessment and management in the region. Since 2016, Congress has annually instructed NOAA Fisheries to fund this survey to provide a consistent time series. A healthy Delaware Bay population supports the economically and ecologically important birding, fishing, and biomedical communities. The continuation of this yearly data is due in a large part to Miranda's efforts.

In addition to these efforts, Miranda's in-depth knowledge of coastal and marine issues, including commercial and recreational fisheries, marine mammals, and offshore energy development is not only an asset to Representative Pallone and New Jersey constituents, but also to the management of marine resources along the Atlantic coast.

Scientific and Technical Contributions

Carol Hoffman, (retired) New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Carol Hoffman, previously with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, was recognized for her longstanding scientific and technical contributions to the management of Atlantic striped bass and American eel. Her keen understanding of fishery management plans and strong analytical abilities helped to ensure that New York manages these species in consideration of both state and coastwide needs. Carol's thorough and detailed approach to data analysis and report development has been key to maintaining New York's high quality of work. Her unmatched ability to meticulously remember the Commission's procedures and timelines ensured that New York consistently fulfills its interstate management responsibilities.

A strong communicator and dedicated team player, Carol fostered strong relationships not only within the marine district, but also with New York's inland and Hudson River fisheries. She developed vital working relationships with her neighboring states of New Jersey and Connecticut which allowed striped bass and eel to be monitored and managed successfully on a regional level. Particularly for eel, Carol worked tirelessly to provide alternative data sets from a citizen science group and a power plant in New York, both of which are now used to assess the species.

Not only has Carol delivered timely and accurate data analyses and compliance reports, she has also been instrumental in the extensive process of regulation formulation that supports the Commission's mandates. Her efforts contributed to New York being an active and dedicated participant in the Commission's fisheries management process.

Law Enforcement Contributions

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Police, Region 3

The last award of the evening was presented to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Police for their efforts in the protection of the Atlantic striped bass along the spawning grounds of the Hudson River. Over the past three years, Region 3 officers have conducted patrols of the Western, Putnam, Orange, and Rockland Counties for recreational fishery compliance inspections.

Throughout February and March, the Environmental Conservation Police dedicated its resources to the protection of migrating striped bass. During 14 dedicated patrols in 2023 alone, officers issued 430 tickets for violations of striped bass regulations and other associated violations. Officers also seized 184 illegally possessed striped bass during their patrols; these fish were later donated to a local zoo. The dedicated patrols were conducted at varied times of the day and night. Officers used specialized night vision gear to aid in the detection of anglers. Over the course of this operation, violations included: fishing without a marine registration; failure to use circle hooks; exceeding the possession and size limits; and targeting striped bass during a closed season.

With the opening of the season on April 1, the dedicated patrols have ended, but officers continue to diligently monitor the fishery. Through their efforts, these officers have helped to ensure that fishing regulations are upheld and the resource is given its best chance to rebuild.

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