

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



COMPLETION REPORT

Grantee: POTOMAC RIVER FISHERIES COMMISSION

Project No: 3-ACA-047

Grant No: NA76FG0466

Project Title: COMPLIANCE WITH THE ATLANTIC COASTAL FISHERY  
COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT ACT

Period Covered: 10/01/97 - 03/31/99

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: APRIL 30, 1999

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
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**Report Period October 1, 1997 through April 30, 1999**

**April 30, 1999**

This grant funded or partially funded four jobs.

**JOB 1 – PUBLIC HEARING/EDUCATION**

**(Category 1 of the funding priorities identified in Section 804 of the Act)**

This job involved the cost of additional legal advertising to hold public hearings (as required by the Maryland-Virginia Potomac River Compact) for the adoption or modification of fisheries regulations dealing with such things as size limits, seasons, creel limits, quotas and harvest reporting requirements being stipulated in the many and varied Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission adopted fishery management plans. In addition, this job included funding for the public education cost of information necessary for effective implementation of these plans under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act.

During the grant period a public hearing was held in April 1998. Items related to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission fishery management plans that were considered and adopted as a result of that April public hearing are as follows:

1. A modification to the Potomac River Fisheries Commission's regulation sections that required formal advertised public hearing to change annual seasons, creel limits and size limits of finfish. The modification allows the Commission to now adopt changes to annual seasons, creel limits and size limits for all species with Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission adopted fishery management plans by Order of the Commission, which can be set at any public meeting of the Commission.

Three regulation sections had to be modified to accomplish this change. This modification has the same legal effectiveness of a regulation but helps reduce or minimize legal advertising costs associated with future changes of this nature. It also allows the Commission to act in a timely manner to meet requirements of Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission fishery management plans, with which we must comply.

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Changes made to annual seasons, creel limits and size limits at the April public hearing, and subsequent regularly scheduled public meetings, necessitated the printing and distribution of thousands of new fish size limit charts. These publications have become known locally as the "blue sheets" and are widely available throughout the area. They contribute greatly to the public's understanding of the rules for fishing in the Potomac.

2. A modification to the Potomac River Fisheries Commission's regulations pertaining to pound net by-catch restrictions was necessary to conform with the provisions of the fishery management plans for Summer flounder and weakfish

The Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan, adopted by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, had no by-catch tolerance for undersized Summer flounder. However, since 1984, regulations of this Commission allowed the pound net fishermen a five percent by-catch tolerance for undersized Summer flounder. That particular provision caused the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder Management Board to find this Commission "out-of-compliance" with the management plan. New regulations adopted by this Commission after the April public hearing do not allow any by-catch tolerance for this species. The Summer Flounder Management Board then found us "in-compliance" with the management plan.

A provision of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Weakfish (Sea Trout) Management Plan allowed a one-bushel per day legal size weakfish by-catch when the season for that species was closed. New regulations adopted by this Commission after the April public hearing incorporated that provision into our laws pertaining to the pound net fishermen.

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**JOB 2 – ENHANCED MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS OF FISHERIES DATA  
(Category 2 of the funding priorities identified in Section 804 of the Act)**

To effectively implement provisions of the varied management plans under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, timely management and analysis of harvest data is essential. This job funded a data entry clerk to enter fisheries data which enabled more timely collection and maintenance of harvest estimates for the Potomac. This improved the timeliness and accuracy of harvest information the Commission needs to meet reporting and management requirements of the various fishery management plans.

Commercial data is gathered from mandatory weekly catch reports filed by each fisherman licensed by the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. As part of the data enhancement funded under Job 3, weekly harvest reports are scanned and the individual fisherman's daily harvest data is entered. More specifics on this aspect of data management and analysis are outlined under Job 3.

Sport data is gathered from the recreational striped bass permit log sheets issued to each boat owner and returned at the end of the specified season. This information is needed to avoid overages of state quotas and to comply with the reporting requirements of the respective fishery management plans.

During this grant period permit log sheets were being returned after the close of the 1997 fall season which ran August 30<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup>. Of the 4,193 permits issued for that season, 3,046 were returned by January 26, 1998, each reporting the daily striped bass fishing activity for the vessel to which it was issued. The data entry clerk entered the data for each fishing trip as reported. The data was compiled for presentation in our 1997 Striped Bass Harvest Report submitted to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The ASMFC Striped Bass Management Board then determines if this Commission is "in-compliance" with the requirements of the Striped Bass Management Plan by reviewing data presented in this report.

Also, during this grant period, the data entry clerk issued an additional 1,398 recreational striped bass permits for the 1998 spring striped bass season which ran April 25<sup>th</sup> through May 10<sup>th</sup>. The log sheets are requested to be returned within ten days of the season closing date and 743 of them were returned by July 25, 1998. This data will be included in the 1998 Striped Bass Harvest Report to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

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**JOB 3 – FISHERIES DATA ENHANCEMENT – UPDATE OF  
LICENSE/PERMIT/REPORTING SYSTEMS SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE  
(Category 2 of the funding priorities identified in Section 804 of the Act)**

In November 1997 this Commission placed newspaper advertisements soliciting proposals to develop a suite of customized database applications, hardware acquisition, installation, and setup that would include operating system and commercial software acquisition, installation and setup, and training on system and application operations. The deadline for proposals was December 12, 1997. Three proposals were received and after review, the Commission awarded the job to Custom Computer Applications. Actual work on the project began in mid January 1998.

The first phase of the project included the purchase of a ProSignia 200 6/233 Small Business Server and Smart-UPS uninterrupted power supply for the network server. Six new Gateway personal computers with network capabilities were purchased and connected to the business server.

The next phase involved the purchase and installation of *Windows95* and *Microsoft Office 97* software. The funding of this job allowed the Potomac River Fisheries Commission to convert data processing from a slow running database system operating under the *DOS* environment to more reliable and efficient *Windows®* based software and inter-office network. This facilitates more accurate and timely processing of information necessary to meet reporting requirements of the fishery management plans. It will also allow us to transmit data electronically to NMFS Northeast Region via our working arrangement with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the local National Marine Fisheries Service office in Hampton, Virginia. This helps us meet the data reporting requirements outlined in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act.

The most time consuming and complex part of this project involved the custom software development. As noted earlier in this report under Job 2, commercial fishermen are required to submit weekly harvest reports. Between twelve and fifteen thousand individual weekly reports are submitted each year that show daily commercial fishing activity. The information provided on these reports is entered into a database. We then extract data required for submission to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission so that compliance with fishery management plans can be determined for any particular species. We estimate that approximately another fifteen thousand individual reports are submitted each year showing no commercial fishing activity. These too must be entered into the database.

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Part of the custom software design included developing a tracking system for the weekly catch reports whereby each licensee is issued a set of bar code labels when a commercial license is purchased. The label contains information on the licensee, the commercial license number, the specific gear type and the week ending date for the report period in bar code format. This label is then scanned using an optical reader. This improves efficiency and accuracy for compiling the harvest data.

Other improvements to the license/permit/reporting system included converting approximately 60,000 lines of dBase code to Microsoft Access. Work on this segment of the job was not accepted by the Commission prior to the original grant closeout date of September 30, 1998. We applied for and received an extension of the closing date. Overall, most of the project was completed and accepted during the closeout extension. However, a small portion of the custom software application still needs some work so a portion of the grant budgeted funds were not used. This Commission will pay the final payment for that specific part of the job (approximately \$2,900) from non-grant funds upon completion and final acceptance by the Commission.

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**JOB 4 – FISHERIES DATA ENHANCEMENT – CONVERSION OF dBASE and  
manual historical finfish data to Microsoft Access®  
(Category 2 of the funding priorities identified in Section 804 of the Act)**

This job involved developing software necessary to convert existing harvest records into Microsoft Access® format for use in developing management strategies and reporting historical harvest information in connection with Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission fishery management plans.

This job, while not directly a part of the previous job, was related because it would use the new software installed as part of that job. It was not done prior to the original grant closeout date of September 30, 1998 or the extension of the closeout and therefore the grant budgeted funds were not used. This Commission will either reapply for this work as part of a new grant proposal, or pay for this job (approximately \$5,000) with other Commission non-grant funds upon completion and acceptance.