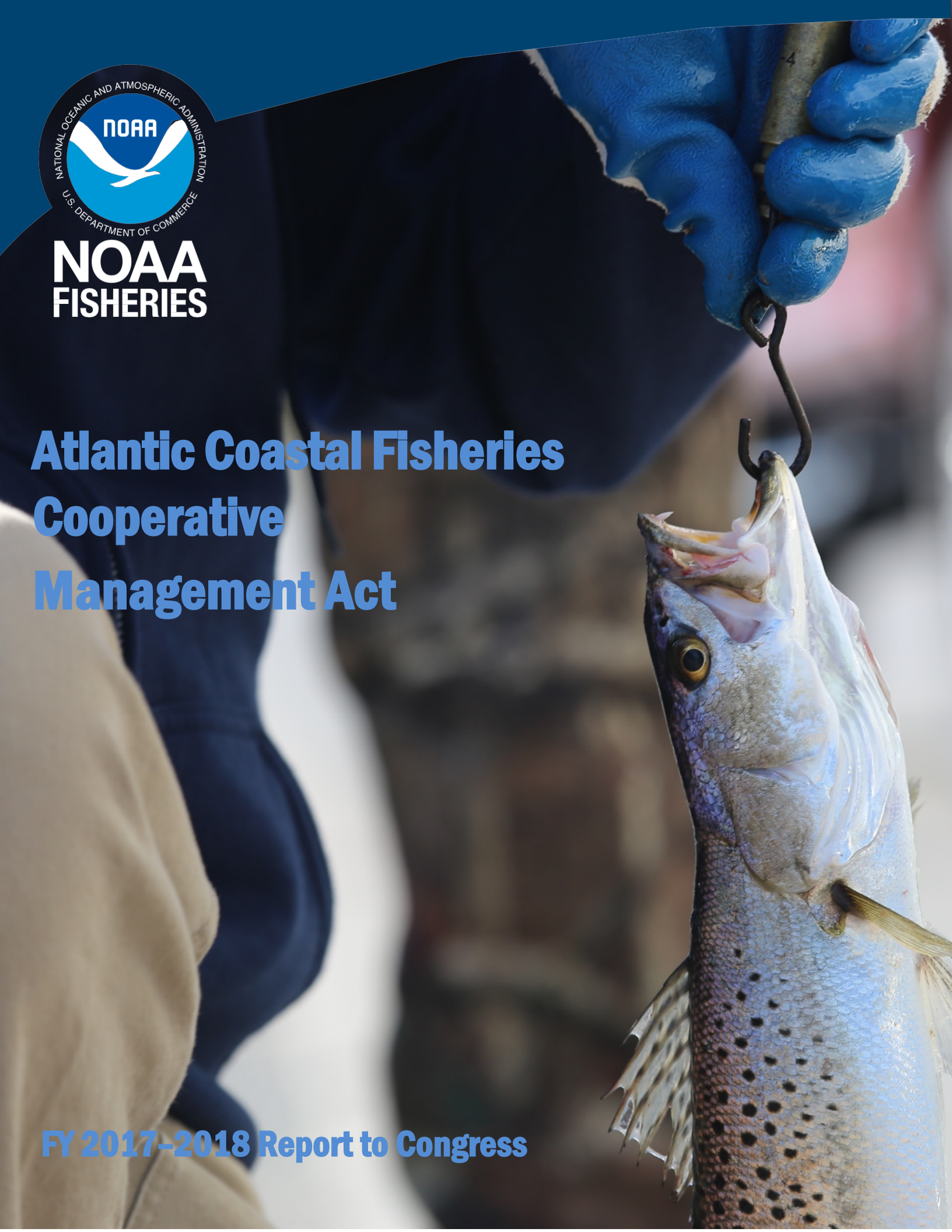




**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

# **Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act**

**FY 2017–2018 Report to Congress**



# Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Report to Congress FY 2017–2018

## Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act

With the passage of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (the Act) 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), was charged with the responsibility of supporting the interstate fisheries management efforts of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). When Congress reauthorized the Act in 2000 (Public Law 106-555) it required that the Secretary of Commerce 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.

Federal assistance is executed via a grant program authorized by the Act. The projects funded by the grant program are carried out to gather information and conduct activities that support management of U.S. multijurisdictional fisheries. These projects respond to fishery management planning, data collection (including statistics), research, habitat, and law enforcement needs under the Act. Many of the projects funded are core elements that support fishery management programs for interstate fisheries.

Funding provided to the ASMFC, the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), member states, NOAA Fisheries, and the USFWS through the Act continues to be integral to realizing state and federal alignment of fishery management and data collection programs carried out in U.S. Atlantic Coast waters. All beneficiaries of the funding have come to depend upon it for essential services as well as for short-term projects supporting immediate fishery management objectives.



Access Point Angler Intercept Survey interviewers practice collecting fish weights and measurements while recording survey responses with the Dockside Interceptor Application. Photo credit: Trevor Scheffel, ACCSP.



## Use of Federally Appropriated Assistance

### Commissions and States

Following the annual Congressional appropriation, NOAA Fisheries determines the total available funds. NOAA Fisheries uses a formula to distribute available funds among recipients, which is based on the value of each state's commercial and recreational fisheries, 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 Florida to Maine, 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 75 percent of their funding as direct funds under the Act. Together the ASMFC and the ACCSP employ 36 staff in their offices in Alexandria, Virginia. From 2017 to 2018, the ASMFC cooperatively managed 33 fish stocks, covering 26 species of marine fish from Maine to Florida. The ACCSP has grown to establish coast-wide data collection and reporting standards and now serves as a data warehouse for more than 50 years of complete fisheries landings data. The ACCSP developed and runs the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), which is the principal electronic seafood dealer reporting system 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—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 804 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.
5. Habitat conservation.

NOAA Fisheries leaves it to the discretion of the ASMFC and the eligible states for development of projects for funding, with the stipulation that submitted projects must support one of the five project priorities listed above. This process has enhanced individual state agency capabilities to perform activities that support the ASMFC's Interstate Fisheries Management Program, which includes the development of FMPs and addenda and amendments to these FMPs. Projects are designed to strengthen individual agencies in areas where the recipients have the greatest internal needs. For instance, many states use the funding to provide better marine commercial fisheries statistics, while other states use their funding for fisheries law enforcement. Table 1 contains the breakdown of funding under the Act by state recipients for FY 2017 and 2018. See Appendix 1 for a list of individual state projects.



Measuring Jonah crab (*Cancer borealis*) during the Gulf of Maine Northern Shrimp Survey. Photo credit: ASMFC.

**Table 1. Atlantic Coastal Act funding by state for FY 2017 and 2018.**

Recipient	Total Projects	FY17	FY18
Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program	1	\$1,425,000	\$1,500,000
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	1	\$2,019,536	\$2,125,827
Connecticut	2	\$168,375	\$175,408
Delaware	1	\$175,137	\$185,513
District of Columbia	2	\$38,000	\$40,000
Florida	3	\$207,272	\$216,291
Georgia	3	\$150,495	\$156,169
Maine	3	\$205,631	\$223,065
Maryland	3	\$199,593	\$209,767
Massachusetts	3	\$251,082	\$252,982
New Hampshire	2	\$144,549	\$150,589
New Jersey	1	\$228,566	\$237,360
New York	1	\$192,209	\$200,451
North Carolina	1	\$202,448	\$216,074
Pennsylvania	1	\$107,087	\$115,712
Potomac River Fisheries Commission	1	\$97,850	\$103,000
Rhode Island	5	\$175,089	\$182,160
South Carolina	4	\$159,269	\$166,861
Virginia	1	\$206,802	\$220,938
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>\$6,353,990</b>	<b>\$6,678,167</b>

## Federal Government

NOAA Fisheries and USFWS use the Act's funds to participate in quarterly ASMFC meetings, as well as technical committee and ACCSP meetings; program administration; and research. Table 2 provides the funding allocation for NOAA Fisheries and USFWS for these activities. In order to provide more financial assistance to the states and ASMFC for these important activities, NOAA Fisheries removed any administrative and programmatic costs from the Act's appropriation and provided that funding from base funding.

**Table 2. Atlantic Coastal Act funding by federal agency/office for FY 2017 and 2018.**

Federal Allocation	FY17	FY18
Habitat Conservation	\$16,000	\$0
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	\$17,600	\$0
Northeast Fisheries Science Center	\$138,000	\$0
Southeast Regional Office	\$4,500	\$0
Southeast Fisheries Science Center	\$111,400	\$0
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	\$90,000	\$90,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$377,500</b>	<b>\$90,000</b>

## Evaluation of Projects Funded in FY 2017 and 2018

Projects funded through the Act are evaluated by many different metrics. Common metrics include 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 the states to conduct essential fisheries work that it would be unable to support otherwise. An important overarching metric by which to evaluate the success of these projects is the status of the fisheries resources themselves.

The ASMFC's July 2019 status report indicates there were 33 fish stocks, covering 26 species (excluding the 40 Atlantic coastal shark species) managed all, or in part, through the ASMFC. Of these 33 stocks, the stock status is fully known (both overfished and overfishing or depleted status is known) for 22 stocks, partially known (either overfished, overfishing, or depleted status is known) for six stocks, and fully unknown for five stocks. Of the 33 managed stocks, 21 stocks are not subject to overfishing, four stocks are subject to overfishing, and the overfishing status is unknown for eight stocks. Of the 33 managed stocks, 13 stocks are not overfished or not depleted (with three of these stocks rebuilt), 12 stocks are depleted or overfished, and the depleted or overfished status of eight stocks is unknown (See Table 3, and the ASMFC's definitions).

### ASMFC Definitions

**Rebuilt/Sustainable:** Stock biomass is equal to or above the biomass level established by the FMP to ensure population sustainability.

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

**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., impacts due to environmental conditions).

**Overfished:** Occurs when stock biomass falls below the threshold established by the fishery management plan.

**Overfishing:** Occurs when fish are removed from a population at a rate that exceeds the threshold established in the fishery management plan.

The number of species and stocks referred to in Table 3 does not include 40 species of Atlantic coastal sharks because these species are principally managed by NOAA Fisheries. The ASMFC has a limited fishery management plan for Atlantic coastal sharks to complement federal management actions.

**Table 3: Stock status of species managed in whole or part by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission as of July 2019**

Species	Stock	Overfished	Overfishing	Rebuilding Status and Schedule
American Eel		Depleted	Unknown	2017 stock assessment update indicates resource remains depleted.
American Lobster	Gulf of Maine (GOM)	Not depleted	N	Rebuilt/Sustainable; GOM/GBK stock abundance has increased since the 1980s.
	Georges Bank (GBK)	Not depleted	N	Rebuilt/Sustainable; GOM/GBK stock abundance has increased since the 1980s.
	Southern New England	Depleted	N	SNE stock has collapsed and is experiencing recruitment failure.
American Shad		Depleted	Unknown	Depleted on coastwide basis; Amendment 3 established 2013 moratorium unless river specific sustainability can be documented; benchmark assessment scheduled for 2020.
Atlantic Croaker		Unknown	Unknown	Overfished status unknown; Traffic Light Analysis indicates relatively low harvest in 2017; no management action triggered.
Atlantic Herring		N	N	2018 stock assessment indicates declines in total biomass, spawning stock biomass (SSB), and recruitment over the past 5 years.
Atlantic Menhaden		N	N	2018 and 2019 total allowable catches set at 216,000 mt.
Atlantic Striped Bass		Y	Y	Overfished and overfishing occurring on a coastwide basis; Board has initiated management action to reduce fishing mortality.
Atlantic Sturgeon		Y	N	40+ year moratorium; to be rebuilt by ~2038. Listed in 2012 under the Endangered Species Act. Benchmark assessment indicates stock is depleted coastwide though slow recovery has been occurring since 1998 and total mortality is sustainable.
Black Drum		N	N	FMP approved in 2013; status based on 2015 benchmark assessment which found 2012 median biomass well above median biomass that produces maximum sustainable yield.
Black Sea Bass		N	N	Improved recruitment and declining fishing mortality rates since 2007 have led to steady increases in SSB;

Species	Stock	Overfished	Overfishing	Rebuilding Status and Schedule
				operational assessment scheduled for 2019.
Bluefish		N	N	Biomass above threshold but below target; operational assessment scheduled for 2019.
Cobia		N	N	FMP approved in 2017; SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) research track assessment scheduled for 2019 and SEDAR operational stock assessment scheduled for 2020.
Horseshoe Crab		Unknown	Unknown	2019 benchmark assessment found Northeast region and Delaware Bay stocks are neutral; the New York region stock is poor; and the Southeast region stock is good. Coastwide abundance has fluctuated, with many surveys decreasing after 1998 but increasing in recent years. Adaptive Resource Management Framework has been used since 2013 to set harvest levels for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin.
Jonah Crab		Unknown	Unknown	No range-wide assessment; Interstate FMP adopted in 2015.
Northern Shrimp		Depleted	N	2018 benchmark assessment indicates biomass has declined precipitously since 2010 and recruitment in recent years has been low; fishery moratorium in place since 2014 to protect remaining spawning population.
Red Drum	Northern Region	Unknown	N	Spawning potential ratio above target and threshold. Spawning potential ratio above target and threshold, though high uncertainty.
	Southern Region	Unknown	N	
River Herring		Depleted	Unknown	2017 assessment update indicates stock remains depleted on coastwide basis; Amendment 2 established 2012 moratorium unless riverspecific sustainability can be documented.
Scup		N	N	Rebuilt/Sustainable
Spanish Mackerel		N	N	Rebuilt/Sustainable
Spiny Dogfish		N	N	Rebuilt/Sustainable
Spot		Unknown	Unknown	Status unknown; Traffic light approach indicates relatively low harvest in 2017; no management action triggered.
Spotted Seatrout		Unknown	Unknown	Omnibus Amendment includes measures to protect spawning stock and establish 12" minimum size limit.
Summer Flounder		N	Y	2016 assessment update shows biomass trending downward since 2010;



Species	Stock	Overfished	Overfishing	Rebuilding Status and Schedule
				benchmark stock assessment scheduled for release in 2019.
Tautog	Massachusetts – Rhode Island Long Island Sound New Jersey – New York Bight Delaware – Maryland – Virginia	N Y Y Y	N Y Y N	Amendment 1 establishes regional stock units and reference points.
Weakfish		Depleted	N	6-year rebuilding period if spawning stock biomass is below threshold level; restricted harvest since 2009; Stock assessment update scheduled for 2019.
Winter Flounder	Gulf of Maine  Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic	Unknown  Y	N  N	Biomass unknown; unknown why stock is not responding to low catches and low exploitation rates. Current biomass at 18% of SSB target based on 2017 operational assessment.

## Success of Federal Activities

For FY 2017, NOAA Fisheries used funds to participate in the ASMFC science and management process, the northern shrimp trawl survey in the Gulf of Maine, menhaden port sampling in Beaufort, North Carolina, and lobster management activities. In FY 2018, NOAA Fisheries adjusted its internal funding and no longer used Atlantic Coastal Act funds, and directed these funds to the states as described in Table 1.



Tagging Atlantic striped bass. Photo credit: Kirby Rootes-Murdy, ASMFC.

The USFWS used FY 2017 and 2018 funds to participate in the ASMFC science and management process, North Carolina anadromous fish population characterization, deployment and maintenance of the Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, acoustic array and tagging database for striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, and horseshoe crab recaptures.

Details of the federal activities funded under the Act in FY 2017 and 2018 can be found in Appendix 2.

## Appendix 1 – List of Individual Eligible State Efforts to Support the Act during FY 2017 and 2018

**Maine Department of Natural Resources** – Marine Resources Monitoring of Maine Fisheries; Managing Mandatory Dealer 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; Electronic Trip-level Reporting for the For-Hire Sector; and Northeastern U.S. Black Sea Bass (*Centropristis striata*) Otolith Age Validation and Otolith Micro-Chemical Investigation using Marginal Increment Analysis and LA-ICP-MS.

**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; Implementation of a Barcode Commercial Fishing License in Rhode Island; 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 and Head Boat Survey Mobile Application.

**Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection** – Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act; and Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection – Connecticut Interstate Marine Fisheries Management.

**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.

**Maryland Department of Natural Resources** – Maryland Limited Entry for Fisheries Management; Maryland American Eel Population Study; 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 Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management.

**District of Columbia Department of Environment** – American Shad Population Dynamics and Stock Enhancement Assessment; and 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.

**South Carolina Department of Natural Resources** – Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Program in South Carolina; 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; South Atlantic Pilot Implementation Proposal - Charterboat Electronic Data Collection; and Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Program in South Carolina with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act of 1993.

**Georgia Department of Natural Resources** – Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Planning and Implementation for the conducting of surveys, administration and education to support the Atlantic Coastal Act; Piloting Electronic Commercial Data Collection/Sharing System in Georgia; and Data Entry and Management of Commercial Fisheries Paper Trip Tickets in Georgia.

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

## Appendix 2 – List of Individual Federal Projects to Support the Act during FY 2017 and 2018

In FY 2017, NOAA Fisheries used funds to implement the following (NOAA did not use FY 2018 funds from the Act):

**Support of the ASMFC Science & Management Process** – Funds provided partial support for NOAA Fisheries staff to participate in the ASMFC science and management process, and joint processes with the regional fishery management councils (New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic). This included 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.

**Northern Shrimp Trawl Survey** – The Gulf of Maine Northern Shrimp survey was initiated in 1983 and has since been conducted annually aboard the R/V *Gloria Michelle*. It is a standardized survey conducted during July and August that employs a stratified random design and standard field data collection procedures similar to those used in Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) multispecies bottom trawl surveys. This survey, which was developed and implemented with support from the ASMFC, provides the primary fishery-independent data source for the assessment and management of the Gulf of Maine Northern shrimp stock. The NEFSC has held lead responsibility for conducting this survey and for processing and archiving the resulting data. The Northern Shrimp Technical Committee of the ASMFC plays a supporting role in staffing this survey.

**Menhaden Port Sampling, Beaufort, North Carolina** – The objective of this effort is to provide science-based stock assessment support to the ASMFC to ensure Atlantic Coast states compliance with conservation measures for Atlantic menhaden. The efforts and inputs include staff time and analysis for sampling, sample work-up and related data activities at a Chesapeake Bay processing plant (Reedville, Virginia), and for aging the menhaden, processing data, maintaining records, monitoring landings, and conducting assessments at the NOAA Fisheries Beaufort Lab.

**Lobster Management Activities** – The service of an environmental technician was being funded to provide programmatic and administrative support services to the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office's Sustainable Fisheries Division. Services provided were specific to the development and implementation of federal lobster management actions under the authority of the Act and consistent with the recommendations of the ASMFC's Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. Lobster services/deliverables provided under the contract were limited to following tasks: lobster trap tag program, lobster trap limited access program, lobster trap transfer program, and general Atlantic Coastal Act fisheries program support.

In FY 2017 and 2018, the USFWS used funds to implement the following:

**Support of the ASMFC Science & Management Process** – Provide 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 to assess 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** – Provide funding and coordination of the coast-wide cooperative striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, and horseshoe crab tagging programs. Coordination includes 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.

**Alewife and American Eel Passage at Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge** – Management concerns over river herring (*Alosa pseudoharengus* and *Alosa aestivalis*) and American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) access and abundance in Lake Mattamuskeet (of Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge) and its four man-made canals that connect it to Pamlico Sound were the impetus for passage research and water quality monitoring. Once abundant on the refuge, the populations of these species have been in decline over the past few decades as reported by previous studies and fishery reports. Research was conducted by agency staff and collaborators will address the fish passage and abundance component of the critical research needs, as well as providing for continuous water quality monitoring within the lake. An estimated 2 years (two field seasons) were needed to accurately conduct the proposed studies. Cage sampling took place mainly in the spring, push net surveys mainly in the summer, eel pot surveys at certain intervals year-round, and water quality and gate measurements at times of the other surveying events.



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