



NOAA
FISHERIES

Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act

FY 2019-2020 Report to Congress



Cover: spawning horseshoe crabs in Delaware Bay. One crab has a telemetry and disc tag used for population estimation. Photo credit: Greg Breese, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act

With passage of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act 16 U.S.C. 5101 et seq. in December 1993, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), in cooperation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), is charged with the responsibility of supporting the interstate fisheries management efforts of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). The Act was reauthorized by Congress in 2000 (Public Law 106-555) and requires the Secretary of Commerce to submit biennial reports to Congress on the use of federal assistance provided to the ASMFC and the Atlantic Coast states, and an evaluation of the success of the funded activities in implementing the Atlantic Coastal Act.

Appropriated funds under the Act are awarded to ASMFC, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), member states, and federal partners via the federal grant process. All beneficiaries of the funding have come to depend on it for essential services and short-term projects, which support implementation of interstate fishery management plans. The projects funded specifically support fishery management planning, data collection (including conducting statistical analysis and stock assessments), research, habitat conservation, law enforcement needs, and other activities that support management of U.S. Atlantic coastal fishery resources.

Use of Federally Appropriated Assistance

Commissions and States

Following direction in the annual Congressional appropriation, NOAA Fisheries determines the total available funds for federal assistance to implement the Atlantic Coastal Act. NOAA Fisheries uses a formula to distribute available funds among eligible states based on the size of each state’s fisheries (i.e., the value of commercial landings and the number of recreational angler trips taken), the number of ASMFC fishery management plans (FMPs) in which each state participates, and other factors. “Eligible states” under the Act include all the ASMFC member states from Maine to Florida, the District of Columbia, and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC). The ASMFC and eligible states submit grant applications identifying the projects the funds will be used to support. The projects are monitored closely by NOAA Fisheries Regional Program Offices and through NOAA’s online reporting and monitoring program, Grants Online.

The ASMFC, including the ACCSP, receives approximately 25 percent of their total funding as direct funds under the Act. Together the ASMFC and the ACCSP employ 36 staff in their

offices in Alexandria, Virginia. From 2019 to 2020, the ASMFC cooperatively managed 32 fish stocks, covering 26 species of marine fish¹ from Maine to Florida. The ACCSP has grown to include coast-wide data collection and reporting standards, and now serves as a data warehouse for more than 50 years of comprehensive fisheries landings data. The ACCSP developed and runs the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), which is the principal data collection and electronic reporting system for commercial harvesters and seafood dealers on the Atlantic Coast.

The ACCSP Coordinating Council—an oversight group comprised of the ASMFC, eligible states, NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, and the three Atlantic Coast fishery management councils (New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic councils)—serves as a centralized budgeting and coordinating body for the implementation of the ACCSP. ACCSP funds are allocated to recipients based on the recommendations of the Coordinating Council’s Operating Committee. In contrast to general state projects, which are based on each individual state’s discretion and are comprised of diverse projects that support the Act, ACCSP funding is more centralized and coordinated coast-wide.

Section 5103(a) of the Act directs the Secretary of Commerce, in cooperation with the Secretary of the Interior, to develop and implement a program to support the interstate fishery management efforts of the ASMFC. The program shall include activities to support and enhance state cooperation in:

1. The collection, management, and analysis of fishery data (statistics);
2. Fisheries management planning;
3. Fisheries research, including stock assessment, and biological and economic research;
4. Fisheries law enforcement; and
5. Habitat conservation.



ASMFC and eligible states submit projects to NOAA Fisheries for approval consistent with the five priorities listed above. This process provides states with flexibility to enhance individual state agency capabilities to perform activities that support the ASMFC’s Interstate Fisheries Management Program, which includes the development of FMPs, and FMP amendments and addenda. In addition, the process provides eligible states flexibility to support projects that align with the greatest internal needs consistent with the priorities listed above. For example, many states use the funding to provide better marine fisheries statistics (commercial and recreational), while other states use the funding for fisheries law enforcement.

Table 1 provides an overview of the allocation of appropriated funding under the Act by recipient for FY 2019 and 2020. In order to provide more financial assistance to the states,

¹ The number of ASMFC-managed stocks and species does not include the 40 species of Atlantic coastal sharks because these species are principally managed by NOAA Fisheries. The ASMFC has a limited FMP for Atlantic coastal sharks to complement federal management actions.

ASMFC, and ACCSP for these important activities, NOAA Fisheries removed any administrative and programmatic costs from the Act’s appropriation and provided that funding from base funding. See Appendix 1 for a list of individually funded projects by state.

Table 1. Atlantic Coastal Act funding by state for FY 2019 and 2020.

Recipient	Total Projects	FY19	FY20
Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program	1	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	1	\$2,400,000	\$2,400,000
Connecticut	1	\$256,740	\$250,006
Delaware	1	\$271,530	\$266,351
District of Columbia	1	\$40,000	\$40,000
Florida	2	\$316,579	\$340,428
Georgia	1	\$228,580	\$239,699
Maine	4	\$326,495	\$317,846
Maryland	3	\$307,032	\$303,078
Massachusetts	3	\$370,283	\$359,740
New Hampshire	2	\$220,413	\$212,990
New Jersey	1	\$347,418	\$336,162
New York	1	\$293,394	\$292,530
North Carolina	2	\$316,262	\$315,963
Pennsylvania	1	\$169,365	\$168,029
Potomac River Fisheries Commission	1	\$103,000	\$103,000
Rhode Island	6	\$266,622	\$261,358
South Carolina	2	\$244,230	\$254,528
Virginia	1	\$323,380	\$316,300
TOTAL	35	\$8,301,323	\$8,278,009

Evaluation of Projects Funded in FY 2019 and 2020

NOAA Fisheries evaluates projects funded under the Act using a variety of metrics including the number of enforcement actions, permits issued, service calls to seafood dealers and commercial harvesters, meetings attended, observed fishing trips, and fish sampling tows. Each recipient submits semi-annual and annual reports to the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic and Southeast regional program offices. In many cases the funding provided through the Act enables states to conduct essential fisheries work they would otherwise be unable to support. Therefore, an important overarching metric by which to evaluate the success of these projects is the status of the fisheries resources themselves.

The ASMFC's January 2021 Stock Status Overview report indicates there were 32 fish stocks, covering 26 species (excluding the 40 Atlantic coastal shark species) managed all, or in part, through the ASMFC during the FY 2019 and 2020 reporting period. Of these 32 stocks, stock status is fully known for 21 stocks (meaning both overfishing and overfished, or depleted status is known), partially known (either overfishing, overfished, or depleted status is known) for six stocks, and fully unknown for five stocks. Of the 32 managed stocks, 21 stocks are not subject to overfishing, three stocks are subject to overfishing, and the overfishing status is unknown for eight stocks. Of the 32 managed stocks, 10 stocks are not overfished or not depleted (with three of these stocks rebuilt), 14 stocks are depleted or overfished, and the depleted or overfished status of eight stocks is unknown (see Table 2 and the ASMFC Definitions).

ASMFC Definitions

Rebuilt/Sustainable: Stock biomass is equal to or above the biomass level established by the FMP to ensure population sustainability. When between benchmark assessments, a stock can still be considered rebuilt/sustainable if it drops below the target but remains above the threshold.

Recovering/Rebuilding: Stocks exhibit stable or increasing trends. Stock biomass is between the threshold and target level established by the fishery management plan.

Stable/Unchanged: Stock biomass has been consistent in recent years.

Unknown: There is no accepted stock assessment to estimate stock status.

Depleted: Reflects low levels of abundance though it is unclear whether fishing mortality is the primary cause for reduced stock size.

Concern: Those stocks developing emerging issues (e.g., increased effort, declining landings, or impacts due to environmental conditions).

Overfished: Occurs when stock biomass falls below the threshold established by the FMP, impacting the stock's reproductive capacity to replace fish removed through harvest, and that decline is driven primarily by fishing mortality.

Overfishing: Removing fish from a population at a rate that exceeds the threshold established in the FMP, impacting the stock's reproductive capacity to replace fish removed through harvest.

Table 2: Stock status of species managed in whole or in part by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission as of January 2021²

Species/Stock		Overfished	Overfishing
American Eel		Depleted	Unknown
American Lobster	Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank	Not Depleted	No
	Southern New England	Depleted	No
American Shad		Depleted	Unknown
Atlantic Croaker		Unknown	Unknown
Atlantic Herring		Yes	No
Atlantic Menhaden		No	No
Atlantic Striped Bass		Yes	Yes
Atlantic Sturgeon		Depleted	No
Black Drum		No	No
Black Sea Bass		No	No
Bluefish		Yes	No
Cobia		No	No
Horseshoe Crab		Unknown	Unknown
Jonah Crab		Unknown	Unknown
Northern Shrimp		Depleted	No
Red Drum	Northern Region	Unknown	No
	Southern Region	Unknown	No
River Herring		Depleted	Unknown
Scup		No	No
Spanish Mackerel		No	No
Spiny Dogfish		No	No
Spot		Unknown	Unknown
Spotted Seatrout		Unknown	Unknown
Summer Flounder		No	No
Tautog	Massachusetts - Rhode Island	No	No
	Long Island Sound	Yes	Yes
	New Jersey - New York Bight	Yes	Yes
	Delaware -Virginia	Yes	No
Weakfish		Depleted	No
Winter Flounder	Gulf of Maine	Unknown	No
	Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic	Yes	No

² Source: ASMFC Status of the Stocks Overview, January 2021.

Federal Government and Success of Activities

NOAA Fisheries historically used appropriated funds to collect vital fisheries data used in stock assessment and other statistical applications, and to provide partial support for NOAA Fisheries staff to participate in the ASMFC science and management process (and joint processes with the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic fishery management councils). These federal activities directly support ASMFC efforts to implement effective interstate fisheries management. In FY 2018, NOAA Fisheries reallocated Atlantic Coastal Act funds to make more of the appropriated funds directly available to the ASMFC and member states. Since then, NOAA Fisheries uses other funding sources to support the above-mentioned federal activities associated with interstate fishery management of Atlantic coastal fisheries.

The USFWS was awarded \$90,000 in FY 2019 and FY 2020 to participate in quarterly ASMFC meetings, as well as technical committee and ACCSP meetings; program administration; and research including deployment and maintenance of the Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, acoustic array and tagging database for Atlantic striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, and horseshoe crab recaptures. Details of these federal activities can be found in Appendix 2.



Headboat out of Point Judith, Rhode Island. Photo credit: Geoffroy White, ACCSP.

Appendix 1 – List of Individual Eligible State Efforts to Support the Act during FY 2019 and 2020

Maine Department of Natural Resources – Marine Resources Monitoring of Maine Fisheries; Managing Dealer Reporting in Maine; Managing Lobster Harvester Reporting in Maine; and Portside Commercial Catch Sampling and Comparative Bycatch Sampling for Atlantic Herring, Atlantic Mackerel, and Atlantic Menhaden Fisheries.

New Hampshire Fish and Game Department – Law Enforcement of ASMFC Managed Species in New Hampshire; and Programs Improving Management of ASMFC Managed Species in New Hampshire.

Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game – Massachusetts Fisheries Dependent Data Collection, Analysis & Dissemination; Integration of Vessel Monitoring Systems and Electronic Reporting in SAFIS and SAFIS Applications Through API Development and Field Testing of Multiple Hardware Options; Administrative Support to the ASMFC Fishery Management Process.

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management – Administrative Support to the ASMFC Fishery Management Process; Advancing Fishery Dependent Data Collection for Black Sea Bass in the Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic Region Utilizing Modern Technology and a Fishing Vessel Research Fleet Approach; Use of Geographic Data and SAFIS Data Sources to Evaluate an Aggregate Landings Commercial Fishing Management Program in Rhode Island; Integration of Vessel Monitoring Systems and Electronic Reporting in SAFIS and SAFIS Applications Through API Development and Field Testing of Multiple Hardware Options; Maintenance and Coordination of Fisheries Dependent Data Feeds to ACCSP from the State of Rhode Island; Fisheries Dependent Data Collection, Analysis and Dissemination; and Voice Recognition Using Dragon Speech Within Dockside Interceptor Application.

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection – Fisheries Dependent Data Collection, Analysis & Dissemination and Interstate Management of Marine Fisheries in Connecticut.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation – Interstate Management of Marine Fisheries in New York State.

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection – Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Program.

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission – Bio-monitoring and Assessment Project for American Shad and River Herring in the Susquehanna River Basin.

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control – Coastal Fisheries Management Assistance for the State of Delaware.

Maryland Department of Natural Resources – Maryland American Eel Population Study; Expanding Accountability in Reporting: A Toll for Comprehensive For-hire Data Collection and Monitoring in Maryland; and To Implement and Maintain the Limited Entry Commercial Fisheries Management System for Interjurisdictionally-managed Fisheries in Maryland.

Virginia Marine Resources Commission – Virginia Enforcement of Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Fishery Management Plans.

Potomac River Fisheries Commission – Compliance with Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Fishery Management Plans.

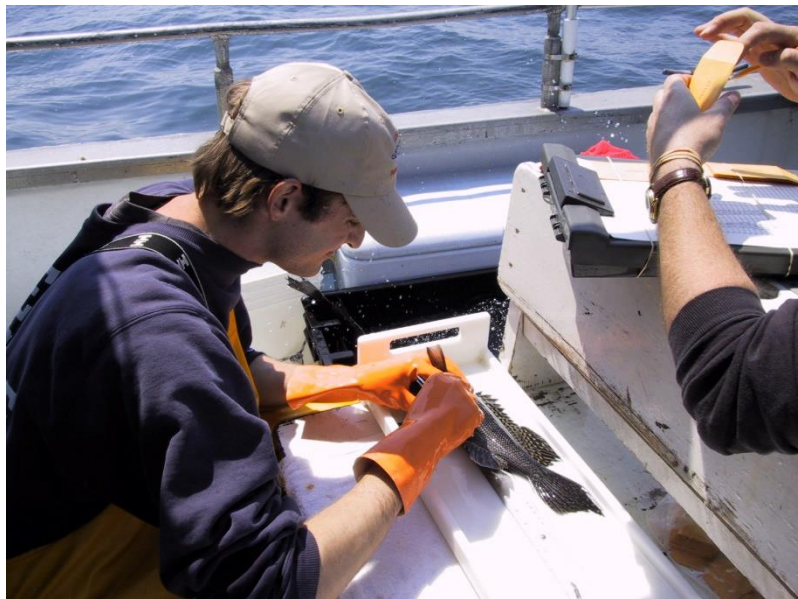
District of Columbia Department of Environment – Invasive Flathead Catfish Population Dynamics, Movement Patterns and Dietary Preferences.

North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Enhancement of North Carolina Commercial Fisheries Data and Statistics; and an Updated Economic and Social Analysis of the Commercial Seafood Dealers of North Carolina.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources – Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Program in South Carolina; and ACCSP Data Reporting from South Carolina's Commercial Fisheries 1) 100 % Trip-Level Catch and Effort Data Collection 2) Biological Sampling for Hard Part/Aging of Offshore Species.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Planning and Implementation: Conduct Surveys, Administration, and Education Support of the Atlantic Coastal Act.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission – Florida Atlantic Coast Stock Assessments, Fisheries Dependent Data Collection, Analysis and Dissemination; Increase At-Sea Sampling Levels for the Recreational Headboat Fishery on the Atlantic Coast of Florida.



Tagging black sea bass out of Ocean City, Maryland, to study seasonal movements in the Northeast Region. Photo Credit: Josh Moser, NEFSC

Appendix 2 – List of Individual Federal Projects Conducted by USFWS to Support the Act during FY 2019 and 2020

Support of the ASMFC Science & Management Process – Provided partial support for participation of USFWS personnel in the ASMFC science and management process, and joint processes with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. This includes participation on management and policy boards, as well as technical committees, providing leadership and assistance with workshops, development and analysis of management actions, plan development, stock assessments, and identification of habitat needs. USFWS also coordinates and implements the cooperative winter tagging cruise, partnering with the ASMFC, NOAA Fisheries, North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, and other states to conduct mandatory tagging of migratory striped bass for mortality calculations, opportunistic tagging of Atlantic sturgeon (if authorized), as well as assessment of winter habitat use off North Carolina and Virginia for other species. Lastly, the USFWS assists in preparing the Striped Bass Biennial Report to Congress.

North Carolina Diadromous Fish Population Characterizations and Passage – Provided ongoing hydroacoustic monitoring of anadromous fish populations in the Roanoke River, one of the least fragmented, most intact, bottomland hardwood ecosystems on the U.S. East Coast. The watersheds in coastal North Carolina—including the Roanoke, Tar-Pamlico, Neuse, and Cape Fear drainages—historically were the epicenter of anadromous fisheries on the U.S. East Coast. Former anadromous nursery and spawning habitats above the Roanoke Rapids, Gaston, John H. Kerr, Rocky Mount Mills, Falls, and Cape Fear River Locks and dams are currently entirely or partially blocked.

Tagging Database for Striped Bass, Atlantic Sturgeon, and Horseshoe Crab Recaptures – Provided funding and coordination of the coast-wide cooperative striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, and horseshoe crab tagging programs. Coordination included tag acquisition, distribution, and recovery; assistance to partners in sampling and tagging fish; and administration of reward programs. These tagging programs are a cooperative effort among federal and state agencies, research institutions, private companies, and commercial and recreational fishermen. The striped bass tagging program provides information on distribution, migration, and mortality to assist in making management and restoration decisions.



Cooperative Winter Tagging Program; tagging Atlantic striped bass off Virginia Beach. Photo credit: Kirby Rootes-Murdy, ASMFC



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