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

COMPLETION REPORT

Grantee: MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Project No: _____

Grant No: NA36FU0336

Project Title: FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION
INITIATIVE

Period Covered: AUGUST 01, 1993 - DECEMBER 31, 1994

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- 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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ANNUAL REPORT
August 1, 1993 - December 30, 1994

Recipient: Maryland Department of Natural Resources,
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with extension to December 31, 1994

Project Title: Fishery Management Plan Implementation
Initiative

TECHNICAL REPORT

Overview

Beginning with the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement, certain Bay fisheries are managed in accordance with Fishery Management Plans (FMP) prepared for individual species. These Plans are developed, adopted and implemented by the states which comprise the Bay watershed. A total of four full-time professionals are assigned to the fishery management plan preparation in Maryland. Virginia has two professionals assigned to the fishery management planning process. NOAA monies fund two of the Maryland positions and provide for travel expenses for coordination with Virginia fishery management staff. To date, 15 Plans have been completed or are nearly finished covering 24 species. These Plans provide the guidance and objectives for various research projects, surveys, regulation, legislation and coordination actions. Fishery management in the Chesapeake Bay, in large part, focuses on implementing the action items that are defined by the Bay FMPs. Legislation and regulations are adopted, implemented and amended in accordance with the FMPs. Implementation progress is annually assessed and the Plans are thoroughly evaluated every five years. As a result of the review process, new strategies may be developed to continue the management, enhancement and restoration of living resources in the Bay.

1994 was an important year for Chesapeake Bay fisheries and the management process. Fishery management staff participated in several significant management actions:

- * The development of a schedule whereby each Fishery Management Plan will be reviewed, updated and amended on a regular basis.
- * Major amendments have been instituted in the fishing license structure and to the entry system into the State's commercial fishing industry.
- * The 1994 Annual Progress Report for Striped Bass was completed. Striped Bass responded so well to the management practices established by the Striped Bass Coastal and Bay FMP that the species has been deemed "Recovered."
- * The 1993 Crab Action Plan, a product and extension of the 1989 Blue Crab FMP was produced in response to increased fishing pressure and resulted in several regulatory and legislative changes to stabilize, and in some case, reduce fishing effort. These efforts will continue in 1995 with the Maryland Blue Crab Steering Committee, which will be working cooperatively with Virginia groups towards improved Baywide management. A briefing document is underway which will summarize biology, ecology, fisheries, and current stock status and will be used as a point of reference throughout the steering committee's activities.
- * The Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan is under revision. Significant text has been added to the biology, ecology, and habitat sections, based on the current research.
- * As part of the fishery management plan preparation process, public information meetings were conducted by FMP staff for horseshoe crabs, black and red drum, king and Spanish mackerel, black sea bass, and blue crab.
- * The draft Chesapeake Bay Catfish Fishery Management Plan is being prepared. A workgroup of scientists, harvesters, managers, retailers, and the public has been formed to guide the planning process. A survey of commercial harvesters was conducted to characterize the fishery, its economic importance, and biological characteristics of the harvest.

- * FMP staff responded to public complaints concerning declining white perch in a tidal pond of the Patapsco River. Research was conducted on white perch habitat requirements and stock assessments. Sampling was conducted to determine if suitable white perch habitat existed in the pond. Impacts of recreational and commercial fishing activities on white perch stocks were examined. The results are compiled in a report entitled "Boyd's Pond: A Look at Its Importance to White Perch Populations."
- * FMP staff remain active in the Living Resources Subcommittee which, among other responsibilities, oversees the implementation process for the FMPs. Staff attended the public meeting of the Executive Council which featured information booths from Bay research and management projects such as water quality monitoring by Maryland and Virginia, best management strategies for Pennsylvania farms, Baywide efforts such as nutrient and toxic reduction strategies and various other projects affecting fish habitat. The FMP staff contributes to the Habitat Objectives and Restoration Workgroup.
- * Final Chesapeake Bay Fishery Management Plans have been published for Horseshoe Crab and Spanish and King Mackerel.
- * The preparation of the Horseshoe Crab Fishery Management Plan required extensive groundwork and cooperation with other States. FMP staff set up a Horseshoe Crab HOTLINE to obtain a database of areas within the Chesapeake Bay and coastal bays of Maryland where spawning activity has been observed. A volunteer network was established by FMP staff. Horseshoe crab spawning areas were surveyed by volunteers and staff. Data collected in 1994 was analyzed and will be used to protect spawning habitat and determine appropriate management recommendations.
- * The 1993 Annual Progress Report including all Chesapeake Bay Fishery Management Plans was prepared. Implementation matrices for all species were updated.