

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Final Report
Grant Number NA17FG2205
A Cooperative State-Federal Program for the
Conservation of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

3-ACA-114

Period of Performance: January 1 – December 31, 2002

Period Covered by this Report: January 1 – December 31, 2002

This grant was received by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission pursuant to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (P.L. 103-206) to assist the Commission in meeting the requirement of the Act to improve cooperative fisheries management among the Atlantic Coast states. The goal of the grant, *A Cooperative State-Federal Program for the Conservation of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*, is to manage, enhance, restore, and maintain the shared fisheries of the Atlantic Coast, with principal emphasis on the conservation and restoration of migratory marine and diadromous fishery resources and their habitat, as well as the maintenance, enhancement, and improvement of public uses and benefits from these resources.

The objectives established to meet this goal are:

- 1) To determine the priority issues in interstate fisheries management, including the need for habitat conservation;
- 2) Develop, review, and monitor the implementation and enforcement of interstate fisheries management plans (FMP);
- 3) Recommend to the states, and where appropriate, Regional Fisheries Management Councils and U.S. Government Agencies, strategies and activities to benefit interstate fisheries;
- 4) Conduct and coordinate research and monitoring essential to the preparation, implementation, and revision of interstate fisheries management plans;
- 5) Improve outreach to the various segments of the fisheries community in order to promote public participation in fisheries management;
- 6) Provide administrative support, including clerical, bookkeeping, and technical oversight to accomplish the above objectives.

Commission activities in five major areas were identified to work toward these objectives: 1) *Fisheries Management*, 2) *Fisheries Statistics*, 3) *Research and Stock Assessment*, 4) *Law Enforcement* and 5) *Habitat*. Activities conducted under these major work areas are reported separately below.



I. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

The Commission used grant funds to work within the areas listed above as follows:

1) Staff Resources

Interstate Fisheries Management Program staff fully or partially funded with this grant include six Fishery Management Plan Coordinators and one Administrative Assistant. Coordinated planning efforts with the Regional Fishery Management Councils is listed to highlight the cooperative fisheries management efforts sought by the Commission and promoted by the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. ISFMP staff divides this workload as follows:

ISFMP Director (Robert Beal)

Work on ISFMP direction, coordination among FMPs, coordination with Commission member states and planning partners such as the Regional Fishery Management Councils, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and conservation organizations. Work to improve coordination and integration of ISFMP with other Commission activities. Additionally, coordinate the striped bass management activities.

Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator (Dr. Joseph Desfosse)

- Atlantic Croaker
- Atlantic Menhaden
- Atlantic Sea Herring
- Red Drum (coordination with South Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
- Spanish Mackerel (coordination with South Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
- Spot
- Spotted Seatrout

Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator (Megan Gamble)

- Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Sharks
- Striped Bass

Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator (Michael Lewis)

- Black Sea Bass (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
- Bluefish (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
- Northern Shrimp
- Scup (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
- Summer Flounder (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)

Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator (Lydia Munger)

- American Eel
- Shad and River Herring
- Tautog
- Winter Flounder

Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator (Carrie Selberg)
Horseshoe Crab
Weakfish

Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator (Heather Stirratt)
American Lobster
Atlantic Sturgeon
Tautog

Administrative Assistant (Laura Huggins)

Provides administrative staff support to ISFMP staff, assists in coordination with other Commission departments.

This level of ISFMP staffing strives for the timely distribution of meeting agendas, meeting minutes, technical and advisory panel reports to species management boards and interested parties to facilitate the open, timely, innovative, and logical development, amendment, and implementation of fishery management plans as desired by the Commission's member states and required by the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. Further, ISFMP and other Commission staff receive and handle numerous requests for information or comments on management actions from members of the public, interested fishing organizations, other agencies with an interest in marine fisheries management, and members of Congress.

2) Travel and meeting costs for management boards, technical committees and advisory panels

The Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act placed increased burdens on the entire Commission, particularly the Commission's member state agencies. To partially offset this burden, grant funds were used to cover travel and meeting costs for FMP activities for the following species. Significant activities on individual species are included in this discussion.

American Eel

The American Eel Management Board determined that all states are fully implementing and enforcing the American Eel FMP. The Eel Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee continued to review the states monitoring efforts to ensure that sufficient data is being collected to update the assessment in 2004.

American Lobster

The Lobster Management Board approved Addendum III to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fisheries Management plan. The Addendum established the management programs for the lobster management areas in order to achieve the egg production targets.

The Commission sponsored an American Lobster Transferable Trap Workshop. The goals of the workshop were to educate participants about transferable trap programs and explore the utility of transferable trap programs as an additional management tool for American lobster.

The Technical Committee and its subcommittees completed an evaluation of the stock status in Area 2, continued to explore alternative biological reference points, and developed analytical tools to estimate the effects of v-notching.

Atlantic Croaker

The South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board determined that all states are fully implementing and enforcing the Atlantic croaker management program. The Management Board also heard an update on the croaker stock assessment.

Atlantic Menhaden

The Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee developed responses to charges from the management board addressing the proposed changes to the overfishing definition, current harvesting practices concerning age-0 menhaden, evaluated potential management measures and questions regarding the current age structure of the population.

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board reviewed and approved the annual state compliance reports for 2001 and the 2002 FMP Review. During this meeting the Board agreed to initiate the addendum process to adjust the biological reference points that are contained in Amendment 1.

Atlantic Sea Herring (in coordination with the New England Fishery Management Council)

The Atlantic Sea Herring Section reviewed the annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the 2001 fishing year, and established the 2003 fishing year specifications for optimum yield from the fishery (OY), foreign fishing ventures, and total allowable catches for each management area.

Atlantic Sturgeon

The Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board determined that all states are fully implementing and enforcing the Atlantic sturgeon management program.

Black Sea Bass (joint with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)

The Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum VI to the Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan established initial possession limits, triggers and adjusted possession limits for Quarters II, III and IV in 2002. The Management Board also approved Amendment 13 to the FMP which established commercial state by state quotas for the years 2003 and 2004.

The Black Sea Bass Monitoring Committee met in July 2002 to review the latest stock assessment information and make recommendations for the black sea bass total allowable landings (TAL) and commercial management measures for 2003. The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and set the black sea bass commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and commercial and recreational management measures for 2003.

Bluefish

The Bluefish Management Board met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to set the bluefish commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and commercial management measures for 2003.

Horseshoe Crab

The Horseshoe Crab Management Board determined that all states are fully implementing and enforcing the horseshoe crab management program. The Board also reviewed the monitoring efforts, including pilot benthic trawl survey, and state landing information in preparation for the upcoming stock assessment.

Northern Shrimp

The Northern Shrimp Section approved the Public Hearing Draft of Amendment 1 to the Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. A series of public hearings were held to solicit comment on the Draft Amendment. The Section established the fishery specifications for the 2003 northern shrimp fishery.

Red Drum

The South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board approved Amendment 2 to the red Drum FMP. The Amendment establishes commercial and recreational management programs, biological reference points, and monitoring requirements for the states. The Board also approved the state implementation plans to come into compliance with Amendment 2.

Scup (joint with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)

The Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addenda V and VII to the Scup FMP. Addendum V to the Scup FMP establishes permanent state-shares for the commercial fishery during the summer period (May 1 – October 31). Addendum VII for the Scup FMP establishes the management program for use in the 2002 recreational fishery.

The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in August 2002 and established the scup commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and commercial and recreational management measures for 2003.

Spanish Mackerel

The South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board determined that all states are fully implementing and enforcing the Spanish Mackerel management program.

Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Sharks

The Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Shark Management Board and the full Commission approved the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Dogfish. (Attachment #1)

Shad and River Herring

The Shad and River Herring Management Board determined that all states are fully implementing and enforcing the Shad and River Herring management program. The Board reviewed

recommendations for the upcoming American shad stock assessment and approved a one-year delay for the peer review of the stock assessment.

Spot

The South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board determined that all states are fully implementing and enforcing the Spot management program.

Spotted Seatrout

The South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board determined that all states are fully implementing and enforcing the Spotted Seatrout management program.

Striped Bass

The Striped Bass Management Board approved the Public Hearing Draft of Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for public comment and hearing. A series of 23 public hearings were held to solicit public comment.

The Technical Committee developed a stock assessment for peer review at the 36th SARC.

The Advisory Panel met twice, at the first meeting the Panel provided input on the approval of the Public Hearing Draft of the Amendment. At the second meeting, the Panel reviewed public comment and provided advice to the Management Board on the approval of the final Amendment.

Summer Flounder(joint with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)

The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in August 2002 (Attachment ML-1) to set the summer flounder commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and commercial and recreational management measures for 2003.

Tautog

The Tautog Management Board approved Addendum III to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Tautog. The Addendum established updated biological reference points and required the states to implement management measures to achieve these goals.

Weakfish

The Weakfish Management Board approved Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Weakfish. (Attachment #2) The Amendment establishes biological reference points, recreational and commercial management programs, bycatch management program, and mandatory monitoring requirements.

Winter Flounder

The Technical Committee developed a stock assessment that was peer reviewed at the 36th SARC.

Advisory Panels

Grant funds allowed Advisory Panels for the following species to meet to discuss contemporary management and planning issues.

American Lobster
Atlantic Menhaden
Northern Shrimp
Red Drum
Scup and Black Sea Bass
Spiny Dogfish
Striped Bass
Summer Flounder
Tautog

II. FISHERIES STATISTICS

Commission staff continued to serve as active members of various ACCSP committees, including the Coordinating Council, the Operations Committee, the Recreational and Commercial Technical Committees, the Computer Technical Committee, the Discard Prioritization Committee, the Biological Review Panel, and several ACCSP subcommittees. Activities conducted through the meetings included development and approval of Technical Source Document V (biological and discard modules), development and approval of the ACCSP Strategic Plan, and finalization of the ACCSP Outreach Strategic Plan. Commission staff also participated in the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) program through membership on work groups.

The Committee on Economics and Social Sciences continued development of the ACCSP social/economic data collection program, mainly through the development of standard methods for collection of information regarding fishing communities.

III. RESEARCH AND STOCK ASSESSMENT

The Commission supported travel to the spring and fall Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) meetings for review of various stock assessments, including summer flounder, scup, striped bass, northern shrimp, and winter flounder. No external peer reviews were conducted during this grant period.

The ISFMP Policy Board approved a revision to the Commission's Stock Assessment Peer Review Process, with the major change being the inclusion of a reconciliation process for Commission external peer reviews. The Policy Board also approved the orientation and technical guidance documents for ASMFC technical support groups. All documents were published during this grant period.

The Committee on Economics and Social Sciences conducted a workshop for ASMFC Commissioners on use of economic information in the fisheries management decision-making process. Planning of a seminar on use of social sciences information was also initiated. A

workshop was conducted to evaluate use of bio-economic modeling for the striped bass fishery. A detailed report was developed for presentation to the full committee. The Commission hired an intern for several months to assist with activities in the social-economic program.

The NEAMAP Board and Operations Committee developed a program design document, a 5-year implementation plan, and a 2003 operations plan. The NEAMAP Data Management Subcommittee developed recommendations for a centralized data management system to house summary fisheries-independent data. The NEAMAP Trawl Subcommittee was appointed and will address issues regarding a regional nearshore trawl survey for the Northeast Region.

The ASMFC Power Plant Panel continued activities to conduct a coastwide assessment to evaluate cumulative impacts of power plant impingement and entrainment. The Panel approved the quantitative methods for linking impingement and entrainment losses to the VPA for Atlantic menhaden. A draft report was submitted by ASA Communications for compilation of impingement and entrainment data for Atlantic coast power plants from New York through South Carolina. An early life history mortality workshop was conducted to develop estimates of natural mortality rates by life stage for menhaden.

The Commission continued development of a multispecies assessment model focused on Atlantic menhaden and three key predator species (striped bass, weakfish, and bluefish). The basic model was reviewed and approved by the Atlantic Menhaden Multispecies Subcommittee. A contract was issued to Dr. Lance Garrison for expansion of the model to include additional prey species and feedback to the predator species. A workshop was conducted to develop recommendations for linking multispecies model results to single species assessments and management. Commission staff worked with University of Miami researchers to secure funding for the development of a spatial multispecies model.

The Commission initiated the development of an ageing manual in order to standardize ageing methods for Commission-managed species. The MSC Ageing Subcommittee has decided to rely on general sections developed by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Committee for a similar manual. Commission staff assisted in the development of an ageing workshop for striped bass to be held in early 2003.

The Interstate Tagging Committee initiated development of an issues paper to provide further details on citizen-based tagging programs and the certification program in response to concerns expressed by the ISFMP Policy Board. The guidance document for responsible aquaculture development was approved by the ISFMP Policy Board following several public comment periods. The MSC Conservation Equivalency Subcommittee initiated development of recommendations for improving the use of conservation equivalency by the Commission. The workshop report on summer flounder regulatory discards was completed but not published, since it needs to be presented to the ISFMP Policy Board for approval.

Commission staff met with ICF Consulting to initiated development of the American lobster stock assessment database. Commission staff also participated as a member of the Northeast Aquatic

Nuisance Species Regional Panel, the EPA Cooling Water Technology Steering Committee, the Lobster Disease Steering Committee, and the MARFIN Panel.

The Commission developed a document entitled "Guidance Relative to Development of Responsible Aquaculture Activities in Atlantic Coast States" (Attachment #3) to assist Atlantic coast states in addressing aquaculture activities in an environmentally sound manner. This project was conducted by funding provided under this grant and other sources of funding.

IV. LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Commission used funds from this grant to fund a Law Enforcement Coordinator on a part-time contractual basis. This Coordinator is responsible for communication within the Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) and between the LEC and the Commission's management and research programs. Also, the coordinator ensures that each year all states report on enforcement activities for all of the species managed by the Commission.

The Law Enforcement Committee held a series of conference call and held two meetings in 2002. The major topics addressed by the Committee include:

- Review and Comment on the Aquaculture Guidance Document
- Species Management Activity – The LEC commented on tautog, American Lobster, horseshoe crab, striped bass, and weakfish.
- Update the Guidelines for Resource Managers
- Development for a short-range plan for the LEC
- Establishing Updated Law Enforcement Reporting Requirements

V. HABITAT

The Commission's Habitat Program is conducted under the auspices of the Habitat Committee. In addition to the Habitat Committee, the Habitat and Fishery Management Plan Committee works specifically on the incorporation of habitat information into fishery management plans. Several other subcommittees that work with the Habitat committee were active during this grant period including the Beach Nourishment and the Shellfish Bed Substrate subcommittee. Staff support for the Habitat Program includes a part-time Habitat Specialist and two contractual people.

In addition to general support provided to the Habitat Committee, staff continued work on the Shellfish Bed Habitat paper which outlines the habitat and its importance to ASMFC managed species. Staff also worked with the program's contractors to complete a paper on beach nourishment and its possible impacts on ASMFC managed species and their habitat. Based on an ASMFC report from 2000, the Habitat Committee asked States to prepare SAV conservation plans on a voluntary basis. The Commission reviewed the reports received from States and completed work on a SAV brochure (Attachment #4) in response to needs outlined in these reports.

Staff also attended meetings to coordinate work with the Fishery Management Councils and the EFH Steering Committee. Staff attended the South Atlantic Council Habitat Advisory Panel meeting.

Four editions of the *Habitat Hotline-Atlantic* were published and distributed in 2002.