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## Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Fisheries Focus April/May 2019

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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ASMFC

# FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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## ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence

At its Spring Meeting, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented its Annual Awards of Excellence to an esteemed group of fishery and data managers, scientists, law enforcement officers and environmental attorneys for their outstanding contributions to fisheries management, science, and law enforcement along the Atlantic coast. Specifically, the award recipients are Robert Ballou for management and policy contributions; Geoffrey White, Coleby Wilt, Alex DiJohnson, Sarah Rains, Michael Celestino, and John Sweka for science and technical contributions; and Casey Oravetz, Sara Block, Banumathi Rangarajan, Lauren Steele, Shane Waller, Shennie Patel, and Joel La Bissonniere for law enforcement contributions.

"Every year, a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence recognize outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries," said ASMFC Chair Jim Gilmore of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. "I am humbled by the breadth and extent of accomplishments of this year's recipients and am grateful for their dedication to Atlantic coast fisheries."



From left: John Sweka, Alex DiJohnson, Mike Celestino, Sarah Rains, Geoff White, Shennie Patel, Casey Oravetz, Lauren Steele, Sara Block, ASMFC Executive Director Robert Beal, Bob Ballou, and ASMFC Chair Jim Gilmore

### Management & Policy Contributions

#### **Mr. Robert Ballou, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management**

For nearly a decade, Mr. Robert Ballou has brought a wealth of knowledge and policy acumen to the Commission's fisheries management programs and elevated the decision-making of all species management boards that he has served on through his work ethic, strong leadership, and expertise. In

ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE, continued on page 11

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N • Arlington, Virginia 22201 • [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org)

## Upcoming Meetings

**The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as the deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.**

### Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

James J. Gilmore, Jr. (NY), *Chair*  
Patrick C. Keliher (ME), *Vice-Chair*

Robert E. Beal,  
*Executive Director*

Patrick A. Campfield,  
*Science Director*

Toni Kerns,  
*ISFMP Director*

Laura C. Leach,  
*Director of Finance & Administration*

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*Director of Communications*  
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www.asmfc.org  
info@asmfc.org

#### **June 10 - 14**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hutchinson Island Marriott, 555 NE Ocean Boulevard, Stuart, FL

#### **June 11 - 13**

New England Fishery Management Council, Doubletree by Hilton, So. Portland, ME

#### **June 17 (9 AM - 12:30 PM)**

Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee Webinar; go here - <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/6/2019/striped-bass-technical-committee-conf-call/1401> - for more details

#### **June 18 (9 AM - 12:30 PM)**

Atlantic Striped Bass Plan Development Team Webinar; go here - <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/6/2019/striped-bass-plan-development-team/1399> - for more details

#### **June 24 (begins at 9 AM) - 26 (ends at 5 PM)**

Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Workshop II, Marriott Residence Inn-Raleigh Downtown, 616 South Salisbury Street, Raleigh, NC

#### **June 26 (begins at 9 AM) - 28 (ends at 4 PM)**

Ecological Reference Points Stock Assessment Workshop II, Marriott Residence Inn-Raleigh Downtown, 616 South Salisbury Street, Raleigh, NC

#### **July 2 (9 AM - 12:30 PM)**

Atlantic Striped Bass Plan Development Team Webinar; go here - <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2019/Striped-Bass-Plan-Development-Team/1400> - for more details

#### **July 8 (5 - 7 PM)**

South Atlantic Species Advisory Panel Conference Call; go here - <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2019/south-atlantic-advisory-panel-conf-call/1403> - for more details

#### **July 10 (9 AM - 12:30 PM)**

Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee Webinar; go here - <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2019/Striped-Bass-Technical-Committee-Conf-Call/1402> - for more details

#### **August 6 - 8**

ASMFC Summer Meeting, Westin, 1800 South Eads Street, Arlington, VA

#### **August 12 - 15**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Courtyard Philadelphia Downtown, 21 N. Juniper St., Philadelphia, PA

#### **September 16 - 20**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC

#### **September 24 - 26**

New England Fishery Management Council, Beauport Hotel, Gloucester, MA

#### **October 8 - 10**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Durham Convention Center, 301 W. Morgan Street, Durham, NC



### ASMFC's Five-Year Strategic Plan Updates Vision and Addresses Need to Prioritize Limited Resources

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, during a typically busy Spring Meeting, Commissioners put their unanimous stamp of approval on the 2019 – 2023 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will guide our activities for the next five years and serve as the basis for annual action planning.

The keystone of the new Strategic Plan is an updated vision that emphasizes the cooperative nature of interstate fisheries management on the Atlantic coast: "Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries." The second major update to the Strategic Plan is a recognition that internal constraints, such as human and fiscal resource limitations, paired with outside forces like changing ocean conditions and ever-increasing political pressures, require us to focus on the most pressing issues. Now more than ever, the Commission and state agencies must dedicate staff time and resources where they are needed most and address less pressing issues only as resources allow.

In 2019, the highest priority species are American lobster, Atlantic striped bass, Atlantic menhaden, summer flounder, black sea bass, Atlantic herring, cobia, horseshoe crab and red drum.

- **American lobster** priorities include adapting management in response to changing ocean conditions and protected species interactions; implementing reporting requirements, bait protocols, and offshore enforcement; and making progress on the 2020 Benchmark Stock Assessment.
- For **Atlantic striped bass**, we are currently responding to the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment, and will continue to work with NOAA Fisheries as it considers opening the EEZ for striped bass harvest.
- **Atlantic menhaden** priorities include completing menhaden-specific and ecological reference points-based benchmark stock assessments, setting 2020 specifications, and monitoring compliance of the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery harvest cap.
- This year, the Commission revised specifications for the 2019 **summer flounder** fishing season, set new specifications for 2020 and 2021, and jointly approved with the Mid-Atlantic Council the Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment. The states will implement Addenda XXXI and XXXII, which address recreational conservation equivalency and specification setting.
- For **black sea bass**, managers will continue to explore new approaches to reform recreational management and reallocation strategies, integrate new MRIP estimates into management decisions, and set 2020-2022 specifications.
- In response to the results of the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment which showed reduced levels of **Atlantic herring** recruitment and spawning stock biomass over the past

five years, states will implement strengthened spawning protections in the inshore waters of the Gulf of Maine. The Herring Board will work with the New England Council as it considers establishing spawning protections in the offshore waters of Area 3.

- Transitioning **Atlantic cobia** to interstate management continues through the development of Amendment 1. The South Atlantic Board will also be working on a Benchmark Stock Assessment.
- The **Horseshoe Crab** Board approved the 2019 Benchmark Stock Assessment in May and will consider a management response later this year, including specifications for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin. Other priorities include securing long-term funding for the benthic trawl survey and working with the biomedical community to increase transparency of assessment results.
- The South Atlantic Board is developing a roadmap for the next **red drum** benchmark stock assessment that includes calibrated MRIP data.

As time and resources permit, the care and feeding of the remaining 17 species management programs will continue. And certainly, as issues arise, any of these species can be shifted to high priority status.

The Strategic Plan's eight goals are:

1. Rebuild, maintain, fairly allocate, and promote sustainable Atlantic coastal fisheries
2. Provide sound, actionable science to support informed management actions
3. Produce dependable and timely marine fishery statistics for Atlantic coast fisheries
4. Protect and enhance fish habitat and ecosystem health through partnerships and education
5. Promote compliance with fishery management plans to ensure sustainable use of Atlantic coast fisheries
6. Strengthen stakeholder and public support for the Commission
7. Advance Commission and member states' priorities through a proactive legislative policy agenda
8. Ensure the fiscal stability and efficient administration of the Commission

Goal 3, which focuses on the data collection and data management efforts of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), was added to reflect the incorporation of ACCSP as a Commission program in 2017.

The 2019 – 2023 Strategic Plan is available on the Commission website at [http://www.asmfc.org/files/pub/2019-2023StrategicPlan\\_Final.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/files/pub/2019-2023StrategicPlan_Final.pdf).



# Species Profile: Atlantic Striped Bass

## New Benchmark Stock Assessment Highlights Challenges in Sustainable Management

### Introduction

Atlantic striped bass is regularly referred to as America's greatest game fish on the U.S. Atlantic coast. High demand for this species among fishermen and consumers, coupled with the complexity of its seasonal distribution along the coast, makes sustainable management of the Atlantic coast striped bass population complex and challenging. Stakeholders regularly call for the Commission to implement biologically, economically, and socially sound regulations within each jurisdiction and sector. As a result, the dynamic nature of Atlantic striped bass fishery management will likely continue for many years to come.

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board recently approved the 2018 benchmark stock assessment, which indicates the striped bass stock is now overfished and experiencing overfishing. While the stock remains in far better condition than it was in the 1980s, when the stock was collapsed and several states imposed moratoriums to recover the resource and fishery, the Commission is once again facing difficult decisions in striped bass management. Given striped bass' importance to both the coastal marine ecosystem and those who commercially and recreationally fish for it, the Board initiated the development of a Draft Addendum to consider measures aimed at reducing fishing mortality to the target level.

### Life History

On the Atlantic coast, Atlantic striped bass range from the St. Lawrence River in Canada to the St. John's River in Florida. The migratory stock under Commission management ranges from Maine through North Carolina.

Atlantic striped bass are an anadromous species spending most of their adult life in oceanic or estuarine waters, and can live up to 31 years old. Mature individuals migrate into freshwater rivers and tributaries in early spring to spawn, releasing millions of eggs into the ecosystem, and then return to the ocean. The fertilized eggs eventually hatch into larvae, which begin feeding on zooplankton. The larvae mature into juveniles and remain in coastal sounds and estuaries for two to four years before joining the coastal migratory population in the Atlantic Ocean.

The rivers that feed into the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware and Hudson Rivers are the major spawning grounds, with the Chesapeake Bay producing the majority of coastal migratory striped bass. In the ocean, striped bass tend to move north during the summer and south during the winter, but these migrations can be influenced by their age, sex, degree of maturity, and the river in which they were born. Important wintering grounds for the mixed stocks are located offshore from New Jersey to North Carolina.

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

For centuries, Atlantic striped bass have supported valuable commercial and recreational fisheries on the Atlantic coast. Currently, commercial fisheries operate in eight Atlantic coastal jurisdictions, while recreational fisheries operate in 14. Commercial fishermen harvest Atlantic striped bass with a variety of gears including gillnets, pound nets, haul seines, trawls, and hook and line, while recreational fishermen use hook and line almost exclusively.

Increased fishing pressure in the 1970s coupled with degradation and loss of habitat led to stock collapse in the early 1980s. Commercial landings peaked in 1973 at almost 15 million pounds and then declined abruptly to 2.2 million pounds (271,958 fish) by 1983. During the mid-to-late 1980s, a number of states closed their Atlantic striped bass fisheries in order to initiate stock rebuilding. In the mid-1990s, the commercial fishery slowly grew again

## Species Snapshot



### Atlantic Striped Bass

*Morone saxatilis*

### Species Range

St. Lawrence River in Canada to St. John's River in Florida

### Interesting Facts

- Throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic, striped bass are also known as striper, rockfish, linesider, rollers, squidhound, or simply "bass."
- In 1669, the first public school in North America (MA) was financed with taxes imposed on striped bass harvest.
- In the 1880s, Atlantic striped bass were successfully transplanted to the Pacific Ocean, and a commercial fishery began in 1889. Commercial fishing was stopped in 1935 when the California coast striper was declared a game fish. The population continues to thrive.
- Atlantic striped bass is the most sought-after sportfish in the Chesapeake Bay, and is the official state fish of Maryland, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

### Largest Recorded

- New world record was caught in CT (2011), weighing 81.88 lbs.
- Historic records confirm a 125 lb female caught off of NC in 1891.

### Age at Maturity

- Females - 50% mature at age 6 (25-26"); 100% at age 9 (32")
- Males - 100% mature at age 3 (18")

### Age at Recruitment into Fishery

- Chesapeake Bay Fishery = age 4 (19")
- Ocean Fishery = age 8 (28")

### Stock Status

Overfished and experiencing overfishing

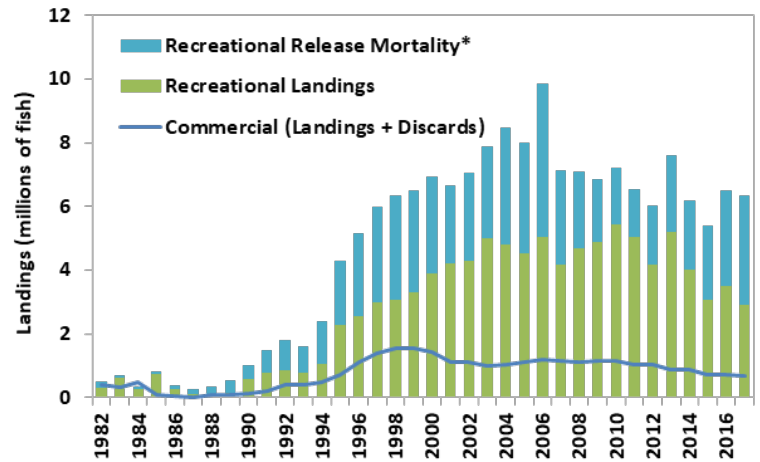
under a new management program (Amendment 4). Coastwide commercial landings rose from about 700,000 pounds (94,000 fish) in 1990 to 3.6 million pounds (540,000 fish) in 1995. Under Amendment 5, commercial striped bass harvest grew to 5.6 million pounds (921,000 fish) by 2002. Since the passage of Amendment 6, commercial harvest has been managed through a quota system, and landings averaged roughly 6.5 million pounds (943,000 fish) annually from 2004 to 2014. The commercial quota was reduced starting in 2015 through implementation of Addendum IV. Commercial landings are consistently dominated by Chesapeake Bay fisheries. Total commercial landings were estimated at 4.6 million pounds (592,576 fish) in 2017, of which approximately 56% (by weight) came from the Chesapeake Bay (77% in terms of numbers of fish).

Between 1982 and 1989, recreational anglers landed an annual average of about 325,000 fish due to a combination of low stock abundance and stringent regulations. Under Amendment 4, recreational landings grew from 579,000 fish in 1990 to more than one million fish in 1994. The following year, with the declaration of restored stock status, recreational landings more than doubled to 2.3 million fish, and landings continued to increase to a record 5.4 million fish in 2010. From 2004 to 2014, recreational landings averaged 4.7 million fish annually. From 2015-2017, recreational anglers harvested an estimated 3.2 million fish annually, which can be attributed to implementation of more restrictive regulations via Addendum IV. Of those coastwide recreational landings, Maryland landed the largest proportion (37%) in 2017, followed by New Jersey (21%), New York (16%), Massachusetts (13%), and Virginia (4%). Anglers continue to release the vast majority of striped bass they catch, primarily due to regulation (meaning the fish is not of legal size or the angler has already landed the bag limit). Since implementation of Amendment 6 in 2003, anglers have released roughly 84% of fish caught each year (the proportion of fish caught and released in 2017 was 91%). The number of released fish peaked in 2006 at 53.5 million fish. Total numbers of releases have declined since then, averaging 26 million fish annually from 2007-2017. An estimated 38 million fish were caught and released in 2017.

## Stock Status

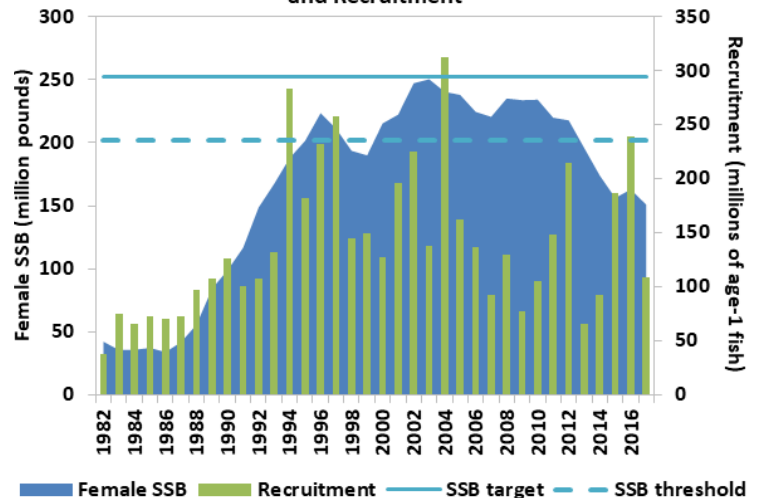
On a regular basis, female spawning stock biomass (SSB) and fishing mortality rate (F) are estimated and compared to target and threshold levels (i.e., biological reference points) in order to assess the status of the stock. The 1995 estimate of female SSB is currently used as the SSB threshold because many stock characteristics, such as an expanded age structure, were reached by this year, and this is also the year the stock was declared recovered. The female SSB target is equal to 125% female SSB<sub>1995</sub>. To estimate the associated F threshold and target, population projections were made by using a constant F and changing the value until the SSB threshold or target value was achieved. For the 2018 benchmark, the reference point values have been updated. The female SSB threshold was

**Atlantic Striped Bass Commercial Landings and Discards & Recreational Landings and Release Mortality**



\*Recreational release mortality assumes that 9% of fish released alive die.

**Atlantic Striped Bass Female Spawning Stock Biomass and Recruitment**



estimated at 91,436 mt (202 million pounds) with a female SSB target of 114,295 mt (252 million pounds). The F threshold was estimated at 0.24 and the F target was estimated at 0.20.

The 2018 benchmark stock assessment estimated female SSB in 2017 at 151 million pounds, which is below the SSB threshold, indicating the stock is overfished. Fishing mortality in 2017 was estimated at 0.31, which is above the F threshold, indicating the stock is experiencing overfishing. Please refer to the science highlight on page 12 for more information on the stock assessment.

## Atlantic Coastal Management

Prior to passage of the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act (Striped Bass Act, 1984), the precursor to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (1993), the Commission

*continued, see ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS on page 8*

# Fishery Management Actions

## Atlantic Herring

The Commission's Atlantic Herring Management Board approved Addendum II to Amendment 3 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring. The Addendum strengthens spawning protections in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) by initiating a closure when a lower percentage of the population is spawning (from approximately 25% to 20%), and extending the closure for a longer time (from four to six weeks). The Addendum also modifies the trigger level necessary to reclose the fishery, with the fishery reclosing when 20% or more of the sampled herring are mature but have not yet spawned. These changes to spawning protections are in response to the results of the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment, which showed reduced levels of recruitment and spawning stock biomass over the past five years, with 2016 recruitment levels the lowest on record.

Under Amendment 3, the Board uses a series of closures to protect spawning aggregations in the Gulf of Maine. Biological samples are used to annually project the start of the spawning closures. Recent analysis by the Atlantic Herring Technical

Committee found that while the spawning closure system was significantly improved under Amendment 3, the protocol could continue to be strengthened by considering when, and for how long, a closure is initiated. Specifically, the analysis showed greater protection could be provided by initiating a closure when a lower percentage of the population is spawning and extending the closure for a longer time.

The states are required to implement Addendum II's measures by August 1, 2019. The Addendum is available at <http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5cddb296Atl.HerringDraftAddendumIIFinalApprovedRevised.pdf>. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org).

## Coastal Sharks

The Commission's Coastal Sharks Management Board approved changes to the recreational size limit for Atlantic shortfin mako sharks in state waters, specifically, a 71-inch straight line fork length (FL) for males and an 83-inch straight line FL for females. These measures are consistent with those required

for federal highly migratory species (HMS) permit holders under HMS Amendment 11, which was implemented in response to the 2017 Atlantic shortfin mako stock assessment that found the resource is overfished and experiencing overfishing. Amendment 11 responds to a recent determination by the International Commission on the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas that all member countries need to reduce current shortfin mako landings by approximately 72-79% to prevent further declines in the population.

The Board adopted complementary size limits in state waters to provide consistency with federal measures as part of ongoing efforts to rebuild the resource. The states will implement the changes to the recreational minimum size limit for Atlantic shortfin mako by January 1, 2020.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [krootesmurdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootesmurdy@asmfc.org). Information on federal HMS shark regulations can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/atlantic-highly-migratory-species/atlantic-highly-migratory-species-fishery-compliance-guides>.

## States Schedule Public Hearings on Atlantic Cobia Draft Amendment 1

The Commission's South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board approved Draft Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia (Atlantic cobia) for public comment. Atlantic coastal states from Virginia through South Carolina have scheduled their hearings to gather public input on Draft Amendment 1. The details of those hearings follow.

### VMRC - June 12 at 6 PM

380 Fenwick Rd, Building 96  
Fort Monroe, Hampton, VA  
Contact: Pat Geer at 757.247.2200

### NC DMF - June 13 at 7 PM

Dare County Commissioners Office  
954 Marshall Collins Drive, Room 168  
Manteo, NC  
Contact: Chris Batsavage at 252.808.8009

### SC DNR - July 1 at 6 PM

Port Royal Sound Foundation Maritime Center, 310 Okatie Highway  
Okatie, SC  
Contacts: Mel Bell at 843.953.9007

### \*Webinar Hearing - June 18 at 6 PM

Webinar Registration: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/3902998396468814081>  
For audio, dial 1.888.585.9008 and enter the Conference Room Number: 275-479-282  
Contact: Dr. Michael Schmidtke at 703.842.0740

\*The webinar hearing is intended to primarily accommodate stakeholders in states where an in-person hearing is not being held. Stakeholders in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina are encouraged to provide comments at the in-

person hearings in their respective states, rather than the webinar hearing.

Draft Amendment 1 was initiated in anticipation of removal of Atlantic cobia from the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils' Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources (CMP FMP) through Regulatory Amendment 31. Final approval for CMP FMP Regulatory Amendment 31 was approved earlier this year. Therefore, there is no longer a federal management plan for Atlantic cobia, and the Commission

ATLANTIC COBIA, continued on next page



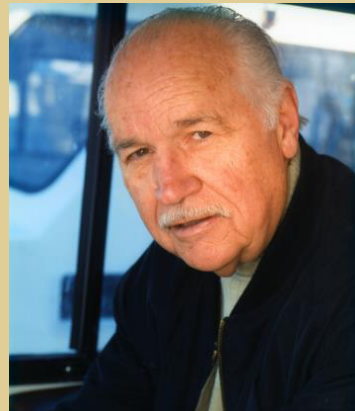
is the sole management body for this stock. This necessitates changes to several portions of the current interstate FMP that are dependent on the CMP FMP and also provides the opportunity for the Board to construct a long-term management strategy in the absence of a federal FMP.

Draft Amendment 1 presents options for addressing 13 issues within the FMP, including additions to the management goals and objectives, establishment of processes to define biological reference points and specify harvest, changes to commercial monitoring of landings, clarification of the process for evaluating recreational harvests against state harvest targets, potential changes to commercial fishery management measures, establishment of de minimis criteria for the commercial fishery, and recommended management measures for federal waters. For some of these issues, multiple options are presented, while for others, only one option is presented. Public input is requested for all issues included in Draft Amendment 1.

Draft Amendment 1 is available at [http://www.asmf.org/files/PublicInput/CobiaDraftAmendment1\\_PublicComment\\_May2019.pdf](http://www.asmf.org/files/PublicInput/CobiaDraftAmendment1_PublicComment_May2019.pdf) or via the Commission's website, [www.asmf.org](http://www.asmf.org), under Public Input. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on Draft Amendment 1 either by attending state public hearings/webinar or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until **5 PM (EST) on July 15, 2019** and should be sent to Dr. Michael Schmidtke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at [comments@asmf.org](mailto:comments@asmf.org) (Subject line: Cobia Amd 1).

The Board will meet at the Commission's 2019 Summer Meeting in August to review and consider public comment and final approval for Draft Amendment 1.

## In Memoriam



On June 1<sup>st</sup>, EDWARD AUGUSTINE O'BRIEN, 82, of Chesapeake Beach, MD, died peacefully at the Mandrin Chesapeake Inpatient Care Center in Harwood, MD, in the presence of his beloved partner, Diane Martin. A charter fishing captain, a life-long advocate for the Chesapeake Bay, a Marine who served his country with distinction, father of five, grandfather of nine, and great-grandfather of ten, he will be forever missed.

In March of this year, Governor Larry Hogan bestowed the highest honor to Captain O'Brien by naming him "Admiral of the Chesapeake Bay" for committing "his time and talents to improving the management of our natural resources and preserving our state's fishing heritage and the charter boat industry for over 40 years."

It was a recognition characteristic of Ed's lifelong service to his country, his family, and his community. After graduating from Loyola High School in Baltimore, Ed began his young life in the Marines in 1954 and was discharged as Sergeant in 1957 with honor. He advanced our country's security while working at McDonnell Aircraft as part of the Project Mercury Team. While with Martin Marietta, then Universal Match Corporation and as an officer of LaBarge Company, he continued to work with U.S. government agencies and Congress to enhance national security efforts. He also served as a Director of Control Video Corporation, the precursor to AOL.

In 1973, he started his charter fishing business with *Semper Fidelis I* on

the Magothy River, *Semper Fidelis II* out of Solomon's Island, and *Semper Fidelis II* and III from Chesapeake Beach with his son Captain John O'Brien, until 2017. This is where he found pleasure, peace, and

some of life's deepest meaning while watching sunshine glisten off the backs of striped bass breaking water in the early morning light on the Chesapeake.

In efforts to improve the health of the Bay and to preserve its fishing heritage, Ed hosted Governors, Congresspersons, members of the Maryland General Assembly, and President George W. Bush on the *Semper Fidelis*. He worked closely with the Coast Guard and received its highest civilian honor, the Meritorious Public Services Award. Since 1995, Ed served as Vice President of the National Charter Boat Association.

A long-time advocate for the restoration and conservation of striped bass, Ed served for over three decades on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel, representing the interests of Maryland anglers and the for-hire industry. For the past several years, he also served as Delegate Stein's ongoing proxy to the ASMFC.

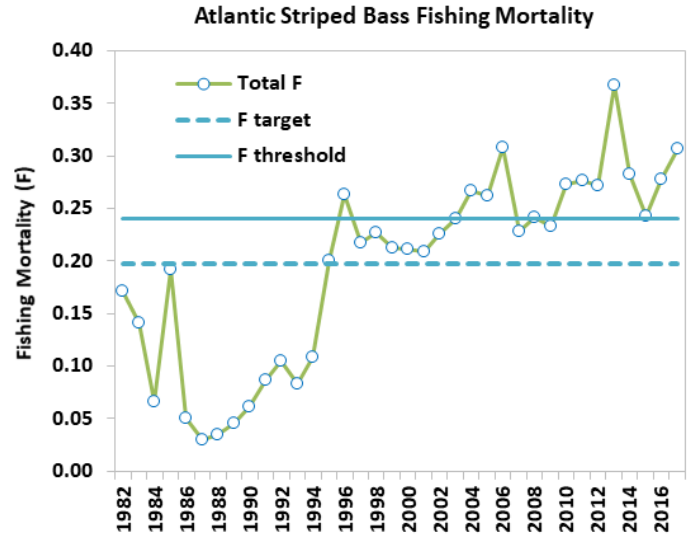
A Mass of Christian Burial was held at St. Andrew by the Bay Catholic Church, 701 College Pkwy., Annapolis, MD on Wednesday, June 5. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Hospice of the Chesapeake, 90 Ritchie Hwy., Pasadena, MD 21122. Online condolences may be made at [KalasFuneralHomes.com](http://KalasFuneralHomes.com)

"O God, thy sea is so great and my boat is so small."



did not have the management authority that it does today. The Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass (1981) and Amendments 1 and 2 (1984) only provided recommendations on how to sustainably manage the resource. Amendment 3 (1985) was the first enforceable plan under the Striped Bass Act. The Amendment implemented measures to protect the 1982 year class, the first modestly-sized cohort for nearly a decade. Several states, beginning with Maryland, opted for an even more conservative approach and imposed a total moratorium on striped bass landings. The Amendment contained a trigger mechanism to reopen fisheries based on a juvenile abundance index, which was triggered with the recruitment of the 1989 year class. Subsequently, Amendment 4 (1989) was implemented and aimed to rebuild the resource rather than maximize yield. In 1995, the Commission declared Atlantic coastal striped bass stocks fully recovered.

Currently, striped bass is managed through Amendment 6 to the FMP (2003). The Amendment introduced a new set of biological reference points based on female SSB, and a suite of management triggers based on the biological reference points. The coastal commercial quota was restored to 100% of the historical average landings during the 1970s, and recreational fisheries were required to implement a two fish bag limit and a minimum size limit of 28 inches, except for the Chesapeake Bay fisheries, Albemarle-Roanoke (A/R) fisheries, and fisheries with approved conservation equivalency proposals. At the time, the Chesapeake Bay and A/R regulatory programs were different than the coastal migratory program because these portions of the stock were predicated on a more conservative F target than the coastal migratory stock. The independent F target allowed these jurisdictions to implement



separate seasons, harvest caps, and size and bag limits as long as they remained under that target.

A series of four addenda to Amendment 6 were implemented from 2007 to 2014. Addendum I (2007) established a bycatch monitoring program to improve stock assessments, and Addendum II (2010) modified the definition of recruitment failure, a term defined in the FMP and associated with one of its management triggers. Addendum III (2012) addressed illegal striped bass harvest and was developed in response to a multi-year, multi-jurisdictional investigation conducted within the Chesapeake Bay that uncovered over one million pounds of illegally harvested striped bass with an estimated net worth of \$7 million. The Addendum required all states and jurisdictions with a commercial striped bass fishery to implement a commercial harvest tagging program whereby each commercially-caught striped bass is affixed with a unique tag that must remain on the fish until purchased by the consumer.

Addendum IV (2014) established one set of F reference points for the coastal migratory population in all management areas. Now, and as it was prior to Amendment 5, the Atlantic striped bass complex (excluding the A/R stock) is managed and modeled as a single stock with one set of SSB and F reference points for the coastal migratory population. Addendum IV was also initiated in response to a steady decline in SSB since 2004. In order to reduce F to a more sustainable level and stabilize SSB, the Addendum implemented regulations to achieve a 25% reduction in removals along the coast and 20.5% reduction in the Chesapeake Bay beginning in 2015. Specifically, commercial quotas were cut and coastal recreational bag limits were reduced from two fish to one. The recreational fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay, as well as several other state fisheries, used the FMP's conservation equivalency process, resulting in a wide range of regulations across the coast. Additionally, since the A/R stock was deemed by the Commission to contribute minimally to the coastal migratory population, Addendum IV defers management of the



Photo (c) Dennis Abbott

## Comings & Goings

### COMMISSIONERS

#### SENATOR PHILIP BOYLE

In April, Senator Philip Boyle stepped down as New York's Legislative Appointee to the Commission. Senator Boyle served in that position since 2013, where he consistently participated in the Commission's fisheries management process through either his own attendance or that of his proxy. We are grateful for Senator Boyle's involvement and wish him great success in all his future endeavors.



#### SENATOR TODD KAMINSKY

Appointed as New York's Legislative Appointee in April, Senator Todd Kaminsky is a Ranking Member of the State's Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, where he has been a champion for preserving and protecting Long Island's air, soil and water. A Long Island native, Senator Kaminsky has been a strong advocate for lower taxes, good jobs and a strong economy. He secured tax breaks for Sandy victims and has rallied to reform Industrial Development Agencies to protect tax dollars.

During his time as a prosecutor, Senator Kaminsky also worked vigorously as a community advocate for the South Shore. He organized free legal clinics for those affected by superstorm Sandy, and helped bring tens of thousands of dollars in relief funds to local residents. For his efforts, he was awarded the Community Service Award from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York and the Long Beach Martin Luther King Center's Sandy Relief Service Award. Senator Kaminsky championed the effort to reopen an emergency room on the Long Beach Barrier Island, succeeded in stopping National Grid from charging Sandy victims for gas connections when rebuilding

their homes, and led the opposition to the Port Ambrose offshore Liquefied Natural Gas terminal.

Senator Kaminsky received his law degree, magna cum laude, from New York University, and his bachelor's degree, summa cum laude, from the University of Michigan. He and his wife, Ellen, live in Long Beach with their sons Rafe and Rory. Welcome aboard!

### STAFF

#### MIKE CAHALL

In mid-May, Commission staff and the program partners of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program bid fond farewell to ACCSP Director Michael Cahall. Mike joined the ACCSP in 1999 to work on IT issues and programming, and was promoted to Director in 2007. Under his visionary leadership, ACCSP enjoyed tremendous growth, becoming the principal source of marine fishery statistics for the U.S. Atlantic coast that program partners had envisioned it to be when they created the ACCSP in the mid-1990s. Both innovative in his problem solving and deft at seeking funding, Mike was able to spearhead projects that significantly advanced



Mike Cahall (center), with ASMFC Executive Director Bob Beal (left) and ASMFC Chair Jim Gilmore this May, having accepted a plaque in honor of his retirement.

COMINGS & GOINGS continued on page 16

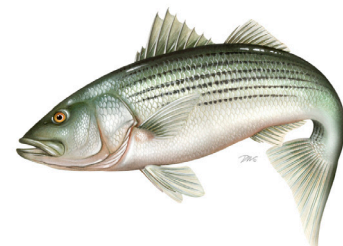
ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS, continued from page 8

A/R stock to the State of North Carolina under the auspices of the Commission, with use of stock-specific biological reference points approved by the Board.

Given that the stock is experiencing overfishing, the Board initiated the development of a Draft Addendum in May to consider measures aimed at reducing F to the target level. The Draft Addendum will explore a range of management options, including minimum size and slot size limits for the recreational fishery in the Chesapeake Bay and along the coast, as well as a coastwide circle hook requirement when fishing with bait. The Board also provided guidance on how to apply the necessary reductions to both the commercial and recreational sectors. The Draft Addendum will be presented to the Board for its consideration and approval for

public comment in August. If approved, it will be released for public comment, with the Board considering its final approval in October for implementation in 2020.

Please visit [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org) for more information, or contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mappelman@asmfc.org](mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org).



## Horseshoe Crab Board Approves Benchmark Stock Assessment for Management Use

The 2019 Horseshoe Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment evaluated the stock status of the resource by region, finding populations within the Delaware Bay and Southeast regions remaining consistently neutral and good, respectively, through time. The Northeast region population has changed from poor to neutral, while the status of the New York region population has trended downward from good, to neutral, and now to poor. The Benchmark Assessment was endorsed by the Peer Review Panel and accepted by the Horseshoe Crab Management Board (Board) for management use.

To date, no overfishing or overfished definitions have been adopted for management use. For the assessment, biological reference points were developed for the Delaware Bay region horseshoe crab population, although not endorsed by the Peer Review Panel for use in management. However, given the assessment results of low fishing mortality and relatively high abundance, overfishing and an overfished status are unlikely for female horseshoe crabs in the Delaware Bay region.

In the absence of biological reference points, stock status was based on the percentage of surveys within a region (or coastwide) having a >50% probability of the final year being below the model reference point (referred to as the Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average or ARIMA reference point). "Poor" status was >66% of surveys meeting this criterion, "Good" status was <33% of surveys, and

Number of Surveys Below the Index-based 1998 Reference Point in the Terminal (Final) Year of ARIMA Model

Region	2009 Benchmark	2013 Update	2019 Benchmark	2019 Stock Status
Northeast	2 out of 3	5 out of 6	1 out of 2	Neutral
New York	1 out of 5	3 out of 5	4 out of 4	Poor
Delaware Bay	5 out of 11	4 out of 11	2 out of 5	Neutral
Southeast	0 out of 5	0 out of 2	0 out of 2	Good
Coastwide	7 out of 24	12 out of 24	7 out of 13	Neutral

"Neutral" status was 34 – 65% of surveys. Based on this criterion, stock status for the Northeast region was neutral; the New York region was poor; the Delaware Bay region was neutral; and the Southeast region was good.

Coastwide, abundance has fluctuated through time with many surveys decreasing after 1998 but increasing in recent years. The coastwide status includes surveys from all regions and indicates a neutral trend, likely due to positive and negative trends being combined.

The Board will consider a possible management response to the assessment at its next meeting in August. A more detailed description of the stock assessment results is available on the Commission's website at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5ccae597HSC\\_StockAssessmentOverview2019.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5ccae597HSC_StockAssessmentOverview2019.pdf). The 2019 Horseshoe Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report is available at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5cd5d6f1HSCAssessment\\_PeerReviewReport\\_May2019.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5cd5d6f1HSCAssessment_PeerReviewReport_May2019.pdf). For more information, please contact Dr. Mike Schmidtke, FMP Coordinator, at [mschmidtke@asmfc.org](mailto:mschmidtke@asmfc.org).

## On the Legislative Front: U.S. House Committee Advances Funding Bill for Fisheries Programs

On May 22, the U.S. House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee approved its FY20 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act by a vote of 30-22. The legislation provides funding to the Department of Commerce, NOAA Fisheries and some ASMFC programs, including the Atlantic Coastal Act and the ACCSP.

The Committee Report accompanying the legislation includes provisions to fund Interstate Fisheries Management Commissions at the FY19 level; continue the Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey in FY20; and provide resources to study climate change impacts on American lobster. The Committee Report rejects the President's proposal to eliminate Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants, Joint Enforcement Agreements, and the National Sea Grant College Program.

The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee has yet to introduce its version of the FY20 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (in \$ thousands)

	2019 Enacted	2020 President	2020 House
<b>Protected Resources Science and Management</b>			
Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles & Other Species	118,348	112,509	124,000
Species Recovery Grants	7,000	5,996	7,500
Atlantic Salmon	6,500	6,270	6,500
Pacific Salmon	65,000	61,741	66,420
<b>Fisheries Science and Management</b>			
Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services	147,107	135,593	150,000
Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments	168,086	157,656	171,000
Observers and Training	53,955	44,047	45,100
Fisheries Management Programs and Services	121,116	113,653	124,000
Aquaculture	15,000	13,005	13,005
Salmon Management Activities	37,000	31,598	37,000
Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions	40,175	37,653	41,500
Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants	3,365	0	3,500
<b>Enforcement</b>	69,796	54,072	73,500
Habitat Conservation and Restoration	56,384	37,875	61,625
<b>Other Line Items of Note</b>			
National Sea Grant College Program	68,000	0	73,000
Coastal Zone Management and Services	43,500	44,976	46,500
Coastal Zone Management Grants	75,500	0	81,000
National Estuarine Research Reserve System	27,000	0	29,000
		increase from FY19 amount, decrease from FY19 amount, >10% change	



particular, Mr. Ballou has shown outstanding leadership on two very high profile and consequential Commission management bodies – the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board and the Atlantic Menhaden Board. Over the past several years and in particular as Board Chair since 2017, Mr. Ballou has been responsible for much of the progress that has been made on summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass management. These species are particularly challenging given they are jointly managed with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and are highly influenced by changes in ocean temperatures. As Chair, Mr. Ballou has led the Board through difficult deliberations, leading to the adoption of multiple addenda, as well as approval of the Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment.

Even more noteworthy is the role Mr. Ballou played in the development and approval of Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Management Plan. As Board Chair, Mr. Ballou worked tirelessly with Commission staff, Board members, and technical groups. There are few management actions higher in profile or more complex, and Mr. Ballou's commitment to the integrity of the Commission's process and the sustainable management of this important forage species deserves high commendation.

### Science & Technical Contributions

#### **Geoffrey White, Coleby Wilt, Alex DiJohnson and Sarah Rains, Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) Team**

Due to the herculean efforts of the APAIS Team of Mr. Geoff White, Mr. Coleby Wilt, Mr. Alex DiJohnson and Ms. Sarah Rains over the past two years, the collection of recreational survey data successfully transitioned from a federal contractor to the state fishery agencies from Maine through Georgia. As part of the transition, the APAIS Team worked to shift the collection program from an outdated, paper-based system that included tens of thousands of paper interview forms to an automated system, whereby data is now collected via a tablet-based Dockside Interceptor. The Dockside Interceptor has reduced data transfer from 21 days to 1 day, completely eliminating all the paper steps.

The APAIS Team also assisted in the development and deployment of a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview tool to conduct the for-hire telephone survey, replacing a manual transcription process in the three states conducting the survey. The system was first deployed in North Carolina in January 2019, with the state estimating a 33% increase in efficiency and a better than 80% response rate.



From left: Part of the APAIS Team - Sarah Rains, Geoff White and Alex DiJohnson

These two innovative systems, spearheaded by the APAIS Team, are completely changing the complexion of recreational data collection on the Atlantic coast, resulting in more accurate and timely data with a significantly reduced workload.

#### **Michael Celestino, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife**

For the past several years, Mr. Michael Celestino has made his mark as an active participant and chair for numerous Commission science committees. These include the Assessment Science Committee (ASC), the Ecological Reference Points Work Group, and the Science and Data Working Group of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, as well as species technical committees and stock assessment subcommittees for bluefish, striped bass and Atlantic sturgeon.

Mr. Celestino's leadership on the 2018 striped bass benchmark stock assessment is of particular note. Midway through the assessment process, Mr. Celestino stepped in as Stock Assessment Subcommittee Chair, skillfully guiding the Subcommittee through the challenges of dealing with newly revised recreational data and new modeling approaches. He was responsible for updating the statistical catch-at-age model with new and improved data and conducting sensitivity analyses, all the while supporting the primary model being developed by another modeler. Ultimately, the model Mr. Celestino spearheaded was accepted as the preferred model by the peer review panel, adding lead modeler to his already long list of accomplishments. With the assessment process completed, Mr. Celestino continues to contribute to the striped bass stock assessment by running projections and responding to Board tasks.

In all that he does, Mr. Celestino exhibits an outstanding work ethic, consistently producing high-quality and meticulous work in a timely fashion. Committed to the Commission's mission and the process of cooperative management, Mr. Celestino analyzes problems carefully from all angles and provides a comprehensive viewpoint of the issues. While it is still early in his career, Mr. Celestino's leadership and efforts of the past several years have made him a huge asset to the Commission's committees and management process.

#### **Dr. John Sweka, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Northeast Fishery Center**

For more than a decade, Dr. John Sweka has been an invaluable member and chair of several Commission science committees, including the ASC and stock assessment subcommittees for American eel, Atlantic sturgeon, river herring and horseshoe crab. Dr. Sweka served as Chair of the River Herring Stock Assessment Committee, leading the charge in the first coastwide stock assessment of river herring, and he currently chairs the Horseshoe



# Science Highlight: Atlantic Striped Bass Assessment Overview

This overview presents a summary of the 2018 benchmark stock assessment for Atlantic striped bass. The assessment is the latest and best information available on the status of the coastwide Atlantic striped bass stock for use in fisheries management.

## What Data Were Used?

The stock assessment used both *fishery-dependent and -independent data* collected through state, federal, and academic research programs. The assessment included final catch data through 2017.

## Recreational and Commercial Catch

The stock assessment used total catch (harvest, commercial discards and dead recreational discards) and catch-at-age split into two components: Chesapeake Bay removals and ocean removals. Removals include harvest and dead discards from both fishing sectors. Ocean removals include removals from inland areas like the Delaware Bay, Long Island Sound and the Hudson River.

Strict commercial quota monitoring is conducted by states through various state and federal dealer and fishermen reporting systems; landings are compiled annually from those sources by state biologists.

Recreational catch, effort, and length frequency data were obtained from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) for 1982-2017. MRIP uses surveys to estimate how many fishing trips recreational anglers take every year and how many fish per trip they catch. In 2018, MRIP transitioned from a phone-based survey to a mail-based survey to estimate the number of angler trips. The new, improved survey showed the number of trips taken in recent years was much higher than had been previously estimated, and as a result, estimates of recreational catch were much higher for striped bass (see Figure 1). Overall, the estimates of recreational removals of striped bass (fish that were landed plus fish that died as a result of being released alive) were 2.3 times higher using the new method, with a greater difference in recent years.

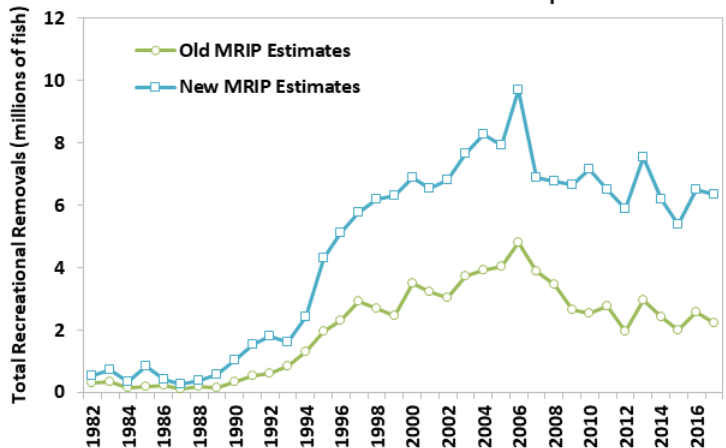
MRIP catch per unit effort data was used as a fishery-dependent index of relative abundance.

## Fishery-Independent Surveys & Tagging Data

The assessment used nearly a dozen fishery-independent indices of relative abundance for adults, young-of-year and age-1 fish.

Eight tagging programs have traditionally participated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Atlantic coast striped bass tagging program and each have been in progress for at least 18 years. The tagging programs are divided into two categories, producer area programs and coastal programs. Producer area tagging programs primarily operate during spring spawning on spawning grounds in New York, Delaware/Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. Coastal programs tag striped bass from mixed stocks during fall, winter, or early spring in waters off of Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina. USFWS maintains the tag release and recapture database and provides rewards to

Figure 1. Comparison of Old & New MRIP Estimates of Recreational Removals\* of Atlantic Striped Bass



\*Recreational removals include landed fish and the 9% of fish released alive that die.

fishermen who report the recaptures of tagged fish. From 1985 through August 2018, there were 542,149 striped bass tagged and released, with 92,344 recaptures reported coastwide.

## How Were the Data Analyzed?

### Statistical catch-at-age (SCA) model

The accepted model for use in striped bass stock assessments is a forward projecting statistical catch-at-age (SCA) model, which uses catch-at-age data and fishery-dependent and -independent survey indices to estimate annual population size and fishing mortality. Indices of abundance track relative changes in the population over time while catch data provide information on the scale of the population size. Age structure data (numbers of fish by age) provide additional information on recruitment (number of age-1 fish entering the population) and trends in mortality.

### Tagging model

As a complement to the SCA model, a tagging model (IRCR) was run on data from the USFWS coastwide striped bass tagging program through the 2017 tagging year. The IRCR model compares the numbers of tagged fish that have been recaptured to the numbers of fish that were originally tagged over time to estimate the survival rate of striped bass from year-to-year, fishing mortality rates and natural mortality rates.

## What is the Status of the Stock?

In 2017, the Atlantic striped bass stock was overfished and experiencing overfishing relative to the updated reference points defined in the 2018 assessment. Female spawning stock biomass (SSB) was estimated at 151 million pounds, below the SSB threshold of 202 million pounds. Total fishing mortality was estimated at 0.307, above the fishing mortality threshold of 0.240.

Despite recent declines in SSB, the stock is still above the SSB levels observed during the moratorium that was in place in the mid-late 1980s.

### Recruitment

As shown in the lower figure on page 5, striped bass experienced

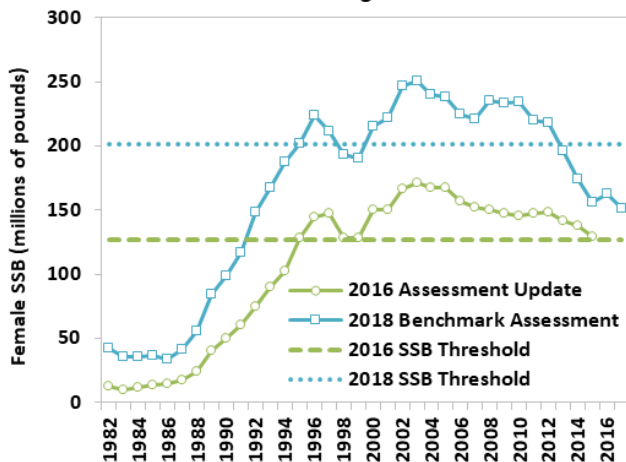
a period of strong recruitment (age-1 fish entering the population) from 1994-2004, followed by a period of lower recruitment from 2005-2011 (although not as low as the early 1980s, when the stock was considered collapsed). This period of low recruitment contributed to the decline in SSB that the stock has experienced since 2010. Recruitment of age-1 fish was high in 2012, 2015, and 2016 (corresponding to strong 2011, 2014, and 2015 year classes), but estimates of age-1 striped bass were below the long-term average in 2013, 2014, and 2017. Recruitment in 2017 was estimated at 108.8 million age-1 fish, below the time series average of 140.9 million fish.

### Biological Reference Points

The reference points currently used for management are based on the estimate of female SSB in 1995, the year the stock was declared recovered, as well as the fishing mortality needed to maintain SSB at its threshold and target values.

For the 2018 assessment, the definitions of the targets and thresholds remain the same, but the values have been updated. The new MRIP estimates resulted in higher estimates of SSB and, therefore, higher estimates for the SSB threshold and target (Figure 2). The SSB threshold was estimated at 202 million pounds, with an SSB target of 252 million pounds. The new MRIP estimates did not have a large effect on the estimates of fishing mortality, and the updated fishing mortality threshold and target values are

**Figure 2. Comparison of SSB Estimates from the 2016 Update Using Old MRIP Numbers and the 2018 Benchmark Using New MRIP Numbers**



very similar to the previous fishing mortality reference points. The fishing mortality threshold was estimated at 0.24, and the target was estimated at 0.20.

### Data and Research Priorities

The Technical Committee (TC) addressed several of the recommendations from the 2013 benchmark assessment report, including developing new maturity-at-age estimates for the coastal migratory stock and evaluating stock status definitions relative to uncertainty in biological reference points. The TC also made

progress on developing a spatially and temporally explicit catch-at-age model incorporating tag-based movement information. Although the Peer Review Panel did not accept the migration model for management use, it recommended continued work to improve the model for future assessments.

The TC identified several high priority research recommendations to improve the assessment. These included better characterization of commercial discards; expanded collection of sex ratio data and paired scale-otolith samples; development of an index of relative abundance for the Hudson River stock; better estimates of tag reporting rates; continued collection of mark-recapture data to better understand migration dynamics; and additional work on the impacts of Mycobacteriosis on striped bass population dynamics and productivity.

The TC recommends the next benchmark stock assessment be conducted in 2024, which will allow time to work on issues like state-specific scale-otolith conversion factors and directly incorporating tagging data into the two-stock assessment model.

A more detailed description of the stock assessment results is available on the Commission's website at <http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5cc9ba4eAtlStripedBassStockAssessmentOverview.pdf>. The 2018 Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment, Stock Assessment Summary and Peer Review Report can be obtained via the following links:

Full assessment report - <https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd1908/crd1908.pdf>

Summary Report - <https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd1901/crd1901.pdf>

Peer Review Report - <https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/saw66/saw-66-summary-report.pdf>



From left: ISFMP Director Toni Kerns and former FMP Coordinator Kate Taylor with a striped bass caught as part of the hook and line tagging survey. Photo (c) Tom Crews, USFWS

## ACCSP Announces FY19 Funding Recipients

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) is pleased to announce the recipients of its FY19 funding awards. Thanks to NOAA Fisheries, ACCSP is able to fund 13 new and ongoing projects submitted by our state and federal partners to improve fisheries data collection and processing on the Atlantic coast. This year's awards total over \$1.6 million.

Partner	Project Title	Approximate Funding
ME DMR	Managing Mandatory Dealer Reporting in Maine	\$214,000
ME DMR	Portside Commercial Catch Sampling and Comparative Bycatch Sampling for Atlantic Herring, Atlantic Mackerel, and Atlantic Menhaden Fisheries	\$25,500
RI DEM	Maintenance and Coordination of Fisheries Dependent Data Feeds to ACCSP from the State of Rhode Island	\$77,000
RI DEM	Advancing Fishery Dependent Data Collection for Black Sea Bass in the Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic Region Utilizing Modern Technology and a Vessel Research Fleet Approach	\$133,000
NJ DFW	Electronic Reporting and Biological Characterization of New Jersey Commercial Fisheries	\$164,400
SC DNR	ACCSP Data Reporting from South Carolina's Commercial Fisheries	\$168,900
ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee	Supplemental At-Sea Sampling for the Recreational Headboat Fishery on the Atlantic Coast	\$107,100
SEFSC	Continued Processing and Aging of Biological Samples Collected from U.S. South Atlantic Commercial and Recreational Fisheries	\$300,000
NC DMF	An Updated Economic and Social Analysis of the Commercial Seafood Dealers of North Carolina	\$19,900
ME DMR & MA DMF	Collaborative Electronic Tracking Pilot Program in the American Lobster Fishery	\$19,700
MD DNR	Expanding Accountability in Reporting: A Tool for Comprehensive For-Hire Data Collection and Monitoring in Maryland	\$182,900
RI DMF & GA DNR	Development of a Mobile Application to Assist Maritime Law Enforcement Personnel with Fisheries Enforcement Tasks	\$60,000

## ACCSP Issues Request for FY20 Proposals

The ACCSP is issuing a Request for Proposals to Program Partners and Committees for FY20 funding. ACCSP's Funding Decision Document (FDD) provides an overview of the funding decision process, guidance for preparing and submitting proposals, and information on funding recipients' post-award responsibilities. Projects in areas not specifically addressed in the FDD may still be considered for funding if they help achieve Program goals. These goals, listed by priority, are improvements in:

- 1 a. Catch, effort, and landings data (including licensing, permit and vessel registration data);
- 1 b. Biological data (equal to 1a.);
2. Releases, discards and protected species data; and,
3. Economic and sociological data.

Project activities that will be considered according to priority may include:

- Partner implementation of data collection programs;
- Continuation of current Program-funded partner programs;
- Funding for personnel required to implement Program-related projects/proposals; and
- Data management system upgrades or establishment of partner data feeds to the Data Warehouse and/or Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System.

Initial proposals are due **June 10, 2019**. Full information can be found at <https://www.accsp.org/what-we-do/partner-project-funding>



ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and the integration of those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org).





From left: Mike Celestino and John Sweka

Crab Stock Assessment Subcommittee and the ASC. For Atlantic sturgeon, Dr. Sweka has made substantial advances in field research, such as hydroacoustic and telemetry tagging studies, which were used in the 2017 sturgeon stock assessment.

Dr. Sweka also acts as a key liaison to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in order to advance the Commission's scientific endeavors, most notably our understanding and management of horseshoe crab and American eel populations. In collaboration with Mr. Dave Smith at the USGS Leetown Science Center, Dr. Sweka was a key contributor in the development of the Adaptive Resource Management framework to balance horseshoe crab harvest policies with the protection of endangered and threatened shorebird populations. He is also working with USGS and the Eel Technical Committee to incorporate habitat variables in a GIS mapping framework for future stock assessments.

Dr. Sweka has exhibited innovation and creativity by introducing new models for stock assessments. He has run ARIMA models for multiple species, which are currently used to evaluate abundance relative to reference points for American eel, river herring, and horseshoe crab. Dr. Sweka also developed a new age-structured operational model for horseshoe crabs as

part of the stock assessment completed this spring. The peer review panel found the models to be notable improvements to the assessment process.

Finally, Dr. Sweka is recognized by fellow committee members, Commission staff, and USFWS as a respected and reliable scientific colleague. Federal fisheries agencies have a mandate to provide scientific support to the Commission and John has answered the bell. At a time when demands on our scientific community can be overwhelming, John consistently delivers analytical work on time and at a very high standard.

### Law Enforcement Contributions

**NOAA Special Agents Casey Oravetz and Sara Block, Assistant US Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina Banumathi Rangarajan, and the US Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division's Environmental Crimes Section Trial Attorneys Lauren Steele, Shane Waller, Shennie Patel, and Joel La Bissonniere**

Due to the diligence and tenacity of the team of NOAA Special Agents and attorneys with the Eastern District of North Carolina, and the U.S. Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division's Environmental Crimes Section, 13 North Carolina trawl captains were indicted for the illegal harvest and possession of hundreds of thousands of pounds of striped bass from the EEZ in 2009 and 2010. The investigation began from a tip to NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) and a subsequent U.S. Coast Guard at-sea boarding of the F/V LADY SAMAIRA. The captain provided false information to officers regarding where fishing had occurred, and NOAA conducted a dockside investigation wherein the vessel's navigation computer was seized. Forensic analysis determined the captain caught striped

bass illegally from the EEZ on that date and on previous trips, and had deleted evidence on the computer to attempt to conceal this activity. NOAA OLE agents recovered the data and reconstructed the trips using GIS tools. A broader analysis was then performed on other vessels landing striped bass on the same fishing days. Over a period of two years, NOAA OLE conducted over 30 search warrants in four states on vessels and businesses in order to gather evidence. Legal challenges made by the defense counsel resulted in the District Court erroneously dismissing the indictments. The U.S. Department of Justice appealed the case to the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, who ultimately reversed the decision and reinstated the indictments.

Twelve defendants ultimately pled guilty to violating the Lacey Act. Some additionally pled to false statements, obstruction of justice, tax evasion, and failure to file tax returns. One of the defendants passed away during the investigation. For the 12 defendants, the U.S. District Court Judge imposed sentences totaling over 38 years of probation, 2.5 years of home confinement, 850 hours of community service, \$3,000 in fines, and over \$1.2 million in restitution.

This team's tenacity, hard work, and commitment to the mission showcase the outstanding work performed as a team to protect and conserve the Atlantic striped bass fishery.



From left: Shennie Patel, Casey Oravetz, Lauren Steele, and Sara Block



# ASMFC Seeks New ACCSP Director

The Commission seeks a dynamic and visionary leader to manage and further develop the integrated fisheries statistics programs that include the collection, warehousing and dissemination of commercial and recreational harvest data for the U.S. Atlantic coast. The applicant should have strong skills and experience as a program/project manager. The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Director will be responsible for: 1) articulating, advocating for and promoting

the vision and mission of ACCSP to a wide range of participants and stakeholders; 2) developing and updating annual operating plans that appropriately reflect the strategic plan, availability of funds and policy guidance from the ACCSP Coordinating Council; 3) providing executive leadership for the program; 4) providing overall programmatic management; and, 5) supervising the day-to-day operations of the Program. The Director will supervise a staff of 13 and work closely with the Chair of the ACCSP

Coordinating Council and the Commission's Executive Director on Program policy and administrative issues. ACCSP is a partner-driven program of the ASMFC.

Applications will be accepted until **June 17**. The full job announcement can be found at [http://www.asmfc.org/files/JobAnnouncements/19-005\\_ACCSPDirector\\_May2019.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/files/JobAnnouncements/19-005_ACCSPDirector_May2019.pdf)

Species	FMP Coordinator	Stock Assessment Scientist	ACCSP Data Lead
American Eel	Kirby Rootes-Murdy <a href="mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org">krootes-murdy@asmfc.org</a>	Kristen Anstead <a href="mailto:kanstead@asmfc.org">kanstead@asmfc.org</a>	Heather Konell <a href="mailto:heather.konell@accsp.org">heather.konell@accsp.org</a>
American Lobster & Jonah Crab	Caitlin Starks <a href="mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org">cstarks@asmfc.org</a>	Jeff Kipp <a href="mailto:jkipp@asmfc.org">jkipp@asmfc.org</a>	Julie Defilippi Simpson <a href="mailto:julie.simpson@accsp.org">julie.simpson@accsp.org</a>
Atlantic Croaker	Mike Schmidtke <a href="mailto:mschmidtke@asmfc.org">mschmidtke@asmfc.org</a>	Kristen Anstead <a href="mailto:kanstead@asmfc.org">kanstead@asmfc.org</a>	Mike Rinaldi <a href="mailto:mike.rinaldi@accsp.org">mike.rinaldi@accsp.org</a>
Atlantic Herring	Kirby Rootes-Murdy <a href="mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org">krootes-murdy@asmfc.org</a>	Katie Drew <a href="mailto:kdrew@asmfc.org">kdrew@asmfc.org</a>	Joe Myers <a href="mailto:joseph.myers@accsp.org">joseph.myers@accsp.org</a>
Atlantic Menhaden	Max Appelman, <a href="mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org">mappelman@asmfc.org</a>	Kristen Anstead <a href="mailto:kanstead@asmfc.org">kanstead@asmfc.org</a>	Julie Defilippi Simpson <a href="mailto:julie.simpson@accsp.org">julie.simpson@accsp.org</a>
Atlantic Striped Bass	Max Appelman, <a href="mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org">mappelman@asmfc.org</a>	Katie Drew <a href="mailto:kdrew@asmfc.org">kdrew@asmfc.org</a>	Joe Myers <a href="mailto:joseph.myers@accsp.org">joseph.myers@accsp.org</a>
Atlantic Sturgeon	Max Appelman, <a href="mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org">mappelman@asmfc.org</a>	Kristen Anstead <a href="mailto:kanstead@asmfc.org">kanstead@asmfc.org</a> Katie Drew <a href="mailto:kdrew@asmfc.org">kdrew@asmfc.org</a>	Joe Myers <a href="mailto:joseph.myers@accsp.org">joseph.myers@accsp.org</a>
Black Drum	Mike Schmidtke <a href="mailto:mschmidtke@asmfc.org">mschmidtke@asmfc.org</a>	Jeff Kipp <a href="mailto:jkipp@asmfc.org">jkipp@asmfc.org</a>	Mike Rinaldi <a href="mailto:mike.rinaldi@accsp.org">mike.rinaldi@accsp.org</a>
Black Sea Bass	Caitlin Starks <a href="mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org">cstarks@asmfc.org</a>	Jeff Kipp <a href="mailto:jkipp@asmfc.org">jkipp@asmfc.org</a>	Heather Konell <a href="mailto:heather.konell@accsp.org">heather.konell@accsp.org</a>
Bluefish	Dustin Colson Leaning <a href="mailto:DLeaning@asmfc.org">DLeaning@asmfc.org</a>	Katie Drew <a href="mailto:kdrew@asmfc.org">kdrew@asmfc.org</a>	Joe Myers <a href="mailto:joseph.myers@accsp.org">joseph.myers@accsp.org</a>
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Horseshoe Crab	Mike Schmidtke <a href="mailto:mschmidtke@asmfc.org">mschmidtke@asmfc.org</a>	Kristen Anstead <a href="mailto:kanstead@asmfc.org">kanstead@asmfc.org</a>	Heather Konell <a href="mailto:heather.konell@accsp.org">heather.konell@accsp.org</a>
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Red Drum	Mike Schmidtke <a href="mailto:mschmidtke@asmfc.org">mschmidtke@asmfc.org</a>	Jeff Kipp <a href="mailto:jkipp@asmfc.org">jkipp@asmfc.org</a>	Mike Rinaldi <a href="mailto:mike.rinaldi@accsp.org">mike.rinaldi@accsp.org</a>
Shad & River Herring	Caitlin Starks <a href="mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org">cstarks@asmfc.org</a>	Jeff Kipp <a href="mailto:jkipp@asmfc.org">jkipp@asmfc.org</a>	Mike Rinaldi <a href="mailto:mike.rinaldi@accsp.org">mike.rinaldi@accsp.org</a>
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ACCSP's mission and objectives, including tablet and mobile data entry apps for dealers, commercial fishermen and the for-hire industry. Not one to rest on his laurels, Mike will be filling his retirement with a multitude of other pursuits, such as working as an EMT, teaching and performing the violin, and creating a database to aid in mapping the ancient ruins of Pompeii. We wish Mike all the very best.



## DUSTIN COLSON LEANING

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, Commission staff welcomed Dustin Colson Leaning as its

newest Fishery Management Plan Coordinator. Dustin is a recent graduate from Duke University with a Master's in Environmental Economics and Policy. He completed his undergraduate degree from Eckerd College. While at Duke, he examined the effects of community conservation engagement on bush meat hunting in Gabon. Dustin assumes coordination responsibility for summer flounder, scup, bluefish, winter flounder and Northern shrimp. Please join us in welcoming Dustin to the Commission. (See accompanying table for current fisheries management, science and data leads and their contact information.)