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## Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission 2019 Action Plan 10/23/18

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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# ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

## 2019 Action Plan



**Approved by the Business Session**

**October 23, 2018**

## **Goal 1 – Rebuild, maintain and fairly allocate Atlantic coastal fisheries**

Goal 1 focuses on the responsibility of the states to conserve and manage Atlantic coastal fishery resources for sustainable use. Commission members will advocate decisions to achieve the long-term benefits of conservation, while balancing the socio-economic interests of coastal communities. Inherent in this is the recognition that healthy and vibrant resources mean more jobs and more opportunity for those that live along the coast. The states are committed to proactive management, with a focus on integrating ecosystem services, socioeconomic impacts, habitat issues, bycatch and discard reduction measures, and protected species interactions into well-defined fishery management plans (FMPs). FMPs will also address fair (equitable) allocation of fishery resources among the states. Understanding global climate change and its impact on fishery productivity and distribution is an elevated priority. Improving cooperation and coordination with federal partners and stakeholders can streamline efficiency, transparency, and, ultimately, success. In the next five years, the Commission is committed to making significant progress on rebuilding overfished or depleted Atlantic fish stocks.

Fisheries management and stock assessment activities anticipated for 2019 and into 2020 are outlined below. Activities are divided into high priority species (those with significant management action, stock assessment activity, or are of critical importance to the states and their stakeholders) and medium-low priority species. For most species, there are several activities that occur on an annual or ongoing basis, including specification setting; FMP review and state compliance reports; and ensuring cooperation and consistent management programs among the states, regional councils, and NOAA Fisheries for shared resources. While ongoing activities are not listed below, they continue to be conducted. The focus of the Action Plan is to highlight new and high profile activities where the Commission will focus its resources and energies for the next two years.

### **HIGH PRIORITY SPECIES FOR 2019**

#### **American Lobster**

##### ***New Tasks***

- Develop a strategy for management of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock that acknowledges the effects of climate change (Addendum XXVII)
  - Monitor and respond if necessary to GOM research on impacts of changing ocean conditions
- Implement Addendum XXVI data elements to improve data collection and characterization of the fishery
- Develop a strategy to address large whale issues; work will likely continue into 2020
- Develop a strategy to identify bait sources and protocols to address concerns regarding biohazards
- Continue to work with the Law Enforcement Subcommittee and states to improve enforcement of management measures and develop a strategy for offshore enforcement
- Continue the development of Benchmark Stock Assessment for peer review in 2020
  - August 2020: Board review of Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review Report. Consider management response.

- Prior to delivery of assessment, establish management scenarios for GOM/GBK and Southern New England stocks based on different findings through a Board working group
- Work with NOAA Fisheries to ensure consistency in state and federal regulations (e.g trap cap in Area 3, trap banking, data collection)

## **Atlantic Herring**

### ***New Tasks***

- In conjunction with New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), consider management response to the 2018 Benchmark Assessment findings and the outcome of NEFMC's Amendment 8
  - Set specifications for 2020 and 2021
- Consider changes to the management goals and objectives of the spawning closures in the Gulf of Maine through an addendum.
- In conjunction with the NEFMC consider expanding spawning protections to Area 3
- Consider tools to expand flexibility in setting specifications for Area 1A
- Continue to improve coordination and collaboration with the NEFMC through new committee and board roles
- Conduct meetings as necessary to establish state effort control (days-out) programs for Areas 1A and 1B

## **Atlantic Menhaden**

### ***New Tasks***

- Complete Atlantic Menhaden-specific and ERP Benchmark Stock Assessments for SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) peer review in 2019
  - February 2020: Board review of Benchmarks Assessments and Peer Review Reports. Consider management response.
- Resolve implementation of Chesapeake Bay cap
- Set specifications for 2020

## **Atlantic Striped Bass**

### ***New Tasks***

- Work cooperatively with NOAA Fisheries to consider changes to Atlantic striped bass fishing in the EEZ (including Block Island Transit Zone)
- Develop long-term strategy for collecting striped bass tagging data including funding, administration and at-sea support
- February 2019: Board review of Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report. Consider management response
  - Explore development of region-specific management

## **Black Sea Bass**

### ***New Tasks***

- Complete Operational Assessment, which will include calibrated Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimates.
  - April/May 2019: Board/Council review of Operational Assessment. Consider management response and changes to 2019 specifications in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC).
    - Set 2020-2022 specifications
- Develop, in coordination with MAFMC, addendum/amendment on reforming recreational management and commercial/recreational allocation; this activity will likely extend into 2020
- Consider changes to the commercial management program
- Implement Addenda XXXI and XXXII
- Develop a strategy to address large whale issues; work will likely continue into 2020

## **Cobia**

### ***New Tasks***

- 2019/2010: Finalize and implement Amendment 1 to the Cobia FMP
  - Work with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) and NOAA Fisheries to ensure complementary regulations in federal waters
- Work through SEDAR to finalize Benchmark Stock Assessment
  - October 2019/February 2020: Board review of Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review Report. Consider management response.

## **Horseshoe Crab**

### ***New Tasks***

- Complete Benchmark Stock Assessment for External Peer Review in March 2019
  - May 2019: Board review of Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review Report. Consider management response.
    - Set 2020 specifications for Delaware Bay
- Secure long-term funding for the Horseshoe Crab Benthic Trawl Survey for use in the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework
- Seek alternatives with the biomedical community in order to more transparently communicate annual mortality and assessment results

## **Red Drum**

### ***New Tasks***

- Continue to work with the Assessment Science Committee (ASC) to develop a roadmap for the next benchmark stock assessment, including consideration of calibrated MRIP data

## **Summer Flounder**

### ***New Tasks***

- February 2019: In coordination with MAFMC, review of Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review Report. Consider management response and changes to 2019 specifications.

- Set specifications for 2020-2022
- In coordination with MAFMC, finalize the Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment (commercial management) for implementation in 2020
- Request an ASMFC working group meet with MAFMC's Research Steering Committee to examine the possibility of reestablishing the Research Set Aside program
- Implement Addenda XXXI and XXXII

## **MEDIUM-LOW PRIORITY SPECIES**

### **American Eel**

#### ***New Tasks***

- Monitor and respond, if necessary, to the classification of American eel under the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES)
- Implement Addendum V
- Review data sources to determine the next stock assessment timeline
- Increase scientific collaborations with Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- Work with Law Enforcement Committee to monitor poaching and illegal sale of glass eels

### **Atlantic Croaker**

#### ***New Tasks***

- Consider management alternatives to address stock condition based on the updated Traffic Light Analysis (TLA)

### **Atlantic Sturgeon**

#### ***New Tasks***

- Monitor state and federal activities in response to an Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing of Atlantic sturgeon, including 5-year status review and recovery plan

### **Black Drum**

#### ***New Tasks***

- Work with the Technical Committee and Plan Review Team to develop recommendations on the need for and timing of the next stock assessment

### **Bluefish**

#### ***New Tasks***

- Continue development of allocation amendment in collaboration with MAFMC
- Complete Operational Assessment, which will include calibrated MRIP estimates.
  - April/May 2019: Board/Council review of Operational Assessment. Consider management response and set 2020-2022 specifications

## **Coastal Sharks**

### ***Ongoing Tasks***

- Monitor activities of NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Division with regards to coastal shark management actions and consider development of complementary management actions as needed for consistency

## **Jonah Crab**

### ***New Tasks***

- Develop a strategy to address large whale issues; work will likely continue into 2020

## **Northern Shrimp**

### ***New Tasks***

- Develop a strategy to address large whale issues, if fishery re-opens
- Conduct stock assessment update
  - Set specifications for the 2020/2021 season. Consider industry test tows to collect biological data, if necessary and as resources allow.
- Implement Amendment 3 and Addendum I as appropriate given the stock status

## **Scup**

### ***New Tasks***

- Complete Operational Assessment, which will include calibrated MRIP estimates.
  - April/May 2019: Board/Council review of Operational Assessment. Consider management response and set 2020-2022 specifications.
- Develop a strategy to address large whale issues; work will likely continue into 2020

## **Shad and River Herring**

### ***New Tasks***

- Complete American Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment for External Peer Review in 2019
  - February 2020: Board review of Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review Report. Consider management response.
- Monitor management activities of the NEFMC and the MAFMC including, but not limited to, shad and river herring catch caps and bycatch avoidance programs
- Address disconnect between monitoring requirements of Amendments 2 and 3 and Sustainable FMPs
- Co-Chair the Technical Expert Working Group for River Herring
- Monitor ESA status reviews for river herring.

## **Spanish Mackerel**

### ***New Tasks***

- Work through SEDAR to prepare Benchmark Stock Assessment for peer review in 2020
  - 2020: Board review of Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review Report. Consider management response in conjunction with SAMFC.

## **Spiny Dogfish**

### ***New Tasks***

- Review and respond to data update, if necessary

## **Spot**

### ***New Tasks***

- Consider management alternatives to address stock condition based on the updated TLA

## **Spotted Seatrout**

No new tasks

## **Tautog**

### ***New Tasks***

- Finalize commercial harvest tagging program as required by Amendment 1 for implementation in 2020

## **Weakfish**

### ***New Tasks***

- Complete Stock Assessment Update
  - August/October 2019: Board review of Stock Assessment Update. Consider management response and set 2020 specifications
- Board review of Stock Assessment Update and consider management response.

## **Winter Flounder**

No new tasks

## **CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES**

- Monitor developments related to changing ocean conditions, ocean acidification, stock distributions, ecosystem services, ocean planning and potential fisheries reallocations
- Work with NOAA leadership to better understand the impacts to state management programs given the movement toward increased recreational flexibility. Seek ways to address the concerns of the recreational community with regard to Commission-managed and jointly-managed species.
- Respond to new MRIP estimates as needed across Commission species management plans
- Examine allocation strategies and provide recommendations to management boards as necessary



## **Goal 2 – Provide the scientific foundation for stock assessments to support informed management actions**

Sustainable management of fisheries relies on accurate and timely scientific advice. The Commission strives to produce sound, actionable science through a technically rigorous, independently peer-reviewed stock assessment process. Assessments are developed using a broad suite of fishery-independent surveys and fishery-dependent monitoring, as well as research products developed by a coastwide network of fisheries scientists at state, federal, and academic institutions. The goal encompasses the development of new, innovative scientific research and methodology, and the enhancement of the states' stock assessment capabilities. It provides for the administration, coordination, and expansion of collaborative research and data collection programs. Achieving the goal will ensure sound science is available to serve as the foundation for the Commission's evaluation of stock status and adaptive management actions.

Several fisheries science activities occur on an annual or ongoing basis, including development of stock assessments and conducting peer reviews; stock assessment scheduling and evaluation of scientists' workloads; updating Commission research priorities and distributing to funding agencies; external research proposal reviews; development of ecological reference points models; supporting multispecies/diet data collection; fish ageing and tagging programs; gear technology research; and participation in MRIP catch estimation calibrations and ACCSP committees. While ongoing activities are not listed below, they continue to be conducted.

### **SCIENCE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

#### ***New Tasks***

- Through the Management and Science Committee (MSC) and ASC, develop a long-term vision for scientific initiatives within the Commission's next 5-year Strategic Plan.
  - Seek guidance and review procedures from other stock assessment centers (NWFSC, ICES) to consider for streamlining ASMFC assessment operations
  - Conduct a workshop on management strategy evaluation methods, examples, and potential applications to Commission stocks
- Through the ASC, establish best practices protocols for compiling and selecting data, and common analyses, in order to gain efficiencies in completing stock assessments.
- Through the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS), develop socioeconomic indicators to include in FMPs. Finalize ACCSP socioeconomic data collection standards.
- Finalize a Commission policy regarding risk and uncertainty for consideration and approval by the ISFMP Policy Board.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

#### ***New Tasks***

- Collect new data to address data deficiencies
  - Collect new fishery-dependent data using black sea bass research fleet
  - Collect new data elements from lobster fisheries (effort and spatial details) to improve stock assessments;

- Assess fixed gear and right whale interactions in the Gulf of Maine
- Increase bycatch monitoring of sturgeon, shad and river herring, and sciaenids in state waters, as resources allow
- Coordinate the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) South Atlantic component; implement activities in the SEAMAP 5-Year Plan
- Coordinate the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP); implement action items stemming from the 2018 NEAMAP Summit
  - Develop criteria and minimum standards for NEAMAP surveys
  - Conduct Fish Maturity Stage Classification Workshop
  - Evaluate trawl catchability for individual species across NEAMAP surveys
- Promote the collection of acoustic tagging information and work with the Atlantic Coastal Telemetry network to integrate tagging studies along the coast; secure telemetry tagging data for use in stock assessments

## **FISHERIES RESEARCH**

- Conduct a Fish Ageing Quality Assurance Workshop among Atlantic coast state and university laboratories to ensure consistency between new and historical age data
- Collaborate with SUNY-Oneonta to develop new growth model and VA Tech's Bayesian index-based methods for shad stock assessment
- Collaborate with UMaine to develop next iteration of lobster length-structured assessment model; will likely continue into 2020
- Seek opportunities to collaborate with academic institutions to advance population dynamic models for use in stock assessments
- Partner with the U.S. Geological Survey to identify shared research priorities and opportunities for enhanced scientific support to the Commission

## **ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT & CHANGING OCEAN CONDITIONS**

- Collaborate with the NOAA Fisheries Northeast and Southeast Fisheries Science Centers to include Commission interests in Ecosystem Status Reports
- Through the MSC, track the development of state and federal activities related to changing ocean conditions and impacts to fisheries

## **COMPETING OCEAN USES**

- Determine the Commission's role in identifying and evaluating impacts to fisheries resources from offshore energy development
- Form an Aquaculture Committee to determine the Commission's role in aquaculture activities, including policy development and interstate shellfish seed tracking

## **Goal 3 – Promote compliance with fishery management plans to ensure sustainable use of Atlantic coast fisheries**

Fisheries managers, law enforcement personnel, and stakeholders have a shared responsibility to promote compliance with fisheries management measures. Activities under the goal seek to increase and improve compliance with FMPs. This requires the successful coordination of both management and enforcement activities among state and federal agencies. Commission members recognize that adequate and consistent enforcement of fisheries rules is required to keep pace with increasingly complex management activity and emerging technologies. Achieving the goal will improve the effectiveness of the Commission’s FMPs.

The Commission’s Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) carries out much of Goal 3. Most of these activities occur on an annual basis or as part of the FMP development process. Proposed changes in management are evaluated to determine enforceability and effectiveness. The LEC provides managers with feedback on the practicality of regulations to foster stakeholder buy-in and compliance.

### **COMPLIANCE**

- Incorporate and reference the revised “Guidelines for Resource Managers” in reviews and evaluations of proposed changes to management programs
- Annually review and comment on (as needed) NOAA Fisheries enforcement priorities to ensure they support the enforceability and effectiveness of Commission management programs
- Aquaculture: Review and provide input on enforcement issues associated with American eel or other aquaculture proposals, including offshore aquaculture proposals
- Evaluate interagency measures to enhance traceability of fishery products across jurisdictional boundaries

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

- Engage and support NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Offices of Law Enforcement, U.S. Department of Justice, and U.S. Coast Guard to facilitate the enforceability of Commission FMPs
- Work to sustain financial support for Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEAs)

### **STAKEHOLDER AWARENESS**

- Use emerging communication platforms and tools to deliver real time information regarding regulations and the outcomes of law enforcement investigations
  - Explore the use of electronic tools to communicate real-time commercial and recreational regulations

## **Goal 4 – Protect and enhance fish habitat and ecosystem health through partnerships and education**

Goal 4 aims to conserve and improve coastal, marine, and riverine habitat to enhance the benefits of sustainable Atlantic coastal fisheries and resilient coastal communities in the face of changing ecosystems. Habitat loss and degradation have been identified as significant factors affecting the long-term sustainability and productivity of our nation’s fisheries. The Commission’s Habitat Program develops objectives, sets priorities, and produces tools to guide fisheries habitat conservation efforts directed towards ecosystem-based management.

The challenge for the Commission and its state members is maintaining fish habitat in the absence of specific regulatory authority for habitat protection or enhancement. Therefore, the Commission will work cooperatively with state, federal, and stakeholder partnerships to achieve this goal. Much of the work to address habitat is conducted through the Commission’s Habitat and Artificial Reef Committees. In order to identify critical habitat for Commission managed species, each year the committee reviews existing reference documents for Commission-managed species to identify gaps or updates needed to describe important habitat types and review and revise species habitat factsheets. The Habitat Committee also publishes an annual issue of the *Habitat Hotline Atlantic*, highlighting topical issues that affect all the states.

The Commission and its Habitat Program endorses the National Fish Habitat Partnership, and will continue to work cooperatively with the program to improve aquatic habitat along the Atlantic coast. Since 2008, the Commission has invested considerable resources, as both a partner and administrative home, to the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP), a coastwide collaborative effort to accelerate the conservation and restoration of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes. As part of this goal, the Commission will continue to provide support for ACFHP, under the direction of the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board.

### **EDUCATE**

- Educate Commissioners, stakeholders, and the general public about the importance of habitat to healthy fisheries and ecosystems
- Publish a Habitat Management Series document on acoustics affecting fish habitat for ISFMP Policy Board review and acceptance
- Identify mechanisms to evaluate ecosystem health for consideration by Technical Committees and Boards

### **INTERGRATE**

- Complete Fish Habitats of Concern descriptions to be considered for integration into Commission FMPs

- Increase communication on ecosystem-based management with Commission committees to find overlap with fish habitat related issues
- Explore opportunities to integrate habitat data into stock assessments where possible

### **LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIP**

- Engage local, state, and regional governments in mutually beneficial habitat protection and enhancement programs through partnerships
- Foster partnerships with management agencies, researchers, and habitat stakeholders to leverage regulatory, political, and financial support
- Engage in state and federal agency efforts to ensure response strategies to changing ocean conditions are included in habitat conservation efforts
- Work with ACFHP to foster partnerships with like-minded organizations at local levels to further common habitat goals
- Coordinate the activities of the Fish Passage Working Group to carry out priority tasks as defined by the ISFMP Policy Board
- Promote development of effective fish passage approaches and projects through state and federal collaboration

### **ATLANTIC COASTAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP (ACFHP)**

- Determine data gaps in the Southeast Fish Habitat Mapping project; initiate the Northeast Fish Habitat Mapping project and complete by 2020
- Redesign outreach materials for consistency with the redesigned website to optimize our messaging and facilitate partner and stakeholder engagement
- Adopt a Business Plan and implement action items to network with new partners and solicit donations from the private sector (foundations, corporations)
- Work with partners to protect, restore, or maintain resilient Regional Priority Habitats to optimize ecosystem functions and services to benefit fish and wildlife
- Restore habitats by funding fish passage and non-fish passage projects (SAV, oyster reefs, salt marshes)

## **Goal 5 – Strengthen stakeholder and public support for the Commission**

Stakeholder and public acceptance of Commission decisions are critical to our ultimate success. For the Commission to be effective, these groups must have a clear understanding of our mission, vision, and decision-making process, as well as the opportunities that stakeholders have to participate in our process through advisory panels and public comment. The goal seeks to do so through expanded outreach and education efforts about Commission programs, decision-making processes, and its management successes and challenges. It aims to engage stakeholders in the process of fisheries management, and promote the activities and accomplishments of the Commission. Achieving the goal will increase stakeholder participation, understanding, and acceptance of Commission activities. On a continuing basis, the Commission conducts outreach and stakeholder engagement through a number of products and activities. These include publications (e.g., bi-monthly Fisheries Focus, Annual Report to Congress), press releases, meeting summaries, stock assessment overviews, website and

social media platforms, industry tradeshow and state festivals, and stakeholder engagement through the advisory panel process. Building strong relationships with local, regional and national media contacts, and networking/collaborating with our management partners from the Councils, states and federal agencies are also critical components of our outreach program, which occur on an ongoing basis.

### **INCREASE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT OF ASMFC**

- Increase public understanding and support of activities through expanded outreach at the local, state, and federal levels
- Promote high profile species and stock assessment results through various outreach tools and platforms
  - 2019: Atlantic herring, Atlantic striped bass, black sea bass, cobia, horseshoe crab, shad, summer flounder
  - 2020: American lobster, Atlantic menhaden, ecological reference points

### **MAXIMIZE USE OF CURRENT AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

- Use new technologies and communication platforms to more fully engage the broader public in the Commission's activities and actions
- Explore use of story mapping and photo journaling to better communicate science and management activities
- Solicit outside sources to develop short video clips of fisheries management and science activities
- Explore the use of topical webinars to engage and inform public about current activities (management, science, habitat, and data collection and management)
- Use website capabilities (e.g., video clips) to promote Fisheries Science 101 webinars, videos of fisheries surveys and state on-the-ground projects
- Monitor the success of website and social media platforms in reaching broader constituency and effectively communicating ASMFC mission, programs and activities

### **FACILITATE STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION**

- Clearly define Commission processes to facilitate stakeholder participation, as well as transparency and accountability.
  - Develop outreach materials that highlight opportunities for public engagement in the Commission's fisheries management and stock assessment processes
- Enhance engagement in advisory panels through solicitation of new members, increased participation of existing members, and improved communication from staff
  - 2019: Atlantic herring, Atlantic striped bass, black sea bass, cobia, horseshoe crab, shad, summer flounder
  - 2020: American lobster, Atlantic menhaden

## **MEDIA RELATIONS AND NETWORKING**

- Strengthen national, regional, and local media relations to increase coverage of Commission actions.
- Track media communications and coverage through ASMFC-related news clippings and media tracking sheet.
- Work with Atlantic Coast Fisheries Communication Group, comprised of Public Information Officers from the Councils, states and federal agencies, to share successful tools, identify key media contacts and work cooperatively on joint projects.
  - Explore mechanisms to better inform fishing blogs and other external communication platforms about Commission assessment results and management actions.

## **Goal 6 – Advance Commission and member states’ priorities through a proactive legislative policy agenda**

State input is critical for a coherent national fisheries policy. The Commission recognizes the need to work with Congress, the Administration and partner organizations in policy formulation, and will be vigilant in advocating state interests to Congress. The Commission will pursue federal resources for states to implement and comply with the Atlantic Coastal Act and to improve or maintain fisheries data collection. The importance of habitat restoration, research on the impacts of changing ocean conditions, and the need for effective marine enforcement will also be communicated to Congress and our management partners.

## **DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND STAFF**

- Provide opportunities for Commissioner and the Executive Director to interact with Members and staff during Winter and Spring Meeting Weeks
- Provide opportunities for the Executive Director to meet with Congressional staff on a regular basis
- Make connections (via correspondence and in-person meetings) with newly elected Atlantic coast members of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress and appropriate Committee Chairs and members

## **ENGAGE CONGRESS AND ADMINISTRATION ON FISHERY-RELATED LEGISLATION AND ISSUES**

- Monitor federal legislation affecting the Commission, including policy and annual appropriations bills and develop Commission positions on pending federal legislation, including the *Atlantic Coastal Act*, *Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act*, *Anadromous Fish Conservation Act*, *MSA*, *Federal Aid in Fish Restoration Act*, in addition to new legislation addressing emerging issues such as marine national monuments and alternative energy initiatives.

## **PURSUE FEDERAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

- Communicate the Commission’s federal funding needs to Congress and advocate for sufficient appropriations

- Priority line items include the Atlantic Coastal Act, Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments, ACFHP, and Fisheries Information Networks)
- Restore the Atlantic Coastal Act proportion of the “Regional Councils and Fishery Commissions” appropriation to its historic share
- Seek federal funding support for long-term monitoring surveys and species-specific initiatives
  - NEAMAP and SEAMAP
  - Gulf of Maine lobster research to characterize impacts of environmental changes
  - Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey to support ARM Framework
- Engage the Administration (Commerce and Interior Departments) on funding and policy issues, including Secretarial implementation of the Atlantic Coastal Act
- Communicate state and Commission funding needs to NOAA Fisheries and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

- Coordinate with the Gulf, Pacific, and Great Lakes Commissions on policy items of mutual interest including federal funding for fisheries programs. Executive Directors should continue to provide unified positions on funding and legislative priorities to lawmakers and federal agencies, where appropriate.
- Continue participation on Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, the Marine Fisheries Initiative and Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

## **Goal 7 – Ensure the fiscal stability and efficient administration of the Commission**

Goal 7 will ensure that the business affairs of the Commission are managed effectively and efficiently, including workload balancing through the development of annual action plans to support the Commission’s management process. It also highlights the need for the Commission to efficiently manage its resources. The goal promotes the efficient use of legal advice to proactively review policies and react to litigation as necessary. It also promotes human resource policies that attract talented and committed individuals to conduct the work of the Commission. The goal highlights the need for the Commission as an organization to continually expand its skill set through training and educational opportunities. It calls for Commissioners and Commission staff to maintain and increase the institutional knowledge of the Commission through periods of transition. Achieving this goal will build core strengths, enabling the Commission to respond to increasingly difficult and complex fisheries management issues.

On a continuing basis, the Commission staff conservatively manages fiscal resources to achieve the proper balance between allocating funds to coastwide priorities and ensuring fiscal stability. Tasks performed to accomplish this balance include monitoring expenditures on a monthly basis; managing



the reserve fund; fine-tuning meeting and travel policies; and preparing and participating in the annual audit and indirect cost proposal.

Human resources management is an ongoing process of recruitment and selection of employees; thoroughly orienting and introducing new employees to the culture of the Commission; maintaining good working conditions for all employees; managing employee relations; and training to enhance and increase their current skills. Ongoing tasks to accomplish this are annual review and revision of position descriptions; facilitating staff participation at national and regional conferences; and providing professional training opportunities. Additionally, human resource support is provided to cooperative programs such as APAIS and ACFHP. All human resources documents are reviewed at least annually to ensure compliance with federal regulations and consistency with current practices.

Further, Commission staff keeps abreast of changes in technology and evaluates the need for updating the Commission's hardware and software. Ensuring consistency of resources and training across the Commission as well as documenting processes and verifying database information are ongoing tasks conducted by the staff.

The Commission process can be overwhelming to new Commissioners. The staff is committed to providing a thorough introduction and orientation to new Commissioners. Tasks conducted throughout the year include documenting institutional knowledge and updating on a regular basis the Commissioner Manual. Staff also provides this service to new members of Commission committees.

## **MANAGE OPERATIONS AND BUDGETS**

- Develop Commission compensation plan with updated job classifications and salaries based on location
- Manage the "Fisheries Management, Science, Administration and Logistical Support" cooperative agreement

## **UTILIZE CURRENT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

- Document standards for electronic record retention and develop site map of Commission electronic filing system for internal use, including protocols for document archiving
- Explore the use of available software packages to digitize review and approval of bills received by the Commission
- Develop a contracts database to track details of multiple Commission contracts

## **MANAGE HUMAN RESOURCES**

- Promote Commission's mission and programs, and recruit new talent through outreach meetings with various marine policy and marine science graduate programs
- Provide training opportunities for ASMFC staff on commonly used software
- Conduct annual meeting with financial advisor to review retirement program performance with staff and provide opportunities for staff to meet individually with financial advisor to match financial goals with investment choices for retirement
- Implement staff culture playbook developed in 2018

## **ENGAGE AND SUPPORT NEW COMMISSIONERS**

- Respond to recommendations from Strategic Planning discussions related to new Commissioner orientation

## **ENSURE THE LEGAL COMPLIANCE OF COMMISSION ACTIONS**

- Utilize legal advice on new management strategies and policies, and respond to litigation as necessary, whether it be regarding challenges to Commission FMPs, a human resource issue, or access to confidential data

## **Goal 8 - Produce dependable and timely marine fishery statistics for Atlantic coast fisheries**

Effective management depends on quality fishery-dependent data and fishery-independent data to inform stock assessments and fisheries management decisions. While Goal 2 of this Action Plan focuses on providing sound, actionable science and fishery-independent data to support fisheries management, Goal 8 focuses on providing timely, accurate catch and effort data on Atlantic coast recreational, for-hire, and commercial fisheries.

Goal 8 seeks to accomplish this through the activities of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), a cooperative state-federal program that designs, implements, and conducts marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and integrates those data into data management systems that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. ACCSP partners include the 15 Atlantic coast state fishery agencies, the three Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

On a continuing basis, ACCSP (1) conducts routine reviews of standard codes and processes, and promulgates new standards as needed; (2) operates and maintains commercial dealer landing and fisherman catch reporting through the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS); maintains the operations of the Data Warehouse, Angler Point Access Intercept Survey (APAIS), and for-hire survey; and (4) provides funding to its Program Partners to improve data collection and management through a competitive process. ACCSP staff is also responsible for ensuring that all hardware and software related to ASMFC and ACCSP systems and the network components (e.g., routers, firewalls) are maintained in accordance with established processes and procedures.

## **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

### ***New Task***

- Review and select funded projects for 2019 and 2020; these years represent the first targeted reductions in funding for ongoing or maintenance projects

## **FISHERIES-DEPENDENT REPORTING**

### **SAFIS**

### ***New Tasks***

- Support the efforts of federal and state agencies to expand mandatory trip reporting

- Conduct major redesign of the SAFIS database, incorporating dealer landing and harvester catch reporting (SAFIS eDR and eTrips), as well as the addition of an integrated reporting solution to streamline reporting, reduce duplication, and share data between more easily

## **APAIS**

### ***New Tasks***

- Transition Program from paper-based to electronic intercept software, which will to verify and analyze incoming data resulting in fewer errors and greater efficiencies
- Develop and approve for-hire survey validation methodology

## **DATA DISTRIBUTION AND USE**

### **Data Warehouse**

#### ***New Tasks***

- Continue to expand data warehouse, including the addition of biological data
- Implement processes designed to improve data integrity of data
- Develop data use requirements for bycatch

## **DATA INFRASTRUCTURE AND SECURITY**

### ***New Task***

- Complete Federal Information Security Management Act security audit and adjust security protocols as needed