

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Northeast Region
State, Federal & Constituent Programs Division



COMPLETION REPORT

Grantee: ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

Project No: 3-ACA-001

Grant No: NA57FG0160

Project Title: A COOPERATIVE STATE-FEDERAL PROGRAM FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC COASTAL FISHERIES

Period Covered: 03/01/95 - 03/31/96

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Approved by: _____

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Statutory Funding Authority: Anadromous Fish Conservation Act

(P.L. 89-304)

Chesapeake Bay Studies

Endangered Species Act

Interjurisdictional Fisheries

Act (Title III of P.L. 99-659)

Magnuson Act

Oyster Disease Research

Saltonstall-Kennedy

Unallied Industry Projects

Unallied Science Projects

ACFCMA

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Final Performance Report
Grant Number NA57FG0160
A Cooperative State-Federal Program for the
Conservation of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Period of Performance: March 1, 1995 - March 31, 1996

Period Covered by this Report: ^{MARCH} September 1, 1995 - March 31, 1996

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;
- 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 four major areas were identified to work toward these objectives: 1) *Fisheries Management*, 2) *Fisheries Statistics*, 3) *Research and Stock Assessment*, and 4) *Law Enforcement*. Activities conducted under these major work areas are reported separately below.

I. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

The grant proposal contains three specific areas to address the efficiency of the Commission's interstate fisheries management efforts, and outreach of these efforts. The areas are 1) enhanced staff resources to more adequately support management board activities, 2) travel and meeting costs for management boards, technical committees, and other Commission groups, including Citizen Advisory Committees, and 3) outreach to the fishing community.

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 the ISFMP Director, three Fishery Management Plan Coordinators, and one Administrative Assistant. The ISFMP 1996 Work Plan (Attachment 1) outlines the broad work plan for 1995/96. 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 divide this workload as follows:

ISFMP Director (George Lapointe)

- Northern Shrimp
- Atlantic Sea Herring (joint FMP with New England Fishery Management Council)
- Atlantic Menhaden

Anadromous Species Coordinator (John Field)

- Striped Bass
- Shad and River Herring
- Atlantic Sturgeon
- American Eel (including guidance on horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*) conservation and management)

Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator (Frank Lockhart)

- Weakfish

American Lobster (joint FMP with New England Fishery Management Council)
Winter Flounder (joint FMP with New England Fishery Management Council)
Spot
Croaker
Red Drum (joint FMP with South Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
Spanish Mackerel (joint FMP with South Atlantic Fishery Management Council)

Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator (John Carmichael)

Summer Flounder (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
Bluefish (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
Tautog
Scup (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
Black Sea Bass (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
Spotted Seatrout

Administrative Assistant (Alicon Morgan)

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

This level of ISFMP staffing allows 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 & meeting costs for management boards, technical and advisory committees

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. Further FMP related activities are discussed in the annual review of Commission FMPs (Attachment 2).

American Eel, including guidance on horseshoe crab conservation and management

- formation of Species Management Board, Technical Committee, Plan Development Team

- organization of symposium on the biology and management of American eel as part of the 1996 Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference

American Lobster (coordination with New England Fisheries Management Council)

- begin Amendment 3 to American lobster FMP, including assumption of lead in management planning from New England Fishery Management Council
- with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) organized and sponsored A Review of the Population Dynamics of American Lobster in the Northeast (Attachment 3).
- completed formation of Citizen's Advisory Panel for American Lobster (Attachment 4).

Atlantic Sea Herring (coordination with New England Fisheries Management Council)

- begin Amendment 3 to Atlantic Sea Herring FMP
- work with NMFS, NEFMC on allowing herring joint venture fishing as permitted by the recent preliminary management plan for Atlantic Sea Herring.

Atlantic Menhaden

- as outlined in the Atlantic menhaden FMP, monitored fishery and FMP effectiveness

Atlantic Sturgeon

- begin development of Amendment 1 to sturgeon FMP
- sponsored workshop on the current status and management needs of Atlantic Sturgeon. One outcome of this workshop was the recommendation for a moratorium on all harvest of Atlantic Sturgeon on the Atlantic Coast
- The management Board urged state members to impose a 2 year moratorium on sturgeon harvest before Amendment 1 is completed to afford maximum protection to sturgeon stocks as soon as possible.
- generated Breeding and Stocking Protocol for captive Atlantic Sturgeon, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Hudson River Foundation.

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

- approved a draft Black Sea Bass FMP
- work with MAFMC on a workable quota management system for black sea bass

Bluefish (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)

- continue work on Amendment 1 to the bluefish FMP
- jointly with MAFMC, set management measures (bag limit, commercial quota) for 1996
- convened two meetings of Bluefish Advisory Panel to discuss current, needed management measures and the status of the bluefish resource

South Atlantic State/Federal Management Board (Croaker, Spot, Spanish Mackerel, Red Drum)

- met to discuss status of FMPs, other contemporary fishery management issues

Tautog

- completed Tautog FMP (Attachment 5).
- completed formation of Tautog Citizen Advisory Panel met to assist with FMP development.

Northern Shrimp

- held annual public hearing on the 1995/96 Northern Shrimp season. management measures (Attachment 6).
- completed formation of Northern Shrimp Citizen's Advisory Panel (Attachment 4), met to discuss need for Amendment 1 to Northern Shrimp FMP.

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

- worked on Amendment 10 to the Summer Flounder FMP to address concerns of states and fishermen regarding changes in the summer flounder quota management system.
- jointly with MAFMC, set management measures (bag limit, commercial quota) for 1996.

Scup (joint FMP with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council)

- approved scup FMP
- met with MAFMC to devise scup quota management system for inclusion in FMP through framework measures

Striped Bass

- continued implementation of Amendment 5 to striped bass FMP including work on Virtual Population Analysis (VPA) to use in future quota setting.
- worked with the NMFS to address concerns relating to proposed opening of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for striped bass fishing.
- worked with NMFS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to prepare report to Congress on striped bass management programs along the Atlantic Coast.

Weakfish

- neared completion on Amendment 3 to the Weakfish FMP (Attachment 7).
- worked with the NMFS to develop compatible weakfish regulations in the EEZ, pursuant to the authority provided by the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act.

Winter Flounder

- Winter Flounder Management Board met to discuss implications of latest stock assessment (March 1996) on the ASMFC Winter Flounder FMP because the most recent estimate of natural mortality resulted in states not meeting the F₃₀ interim target.

Shad and River Herring

- The Shad and River Herring Management Board, in October 1995, used the emergency provisions of the ISFMP Charter so that states could not expand ocean fisheries for shad because of concern over the ocean intercept fishery in spring 1996.

Grant funds were used for staff travel to participate in public information meetings or public hearings to gather public opinion on management actions pursuant to FMP development or amendment for the following species:

Shad and River Herring
Northern Shrimp
Tautog
Summer Flounder
Weakfish

Additionally, grant funds allowed Citizen Advisory Panels for the following species to meet discuss contemporary management and planning issues. A list of ASMFC Citizen Advisory Panels is included in Attachment 4.

Northern Shrimp
Bluefish
Winter Flounder
American Lobster
Tautog
Striped Bass
Weakfish
Shad and River Herring

II. FISHERIES STATISTICS

Efforts to build building policy-level consensus for the design and implementation of a unified coastwide fisheries statistics program continued during 1995 through funding under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. Based on policy-level discussions at the May 1995 Fisheries Statistics Workshop held in Charlotte, North Carolina an Options Paper was developed by the Fisheries Statistics Plan Design Team outlining the options for the technical design of the ACCSP. (Attachment 8 - Fisheries Statistics Options Paper) On September 5, 1995, the Commission's Statistics Committee reviewed and finalized the Memorandum of Understanding for the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. (Attachment 9 - Draft minutes Sept. 5, 1995 Statistics Committee) The Statistics Committee also reviewed and developed consensus recommendations on the preferred options for designing the technical aspects of this program. On November 2, 1995 the MOU

was signed by the state and federal signatory partners to this program. (Attachment 10 - ACCSP MOU) As part of the Commission's Outreach Program, a Fishing Industry Statistics Workshop was held on December 11, 1995 in Alexandria, Virginia to obtain industry and fishermen input into program design, and to gather information from the industry perspective on issues concerning outreach and marketing. (Attachment 11 - Minutes December 11, 1995 Industry Workshop) The adhoc Computer Technical Workgroup met on February 7-8, 1996 to examine technical aspects of computer system design in support of the ACCSP. (Attachment 12 - Minutes February 7-8, 1996 Computer Technical Workgroup) Consensus recommendations from the Statistics Committee and the Fishing Industry Statistics Workshop on program design were forwarded to the ACCSP Coordinating Council for consideration at the March 14 meeting in Norfolk, Virginia (Attachment 13 - Options Paper Recommendations & Attachment 14 - Minutes March 14, 1996 ACCSP Coordinating Council). The ACCSP Coordinating Council appointed state, federal, and Commission personnel to the Fisheries Statistics Operations Committee, and further tasked the committee with several specific tasks to be addressed in April 1996.

The Commission's Northeast Fisheries Statistics Committee met on November 20-21, 1995 in Providence, Rhode Island. The committee discussed and evaluated the Southeast regional programs for recreational and commercial fisheries statistics, discussed the problems and solutions for ensuring consistent biological sampling in the Northeast Region, and discussed the Northeast regional computer system and data collection programs. The committee was also provided an update on the ACCSP and the potential role of the Commission statistics technical committees in support of the ACCSP design and implementation. (Attachment 15 - Agenda November 20-21, 1995 Northeast Fisheries Statistics Committee)

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission staff provided coordination with the Pacific and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's in terms of regional recreational and commercial fisheries statistics data collection programs. Commission staff attended meetings of the Recreational and Commercial Fisheries Information Networks for the Southeast Region, and participated in the RecFIN(SE) Charter/Headboat Workshop held in New Orleans, Louisiana on February 24-March 1, 1996. Staff from all three Commissions also met in Portland, Oregon on February 21-24, 1996 to discuss and coordinate regional statistics initiatives on the three coasts. Coordination with other regional programs and the potential development of a national marine fisheries statistics program is a major goal under the ACCSP.

The Commission and the National Marine Fisheries Service's Northeast Fisheries Science Center have been working jointly to develop a cooperative program for the collection of biological data from the commercial fishing sector in the Northeast region. Two regional meetings were held in August 1995 between Center personnel and state representatives to facilitate the exchange of information on current data collection programs, and to discuss possible cooperative arrangements between the states and the Center. Discussions were continued among policy representatives through a meeting of the Commission's ISFMP

Policy Board in October. (Attachment 16 - Minutes October 6, 1995 ISFMP Policy Board) Commission and Center personnel have drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (Attachment 18 - Biological Sampling MOU) and a Cooperative Agreement (Attachment 17 - Biological Sampling Cooperative Agreement) for a cooperative state-federal biological sampling program for the Northeast Region. These documents will be presented to the Commission's Executive Committee for review and approval in May 1996.

III. RESEARCH AND STOCK ASSESSMENT

The grant proposal for *A Cooperative State-Federal Program for the Conservation of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries* stated that the Commission would hire a Stock Assessment Biologist to assist the Commission and its member states in assessing the status of Atlantic coastal fish stocks. The Commission, at this time, has decided to forego hiring of personnel and use the funds to educate and train state fisheries personnel in stock assessment methodologies. The Commission will sponsor state personnel to attend national and international workshops/meetings on stock assessment and population dynamic principles. This process will be designed to educate state personnel on the biases, assumptions, and proper use of the major stock assessment methods. The benefits of this process will accrue to both the Commission and the individual states by increasing the number of qualified stock assessment biologists capable of conducting state, regional, and coastal stock assessments.

During 1995, the Commission's Management and Science Committee completed two reports on compilation of state and federal stocking (Attachment 19 - MSC Stocking Report) and mariculture programs (Attachment 20 - MSC Mariculture Report) on the Atlantic coast. The mariculture report contains information such as the state contact person for mariculture activities, permit and leasing requirements, federal coordination activities, health policies and restrictions on activities, and ongoing research projects and data collection activities. The stocking report contains information on stocking of Commission managed species, including stocking frequency, purpose of the stocking program, ongoing research projects and data collection activities related to stocking, identification of cooperative efforts, and permitting requirements. At the October 16-17, 1995 meeting in Rehoboth, Delaware, the MSC reviewed the results of the protected species and fisheries interactions workshop, developed a process for prioritization of unmet research needs identified in the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program, and reviewed the 1995 ISFMP fishery management annual plan reviews. (Attachment 21 - Minutes October 16-17, 1995 Management and Science Committee)

The Commission provided funding and coordination of state participation in the November 27-December 1, 1995 Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) for the review and evaluation of Northeast regional stock assessments. State and Commission representatives assisted in the evaluation of assessments for long-finned and short-finned squid, Atlantic herring, winter flounder, and the Northeast groundfish complex.

The Committee on Economics and Social Sciences met on November 1, 1995 to develop a process for integration of social and economic information into the Commission's fishery management process. The committee recommended that one social scientist and one economist be appointed to each species technical committee and plan development team to assist in compilation of relevant social and economic technical information and analyses, and to draft social and economic sections of Commission fishery management plans. (Attachment 22 - Minutes November 1, 1995 Committee on Economics and Social Sciences)

IV. LAW ENFORCEMENT

Credible law enforcement is an essential component effective fisheries management. Coastwide, the states have been hard pressed to keep their law enforcement capabilities commensurate with the growth in fisheries. Part of the problem is the basic amount of law enforcement resources available. An additional component lies in making the best use of the limited resources available through effective coordination and cooperation among the states and with federal agencies.

The Law Enforcement Committee met October 31, 1995 and considered problems relating to states applying their laws to fish harvested from other states, greater coordination with the federal government, budget estimating for enforcing fishery management plans, and greater law enforcement input to the fishery management planning process. (Attachment 23 - Minutes October 31, 1995 Law Enforcement Committee)