



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

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

Volume 18, Issue 1
January/February 2009

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

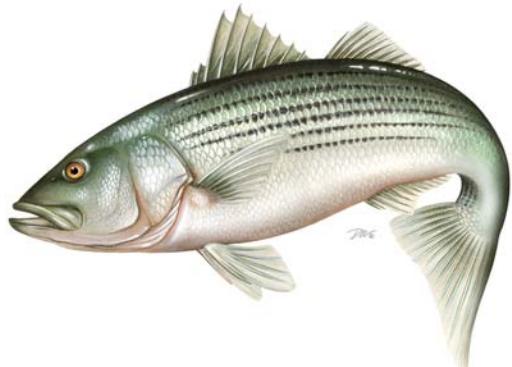
Final Schedule

The final 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. Please note that the ISFMP Policy Board has adopted new Public Comment Guidelines for public comment during meetings as well as the submission of written comment on issues for which the Commission has not established a specified public comment period (see page 7).

Monday, February 2, 2009

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

- Welcome/Call to Order, *M. Gibson*
- Public Comment
- Board Charge
 - Overview of Board Charge, *N. Meserve*
 - Technical Committee Report, *D. Kahn*
 - Committee on Economics and Social Sciences Report, *M. Paine*
- Discussion on Initiating an Addendum, *M. Gibson*
- Other Business/Adjourn



2:15 PM - 4:15 PM **American Lobster Management Board**

- Welcome/Call to Order, *B. Culbane*
- Public Comment
- Draft Addendum XII, *T. Kerns* - ACTION
 - Public Comment Review
 - Discussion and Consider Approval of Addendum XII
- Review and Consider Approval of Draft Addendum XIV for Public Comment, *T. Kerns* - ACTION
 - Changes to the LCMA 3 Transfer Program
 - Consider Approval of the 2008 FMP Review, *T. Kerns* - ACTION
 - Stock Assessment Update, *T. Kerns*
 - Other Business/Adjourn

continued on page 7

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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 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

George D. Lapointe (ME), Chair

Robert H. Boyles, Jr., (SC), Vice-Chair

John V. O’Shea, Executive Director

Robert E. Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program

Patrick A. Campfield, Science Director

Laura C. Leach, Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor

tberger@asmfc.org

(202)289-6400 Phone • (202)289-6051 Fax

www.asmfc.org

Upcoming Meetings

2/2 - 5:

ASMFC Winter Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia (see final agenda on pages 1, 7-9).

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.

6/1 - 5:

Red Drum SEDAR 18 Assessment Workshop, Charleston, South Carolina.

6/8 - 12:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hutchinson Island Marriott, 555 NE Ocean Boulevard, Stuart, Florida; (800) 775-5936.

6/9 - 11:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Radisson Martinique on Broadway, New York City.

One Way to Measure Success

Although there are a few exceptions, the fishery management systems that have evolved along the Atlantic coast have not worked very well. From port to port, state to state, fishermen report similar concerns: the quotas are too small, the seasons are too short, expenses are too high, and fish prices are too low. For some species, fishermen feel there are plenty of fish, but the constraining regulations are unreasonable and unneeded. For other species, fishermen report the fish have greatly diminished or, in some cases, disappeared. In short, neither the fish nor the fishermen have flourished or prospered.

In response to this reality more managers and fishermen are recognizing new thinking will be needed to reverse the downward spiral we appear to be on. While catch shares have been around in fisheries for decades, their use has only been sparsely adopted on the East Coast, and in fact, vigorously opposed in some regions and in many ports. But there are signs that view may be changing.

For those who might not know, catch shares is the collective term that has evolved to mean a system where a percentage of the catch is allocated to individual fishermen, sectors, associations, or communities. These programs have been called individual transferable quotas (ITQs), individual fishing quotas (IFQs), limited access privilege programs (LAPPs), harvesting cooperatives, and community development quotas (CDQs).

Economists have long recognized the power of economic incentives to change behavior. With the gradual implementation of catch share systems there is a growing body of evidence indicating they provide economic incentives to increase fish stocks, improve catch quality, protect habitat, decrease bycatch, and enhance fishing vessel safety. In one study researchers looked at the performance of catch share systems relative to key environmental, economic, and social goals. They compared the changes actual fisheries experienced in converting from conventional management to catch shares.

With regard to keeping catch within limits, all of the catch share fisheries have catch limits, with fishermen tending to err on the side of caution, resulting in combined landings (of the fisheries studied) averaging five percent below the cap. More than 70% of the catch share fisheries have monitoring compared to 25% for

non-catch share fisheries. Consequentially, biomass estimates were more precise. In addition, bycatch was significantly reduced; less fishing gear was used to catch the same amount of fish thus limiting fishing impact on habitat and protected species.

Under catch shares safety more than doubled based on the index of vessels lost, lives lost, search and rescue missions, and recorded safety violations. As for the proverbial bottom line: Revenues per boat increased by 80% due to higher yields and dockside prices.

More complete details of this study, along with an explanation of why the catch share systems drove higher performance, can be found online at www.sustainingfisheries.com. The report, labeled Sustaining America's Fisheries and Fishing Communities, is an easy read at 30 pages, and was published by Environmental Defense.

Despite these glowing findings, the evidence in this report will not be sufficient to change the minds of everyone currently opposed to catch share systems, hence, the ongoing debate will continue. That debate could be more productive if those on both sides would accept the dimensions used in this report to evaluate the trade-offs between different fishery management approaches. So, for example, to the opponents of a catch share system, how would your alternative system improve revenues to fishermen?

The second take away is to recognize that the continuing downward trend in certain Atlantic stocks, the new stricter requirements from Congress for managers to set catch limits, the rapid growth in energy prices, competition from the global economy, and the continuing losses of vessels and crews are all combining into a significant force. That force will not diminish and it will not go away; it will require and drive change.

Therefore, the sooner fishermen and managers acknowledge and react to that reality, the greater their ability will be to control and craft the measures needed to improve the performance of the fishery management system. The experience of other fisheries demonstrates it is possible to have sound science, strong stocks, sustainable harvest quotas, high profits, safe fishermen, and economically vibrant coastal communities.

The goals for our fisheries should be nothing less. Hopefully, that is something we can all agree with.



Spanish Mackerel

Scomberomorus maculatus

**ASMFC Management Area:
NY - FL**

Interesting Facts:

* Can grow up to 15" in length in their first year, reaching legal harvest length (12" fork length or 14" total length) quickly.

*Can be distinguished from king mackerel by the presence of bronze or yellow spots and the lack of scales on the pectoral fins.

Largest Recorded: 13 pounds, 31 inches, Ocracoke Inlet, NC, 1987

Stock Status: Overfishing not occurring; overfished status unknown

Species Profile: Spanish Mackerel

Anticipated Commission Amendment to Establish Compliance Standards and Greater Alignment with Federal Plan

Introduction

Spanish mackerel, *Scomberomorus maculatus*, is managed cooperatively by the Commission and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The species supports recreational and commercial fisheries in the Mid- and South Atlantic. Since adoption of the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1990, states from New York to Florida have implemented bag and size limits, commercial trip limits, and/or provisions for seasonal closures to complement the Council's measures in federal waters (three - 200 miles offshore). Changes to federal regulations will next be addressed in the Council's planned Annual Catch Limit Comprehensive Amendment, being initiated in response to the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Commission will also be working on an amendment to the interstate FMP in 2009 to address consistency and compliance issues.

Life History

A fast swimming fish known to gather in large schools and travel great distances over a short period of time, Atlantic coast Spanish mackerel generally range from New York to the Florida Keys. These fish winter off Florida, moving to North Carolina in early April and to the Chesapeake Bay and as far north as New England in June and July. Later in the year, as waters cool, Spanish mackerel return to warm Florida waters. Their migratory and schooling nature often frustrates anglers, as large congregations of fish can be found in an area one day and gone the next. Spanish mackerel prefer open water but are sometimes found over deep grass beds and reefs, as well as in shallow estuaries. They reach maturity by two years of age, generally between 13 and 15 inches in length, and live for five to eight years. Most spawning occurs between May and September off North Carolina and Virginia, with females releasing between 100,000 and 1.5 million eggs in nearshore waters. Larvae grow quickly, reaching lengths of 12 to 15 inches in a year. Both juvenile and adult Spanish mackerel are carnivorous, feeding primarily on other fishes such as menhaden, anchovy, herring, shad, pompano, and jacks, as well as shrimp and squid. Sharks are a major predator of Spanish mackerel.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

The commercial fishery for Spanish mackerel began about 1850 off Long Island and New Jersey, and was well established in the Mid-Atlantic and Chesapeake Bay by the late 1870s. Soon after, the major areas of production changed to the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, and the waters off Florida became the major commercial fishing area by 1920. Troll lines were used during the fishery's infancy, then pound nets and gillnets too, with gillnets becoming the principal gear in the dominant Florida fishery up to the mid-1990s. In July 1995, Florida instituted a net ban, which shifted gillnet fishing into federal

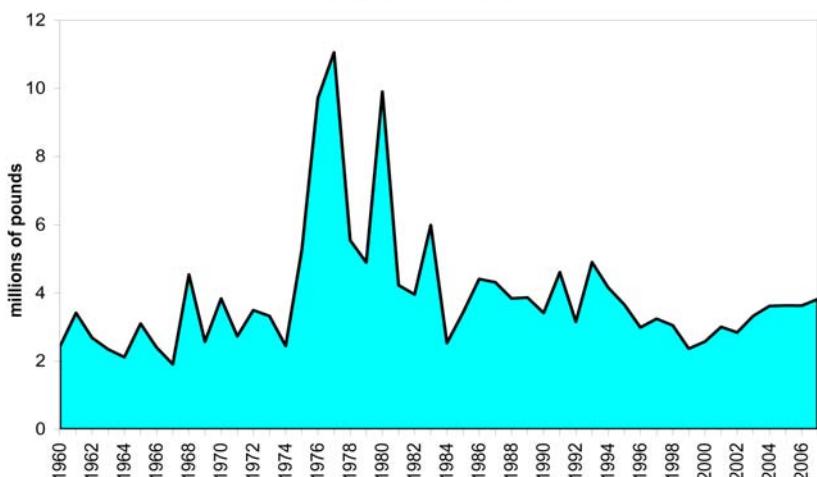


Photo courtesy of Dean Mitchell

waters and lead to an increase in cast net fishing in state waters. In other states' waters, gillnets and pound nets remain the dominant gears. Coastwide since 1950, commercial landings have generally fluctuated between two and six million pounds, with the exception of peak harvests of nine to 11 million pounds in 1976, 1977, and 1980. In the last five years, coastwide commercial landings has averaged 3.6 million pounds, with annual ex-vessel values between 2.0 and 3.2 million dollars. On average in the last five years, 85 percent of the coastwide harvest has been landed in Florida, 12 percent in North Carolina, and less than two percent in Virginia.

Spanish mackerel support recreational fisheries in the South and Mid-Atlantic regions, with the most extensive fisheries occurring in Florida and North Carolina. Landings in these two states have generally contributed 70 to 95 percent of the coastwide harvest since 1981. Anglers target Spanish mackerel for sport and also to use as bait for big game fishing. Over the past ten years, recreational anglers have harvested an average of 1.6 million pounds per year (or 1.1 million fish). The peak harvest occurred in 1988, when anglers harvested

Commercial Landings of Atlantic Coast Spanish Mackerel
Source: Personal communication with the NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, Silver Spring, MD, 2009



over three million pounds (or 1.7 million fish). Part of the recreational fishery is catch and release; in the last ten years, anglers released on average 34 percent of the number of fish caught due to regulations or personal choice.

Stock Status

The most recent stock assessment was completed in 2008 through the SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process. The input data (through 2007) were applied to four models, with a statistical catch at age model being the primary model. The Review Panel concluded that the statistical catch at age model could be used to determine the overfishing status, but

not annual estimates of fishing mortality or biomass, or if the stock is overfished. This conclusion was based on the degree of uncertainty in the input data (i.e., historical recreational catch and bycatch in

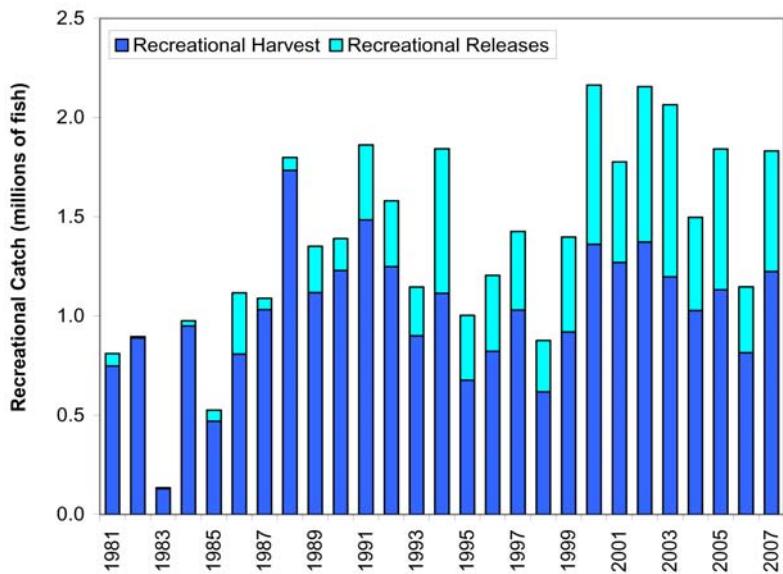
shrimp fisheries), sensitivity to model assumptions (e.g., uncertainty about how to weigh different sources of information), and lack of fishery-independent indices of adult population size. None of the other three models was deemed adequate or appropriate as a stand-alone stock assessment model.

The resulting stock status determination is that overfishing is not occurring, and that overfished status cannot be determined. The Review Panel added that fishery-dependent data indicate an increasing biomass trend, except for the last four years that show a decline, and that the current fishing mortality does not seem to be inhibiting stock growth.

Atlantic Coastal Management

Spanish mackerel is managed cooperatively by the Commission and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Overfishing of the resource prompted state and federal management efforts in the mid-1980s. In 1983, the Council developed a fishery management plan (FMP) for federal waters. The Commission adopted a complementary interstate FMP for state waters in 1990. While intended to be flexible and track the federal Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources FMP, the interstate FMP does not include any compliance criteria to ensure that states implement measures in state waters that are consistent with those required in federal waters. Thus at the Commission's 2008 Annual Meeting, the South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board approved initiating an amendment to update the in-

Spanish Mackerel Recreational Catch (Harvest and Alive Releases)
Source: Personal communication with the NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, Silver Spring, MD, 2009



Species Profile: Spanish Mackerel (continued from page 5)

terstate FMP in terms of compliance criteria, consistency with federal requirements, and alignment with Commission standards and processes.

The major components of the existing management program include a minimum size limit of 12 inches fork length, a maximum recreational bag limit of 15 fish per person per day, an annual total allowable catch (TAC), closure of state fisheries when the commercial quota has been met, commercial trip limits (generally 3,500 pounds per vessel per day), and a season that runs from March 1 to the end of February. States may also implement more restrictive regulations if they so choose.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management

Council determines needed adjustments to regulatory measures for Spanish mackerel based on stock status and technical advice. Currently, the TAC is 7.04 million pounds per year, allocated on a 55:45 basis between the commercial fishery (3.87 million pounds) and the recreational fishery (3.17 million pounds). During the 2003 stock assessment, a reduction in the TAC to 6.7 million pounds was recommended because it was thought that overfishing could occur if the fishery developed greater capacity and achieved the existing TAC for several years. As a result, the Council began development of a regulatory amendment, followed by a plan amendment, to lower the TAC. Options to reduce the TAC were removed from the draft amendment when

public comments and the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee advised the Council to wait until the next assessment could provide more current information on stock status. With the completion of the 2008 stock assessment, the Council was prepared to review regulatory measures. Given that the stock was found to not be experiencing overfishing, and that annual catch limits and targets, accountability measures, allocation, and regulations to limit total mortality to the annual catch target will be included in the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) Comprehensive Amendment, the Council determined that no immediate management measures were necessary for the stock. For updates or more information, please visit the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org.

Tina Berger Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

Tina Berger has been a part of the Commission staff for more than 14 years and her efforts over the years have directly contributed to the Commission's vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." In recognition of a number of accomplishments throughout the past year, Tina was awarded Employee of the Quarter (January – March 2009). The award is intended to recognize special contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.

During the past year, Tina has worked diligently on developing a number of products conveying ASMFC's message in an articulate and memorable way. She excels at developing products that reflect well on the Commission and has established "brand recognition" for the Commission, providing uniformity in our publications. These products include a thoroughly documented history of all Commission programs, as well as a new and improved guide to the Interstate Fisheries Management Program and the 24 species/species groups under its management.

As part of her standard responsibilities Tina also produces the Commission's Annual Report to Congress, monthly issues of *Fisheries Focus*, and press releases of the Commission's activities. Through her efforts the Commission's website sets the standard for similar organizations. Tina also continues to actively promote the Commission's programs and activities at several industry tradeshows and state fairs each year.

Not one to back away from complicated issues, Tina seeks new ways to promote the public's understanding of and participation in the Commission's activities. She is very supportive of the Commission's staff, leadership, and programs, and is a valuable contributor to the Commission's success. Tina has a Bachelor of Arts in Marine Biology from Boston University and a Master of Arts in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island. As Employee of the Quarter, she received a \$500 cash award, an engraved pewter pencil cup, and a letter of appreciation for her personnel record. In addition, her name will be engraved on the Employee of Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Tina!



ASMFC Winter Meeting Final Agenda (continued from page 1)

4:30 PM - 5:30 PM Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Sharks Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *L. Daniel*
- Public Comment
- Review and Consider Approval of 2007 Spiny Dogfish FMP Review, *C. Vonderweidt* - ACTION
- Update of State Regulations for Coastal Sharks Fishery Management Plan, *C. Vonderweidt*
- Discussion of NMFS Delayed Opening of Coastal Sharks Fishery, *L. Daniel*
- Coastal Sharks Technical Committee Membership Update, *C. Vonderweidt*
- Review of Coastal Sharks Plan Review Team Membership, *C. Vonderweidt*
- Other Business/Adjourn

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM Atlantic Herring Section

- Welcome/Call to Order, *T. Stockwell*
- Public Comment
- Consider Approval of Draft Addendum I – ACTION
 - Summary of 2008 Fishery, *M. Cieri*
 - Written Comment Summary, *C. Vonderweidt*
 - Public Hearing Summary, *C. Vonderweidt*
 - Technical Committee Recommendations, *M. Cieri*
 - Advisory Panel Recommendations, *D. Ellenton*
 - Law Enforcement Committee Recommendations, *J. Marston*
- Atlantic Herring FMP Review - ACTION
- Discussion on Harvest of Juvenile Atlantic Herring and Other Management Alternatives
- Other Business/Adjourn

10:15 AM - 12:15 PM Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *A.C. Carpenter*
- Public Comment
- Review of Data Poor Workshop Peer Review - ACTION
 - Scup
 - Black Sea Bass
- 2009 Quota Modifications - ACTION
 - Scup
 - Black Sea Bass
- Consider Approval of State Summer Flounder Recreational Conservation Equivalency Proposals, *T. Kerns* - ACTION
 - Technical Committee Recommendation
 - Consider Approval of Proposals

Public Comment Guidelines

With the intent of developing policies in the Commission's procedures for public participation that result in a fair opportunity for public input, the ISFMP Policy Board has approved the following guidelines for use at management board meetings:

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

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

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

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

1. Comments received 3 weeks prior to the start of a meeting week will be included on the briefing CD.
2. Comments received by 5:00 PM on the Tuesday immediately preceding the scheduled ASMFC Meeting (in this case, the Tuesday deadline will be January 27, 2009) will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.
3. Following the Tuesday, January 27, 2009 5:00 PM deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for management board consideration at the meeting (a minimum of 50 copies).

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

continued on page 8

ASMFC Winter Meeting Final Agenda (continued from page 7)

10:15 AM - 12:15 PM Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (continued)

- Consider Approval of Scup Recreational Proposal, *T. Kerns* - ACTION
- Election of Vice-Chair - ACTION
- Other Business/Adjourn

1:30 PM - 4:30 PM Winter Flounder Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *P. Augustine*
- Public Comment
- Update of NMFS Proposed Interim Rule, *C. Vonderweidt*
- Potential Management Options, *R. Beal*
- Consideration of Management Action for SNE/ME Stock - ACTION
 - Technical Committee Recommendations, *S. Correia*
 - Advisory Panel Recommendations, *B. Brown*
- Consideration of Management Action for GOM Stock - ACTION
 - Technical Committee Recommendations, *S. Correia*
 - Advisory Panel Recommendations, *B. Brown*
- Advisory Panel Nominations, *T. Berger*
- Other Business/Adjourn

4:45 PM - 5:45 PM American Eel Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *A.C. Carpenter*
- Public Comment
- Update on American Eel Stock Assessment - ACTION
 - Technical Committee Report, *J. Clark*
 - Approval of Stock Assessment Timeline and TOR
- Update on MOU with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, *R. Beal*
- Review and Consider Approval of 2007 Fishery Management Review
- Consider Approval of *de minimis* Requests
- Other Business/Adjourn

6:00 PM - 6:30 PM Business Session

- Welcome/Call to Order, *G. Lapointe*
- Public Comment
- Report of Nominating Committee - ACTION
- Election of Commission Chair
- Election of Commission Vice-Chair
- Other Business/Adjourn

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

8:00 AM - 9:45 AM Executive Committee

- Welcome/Call to Order, *G. Lapointe*
- Strategic Leadership Discussion, *G. Lapointe*
- Other Business/Adjourn

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM Shad & River Herring Management Board

(includes 1 hour lunch break)

- Welcome/Call to Order, *P. Diodati*
- Public Comment
- Update on River Herring Stock Assessment
- Stock Status Report, *G. Nelson*
 - Technical Committee Comments, *R. Sadzinski*
 - Discussion of Stock Status Report

- Draft Amendment 2 (River Herring) – ACTION
 - Public Comment Review, *K. Taylor*
 - Advisory Panel Comments, *P. Jackson*
 - Review and Consider Approval of Draft Amendment 2
- Draft Amendment 3 (American Shad)
 - Update of Draft Amendment 3, *K. Taylor*
 - Technical Committee Comments, *R. Sadzinski*
 - Discussion of Draft Amendment 3
- Other Business/Adjourn

3:15 PM - 6:15 PM ISFMP Policy Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *G. Lapointe*
- Public Comment
- Discussion of the Use of Roll Call Votes
- Update and Discussion of Federal Recreational Registry Rule and Marine Recreational Information Program
- Update on Alignment of State/Federal Management Discussions
- Multispecies Technical Committee Report, *M. Cieri*
- Habitat Committee Update, *P. Campfield*
- Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Update, *P. Campfield*
- NEAMAP Update, *M. Paine*
- Update on Non-Native Oyster Activities, *R. Beal*
- Discussion of Future Role of Interstate Shellfish Transport Committee
- Other Business/Adjourn

Thursday, February 5, 2009

8:30 AM - 9:15 AM Weakfish Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *R. Miller*
- Public Comment
- Weakfish Stock Assessment Update Overview, *N. Meserve*
- Data Poor Workshop Report and Technical Committee Response, *R. Allen*
- Board Discussion
- Other Business/Adjourn

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Welcome/Call to Order, *P. White*
- Public Comment
- Update on Cooperative Research
- Update on Chesapeake Bay Menhaden Research Guidance Group
- Update on Ecological Reference Points
- Advisory Panel Nomination – ACTION
- Other Business/Adjourn

10:45 AM - 11:15 AM ISFMP Policy Board (continued)

- Welcome/Call to Order, *G. Lapointe*
- Public Comment
- Review of Noncompliance Findings (if applicable)
- Other Business/Adjourn

11:15 AM - 11:30 AM Business Session (continued)

- Welcome/Call to Order, *G. Lapointe*
- Public Comment
- Review of Noncompliance Findings (if necessary)
- Review and Consider Approval of Fishery Management Plans or Amendments - ACTION
- Other Business/Adjourn



ACCSP Funds Marine Fisheries-Dependent Data Projects for 2009

ACCSP Funds Marine Fisheries-Dependent Data Projects for 2009

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has allocated approximately \$3.5 million for thirteen new and ongoing projects to improve fisheries-dependent data for Atlantic coastal fisheries in 2008. The ACCSP Administrative Grant was recommended for funding as well. Projects are listed below.

- “Development of a Comprehensive Repository for the Tracking of American Lobster Trap Allocation and Effort” - Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was awarded funds to migrate current lobster data into the Data Warehouse.
- “Initiating State Dealer Reporting in Delaware” - Delaware Dept. of Natural Resources was awarded funds to implement dealer reporting using the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), and to transfer the data to the Data Warehouse.
- “Managing Mandatory Dealer and Harvester Reporting in Maine” - Maine Dept. of Marine Resources was awarded funds to continue implementing mandatory dealer reporting and the continued development of a reporting program.
- “Continuation and Expansion of Trip Level Reporting for Lobster Harvesters in Massachusetts” - Massachusetts Div. of Marine Fisheries was awarded funds to continue to implement trip level reporting for lobster harvesters.
- “Introduction and Continuation of SAFIS and Biological Characterization of Commercial Fisheries in New Jersey” - New Jersey Div. of Fish and Wildlife was awarded funds to continue imple-

menting dealer reporting through SAFIS and to transfer data to the Data Warehouse. Also, funds will be used to implement electronic Vessel Trip Reporting (eVT).

- “Development of Electronic Data Submission Software for Federal Seafood Dealers in South Carolina” - South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources (in cooperation with NOAA Fisheries) was awarded funds to develop a comprehensive seafood dealer accounting and trip ticket reporting software package for federally permitted seafood dealers in South Carolina.
- “Increase Intercept Sampling Levels for the MRFSS, For-Hire Methodology of the Charter Boat and Headboat Fishery on the Atlantic Coast” - ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee was awarded funds to continue work to increase traditional charter and head boat sampling in conjunction with the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS).
- “Reducing Catch and Effort Variances for Important Managed Recreational Fisheries on the Atlantic Coast” - ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee was awarded funds to utilize MRFSS and achieve sampling levels that are expected to produce proportional standard error (PSE) of twenty percent for harvest estimates for key partner’s managed species in an annual basis.
- “Portside Bycatch Sampling and Commercial Catch Sampling of the Atlantic herring (*Clupea harengus*), Atlantic mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) and Atlantic menhaden (*Brevoortia tyrannus*) Fisheries” - Maine Dept. of Marine Resources was awarded funds to continue a project to sample Atlantic herring,

menhaden, and Atlantic mackerel.

- “North Carolina Estuarine Gillnet Biological and Bycatch Assessment” - North Carolina Div. of Marine Fisheries was awarded funds to expand upon existing observer data from North Carolina.
- “Upgrades to the Biological Collection Program: Sampling Equipment and Phase III Database Development” - Virginia Marine Resources Commission was awarded funds to upgrade resources needed to maintain the continuity of the VMRC Biological Collection Program and to improve the current data management system.
- “Maintenance and Coordination of Fisheries Dependent Data Feeds to ACCSP from the State of Rhode Island” - Rhode Island Div. of Fish and Wildlife was awarded funds to continue implement dealer reporting through SAFIS and to transfer data to the Data Warehouse.

Upcoming Meetings

January 27-28, 2009:

Biological Review Panel and Bycatch Committee, Washington, D.C.

February 10-11, 2009:

Outreach Committee, Washington, D.C.

About ACCSP

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 further information please visit www.accsp.org or call (202) 216-5690.

Science Highlight: Understanding Reference Points

Reference points are used to describe the status of a fish stock relative to fishing mortality rate (F) and some measure of stock size - number (abundance), total weight (biomass, B), spawning stock biomass (SSB), or exploitable biomass. To assist ASMFC technical committees and other fisheries scientists conducting stock assessments in their efforts to determine reliable indicators of stock status, members of the ASMFC Assessment Science Committee have completed a Reference Points Guidance document. Credit goes to Kim McKown (NYSDEC), Steve Correia (MA DMF) and Matt Cieri (ME DMR) for authoring the document.

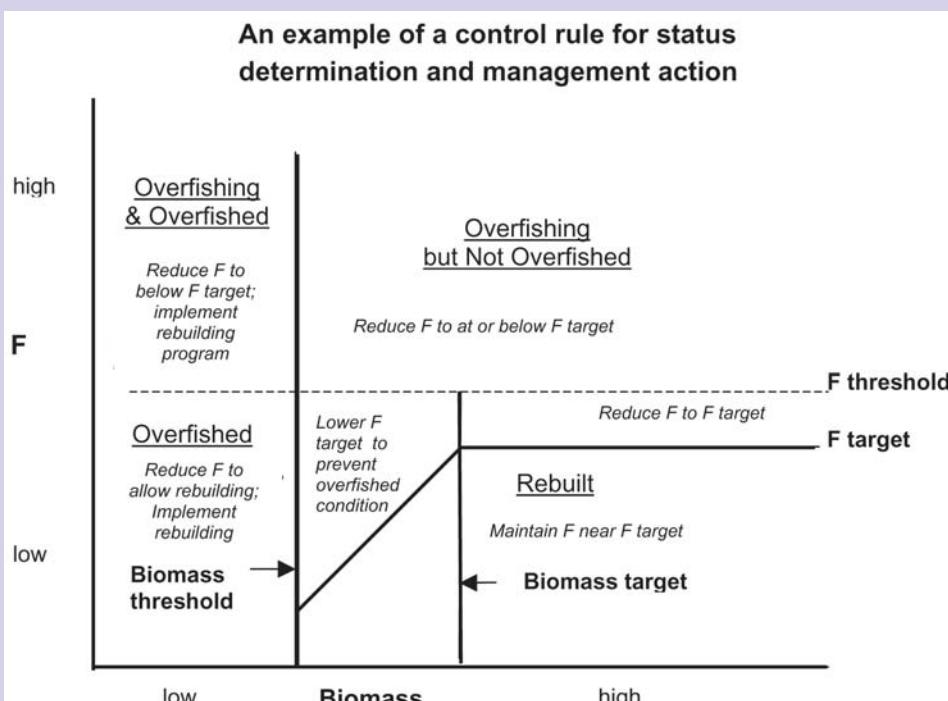
The document provides direction for fisheries scientists exploring the options, methods, and assumptions related to the development of reference points, particularly for species undergoing first-time assessments and for 'data poor' species. Guidance is also provided to managers who interpret stock status with respect to reference points, and subsequently implement management strategies according to control rules. It is important to develop reference points that are appropriate for each individual stock, internally consistent with assessment methodology, and provide clear meaning to fishery managers.

Three categories of reference points are typically used in fisheries management - limits, thresholds, and targets. Levels of these reference points need to be distinctly different to provide clear guidance for management decisions. Mortality rate based reference points define when 'overfishing' is occurring on a stock. Abundance/biomass based reference points determine when a stock is 'overfished' or stock size is unacceptably low. Control rules can be designed to prevent biomass from falling below the threshold, thus reducing the risk of low stock productivity over long periods.

Managers typically set control rules which define predetermined management actions to be taken when a stock meets or exceeds a certain status indicator (e.g., reference points). Control rules allow for clear management actions to be made depending on the biological status of a stock as determined by comparison to reference points. Reference points are signposts indicating the desired state of the stock (targets) and marking the boundary of undesirable stock conditions (thresholds). Managers gauge the status of the stock relative to reference points commonly expressed as fishing mortality (rate of removal of stock by fishing operations) and stock size (reproductive capacity, often expressed as spawning stock biomass or abundance), then take action following the control rules, if necessary (see Figure 1). Management action is typically required when fishing mortality exceeds a threshold reference point (end overfishing), or when biomass falls below a threshold reference point (rebuild). Target reference points define desirable fishing mortality rates or stock sizes managers aim to achieve for a particular stock.

The Reference Points Guidance document will be provided to all ASMFC Technical Committee members, and will be available on the Commission's website. In addition, the Commission will host a workshop discussing the development and use of reference points in the fall of 2009. To request a copy of this document or for more information, please contact Melissa Paine, Scientific Committee Coordinator, at mpaine@asmfc.org, 202-289-6400.

Figure 1. Elements of a control rule. **Bold** indicates thresholds and targets. Underlined is stock status. *Italics* describe management actions agreed upon by managers that are triggered by changes in stock status.



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

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