



**ASMFC**

# **FISHERIES** *focus*

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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1444 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C.

*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015*

## **ASMFC Winter Meeting February 2 - 5, 2009**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel Old Town  
901 North Fairfax Street  
Alexandria, Virginia  
(703) 683-6000**

### **Preliminary Schedule**

The preliminary agenda is subject to change. 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. A final agenda and meeting materials will be posted to the Commission's website ([www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org)) two weeks prior to the meeting.

#### Monday, February 2, 2009

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board  
2:15 PM - 4:15 PM American Lobster Management Board  
4:30 PM - 5:30 PM Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board

#### Tuesday, February 3, 2009

8:30 AM - 10:30 AM Atlantic Herring Section  
10:45 AM - 12:15 PM Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board  
1:30 PM - 3:30 PM Winter Flounder Management Board  
3:45 PM - 4:45 PM American Eel Management Board  
5:00 PM - 5:30 PM Business Session

#### Wednesday, February 4, 2009

8:00 AM - 9:45 AM Executive Committee  
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM Shad & River Herring Management Board  
3:15 PM - 6:15 PM ISFMP Policy Board

#### Thursday, February 5, 2009

8:30 AM - 9:15 AM Weakfish Management Board  
9:30 AM - 10:30 AM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board  
10:45 AM - 11:15 AM ISFMP Policy Board  
11:15 AM - 11:30 AM Business Session

### **Inside This Issue**

**Species Profile: Atlantic Coastal Sharks** Page 4

**Northern Shrimp 2009 Fishing Season Set at 180 Days** Page 7

**BoatU.S. Foundation Solicits Proposals for Clean Water Grants** Page 7

**Science Highlight: SEAMAP-South Atlantic Expands Research Activities** Page 8

**From Our Federal Partners** Page 9

**ACCSP Source of Data for Fisheries of the U.S.** Page 10

**European Commission Considers Protection of Europe's Most Endangered Sharks** Page 11

**T**he 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 fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

*Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission*

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## Upcoming Meetings

**1/22 & 23 (8 AM - 4 PM both days):**

ASMFC Weakfish Stock Assessment Meeting, Holiday Inn Crabtree Valley Hotel, 4100 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh, North Carolina; (919) 782-8600

**1/28 & 29:**

ACCSP Biological Review Panel and Bycatch Prioritization Committee, Holiday Inn Central, 1501 Rhode Island Avenue, Washington, DC.

**2/2 - 5:**

ASMFC Winter Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia (see preliminary agenda on page 1).

**2/9 - 11:**

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Harborside, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

**2/9 - 13:**

Red Drum SEDAR 18 Data Workshop, Hilton Garden Inn, 5265 International Boulevard, North Charleston, South Carolina; (843) 308-9330.

**2/11 - 13:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Seaview Marriot Resort and Spa, 401 South New York Road, Galloway, New Jersey; (609) 652-1800.

**3/2 - 6:**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Jekyll Island Club Hotel, 371 Riverview Drive, Jekyll Island, Georgia; (800) 535-9547.

**3/30 - 4/3:**

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

**4/7 - 9:**

New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Mystic, Mystic, Connecticut.

**4/14 - 16:**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Sanderling, 1461 Duck Road, Duck, North Carolina; (252) 261-4111.

**5/4 - 7:**

ASMFC Spring Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; (800) 333-3333.

## Achievements and Challenges

As the days grow shorter in December we are reminded of the importance of time and the value of taking stock of what has been accomplished over the past year. It is also a good time to look forward to the challenges and opportunities we face in the new year.

A quick review of our four meeting week summaries provides a good description of the variety and complexity of Commission activities. The list is more impressive considering the long hours of independent work and meetings of our technical committees and advisory panels, in addition to the efforts that go into our public input process. These include both open public comment periods for all major Commission actions, as well as in-state public hearings when requested by our states.

Our Commissioners expended considerable effort and time in 2008 conducting strategic planning to develop a direction for themselves, our Commission, and Atlantic coast fisheries for the next five years. Their goal was to produce an updated plan that will ensure wise and effective use of the Commission's fiscal and human resources to enhance the abundance of fisheries under our Commissioners' stewardship. They committed to restoring stocks.

Commissioners also approved the first Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Coastal Sharks, covering some 40 species. The plan enables comprehensive management throughout the species' range of state and federal waters. It also ensures increased protection of pregnant sharks through seasonal closures of nursery and pupping areas. The plan is a direct reflection of the hard work and thoughtful input of our scientists, advisory panel members, and stakeholders from Maine to Florida.

In another important issue regarding sharks, Commissioners increased the coastwide quota for spiny dogfish in response to scientific advice that stock abundance has increased. They also took action to implement measures requiring seasonal overages to be repaid in the same season in the following year. This corrects the problem of having overages caught in the first period of the year restricting harvests by our southern states, and restores the historical quota allocation scheme intended in the plan.

The Commission also sponsored a Fish Passage Workshop in 2008, providing a well-attended forum for scientists and managers to discuss issues, technolo-

gies, and impacts to diadromous species. Participants developed an extensive list of recommendations for improved interstate involvement in fish passage issues for further exploration in 2009. This is a critical topic as most of our states wrestle with the difficult issue of how to respond to depleted shad and river herring stocks in many of their river systems.

2008 was a year of important growth in our fisheries-independent data collection efforts. Thanks to a cooperative funding effort from our states, the Commission, the Mid-Atlantic Council, and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, NEAMAP conducted spring and fall trawl surveys, covering nearshore waters from Cape Hatteras to Cape Cod. While this is just the first step in establishing useful long-term data, it is evident that this survey will be a welcomed source of information for many of our important Mid-Atlantic species. In addition, increased funding in 2008 has enabled the restoration and expansion of SEAMAP research activities in the Southeast.

Looking forward to 2009, our Commissioners face a number of important challenges. They will need to decide how to respond to the latest stock assessment indicating that the southern New England winter flounder spawning stock has dropped to nine percent of the target. They will also continue to wrestle with the difficult issue of effort control for the Atlantic herring fishery in state waters, as well as work with the New England Fishery Management Council on establishing catch and bycatch monitoring programs for the herring fisheries.

Our Commissioners will consider finalizing and implementing new management measures responding to the 2007 American shad stock assessment, and the decline of river herring stocks. They will also be facing peer-reviewed stock assessments of several key species, including American lobster, horseshoe crab, red drum, weakfish, spiny dogfish, and Atlantic herring. In addition to reflecting a tremendous amount of work by our scientists, the outcomes of at least some of these assessments are likely to prompt the need for reevaluation and revision of our current management of these species.

In crafting our new Strategic Plan, our states and Commissioners have committed to working together to ensure their vision of stock restoration stays on track. Their wisdom as reflected in the Plan should serve as an inspiration and a compass for us all. Hopefully, that is something we can all agree with.



Photo courtesy of Bryan Frazier, SCDNR

## Atlantic Coastal Sharks

**ASMFC Management Area:**  
ME - FL

### Interesting Facts:

\* **Sharks have special sensory organ called the Ampullae of Lorenzini which enables them to detect electromagnetic fields emitted by living animals.**

\* **Earliest known sharks have been identified from fossils from the Devonian period, over 400 million years ago.**

\* **The life span of sharks in the wild is not known, but it is believed that many shark species may live more than 30-40 years.**

\* **There are ~350 species of sharks; ASMFC's FMP addresses 40 of these.**

\* **Extreme diversity among shark species exist, with the pygmy shark as the smallest at 7.8" and the whale shark as the largest at 39'**

**Stock Status: Varies by species and species group**

# Species Profile: Atlantic Coastal Sharks Interstate FMP Complements Federal Management & Protects Sharks in Nursing Grounds

## Introduction

Sharks are a vital part of ocean ecosystems all over the world. Scientists consider them to be a keystone species because they generally reside at the top of the food chain having a strong impact on other species either directly or indirectly. Removing or reducing shark populations in an area can cause an imbalance in the food chain and produce far reaching negative impacts. Because of this, the health of shark populations in an ecosystem is often an accurate indicator of the overall health of the system.

Though well understood today, fisheries managers did not always fully understand the life cycle and ecological role of sharks. In the mid-1980s, sharks were considered an under utilized resource and fishermen were encouraged to fish for them. Over the next few years, fishing effort increased considerably and the impact of unregulated harvest was beginning to take its toll on some shark species. In the early 1990s, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implemented a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Sharks of the Atlantic Ocean to rebuild depleted stocks and protect healthy stocks from overfishing. In May 2008, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission adopted an Interstate FMP for Atlantic Coastal Sharks to complement federal management actions and increase protection of pregnant females and juveniles in inshore nursery areas.

## Life History

Sharks belong to the class Chondrichthyes (cartilaginous fish) that also includes rays, skates, and deepwater chimaeras (ratfishes). Relative to other marine fish, sharks have a very low reproductive potential. Various factors create this low reproductive rate such as slow growth, late sexual maturity, one to two-year reproductive cycles, a small number of young per brood, and specific requirements for nursery areas. These biological factors leave many species of sharks vulnerable to overfishing.

Sharks have internal fertilization and the embryo of most species spend their entire developmental period protected within their mother's body, although some species lay eggs. Females produce a small number (2 – 25) of large pups, which have an increased chance of survival due to their size.

Adults usually congregate in specific areas to mate and females travel to specific nursery areas to pup. These nursery areas are discrete geographic areas, usually in waters shallower than those inhabited by the adults. Frequently, the nursery areas are in highly productive coastal or estuarine waters where abundant small fish and crustaceans provide food for the growing pups. These shallow areas have fewer large predators than deeper waters, thus enhancing the chances of survival of the young sharks.

## Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Commercial shark fishing effort is generally concentrated in the Southeastern U.S. and Gulf of Mexico. Commercial fishermen catch sharks using bottom longlines and gillnets. The Atlantic fishery targets both large coastal shark (LCS) and small coastal shark (SCS) species. Bottom longline is the primary commercial gear employed in the LCS and SCS fisheries in all regions. Gear characteristics vary by region, but in general an approximately ten-mile long bottom longline, contain-

ing about 600 hooks, is fished overnight. Skates, sharks, or various finfish are used as bait. The gear typically consists of a heavy monofilament mainline with lighter weight monofilament gangions. The Southeast shark gillnet fishery is comprised of several vessels based primarily out of ports in northern Florida that use nets typically 456 to 2,280 meters long and 6.1 to 15.2 meters deep, with stretched mesh from 12.7 to 22.9 cm.

Recreational fishing for Atlantic sharks occurs in federal and state waters from New England to the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea. In the past, sharks were often called “the poor man’s marlin.” Recreational shark fishing with rod and reel is now a popular sport at all social and economic levels, largely because of accessibility to the resource. Sharks can be caught virtually anywhere in salt water, with even large specimens available in the nearshore area to surf angler or small boaters. Most recreational shark fishing takes place from small to medium-size vessels. Makos, white sharks, and large pelagic sharks are generally accessible only to those aboard ocean-going vessels. Recreational shark fisheries are exploited primarily by private vessels and charter/headboats although there are some shore-based fishermen active in the Florida Keys.

### Stock Status

Stock status is assessed by species complex for most coastal shark species and by species group for species with enough data for an individual assessment (see Table 1). Porbeagle sharks were assessed by the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans in 2005. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reviewed this assessment and determined that it used the best available science and was appropriate for use by U.S. domestic management. Porbeagle are overfished but not experiencing overfishing, with a 70% probability of rebuilding in 100 years at or below the current fishing mortality rate of  $F = 0.04$ .

A 2006 stock assessment of dusky sharks in the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico indicated that dusky populations have been heavily exploited. Four of the five time series examined showed statistically significant decreasing trends in average weight. The vast majority of biomass dynamic models all predicted depletions of greater than 80% of virgin biomass. The stock is considered overfished and experiencing overfishing.

The 2006 SouthEast Data Assessment Review (SEDAR 11) assessed the large coastal species complex (LCS), blacktip, and sandbar sharks. The LCS assessment suggested that it is inappropriate to assess the LCS complex as a whole due to the variation in life history parameters, different intrinsic rates of increase, and different catch and abundance data for all species included in the LCS complex. Based on these results, NMFS has changed the status of the LCS complex from overfished to unknown. SEDAR 11 found that sandbar sharks are overfished and overfishing is occurring. Blacktip sharks were assessed for the first time as two separate populations: Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic. The results indicate that the Gulf of Mexico stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, while the current status of blacktip sharks in the Atlantic region is unknown.

SEDAR 13 (2007) assessed the small coastal species complex (SCS), finetooth, blacknose, Atlantic sharpnose, and bonnethead sharks. The team of independent peer reviewers for SEDAR 13 considered the data to be the ‘best available at the time’ and determined the status of the complex to be ‘adequate.’ Finetooth are not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. Blacknose were found to be overfished and experiencing overfishing, however, because of uncertainties in indices, catch and life history parameters, the status of blacknose shark could change substantially in the next assessment in an unpredictable direction. Atlantic sharpnose are not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. Bonnethead are not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. However, fishing mortality rates in the recent past have fluctuated above and below  $F_{MSY}$ . Thus, there is some probability that blacknose fishing mortality rates in 2006 and 2007 have been or will be in excess of  $F_{MSY}$ .

**Table 1. Stock Status of Atlantic Coastal Sharks Species and Species Groups**

Species or Complex Name	Stock Status		References/Comments
	Overfished	Overfishing is Occurring	
Porbeagle	Y	N	Stock Assessment Report on NAFO Subareas 3 - 6 Porbeagle Shark (2005)
Dusky	Y	Y	Stock Assessment of Dusky Shark in the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico (2006) Dusky are a prohibited species.
Large Coastal Sharks	Unknown	Unknown	SEDAR 11 (2006) Assessing the LCS as a species complex is difficult due to various life history characteristics and lack of available data
Blacktip	Unknown	Unknown	SEDAR 11 (2006)
Sandbar	Y	Y	SEDAR 11 (2006)
Atlantic Sharpnose	N	N	SEDAR 13 (2006)
Blacknose	Y	Y	SEDAR 13 (2006)
Bonnethead	N	N	SEDAR 13 (2006)
Finetooth	N	N	SEDAR 13 (2006)
Smooth Dogfish	Unknown	Unknown	No Assessment

*continued on page 6*



Photo courtesy of Captain Jerry Adams, NOAA Ship OREGON II

## Species Profile: Atlantic Coastal Sharks (continued from page 5)

hibited from possessing silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead sharks species from May 15 – July 15 from Virginia through New Jersey to protect pupping females. All fishermen are required to keep the fins attached to the carcass through landing as well.

Recreational fishermen are prohibited from harvesting any species that are illegal to land in federal waters. Smooth dogfish are not managed in federal waters and anglers may harvest them. Recreational landings are controlled through possession limits with a 4.5' fork length size limit for all species except for Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, blacknose, bonnethead and smooth dogfish that do not have a minimum size limit. In addition, recreational anglers can only harvest sharks caught with a handline or rod & reel.

The commercial fishery is managed based on maximum sustainable yield using quotas and possession limits to control harvest level and effort. Sharks were split into six commercial species groups based on fisheries, biology, and stock status of the various species —prohibited, research, small coastal, non-sandbar large coastal, pelagic, and smooth dogfish (see Table 2 for a list of species by species groups). Fishermen are prohibited from catching or landing any

species in either the prohibited or research species groups without a state display or research permit.

The Commission does not set quotas for the SCS, LCS, or pe-

lagic species groups but rather opens and closes the fishery in response to the federal fishery. The Board may set a quota for smooth dogfish but is not required to. Fishing effort for the smooth dogfish, SCS, LCS, and pelagic species groups is controlled through possession limits. Fishermen may harvest any species contained in the smooth dogfish, SCS, LCS, and pelagic species groups as long as the fishery is open and all sharks are caught according to the regulations contained in the FMP.

Commercial fishermen must have a general state commercial fishing license or permit to harvest sharks. Dealers are required to hold a federal commercial shark dealer permit to buy and sell sharks in order to monitor the quota as efficiently as possible and reduce the chance of quota overages. Fishermen may use handlines, gillnets, trawl nets, shortlines, pound nets/fish traps, and weirs to harvest sharks commercially. Captains and vessel owners must check nets every two hours or use circle hooks and attend a NMFS Protected Species Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshop in order to harvest sharks using shortlines.

For more information, please contact Christopher Vonderweidt, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or [cvonderweidt@asmfc.org](mailto:cvonderweidt@asmfc.org).

There is no assessment for smooth dogfish on the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Coastal Sharks Technical Committee has identified a smooth dogfish assessment as a top research need.

### Atlantic Coastal Management

In August 2008, the Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board approved the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Coastal Sharks. Prior to this plan, shark management in state waters consisted of disjointed state-specific regulations. Federal shark management began with the Fishery Management Plan for Sharks of the Atlantic Ocean in 1993. Since then, federal shark management has evolved as the shark fishery has changed, while state regulations have continued to lack continuity throughout the range of the sharks.

Since the Interstate FMP is mostly complementary to federal regulations, it closes loopholes and allows for joint specification setting throughout the entire Atlantic shark range. The FMP also protects shark nurseries and pupping grounds that are found primarily in state waters. Interstate regulations provide protection to sharks during a particularly vulnerable stage in their life cycle in a location that federal jurisdiction cannot protect.

Commercial and recreational are pro-

**Table 2. Atlantic Coastal Shark Species Listed by Species Group**

Species Groups	Species Contained Within Group
Prohibited	Sand tiger, bigeye sand tiger, whale, basking, white, dusky, bignose, Galapagos, night, reef, narrowtooth, Caribbean sharpnose, smalltail, Atlantic angel, longfin mako, bigeye thresher, sharpnose sevengill, bluntnose sixgill, and bigeye sixgill sharks
Research	Sandbar sharks
Small coastal	Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, blacknose, and bonnethead sharks
Non-sandbar large coastal	Silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead sharks
Pelagic	Shortfin mako, porbeagle, common thresher, oceanic whitetip, and blue sharks
Smooth dogfish	Smooth dogfish

## Northern Shrimp 2009 Fishing Season Set at 180 Days

This fall, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section approved a 180-day fishing season for the 2008-2009 northern shrimp fishery, a 28-day increase from last year's season. The season was based on favorable stock conditions, with the resource not overfished and not experiencing overfishing, and a recommendation of the Advisory Panel.

"Our efforts to reduce fishing mortality in early 2000 has resulted in a high abundance of shrimp for the fishery," stated Section Chair Pat White from Maine. "By approving a six-month fishing season, we hope new markets will open up for this wild-caught species."

The 2004 year-class appeared strong in this summer's annual survey. The five-year-old shrimp will be available as a quality product to the fishery this season. The 2005 year-class is also showing up strong in the summer survey and should provide the base for next season's

fishery. The 2006 year-class continues to be very weak, while the above-average 2007 year class showed up for the first time in the survey.

"The Section is pleased that current stock abundance supports an extension of the 2009 fishing season through most of May. However, we urge the fishery to avoid less desirable small shrimp that are often mixed with marketable larger shrimp during that month," continued Mr. White. "This will help ensure a healthy fishery in future years."

The 2009 fishing season, which is the same for mobile and trap gear, will be open seven days a week from December 1, 2008, through May 29, 2009.

The northern shrimp fishery is jointly regulated by Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine through the



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section. The cooperative management program has been in place since 1972 and is currently managed under Amendment 1 to the Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. For more information, please contact Braddock Spear, Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or <bspear@asmfc.org>.

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## BoatU.S. Foundation Solicits Proposals for Clean Water Grants

The BoatU.S. Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water is offering grant funds up to \$4,000 each for community non-profit groups to develop projects that address environmental problems on local waterways. Since 1997 the annual BoatU.S. Foundation Clean Water Grant program has awarded over \$300,000 to improve the marine environment, funding 149 projects in 35 states. This year's deadline to apply is February 2, 2009.

"Groups have flexibility in deciding what needs to be addressed, whether it's a pollution issue, preventing the spread of invasive species, or other environmental concern," said BoatU.S. Foundation Director of Environmental Programs Susan Shingledecker.

In the past, groups have received funding to create brochures that help educate boaters about the availability of pumpout stations, built and installed information kiosks on waterway ecology, added monofilament recycling bins for anglers, erected signage on clean water practices, and hosted a river clean up contests.

"The bottom line is that we will consider any project that strives to educate boaters about protecting the marine environment," added Shingledecker.

To view previous grant projects or learn more about

the grant program, please visit <http://www.BoatUS.com/foundation/cleanwater/grants> Applications may be submitted electronically or mailed.

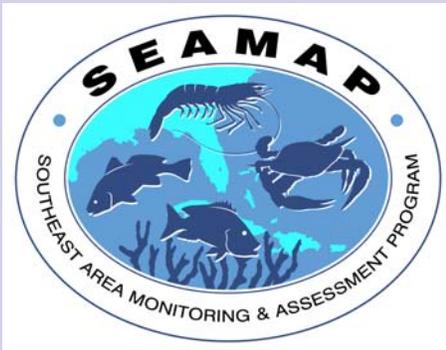
### 2009 Technical Meeting Week Dates

March 30 - April 3

July 6 - 10

September 14 - 18

Locations to be determined.



## Science Highlight: *SEAMAP-South Atlantic Expands Research Activities with Increased Funding*

Winter Tagging Cruise, which is in its twenty-first year of operation to tag striped bass for assessment of population structure and exploitation rates.

**A**fter many years of level funding, the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program-South Atlantic (SEAMAP-SA) has recently received a substantial increase in funds for at least one year from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that will allow for restoration and expansion of its research activities. In the Southeastern U.S., SEAMAP surveys provide the only region-wide, fishery-independent data on economically significant fish and shellfish, and information on the critical habitats that support them.

SEAMAP is a cooperative state/federal program for collecting, managing, and sharing fishery-independent data that is used by fisheries managers, academic researchers, and fishing industry personnel. SEAMAP presently consists of three geographical components: SEAMAP-Gulf of Mexico, est. 1981; SEAMAP-South Atlantic, est. 1983; and SEAMAP-Caribbean, est. 1988. The Commission provides administrative support to the SEAMAP-SA component. The South Atlantic has several work groups to coordinate activities for gathering information on species abundance, critical fish habitat, and the effects of changing environmental conditions

Another program component, initiated in 1988 at the request of SEAMAP-SA, is the Cooperative

Long-term studies are the foundation of SEAMAP. The largest component of SEAMAP-SA survey research is the Coastal Survey conducted by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, which has been sampling in spring, summer, and fall for the last 18 years in shallow waters between Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and Cape Canaveral, Florida. It is the only effort that has been supported with SEAMAP funds during level funding; all other SEAMAP projects have remained active through limited state and federal support. Increased funding this year has allowed for the resumption of diet studies and age and growth sampling on weakfish, Atlantic croaker, and southern kingfish.

The North Carolina Pamlico Sound Survey has been surveying estuarine fish and decapod crustaceans in the Pamlico Sound since 1990. With the new funds, a biologist has been brought on board for data analysis and management.

A new effort being undertaken with new funds is coordination on fish assessment and habitat characterization with the Marine Resources Monitoring, Assessment, and Prediction (MARMAP) Program. To complement offshore sampling conducted through the MARMAP survey, the SEAMAP-SA survey would sample nearshore waters year-round, targeting high priority finfish species de-

pendant on live/hard bottom habitat, including black sea bass, gag and red drum, from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina to Sebastian Inlet, Florida. In addition, expansion of offshore site sampling through SEAMAP-SA will result in more complete coverage of the MARMAP sampling regime. Regional fishery-independent sampling through SEAMAP-SA supported surveys will provide essential stock identification and characterization data (geographic distribution, relative abundance) needed to improve overall abundance indices and assessments of southeastern finfish populations and fully complement ongoing management and research efforts.

Funding is also being provided to the states of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida to support the continuation of their offshore adult red drum longline surveys. This work will provide access to important information on the adult red drum stock for stock assessments and also information that could be used for coastal sharks assessments in the South Atlantic.

New funds will also support management of all data collected through SEAMAP-SA activities into a SEAMAP Information System. Geographic information system (GIS) products will be developed as well as an Internet map service to display GIS products and metadata records, and allow for data searches.

For more information, please visit [www.seamap.org](http://www.seamap.org) or contact Melissa Paine, SEAMAP-SA Coordinator, at or [mpaine@asmfc.org](mailto:mpaine@asmfc.org)

## News from Our Federal Partners

### NOAA Fisheries Research Ship *Albatross IV* is Retired

On November 20, 2008, the NOAA research ship *Albatross IV* was decommissioned, ending her distinguished 45-year career in service to the nation. The vessel sailed over 655,000 miles on 453 research cruises, primarily fisheries surveys off the northeastern coast of the United States.



Photo courtesy of NOAA, Dept. of Commerce

These surveys created the world's longest continuous study of fish population data. NOAA's new fisheries survey vessel, *Henry B. Bigelow*, is replacing the *Albatross IV*, ensuring the collection of important ecological data goes uninterrupted.

*Albatross IV* is the last of four vessels sharing the same name sailing from Woods Hole since 1883. The original *Albatross* was the first to be built exclusively for marine research by any government. Built in 1962, *Albatross IV* was the first vessel in the modern shipbuilding era, and continued the long scientific tradition established by the first three *Albatross* vessels.

"More than 2,400 people sailed aboard *Albatross IV*, some working their entire careers with the vessel," said Rear Admiral Jonathan W. Bailey, director of the NOAA Corps, one of the nation's seven uniformed services, and director of NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations. "We are sad to see her go, but look forward to continuing this im-

portant work with *Henry B. Bigelow*, a ship that is as much a quantum leap forward in capability for us now as was *Albatross IV* when she entered service back in 1963."

For most of her service life, the 187-foot *Albatross IV* conducted sampling and research cruises across the Northeast continental shelf in support of NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center. Her key projects included annual spring and autumn groundfish and sea scallop trawls.

The magnitude of information collected by a ship like *Albatross IV* can be overwhelming. During each cruise, fish and invertebrates are sorted on deck by species. The data about each fish, such as its sex, weight, length, and stomach contents are recorded. Oceanographic data are also collected by sensors,

both shipboard and deployed. A typical fishery resource survey cruise takes about 45 sea days.

*Albatross IV* was also a "school" for software engineers, who developed a computerized system for fisheries data collection with scientists from NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center during the annual trawls. The ship then served as the test platform in 2001 for the automated system that signaled the end of nearly four decades of pencil and paper data recording aboard NOAA fisheries ships in the Northeast. The successful tests aboard *Albatross IV* led to installation of the system across the NOAA fisheries fleet.

As part of the fleet of NOAA research and survey ships and vessels, *Albatross IV* was operated, managed, and maintained by officers of the NOAA Corps, masters and wage mariners under NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations. Her last captain was Master Stephen Wagner, a resident of Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

### Ships Must Slow Down to Protect North Atlantic Right Whales

A landmark regulation going into effect on December 9 will require ships 65 feet or longer to travel at ten knots or less in certain areas where right whales gather. These new speed restrictions will take effect in waters off New England beginning in January 2009 when whales begin gathering in this area as part of their annual migration. The goal is to reduce the chances ships will collide with whales, injuring or killing them.

With only 300 to 400 in existence, North Atlantic right whales are among the most endangered whales in the world. Their slow movements and time spent at the surface and near the coast make right whales highly vulnerable to being struck by ships, especially since shipping lanes into East Coast ports cut across their migration routes.

The 10-knot speed restriction will extend out to 20 nautical miles around major mid-Atlantic ports. According to NOAA researchers, about 83 percent of right whale sightings in the mid-Atlantic region occur within 20 nautical miles of shore. The speed restriction also applies in waters off New England and the southeastern U.S., where whales gather seasonally.

The speed restrictions apply in the following approximate locations at the following times; they are based on times whales are known to be in these areas:

- Southeastern U.S. from St. Augustine, Florida to Brunswick, Georgia from November 15 to April 15
- Mid-Atlantic U.S. areas from Rhode Island to Georgia from November 1 to April 30
- Cape Cod Bay from January 1 to May 15
- Off Race Point at northern end of Cape Cod from March 1 to April 30

*continued on page 11*



## ACCSP Source of Data for Fisheries of the United States and SEDAR Stock Assessments

### ACCSP Prepares Partner Data for Fisheries of the U.S.

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) is gathering data from its Program Partners and preparing them for use by NOAA Fisheries Service in the 2008 edition of Fisheries of the United States (FUS). FUS is a publication put out by NOAA Fisheries Service each year to provide important fisheries information to government and industry for management purposes.

ACCSP creates a comprehensive data set by utilizing the trip level data from its Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), a real-time web-based reporting tool for commercial landings on the Atlantic coast. Program partners from Virginia to Maine send supplemental data to ACCSP creating a comprehensive data set. ACCSP then provides completed data to NOAA Fisheries Service in the spring.

ACCSP first executed this process in 2007 and plans to continue to provide this service in the future as part of its overall mission. The arrangement is mutually beneficial to ACCSP, and its' program partners. NOAA Fisheries Service no longer has to spend vital staff time merging and combining data sets from different sources for Atlantic coastal states, and ACCSP will be able to provide comprehensive landings data earlier than previously available.

For more information on Fisheries of the U.S., please visit <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/publications.html>.

### ACCSP Integrated into Stock Assessment Process

Since ACCSP began participating in stock assessment data workshops in the summer of 2007, ACCSP has become increasingly integrated in the Atlantic coast stock assessment process. In February 2009, ACCSP will be providing commercial and recreational red drum landings data for South Carolina and Georgia for the SouthEast Data Assessment Review (SEDAR).

Being able to provide standardized data to stock assessment scientists is critical to the success of ACCSP, as the program aims to be the premier source for marine fisheries statistics on the Atlantic coast.

As ACCSP steadily works towards completing all of the data modules, the Program recognizes the value of working with

fisheries scientists early on. In this manner, ACCSP is able to learn in what format data should be supplied, and stock assessment scientists are beginning to recognize ACCSP as a valuable contributor of data for their assessments.

#### ACCSP Data Collection Modules include:

- Catch and Effort data
- Permit and Vessel Registration data
- Biological data
- Bycatch (releases and protected species) data
- Economic Sociological data
- Metadata

NOTE: *Modules in various stages of development.*

### Comings and Goings

Chris Hayes joined the ACCSP staff in October 2008. Prior to his current position as Data Coordinator, Mr. Hayes was a Knauss Marine Policy fellow with NOAA Fisheries Service.

Mr. Hayes received a Master in Fisheries Science from Virginia Tech. Inspired by several NOAA Fisheries Service population dynamics workshops, his thesis was on "Life-history and stock assessment of scalloped, great, and smooth hammerhead sharks in the northwestern Atlantic Ocean." Mr. Hayes received his Bachelor of Science in Ecology from the University of Georgia.



### About the ACCSP

The ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program to design, implement, and conduct marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and to integrate those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. For more information, please visit [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org) or call (202) 216-5690.

## European Commission Considers Protection of Europe's Most Endangered Sharks

This fall, the European Commission released proposals to end fishing in 2009 for six shark and ray species classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as threatened with extinction in the Northeast Atlantic.

The European Commission has proposed setting total allowable catch (TAC) for spiny dogfish (or "spurdog") and porbeagle sharks at zero and prohibiting fishermen from keeping angel sharks, common skates, undulate rays or white skates. The Commission has also proposed additional improvements to the management of fisheries for skates and rays. The European Council of Ministers will make final decisions on 2009 fishing limits for the European Union (EU) on December 17-19, 2009.

The International Council for Exploration of the Seas (ICES), which provides scientific advice to the Commission, has long warned of spiny dogfish population collapse in the Northeast Atlantic and recommended zero take of the species. Spiny dogfish are sold as fish and chips in the United Kingdom (UK) as smoked belly flaps in Germany; filets are eaten in other EU countries including Belgium, France, and Italy. Female spiny dogfish remain pregnant for nearly

two years. Fisheries often target aggregations of pregnant females as they grow larger and fetch higher prices than males. The UK received the greatest share of 2008 EU spiny dogfish quotas which totaled 2,585 metric tons (mt) and are meant to allow for incidental catches only. Spiny dogfish are categorized by IUCN as critically endangered in the Northeast Atlantic.

EU fishing for the large and highly migratory porbeagle shark was not limited until 2008 and current quotas (581 mt total) are too high to rebuild the population.

France and Spain are responsible for the bulk of EU porbeagle catches, which are driven by European demand for meat and Asian demand for shark fin soup. The UK, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Portugal and Germany also have porbeagle quota shares. ICES scientists have recommended that fishing for European porbeagles should not be allowed and are calling for a prohibition on porbeagle landings. Porbeagle sharks

are classified by IUCN as critically endangered in the Northeast Atlantic.

Earlier this year, ICES warned of severe depletion and local extinction of the bottom-dwelling angel shark and white skates and recommended that these species receive the "highest possible protection". ICES also called for an end to fishing for undulate rays and common



Photo courtesy of NOAA, Dept. of Commerce

skates. Common skate, angel sharks and white skates are listed by IUCN as critically endangered; undulate rays are classified as endangered.

The European Commission has also proposed to reduce by 25% the existing skate and ray quota and establish two new TAC limits for these species in areas where their catch is currently unregulated.

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## News from Our Federal Partners (continued from page 9)

- Great South Channel of New England from April 1 to July 31

NOAA will also call for temporary voluntary speed limits in other areas or times when a group of three or more right whales is confirmed. Scientists will assess whether the speed restrictions are effective before the rule expires in 2013.

The rule is part of NOAA's broader ef-

fort to help the right whale population recover by protecting their habitat and reducing chances of ships colliding with right whales and of right whales entangling in fishing gear. Existing protective actions include surveying whale habitat by aircraft, mandatory ship reporting systems that provide advisories and information on right whale locations to mariners, shifting shipping lanes into Boston, recommending shipping routes

into other coastal areas to prevent collisions, and regulations to prevent entanglement in fishing gear.

For more information, please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/>.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1444 Eye Street, N.W., 6th Floor  
Washington D.C. 20005

*Return Service Requested*



**The Staff of the Atlantic  
States Marine Fisheries  
Commission wishes you  
the happiest of holidays  
and a healthy &  
prosperous New Year!**

