



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 20 - 23, 2006
Doubletree Hotel Crystal City
300 Army Navy Drive
Arlington, Virginia
(703) 416-4100**

Preliminary Agenda

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.

If you intend to bring any meeting materials for use by a board or committee not included in the Commission's Winter Meeting Briefing Materials CD-ROM, please bring 50 copies to the meeting.

February 20, 2006

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM **Habitat Committee**

- Public Comment
- Program Updates
- Habitat Program Planning
- Review of Shellfish Document
- State Updates

Noon - 2:00 PM **Tautog Management Board**

- Public Comment
- 2005 Stock Assessment – ACTION
 - Stock Assessment Report
 - Peer Review Panel Report
- Annual Reports – ACTION
 - 2005 PRT Report on State Compliance
 - 2005 Review of the Fishery Management Plan
- Elect a Vice-Chair – ACTION

2:15 PM - 4:15 PM **Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Spiny Dogfish
 - Compliance Reports and FMP Review

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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

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Upcoming Meetings

2/1 - 3:

ASMFC Atlantic Sturgeon Technical Committee Workshop, Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel, 777 Waterside, Norfolk, Virginia.

2/20 - 23:

ASMFC Meeting Week, DoubleTree Hotel Crystal City, 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia; 703/416-4100 (see preliminary agenda on pages 1, 7 & 8).

2/27 - 3/3:

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

3/2 - 4:

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

3/13 - 17:

ASMFC Technical Committee Meeting Week, location to be determined.

3/14 - 16:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Congress Hall, Cape May, New Jersey.

3/20 - 22:

ASMFC Weakfish Stock Assessment Peer Review Panel, Hotel Providence, 311 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

4/4 - 6:

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

5/2 - 4:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Oceanfront Hotel, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

5/8 - 11:

ASMFC Meeting Week, DoubleTree Hotel Crystal City, 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia; 703/416-4100.

5/16 - 18:

Southeast Bycatch Workshop, Hilton, St. Petersburg, Florida. For more information, please contact Mark Godcharles at 727/551-5727.

6/12 - 16:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Wyndham Grand Bay Hotel, 2669 South Bayshore Drive, Coconut Grove Florida; 800-996-3426.

We all know the obvious: Living within our budget is necessary to stretch our weekly salaries to the next payday, and critical to meeting our longer term goals for financial security. Objectively, we recognize the wisdom of setting aside funds, letting them earn interest and building them for future uses. But credit cards make it easy for us to buy now and pay later...a very tempting proposition. So tempting in fact that the use of credit has become an integral part of our private economic lives.

At its best, credit allows us to enjoy the use of something while we are paying for it. At its worst, credit charges consume all of our discretionary funds and some of our essential funds long after we have consumed, used, or worn out what we purchased. Unless you are somehow making money on what you bought, credit purchases are not sustainable. Logically, we all know this but, as a society, Americans have earned a reputation for our affinity for instant gratification. It's tough to say no to that purchase and put the money in the bank instead.

For those of you who saw the fisheries analogy coming in the first sentence, here it is. We know the wisdom of letting fish get bigger before we catch them. We recognize the value in letting fish spawn before we keep them, and we objectively understand the need for leaving enough behind for next year. But that sure doesn't make it easy for us to live within those constraints. We provide all sorts of rationale to justify taking "just a few more fish." Here are just a few:

- I have to meet my annual payment for my boat note.
- The balloon mortgage on my tackle shop is due.
- I'll lose all my charter clients with this bag limit.
- Keeping only two fish is not worth my time and gas.
- Big fish don't come in my bay, so I need to keep the small ones.
- These reductions will cost us our markets.
- Under these limits, half of my customers will stop sailing with me.

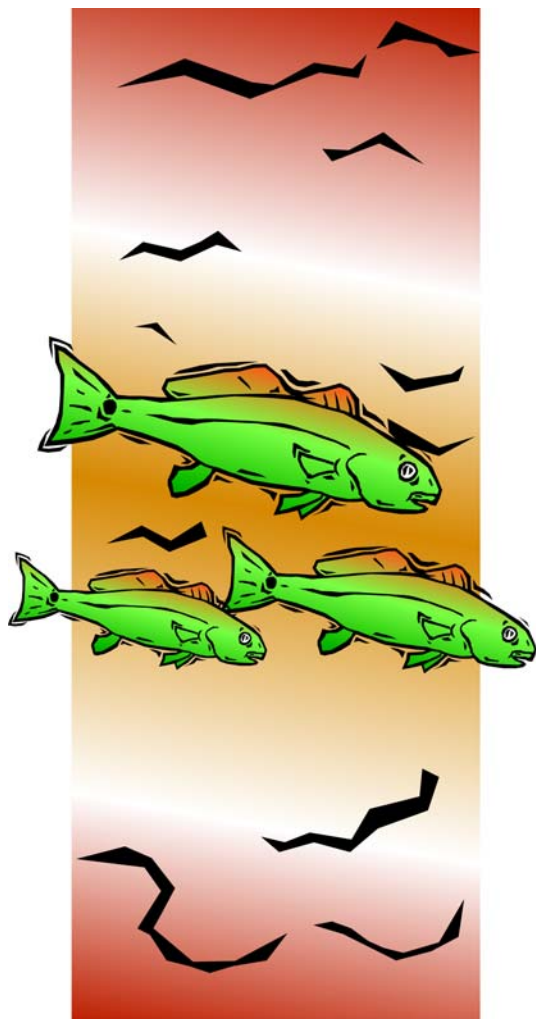
You have probably heard more. Even though they cut across most user groups, the comments reflect the common thread of borrowing against the future, taking next year's catch today. The trouble is that strategy is not sustainable on healthy stocks and it won't get you to your goal of rebuilding depressed stocks.

Our collective will to control our catch today is a major determinant of how many fish will be available tomorrow. I mentioned the difficulty with short-term sacrifice, but that's exactly the choice that was made with striped bass. If you were not around then, a moratorium sounds easy, and logically was the right thing to have done. But to those involved in the fishery back then, it was a painful and courageous investment in the future. All user groups were asked to shoulder the burden, and they collectively stood together to do the right thing. Today, we are all enjoying the wisdom of that decision with a wonderful abundance of striped bass.

Well, we face the same tough choices today as we work to rebuild important species like fluke, weakfish, winter flounder, and others. But to do that we need to continue to keep constraints on what we are taking. The recent Board action to cut the 2006 summer flounder quota to keep the rebuilding schedule on track was a tough call for some members to make. The scientific advice was criticized before the meeting, and the Board action to follow that advice has been criticized since.

Rather than point fingers, let's remember the lesson from striped bass and follow the wisdom of investing for the future. We have a stewardship trust in managing the people's fish. For resource users, living within our budget and saving for the future is not a punishment, it is a responsibility. We owe our children and their children nothing less. I hope that this is something we can all agree with.

Congratulations to my predecessor, former ASMFC Executive Director, Jack Dunnigan, the new Assistant Administrator for the National Ocean Service (NOS) of NOAA. NOS has the important mission of preserving and enhancing the nation's coastal resources and ecosystems. Jack's energy, wisdom, and talents will be a great benefit to NOS and NOAA. We wish him well.



Red Drum
Sciaenops ocellatus

Family: Sciaenidae

Common Names: channel bass, redfish, bull redfish, drum, puppy drum, spottail bass

Fish Fact: Name derived from their color and the fact that during spawning time, males produce a drum-like noise by vibrating a muscle in their swim bladder

Historic Species Range: Massachusetts to Key West, Florida

Largest Recorded: 59 inches, 98 pounds

Oldest Recorded: 62 years

Age @ maturity: Male age 1-2 (21") Female age 3-4 (36")

Stock Status Overfishing is occurring; overfished status unknown

Species Profile: Red Drum

Amendment Seeks to Increase Recruitment and Protect Reproductive Adults

Introduction

Red drum is one of the most popular recreational fish in the South Atlantic and yet it also presents one of the greatest fishery management challenges. Data on the adult population is so limited scientists are unable to assess stock status (total biomass or spawning stock biomass). Instead, the stock is managed to ensure a certain percentage of immature females survive to become reproductive adults.

Life History

Historic distribution of red drum on the Atlantic coast is from Massachusetts to Key West, Florida, though in recent years few red drum have been reported north of the Chesapeake Bay. Juveniles are most abundant in estuarine waters and inlets, while fish older than age-5 inhabit deep offshore waters. Because of this distribution, juveniles tend to experience higher rates of exploitation than the offshore adult population. The diet of red drum changes as they grow. Initially, as juveniles, they feed on zooplankton and invertebrates such as small crabs and shrimp. Gradually, red drum expand their diet to include fish and larger invertebrates.

Red drum are prolific spawners, with large females producing up to two million eggs in a single season. Spawning occurs at night in the summer and fall in nearshore waters. Following first spawn, red drum spend less time in the estuaries and more time in ocean waters. Males mature between age one and two (21 inches in length), while females mature at ages three to four (36 inches in length).

Red drum may reach 60 years of age and 60 inches in length (corresponding to greater than 90 pounds in weight). Due to their unusual growth pattern, a 36-inch red drum may be anywhere from six to 50 years old.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

The recreational fishery for red drum is a nearshore fishery, targeting small, "puppy drum" and large trophy fish. Trophy size fish are caught along the Mid- and South Atlantic barrier islands; puppy drum are taken in shallow estuarine waters. Since the 1980s, recreational fishing has accounted for 90 percent of all red drum landings. The number of red drum harvested by recreational fishermen has generally ranged between 300,000 and 500,000 since 1981. In 1984 and 1985, landings were exceptionally high, reaching over one million fish. Recreational harvest in 2004 was approximately 465,600 fish (1.5 million pounds), the majority taken by Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina anglers. The number of red drum released by recreational fishermen in 2004 was approximately 1.9 million fish, an increase from the previous year (Figure 1).

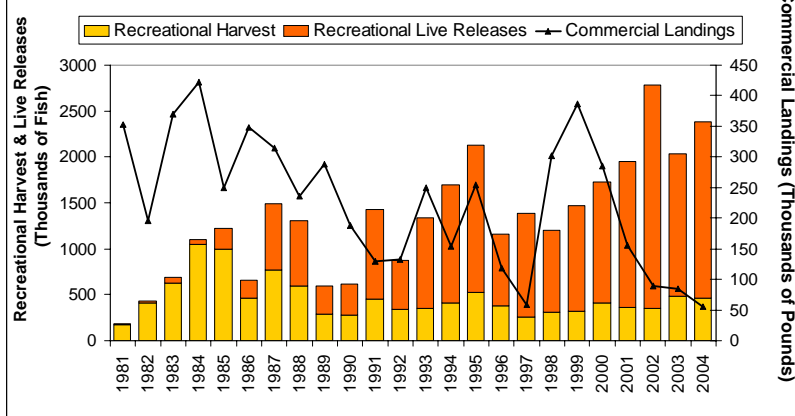
Commercial landings have been reported since the 1880s. Since 1960, landings have fluctuated around 236,000 pounds, with a high of 440,445 pounds in 1980 and a low of 54,736 pounds in 2004. No directed commercial fishery currently exists for Atlantic red drum in



Photo Courtesy of Spud Woodward, GA Coastal Resources

Figure 1. Red Drum Commercial Landings and Recreational Catch (Harvest + Live Releases), 1981-2004

Source: NOAA Fisheries Website, 2005



state waters. In 1990, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council prohibited harvest in federal waters (3 - 200 miles offshore) to prevent any directed fishery for red drum from developing. Few commercial landings have been recorded in states north of Maryland since 1960. Only Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey have reported landings since 1980. The fishery is generally non-directed, using pound nets, shrimp trawls, hand lines, haul seines and gillnets. Runaround gillnets were a dominant gear in Florida, taking 65 to 84 percent of the catch. Concerned that overfishing could cause a stock collapse, Florida banned the use of gillnets in state waters in 1995. North Carolina and Virginia remain the only states on the Atlantic coast with a commercial fishery for red drum. The North Carolina fishery has a state-mandated 250,000-pound annual quota and a seven fish limit. In 2004, North Carolina landed a majority (98.8%) of the total commercial red drum harvest.

Stock Status

The last stock assessment for red drum was conducted in 2000 and included data through 1998. Due to the nature of the fishery, there is very little information to estimate the stock size of adult red drum. Landings of red drum are principally subadults (ages one to four), and while there are some catches of older fish, they must be released alive due to maximum size restrictions. Because of these data limitations, stock status is assessed through the use of spawning potential ratio (SPR). SPR is defined as the ratio of estimated female spawning stock biomass or egg production in a fished versus unfished stock.

In the northern region (North Carolina to New Jersey), SPR increased from 1.3 percent for the period 1987-1991 to approximately 18 percent for 1992-1998. In the southern region (Florida to South Carolina), estimates of SPR increased from 0.5 percent for the period 1987-1991 to approximately 15 percent since for 1992-1998.

The 2000 assessment also indicated recruitment has seriously declined in the southern region from a high of 1.2 million recruits to

Georgia's Peach State Reds Initiative

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) wants to make sure that red drum fishing continues to be part of life along the coast. Should the release of hatchery-reared redfish into tidal rivers and creeks be part of the long-range plan? Many of Georgia's saltwater anglers think so because of simple, but perhaps flawed, logic – introducing more juvenile fish in the water will ultimately mean more fish to catch. But, does it really work that way? Unfortunately, there is little relevant science-based information available with which to answer that question.

Recognizing that public opinion in support of redfish stocking was growing, GA DNR formed a citizens advisory group in 2002. The Red Drum Stock Enhancement Advisory Panel visited Florida and South Carolina, saw the multi-million-dollar saltwater hatcheries and talked to their scientists. After 18 months of study and thorough debate, the group determined that hatchery-reared redfish have potential as a fishery management tool in Georgia. However, it also agreed that no final decision should be made until there was more science-based information specific to Georgia. Enter the Peach State Reds Initiative (PSRI).

The goal of the PSRI is to conduct an experimental release of hatchery-reared redfish in a Georgia estuary. This will be accomplished through a series of joint ventures, the most significant being with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SC DNR), which has both a saltwater hatchery just across the border in Bluffton and staff with vast experience spawning and rearing redfish in captivity. The SC DNR involvement is absolutely essential since Georgia does not have a saltwater fish hatchery.

A second joint venture will be between the University System of Georgia (UGA) whereby faculty and students with expertise in marine-fish research will partner with GA DNR to conduct net- and angler-catch surveys to determine the survival, growth, and habitat preferences of the hatchery-reared redfish for two years

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Species Profile: Red Drum (continued from page 5)

age-1 in 1987 to 200,000 in 1998. Recruitment in the northern region has fluctuated without trend ranging from 550,000 recruits in 1991 to 75,000 in 1998.

The stock status will be reassessed in 2008/2009, to determine if the Amendment's goal of 40 percent SPR is being reached. Currently, information suggests that overfishing is occurring, although it is not clear if the stock is overfished.

In 2005, additional funds were provided from Congress to the Commission to address a number of research priorities. One of these priorities was to determine stock status of red drum. With these additional funds, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia will develop state-specific sampling protocols to provide a fisheries-independent index of abundance for adult red drum. This adult index will be used in the red drum assessment process, and will aid managers in determining biological reference points.

Atlantic Coastal Management Considerations

In 1990, the Council completed the Atlantic Coast Red Drum Fishery Management Plan (FMP), closing federal waters to the harvest of red drum. A major concern for the stock has been heavy fishing pressure on juvenile red drum (puppy drum) in state waters, resulting in significantly reduced recruitment to the spawning stock.

In June 2002, the Commission adopted Amendment 2 to the Red Drum FMP. Its primary management goal is to achieve and maintain SPR at or above 40 percent. To achieve this goal, Atlantic coast states from Florida through New Jersey have implemented appropriate bag and size limits to attain 40 percent SPR and a maximum size limit of 27 inches total length (TL) or less. Current state recreational management measures are summarized in Table 1. All states must also maintain current or more restrictive commercial fishery regulations.

Table 1. Recreational Management Measures by State

State	Size Limit (TL Inches)	Possession Limit (# of Fish)
FL	18 – 27	1
GA	14 – 23	5
SC	15 – 24	2
NC	18 – 27	1
VA	18 – 26	3
PRFC	18 – 25	5
MD	18 – 27	1
DE	20 – 27	5
NJ	18 – 27	1

The red drum fishery is one of the most important coastal fisheries in the Southeastern United States. Considerable state and federal resources are devoted to its management yet it is unclear if the population is overfished. It is the hope with the implementation of management efforts in Amendment 2 and the research efforts underway, the status of red drum will become clear and considered healthy in the future. For more information, please contact Nancy Wallace, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <nwallace@asmfc.org>.

ASMFC Comings & Goings



Dr. Eugene Kray -- In January, Governor Edward G. Rendell appointed Dr. Gene Kray as Pennsylvania's Governor Appointee to the Commission. An avid recreational angler and passionate fisheries conservationist, Dr. Kray is no stranger to Atlantic coastal fisheries conservation and manage-

ment issues. For the last three years, he has served as Representative Curt Schröder's on-going proxy to the Commission's various species management boards and as proxy to other Pennsylvania Commissioners prior to that. He is also currently serving his second term on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Dr. Kray's background in higher education and marketing has been an asset in his representation of Pennsylvania's fishing constituents and in his writings on fisheries and ecosystem-based management which frequently



appear in the New Jersey Angler. Welcome aboard, Dr. Kray!

Ms. April S. Price -- In January, Governor Jeb Bush appointed Ms. April S. Price as Florida's Governor Appointee to the Commission. A native Floridian, Ms. Price comes to the Commission with extensive experience in Florida's marine industry. From 1989 - 2002, she co-owned and managed the Southern Yacht Service. Since 2002, she has worked as a consultant and special project coordinator for the Marine Industries Association of Treasure Coast, of which she was also a board member for 15 years. Ms. Price brings to the table an understanding of the needs of recreational anglers and boat owners in Florida. Welcome aboard, Ms. Price!

ASMFC Winter 2006 Meeting Week Preliminary Agenda (continued from page 1)

2:15 PM - 4:15 PM Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board (continued)

- Spiny Dogfish
 - Update on 2006 Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Coastal Sharks
 - Update Committee Membership -- Technical Committee, Plan Development Team, and Advisory Panel
 - Review and Anticipated Approval of Draft Public Information Document -- ANTICIPATED ACTION
 - Update on 2006 Stock Assessment

4:30 PM - 6:00 PM Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board

- Public Comment
- Review and Approve PRT Reports: State Compliance and FMP Review -- ACTION
- Bycatch Workshop Report
- Shortnose Sturgeon Recovery Plan Report
- North Carolina Aquaculture/Addendum II Update

February 21, 2006

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

- Public Comment
- South Carolina Red Drum Stock Enhancement Presentation
- Discuss Red Drum Stock Enhancement Procedures
- Discuss inconsistencies between the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and the Commission's Weakfish FMP
- Discuss priorities for the Spot and Spotted Seatrout FMPs
- SEAMAP Activities -- ACTION
 - SEAMAP Update
 - Approval of the 2006 Operations Plan
 - Approval of the 2006-2010 Management Plan
- Red Drum Advisory Panel Nominations - ACTION

10:15 AM - 12:15 PM Habitat Workshop

1:30 PM - 5:30 PM American Lobster Management Board

- Public Comment
- Review Staff Documents on Future Lobster Management Changes

February 22, 2006

8:30 AM - 10:15 AM Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Consider Proposal from Maryland on Chesapeake Bay Spring Trophy Season Quota
- Consider Approval of Draft Addendum I for Public Comment - ANTICIPATED ACTION
- Technical Committee Report
- Summary of 2006 Cooperative Tagging Cruise

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board

- Public Comment
- Review 2006 Summer Flounder Recreational Regulations
- Review Scoping Document for Amendment 15
- 2006 Scup Recreational Regulations
- Update on MAFMC Amendment 14

Habitat Workshop to Focus on Water Quality & Communication Issues

On February 21, 2006, the Commission's Habitat Committee will host an Aquatic Habitat Workshop geared to facilitate communication and education among ASMFC Commissioners on the importance of habitat to fisheries. The Workshop will focus on aquatic habitat degradation and the need for coordinated monitoring programs to support habitat conservation and fisheries management. Guest speakers include Dr. Kevin Summers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Dr. Pace Wilber, National Ocean Service, and Dr. Christopher Deacutis, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program. All are welcomed to attend this free workshop. For more information, please contact Julie Nygard at (202) 289-6400 or <jnygard@asmfc.org>.

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM NEAMAP Board

- Public Comment
- Approval of the 2006 NEAMAP Operations Plan – ACTION
- Update and Review Nearshore Bottom-trawl Survey Pilot
- Discuss Funding Issues
- Discuss 2007-2011 Operations Plan

1:45 PM - 4:15 PM American Eel Management Board

- Public Comment
- 2005 Stock Assessment - ACTION
 - Stock Assessment Report
 - Peer Review Panel Report
- Review of Public Comment on Draft Addendum I – ANTICIPATED ACTION
- Update on the Federal Status Review and ESA Petition

4:30 PM - 5:30 PM Shad & River Herring Management Board

- Public Comment
- Technical Committee Report – ACTION
 - Recommendations Regarding the Virginia Bycatch Allowance
 - Recommendations for River Herring Stocks
- Annual Reports – ACTION
 - 2005 PRT Report on State Compliance
 - 2005 Review of the Fishery Management Plan
- Review and Approve Nominations to the Advisory Panel – ACTION
- Elect Vice-Chair – ACTION

February 23, 2006

8:00 AM - 9:30 AM Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Elect Vice-Chair-ACTION
- Public Comment
- Review Addendum II Implementation Plans – ACTION
- Update on 2006 Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment

9:45 AM - 12:45 PM Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Public Comment
- Technical Committee Report
- Review and Consider Approval Draft Addendum IV Management Options – ACTION

1:00 PM Buffet Lunch for Commissioners & Proxies

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM ISFMP Policy Board

- Public Comment
- Review Draft Response to MRAG America's Report
- Update on Non-Native Oyster Activities
- Habitat Committee Report
- NEAMAP Board Report
- Update on Multispecies Assessment Efforts
- Review Noncompliance Recommendations (if necessary)

4:00 PM - 4:30 PM Business Session

- Public Comment
- Consider Approval of Amendment 2 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan – ANTICIPATED ACTION
- Review Noncompliance Recommendations (if necessary)



Photo courtesy of Brian Mullaney

U.S. Court of Appeals Upholds ASMFC and RI DEM Position Medeiros v. ASMFC and RI DEM Challenged Lobster Rules

The U.S. First Circuit Court of Appeals recently affirmed the judgement of the U.S. District Court for Rhode Island supporting the authority of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM) to impose a 100/500 daily/trip limit on lobsters caught by trawlers.

Steven P. Medeiros, a Rhode Island inshore trawl fisherman brought the suit claiming the 100/500 rule unfairly discriminates against trawl fishermen. He also claimed the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act violated the Tenth Amendment by "commandeering" state authority by requiring Rhode Island to implement a Commission fishery management plan (FMP). RI DEM and the Commission indicated the rules were necessary to protect lobsters and to discourage an increase in effort from trawl vessels displaced by restrictive groundfish regulations.

The Circuit Court recognized that harvesting methods are different and therefore the rules to control harvest could be different. It also determined it was rational for the Commission to impose rules on trawlers to discourage new efforts to target lobsters. Regarding the Tenth Amendment challenge, the Court held that a private party does not have standing to bring a Tenth Amendment challenge to an Act of Congress.

The District Court ruling, now upheld by the First Circuit Court identifies the judicial standard against which Commission FMPs are to be judged in an Equal Protection/Due Process challenge:

- Regulations implementing an FMP need only meet a "rational basis" standard. That standard is met if any reasonably conceivable set of facts could establish a rational relationship between the challenged regulation and Commission objectives.

- The regulatory choice is not subject to findings of fact by the Commission, nor must the means chosen be the least burdensome way to establish the regulatory goal.
- The efficacy of the 100/500 limit is not relevant to the rational basis inquiry; it is not up to the courts to determine the wisdom or utility of the Commission's choice.

RI DEM was named as a codefendant and was represented by Gary Powers, attorney for RI DEM. The Commission was also supported by attorneys from NOAA and the U.S. Department of Justice who responded because of the challenge to federal law. Mr. Paul Lenzini represented the Commission.

To view the complete ruling of the First Circuit go to: <http://www.ca1.uscourts.gov/>

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board Approves Draft Addendum XVIII for Public Comment

The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board has approved Draft Addendum XVIII to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan for public comment and review. The Draft Addendum proposes to alter the summer flounder recreational specification process in 2006 only. If approved, the Addendum would provide states that are facing large recreational harvest reductions (New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts) the opportunity to implement smaller reductions based on anticipated savings achieved from other states maintaining their 2005 recreational fishing rules in 2006. As such, states that have the option to liberalize their 2006 summer flounder recreational regulations could

choose to maintain their 2005 regulations in order to distribute the savings to New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. This assumes the states maintaining regulations would land the same amount in 2006 as in 2005.

Based on the 2005 summer flounder stock assessment, the 2006 coastwide total allowable landings were significantly reduced from an expected 33 million pounds to 23.59 million pounds, resulting in smaller state recreational harvest limits than anticipated. On a coastwide basis, the recreational fishery did not harvest its entire 2005 limit, with the majority of states harvesting less than their state share. However, due to the drop in the 2006 har-

vest limit, it was necessary to reduce coastwide landings by 3.85 % (based on projected landings data from NMFS MRFSS waves 1-5).

The States of Rhode Island and New Jersey have scheduled the dates and times of their public meetings to gather comment. The details of those meetings follow below and on page 14:

Rhode Island Div. of Fish & Wildlife
February 15, 2006; 6:00 PM
Corless Auditorium
University of Rhode Island
South Ferry Road
Narragansett, Rhode Island
Contact: Brian Murphy, (401)423-1941

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Georgia's Peach State Reds Initiative (continued from page 5)

following stocking. Economists and social scientists from UGA will also assist with surveys to determine how the angling community has responded to the stocking experiment, by measuring both fishing behavior and spending habits.

The angling community has rallied to the PSRI with funding, logistical help, and advocacy. The Georgia Coastal Conservation Association has pledged \$75,000 to support the initiative and will be hosting the Georgia Redfish Rally in 2006 to help raise a portion of this amount. This month-long, coastwide tournament is based on a redfish-with-the-most-spots format. The Savannah Sport Fishing Club recently made a donation of \$10,000 to the PSRI.

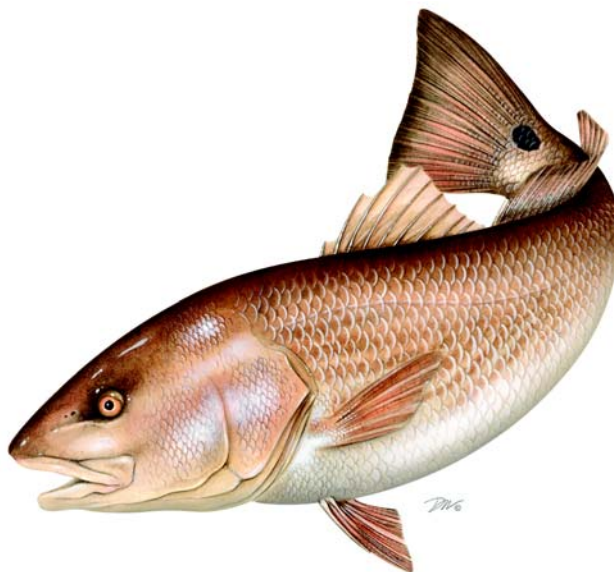
During November a dozen adult red drum were captured and transported to South Carolina's Waddell Mariculture Center. By late summer of 2006 these fish will be induced to spawn in captivity. The offspring will be reared in hatchery ponds for 15 to 30 days, after which 500,000 one- to two-inch fingerlings will be transported to a new home in the Wassaw estuary near Savannah. A new batch of adults will be captured in autumn 2006 and will be used to produce 500,000 offspring for release in October 2007.

A second project of the PSRI will involve holding a minimum of 1,000 fingerlings in the hatchery until they reach a length of seven inches or greater. These fish will be marked with anchor tags and transported to Jekyll Island and released in a 10-acre saltwater impoundment.



Similar to the process in the Wassaw estuary, angler and net surveys, as well as tag returns, will be used to document the survival, growth and movement of these hatchery-reared fish.

To the angler, the untagged hatchery-reared redfish will be indistinguishable from their wild cousins. However, thanks to advancements in the use of DNA, it will only take a small piece of tissue clipped from a fin to tell a scientist whether the fish came from wild or captive parents. DNR will provide volunteer anglers with the supplies necessary to collect fin clips from the fish they catch and release. Creel clerks will be collecting fin clips from the redfish they encounter during angler interviews. Anglers can also donate the filleted carcasses of the redfish they harvest through the Marine Sportfish Carcass Recovery Project. Chest freezers are located at several fishing access points in the Savannah and Brunswick areas. In 2009, the final results of the PSRI will be publicized. At that time, the saltwater angling community and Georgia DNR will have better information to decide whether additional redfish stocking is warranted. For more information, go to www.peachstatereds.org or contact Spud Woodward or Doug Haymans at the Coastal Resources Division headquarters in Brunswick (912) 264-7218.



ASMFC, SAFMC and ACCSP Join Forces to Advance Fisheries Stock Assessment Training & Understanding

The dissemination of stock assessment results to the public in a clear and concise manner is vital to maintain stakeholder participation and facilitate acceptance of management actions. In order for management staff to have the capacity to discuss stock assessment results coherently, they first must have a basic understanding of the technical language, assumptions, parameters, and application of stock assessment methodologies. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission), South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), and Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) recently combined efforts to address this need.

On July 25-27, 2005, the combined technical staffs for the Commission and Council met in Raleigh, North Carolina for an introductory workshop on stock assessments, co-taught by John Carmichael (SEDAR Coordinator) and Joe Grist (ASMFC Stock As-

essment Specialist). During this three-day workshop participants were introduced to the stock assessment process through combined lectures and hands-on exercises, which included data inputs, model development and application, reference point determination, and stock projections. This was followed by a one-day workshop on stock assessment data inputs and model outputs, held in Washington, D.C. on October 5, for Commission and ACCSP technical staffs. This workshop was taught by Joe Grist and was specifically focused on the multiple types of data needed to adequately assess a fish population and how those inputs are utilized in the assessment modeling process. Participants left both workshops with a better understanding of the stock assessment process as a whole, and a desire to see further workshops focus on this topic in the future.

Stock Assessment Training Workshops

Stock assessments have become a primary analysis tool for today's fisheries management agencies. However, fisheries biologists often have little time to explore basic and advanced procedures on their own. In response to this need, the Commission continues to hold a series of training workshops for biologists from our partner agencies that cover both basic and advanced stock assessment procedures.

The ASMFC Advanced Stock Assessment Workshop, designed to meet fisheries scientists' training needs in statistical catch-at-age stock assessment models, was held November 14-18, 2005, in St. Petersburg, Florida at the Fish and Wildlife Research In-

stitute. Dr. Erik Williams (SEFSC), Dr. Clay Porch (SEFSC), and Dr. Christopher Legault (NEFSC) delivered thorough instruction and hands-on exercises for approximately 30



state, federal, and Commission scientists on statistical catch-at-age modeling approaches using Excel, as well as ASAP, Stock Synthesis II, and VPA-2Box modeling applications.

The first week of the two-week ASMFC Basic Stock Assessment Workshop was held December 12-16, 2005, in Virginia Beach, Virginia at the Sheraton Oceanfront Hotel. Dr. Joe DeAlteris, Professor of Fisheries at the University of Rhode Island, provided participants with instructional lectures and exercises that focused on the concepts needed to perform a basic stock assessment analysis, including fish growth and mortality process, fishery selectivity, stock recruitment relationships, and the estimation of stock size and biological reference points. The second week of this two-week course will take place in late February or early March 2006.

For more information on the stock assessment workshops, please contact Joe Grist, Stock Assessment Specialist, at (202)289-6400 or <jgrist@asmfc.org>.



essment Specialist). During this three-day workshop participants were introduced to the stock assessment process through combined lectures and hands-on exercises, which included data inputs, model development and application, reference point determination, and stock projections. This was followed by a one-day workshop on stock assessment data inputs

Recreational Fishing Data Collection for 2005 Completed: NOAA Fisheries to Release Final 2005 Estimates in Late Spring

State and federal partners of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) have completed recreational fishing interviews with anglers for the 2005 fishing year.

The states that participate in the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) and NOAA Fisheries are combining catch data collected through in-person interviews with fishing effort data collected through phone interviews. NOAA Fisheries will use those data to generate state-by-state estimates for all species recorded in the survey. Estimates for dozens of the most commonly caught recreational species should be available online in the late spring.

When looking at the estimates, anglers and others interested in recreational fishing may have some questions about how the survey is conducted. Here are a few of the most frequently asked questions:

Q: How come I've never been interviewed?

A: More than 110,000 interviews are conducted with fishermen annually, which is an estimated five to ten percent of all angler-fishing trips that occur in any given year nationwide. Your chances of being interviewed vary by state and depend on where and how often you fish. Since the survey is random, some people may be interviewed several times a year and others, never. The surveys are designed to ensure a representative view of sportfishing in our marine waters.

Q: Was the MRFSS designed to be used for fishery management?

A: Yes. State and federal partners collect information on recreational fishing to be able to estimate annual recre-

ational landings and enable managers to use that information in their stock assessment models. Recreational harvest for some stocks, like striped bass, far exceed the commercial catch. Without the MRFSS, there would be no way to estimate regional landings of such an important species. Because the same methodology is used throughout all coastal states, managers can compare catch, effort and participation over time.

Q: Should I participate if the information can be used against me?

A: Participating in the survey is one of the best ways to make sure your voice is heard and your participation is counted. Sharing your individual fishing experience, when combined with those experiences of many other anglers, ensures that the survey is as accurate as possible. By not participating, you forfeit your chance to be a part of the process. Like not voting in an election, it is hard to argue with the results when you did not participate.

Q: How can I participate if I am not contacted for the survey?

A: Your influence with other fishermen can be your contribution. By supporting the survey in your fishing community or voicing your support to your charter clientele, you are ensuring that managers are getting the most accurate information possible on recreational catch and effort.

Q: Why don't you ask about my catch when you call me on the phone?

A: We do collect catch information, but we do that in person. The phone surveys are designed to collect informa-

tion on how often you went fishing rather than what you caught or targeted while fishing. We do this because it's more statistically sound to measure catch at the dock and effort over the phone.

Q: Why can't the states take over data collection?

A: The states are already involved in data collection. MRFSS works in partnership with almost half of the Atlantic coastal states and all of the Gulf states to conduct the field survey using state employees. The remaining states are covered using interviewers working for one government contractor. The same methodology is used so information can be compared across states and the impact of sportfishing at both the state and national level can be accurately assessed.

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



MRFSS to Include Economic Questions in 2006

Economic impacts demonstrate the importance of fishing and help fishery managers make decisions to make fishing better. In 2006, the MRFSS in-person interviews will include questions about money spent on fishing trips. For more information please visit <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/recreational/New2006.html>.

Non-Traditional Stakeholders Sought for Participation in ASMFC Coastal Sharks Advisory Panel

The Commission's Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Sharks Management Board is in the process of establishing a Coastal Sharks Advisory Panel. As part of that process, the Board is seeking nominations from nontraditional stakeholders to fill two seats on the Advisory Panel. Examples of such stakeholders include, but are not limited to, non-governmental organizations, grassroots organizations, and individuals or groups with an interest in coastal shark conservation.

The intent of this action is to broaden the scope of public input to the Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Sharks Management Board as it develops an Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Sharks. The Commission believes that input from nontraditional stakeholders will strengthen its efforts in successfully

managing coastal sharks. Individuals interested in serving as advisors can obtain an Advisory Panel (AP) nomination form by contacting the Commission at (202)289-6400 or downloading the nomination form via the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, under Breaking News. A completed nomination form must be submitted to the Commission by **5:00 PM on February 16, 2006**.

The Commission's Advisory Panel process was established to address the Commission's increasing responsibilities under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. The Act mandates, among other considerations, that the Commission provide adequate public participation in its fishery management planning process, including at

least four public hearings and procedures for submission of written comments to the Commission. In 2002, the Commission established the Advisory Panel Oversight Committee, comprised of a subset of legislative and governor-appointed Commissioners and Advisory Panel Chairs, to provide oversight to its advisory panel process. Advisory Panels have been developed for Atlantic croaker, Atlantic herring, Atlantic menhaden, American eel, American lobster, black sea bass, bluefish, horseshoe crab, northern shrimp, red drum, scup, shad & river herring, spiny dogfish, striped bass, summer flounder, tautog, weakfish, and winter flounder.

For more information, please contact Tina Berger, Public Affairs Specialist, at (202)289-6400 or tberger@asmfc.org.

NMFS Solicits Proposals for Funding Under its Research Set-Aside Program

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced that it is accepting proposals under the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program for research activities to be conducted in 2007. NMFS Northeast Regional Office must receive applications on or before **5:00 PM on February 21, 2006**.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, in coordination with NMFS and the Council, may set aside up to three percent of the total allowable landings (TAL) in the summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish fisheries to be used for research endeavors under a RSA program. The RSA program funds research and compensates vessel owners through the sale of fish harvested under the research quota. Vessels participating in an approved research project may be authorized by the

NMFS Northeast Regional Administrator to harvest and land species in excess of any imposed trip limit or during fishery closures. These landings are sold to generate funds to defray the costs associated with research projects. No Federal funds are provided for research under this notification.

NMFS is soliciting proposals for research activities concerning the summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, bluefish, and other non-commission managed fisheries (*Loligo* squid, *Illex* squid, Atlantic mackerel, butterfish, and tilefish). Priority funding will be given to research proposals in the following general subject areas: (1) Bycatch and discard reduction; (2) mesh and gear selectivity; (3) fishing impact on habitat; (4) cooperative stock assessment surveys; (5) improved recreational fishery data; (6) tagging studies; and (7) other research

relevant to the Mid-Atlantic fisheries as further discussed in the full funding opportunity announcement.

For details on how to apply, please visit the Council's Research Set-Aside web page at <http://www.mafmc.org/mid-atlantic/rsa/rsa.htm> or visit the Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov>) and click on 'Search for Grant Opportunities' and then search for the 'Funding Opportunity Number': NMFS-NERO-2006-2000437



Draft Summer Flounder Addendum XVIII Available for Public Comment (continued from page 9)

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

February 14, 2006; 7:00 PM

Ocean County Complex, Room 119

101 Hooper Avenue

Toms River, New Jersey

Contact: Tom McCloy, (609) 292-7794

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. Copies of the Draft Addendum can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. Public comment will be accepted until **5 PM on February 16, 2006** and should be forwarded to Toni Kerns, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax) or comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Addendum XVIII). Following the public comment period, the Draft Addendum is scheduled to come before the Board for final action on February 22, 2006 in Arlington, Virginia. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns at (202)289-6400 or tkerns@asmfc.org.

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

Return Service Requested

In the News...Vito Calomo Named Chair of the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Commission

Mr. Vito Calomo, an active participant in the fisheries management processes of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and New England Fishery Management Council, was recently elected Chair of the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Commission. A longtime advocate for the Gloucester fishing community, Mr. Calomo will add a strong voice to the nine-member regulatory board that oversees rule-making activities for the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries. Mr. Calomo will also maintain his full-time job as Executive Director of the Massachusetts Fishery Recovery Commission, a state-funded fishing research group. Congratulations, Mr. Calomo!