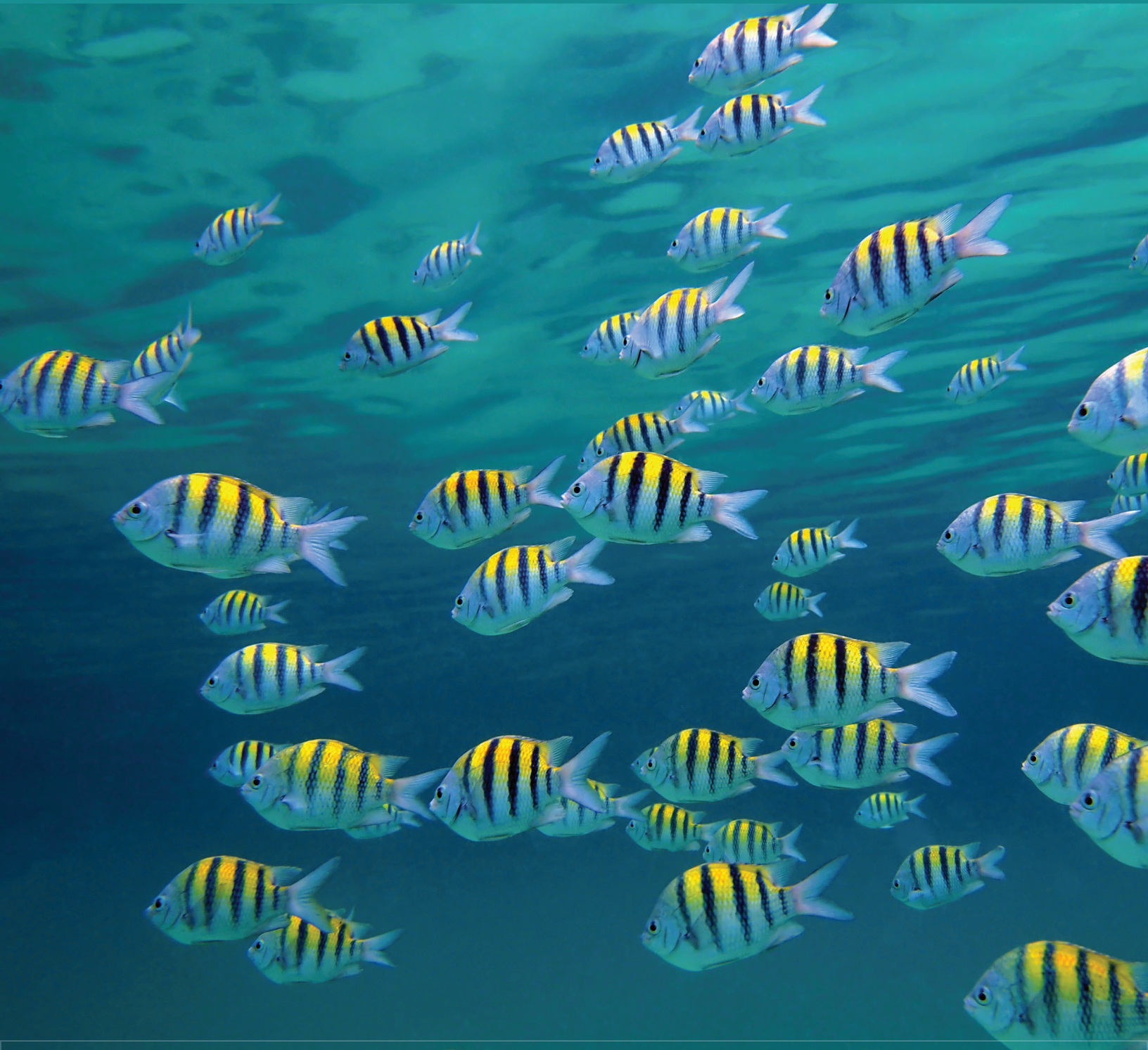


Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program



FISCAL YEAR IN REVIEW **2015**

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The ACCSP Philosophy

Vision

To be the principal source of fishery-dependent information on the Atlantic coast through the cooperation of all program partners in the collection and processing of common fisheries data and dissemination of the information for purposes of fisheries science and management.

Mission

Produce dependable and timely marine fishery statistics for Atlantic coast fisheries that are collected, processed, and disseminated according to common standards agreed upon by all program partners.

Values

- Accurate data are required for good fisheries management decisions.
- Coordination and collaboration amongst the program partners are essential for success.
- The Program must be responsive to the changing needs for fisheries data.
- Processes must be open and transparent, but confidential data must be protected.
- Data shall be accessible and easy to use.
- Responsibilities should be matched with available resources.

About the ACCSP:

Program Partners

FEDERAL

NOAA Fisheries



US Fish & Wildlife Service



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)



New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC)



New England
Fishery Management
Council

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC)



Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC)



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC)



COUNCILS & COMMISSIONS

Maine Dept. of Marine Resources
(ME DMR)



New Hampshire Fish & Game Dept.
(NH FGD)



Massachusetts Division of Marine
Fisheries (MA DMF)



Rhode Island Division of Fish &
Wildlife (RI DFW)



Connecticut Dept. of Energy &
Environmental Protection (CT DEEP)



New York State Dept. of Environmental
Conservation (NYS DEC)



New Jersey Division of Fish &
Wildlife (NJ DFW)



Pennsylvania Fish & Boat
Commission (PFBC)



STATE AGENCIES

Delaware Division of Fish &
Wildlife (DE DFW)



Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources
(MD DNR)



District of Columbia Fisheries & Wildlife
Division (DC FWD)



Virginia Marine Resources
Commission (VMRC)



North Carolina Division of Marine
Fisheries (NC DMF)



South Carolina Dept. of Natural
Resources (SC DNR)



Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources
(GA DNR)



Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation
Commission (FL FWCC)



Letter from the Chair

As the current ACCSP Coordinating Council Chair, I am honored to present to you the 2015 Fiscal Year Review of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP). This past year has been a big one for the Program. I encourage you to read this report if you're interested in learning more about the organization, goals of our Program, our recent accomplishments and ongoing efforts, and our support of our partners' fisheries data collection and management projects.

In 2015, the Program prepared for its expanded role in supporting the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Recreational Information Program's (MRIP) Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS). Through a Cooperative Agreement reached between NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), the ACCSP has been tasked with the new dual role of data collection coordinator and data processor in the transition to state conduct of APAIS. ACCSP staff has worked hard to prepare for the increased workload.

Over the past year, the program has welcomed four new hires to manage survey coordination, data collection, and data processing tasks; acquired new infrastructure to accommodate increased data loads; and worked with state partners to hire and train

APAIS personnel. As of January 1, 2016, the Atlantic states are now conducting APAIS surveys and the transition has gone smoothly, thanks in large part to ACCSP staff's efforts.

Also this past year, the ACCSP successfully piloted its new mobile electronic trip reporting application, eTrips/Mobile. This application makes it possible for fishermen to report while still at-sea, improving timeliness and accuracy of reports received, which in turn aids the development of more accurate catch and effort estimates.

Recently, the application was authorized by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) for federal trip reporting in the region, meaning fishermen in the region now need only submit one electronic trip report to satisfy both state and federal trip reporting requirements in states that use the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). The ACCSP will conduct outreach and training to expand use of this time-saving tool in the coming year.

In addition to its own efforts, the program continues to support its partners in their efforts to improve fisheries data collection and management. In 2015, the ACCSP allocated nearly \$2 million to its partners for projects ranging from improving American lobster biological and catch/effort data in New Hampshire to improving data transmission methods in North



*Robert Boyles, SC DNR,
Coordinating Council Chair*

Carolina. These projects benefit not only grant recipients, but all of the ACCSP partners: project results and data collected are shared among all ACCSP partners, maximizing their benefits and eliminating duplicative research efforts.

As a partnership-based program, the ACCSP is dependent on the participation of its partners. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of our partners for their continued commitment to the program. Your input guides program efforts and helps ensure that the ACCSP fulfills your fisheries data needs. I would also like to thank ACCSP staff for their hard work over the past year and commend you on your recent successes. I look forward to seeing how the ACCSP and its partners will continue to improve fisheries data collection and management in 2016.

Sincerely,
Robert Boyles

Background

History

In 1995, the ACCSP was established by 23 state and federal partner agencies (listed on p.4) in order to address data deficiencies constraining fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. These deficiencies included incompatibilities between state and federal data systems, a lack of standardized trip-level catch and effort reporting, no universal permit and vessel registration data, and a general need for more and better data to support emerging fisheries management initiatives.

Mission

The ACCSP works to design, implement, and conduct fisheries statistics data collection programs and integrates those data into a single management system designed to meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen.

Partner Coordination and Collaboration

The ACCSP was established as a committee-based organization in order to encourage and facilitate partner coordination and collaboration. Partners are represented on the various committees (page 8). These committees meet at least once each year, allowing partners to identify and discuss issues pertaining to their committee's mission.

In working together, the partners can leverage the limited resources available to address shared problems and develop solutions that are mutually beneficial.

2014-2018 Program Goals

- Manage and expand a fully integrated data set that represents the best available fisheries data.
- Continue working with the program partners to improve fisheries data collection and management in accordance with the evolving ACCSP standards (within the confines of limited funds).
- Explore the allocation of existing Program funds and work with partners to pursue additional funding.
- Effect stronger executive leadership and collaborative involvement among partners at all committee levels.
- Monitor and improve the usefulness of products and services provided by the ACCSP.
- Collaborate with program partners in their funding processes by providing outreach materials and other support to demonstrate the value of ACCSP products and the importance of maintaining a base support for fisheries-dependent data collection programs to state partners and their executive and legislative branches as well as to all other partner agencies.
- Support nationwide systems as defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act.

Data Modules and Collection Standards

Data Modules

Catch & Effort

Statistics for the commercial fishing sector are collected by the partners for the fishing activity that occurs in their respective areas of jurisdiction. Due to the large number of commercial reporting programs on the Atlantic coast, there is a need for consistency in data collection procedures and coding by the partners.

Statistics for most of the recreational and for-hire sectors are collected by coastwide programs including MRIP, the Southeast For-hire/Headboat Survey, and the Northeast Vessel Trip Reporting Program (VTR).

Full implementation of the dealer, fishermen, and vessel permit and registration module is essential to managing data used for fisheries assessment, because it allows linking of data from other modules back to the trip information. It also provides comprehensive data on the numbers of participants and vessels in various fisheries.

Biological

Biological data, such as species, length, weight, age, and maturity are used to characterize the composition of the catch, stock, and to determine other life history characteris-

tics. These data are an important component of stock assessments and management.

Bycatch, Releases, & Protected Species Interaction

Data on bycatch and releases describe the landed and discarded or released catch. Protected species interactions data are used to determine the impact of fishing activity. Collectively, these data are necessary to manage fisheries in a holistic manner and to measure the impacts of various management strategies on stocks.

Socioeconomic

Federal law mandates the collection and consideration of socio-economic data related to fisheries. These data are needed to measure the value of fisheries to our nation, regions, and states, and to evaluate the impacts of fisheries regulations on fishermen, fishing communities, and the economy.

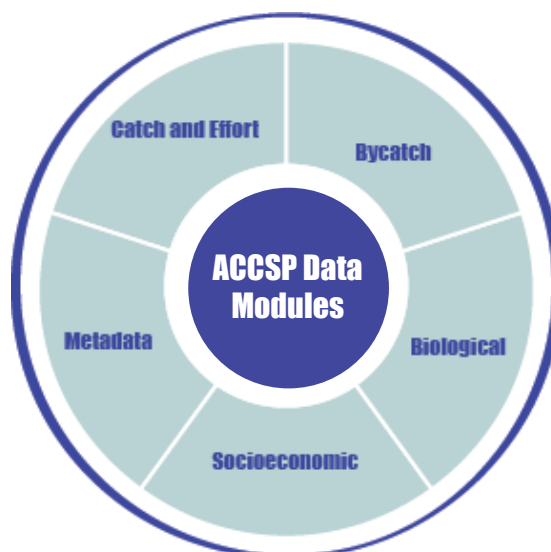
Metadata

Metadata are “corollary or descriptive information, both numeric and non-numeric, which may qualify or explain primary data.” Metadata is an essential component of each module, and is critical for understanding trends in data and how to use the data for analyses. Metadata applications are needed for program documentation, statutory and regulatory histories, fishing technology histories, environmental data, and social and economic data (indices).

Data Collection Standards

In May 2012, the Program released the latest edition of the [Atlantic Coast Fisheries Data Collection Standards](#). This document defines policies, data collection standards, and data management standards for the ACCSP.

These standards resulted from a collaborative effort undertaken by all of the Atlantic coast federal, state, and regional fisheries agencies. They are updated to provide long-term guidance for implementing programs and providing accurate and timely fisheries-dependent data in support of state and federal fisheries conservation and management activities.





Committee Overviews

Technical Committees

Biological



The **Biological Review Panel** develops program strategies and standards to collect and manage biological data. The committee biennially recommends target species, compiles sampling levels for biological sampling, and works with the Bycatch Prioritization Committee to integrate data collection protocols. In FY2015, the panel completed the **Biological Prioritization Matrix** and reviewed the value and application of sampling targets. In the coming months, the panel will work to complete its new **Biological Sampling Program Inventory application**, which will be made publicly available on the ACCSP website.

Bycatch



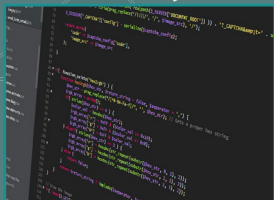
The **Bycatch Prioritization Committee** develops and updates data collection standards and biennially ranks fleets for data collection priority based on statutory requirements, as well as stock assessments and industry needs. This past year, the committee held a **Bycatch Prioritization Matrix** workshop to initiate development of a new matrix, while also clarifying definitions for the existing matrix. It also held 26 fleet calls between August and March in order to outline gear codes, primary bycatch, primary catch, stock/range of East Coast, statistical area and to redefine existing fleets in the matrix. The committee will continue working on the new matrix in the coming year.

Commercial



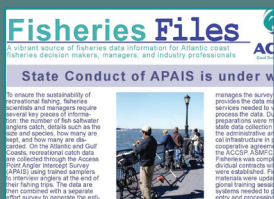
The **Commercial Technical Committee** develops catch and effort data standards for all species commercially harvested on the Atlantic coast and updates and maintains codes to improve reporting systems. In 2015, the committee contributed to the **redesign of the Data Warehouse** (p. 13) and completed its **Validation of Commercial Finfish and Shellfish Conversion Factors** project. Committee members also reviewed and standardized SAFIS codes and metadata tracking. In 2016, the committee will begin discussions on the issues of seafood traceability and electronic monitoring. Swipe card standards for state and federally managed species will be defined as well.

Information Systems



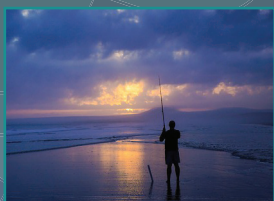
The **Information Systems Committee** guides and advises the development of information systems supporting the implementation of program standards. This year, the committee successfully launched the **eTrips/Mobile application** (p. 11) pilot program with SeaPlan to collect location data. The eTrips/M app was also authorized by GARFO, allowing electronically submitted Vessel Trip Reports to be automatically submitted to GARFO. In the coming year, the committee plans to complete the electronic dealer reporting mobile application (**eDR/M**)(p.11), and plans to roll out the application in Massachusetts in May. and Maine in August.

Outreach



The **Outreach Committee** works to communicate the value of ACCSP products and services and assist program partners with outreach pertaining to program activities. In FY15, the committee conducted several **SAFIS application user surveys** to garner user feedback that will guide the new SAFIS Visioning project. The committee also contributed to the **redesign of the ACCSP website**, making the site more user-friendly.

Recreational Technical



The **Recreational Technical Committee** develops data collection standards for monitoring catch and effort of recreational and for-hire fisheries. In 2015, the Committee continued to support **additional at-sea headboat sampling** from New Hampshire to Florida. The committee developed an Atlantic Regional MRIP Implementation Plan to make recommendations to the NOAA Fisheries regarding future investments in recreational survey implementation and operations. The committee also provided its experience to aid in the **transition to state conduct of the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS)** (p.14).

Operations Committee

The Operations Committee guides the development of program standards and serves as the review body for annual project funding priorities, providing recommendations to the Coordinating Council.

In 2015, the Operations Committee developed new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and provided a recommendation to the Coordinating Council for establishing a Conflict of Interest with Voting Partners Policy. In the coming year, the committee will develop SOP performance metrics and will work to determine if some program priorities have been met and should be reevaluated for funding purposes.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee was established to ensure, to the greatest extent practicable, that the fishing industry perspective is considered in the development and implementation of the Program. The Advisory Committee includes representatives from the commercial, recreational, for-hire, and academic sectors and serves an important role by providing recommendations to the Program. At least one member of this Committee also sits on each technical committee to provide industry feedback. The Committee also reviews and prioritizes project proposals and forwards funding recommendations to the Coordinating Council.

This past year, the committee worked to help develop the Conflict of Interest with Voting Partners Policy.



Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council is the governing body of ACCSP, establishing policies to guide the Program and overseeing program standards and implementation. Every fall, the Council approves the Program's budget for the following year.

In 2015, the Coordinating Council approved a Long-term Funding Strategy for maintenance proposals and the new Conflict of Interest with Voting Partners Policy



Data Collection and Processing

SAFIS

The Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) consists of five distinct web-based applications designed to allow fishermen and dealers to report data electronically. While the five applications function independently, they are all kept within the same database and share standards and codes that are ACCSP-compliant.



Single Trip Ticket Dealer Reporting: e-1Ticket

e-1Ticket provides the ability to collect all of the same data collected through a 2-ticket system, however the harvester and dealer report the different data on a single form and simultaneously create a dealer report.

Electronic Trip Reporting: eTrips

eTrips compiles catch and effort data from fishermen. It enables fishermen to create trip reports after entering the requisite data in the trip, effort, and catch fields. eTrips can create interactive reports that summarize the fisherman's history of catch and effort and illustrate progress.

Voluntary Recreational Logbook: eLogbook

eLogbook allows recreational anglers to submit catch and effort data voluntarily. The app can be used to save daily entries and formulate summaries of information on all species caught by the angler.

Electronic Dealer Reporting: eDR

eDR allows dealers to enter an electronic dealer report. Data required for a completed report include: fisherman, port, date landed, time landed, date purchased, vessel number, species, disposition, gear, quantity, and price. eDR has a unique price board feature that allows the user to save the price of a species for 14 days.

SAFIS Management System: SMS

SMS facilitates maintenance of partner-specific data, such as participants, permits, and vessels.

Provides up-to-date information on species caught

Shows the impact of landings on fisheries and quotas across jurisdictions

Allows confidential access to data-of-record by fishermen and dealers

Fulfills state and federal reporting requirements through online data entry

Reduces duplicative reporting

Has the ability to collect highly migratory species data

Features integrated price board to automatically generate pricing information

Allows users to create favorites, so reporting is quick and easy



What's New in SAFIS

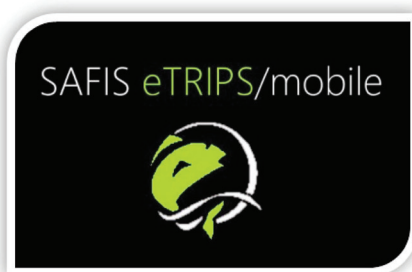
Mobile Electronic Trip Reporting: eTrips/Mobile

Trip reports provide catch and effort data to state and federal agencies for use in fisheries management and stock assessments.

In 2015, the ACCSP developed eTrips/Mobile (eTrips/M), a mobile application that enables harvesters to work on and complete trip reports electronically on a portable device capable of operating independently of a full-time internet connection. This means that fishermen can complete and

“Designed by fishermen and utilizing the latest technology, eTrips/M dramatically reduces our reporting burden while providing more accurate and timely industry data to the states, the ACCSP, and now GARFO. The eTrips/M application will increase data accuracy and make data available immediately to fisheries managers, improving their ability to respond to changes in the fishery in a more timely way.”

- Rick Bellavance, Captain of Priority Too and President of the Rhode Island Party and Charter Boat Association



submit reports while still at sea where an internet connection is available.

If an internet connection is not available, data can be entered and saved and will automatically submit once a connection can be established.

By allowing fishermen to fulfill reporting requirements electronically on a mobile device, eTrips/M expedites the reporting process, improves reporting accuracy, and produces near real-time landings and catch data that can be

accessed by multiple state and federal agencies immediately.

eTrips/M is designed to work in both commercial and charter/headboat fisheries, and is free for anyone who wishes to use it in jurisdictions that have adopted electronic trip reporting through the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). The app can be downloaded from the Apple, Android, and Microsoft app stores for tablets only. eTrips/M training videos are available on the ACCSP website.

Recently, NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) announced that it had authorized eTrips/M for the purpose of eVTR submission in the Greater Atlantic Region.

Mobile Electronic Dealer Reporting: eDR/Mobile

Building on its success with eTrips/M, the ACCSP Software Team is currently working to produce a mobile electronic dealer application, eDR/Mobile. This application will enable dealers to report electronically on a mobile device,

The application will include the management of swipecards, endorsements, and management groups. It is expected to be completed and rolled out in mid-2016.

Data Warehouse

The Data Warehouse is an online database populated with fishery-dependent data supplied by ACCSP's 23 program partners that is accessible to both public and confidential users. The Warehouse harmonizes all of the data received into one set of codes for variables such as species, gear, and fishing area, making it possible to combine datasets from different sources for larger scale, regional analyses.

Commercial Catch & Effort



Commercial landings data represent the best compilation of state and federal landings submitted by both dealers and fishermen. Some complete data sets available include dollar value and total pounds.

Recreational Catch & Effort

ACCSP has recreational catch and effort data starting in 1981 available via the Data Warehouse. The data since 2004 have been updated in conjunction with the MRIP



estimation methodology released in February 2012. This includes both the public estimates and the advanced queries for bag limit analysis and directed trips.

Biological Data

Biological data, such as species, length, weight, age, and maturity, are used to characterize the



composition of the catch and the stock and to determine other life history characteristics. Users have access to available biological data via custom data request, but this data will soon become publicly available on the website.



Gives users the ability to create targeted queries

Allows public and confidential access

Features tools that make using the data easier, such as exporting pivot tables and the ability to email workbooks

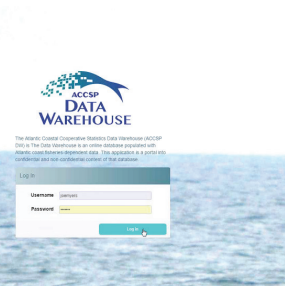
Allows users to submit custom data requests

Suitable for many types of users, including fishery managers, stock assessment scientists, commercial and recreational fishermen, and students

What's New in the Data Warehouse

Redesigned Data Warehouse

Over the past year, the ACCSP Data Team has been working hard to develop a redesigned Data Warehouse. The new warehouse will be more intuitive and flexible for its users.



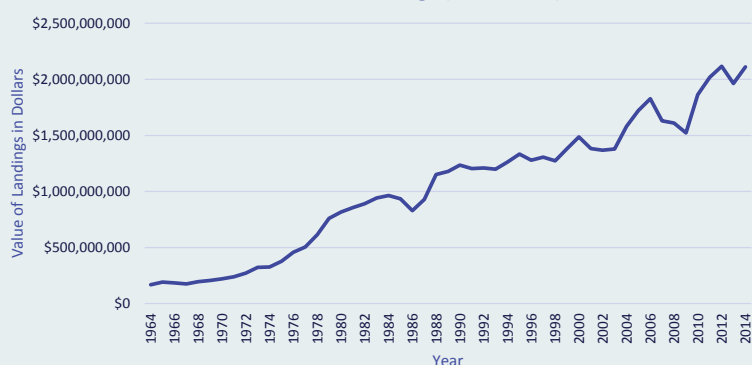
The new site will allow users to create queries at various temporal and spatial scales. A new action bar provides various tools that can be used to manipulate

the display of report data. These tools can be used to: add or drop columns of data displayed, highlight cells, aggregate data or group data, and create pivot tables. The new site also offers users the ability to save reports so that they can be accessed upon the next site visit.

The site is currently in beta-testing and has received very positive feedback from its beta-testers thus far. ACCSP is planning to roll out the new site in conjunction with the warehouse's spring data load.



Value of Annual Landings (1964-2014)



Latest Data Refresh

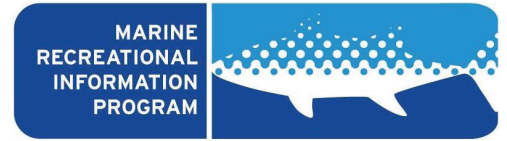
Data Set	Refresh Date
Confidential Commercial Landings	Feb. 11, 2016
Non-Confidential Commercial Landings	Feb. 11, 2016
Non-Confidential Recreational Catch	Apr. 15, 2016
Non-Confidential Recreational Effort	Apr. 15, 2016

Annual Landings 1964-2014



APAIS Transition to State Conduct

Over the past year and a half, ACCSP has been preparing to take on the dual role of data collection coordinator and data processor for state conduct of the NOAA Fisheries' Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) along the Atlantic coast.



What is APAIS?

APAIS, the catch estimate component of NOAA's Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), uses trained samplers to collect marine recreational catch data via interviews with anglers at the end of their fishing trips. These surveys capture key pieces of information required to develop catch estimates, including:

- Number of fish caught
- Number kept
- Number discarded
- Species
- Size

Moving To State Conduct

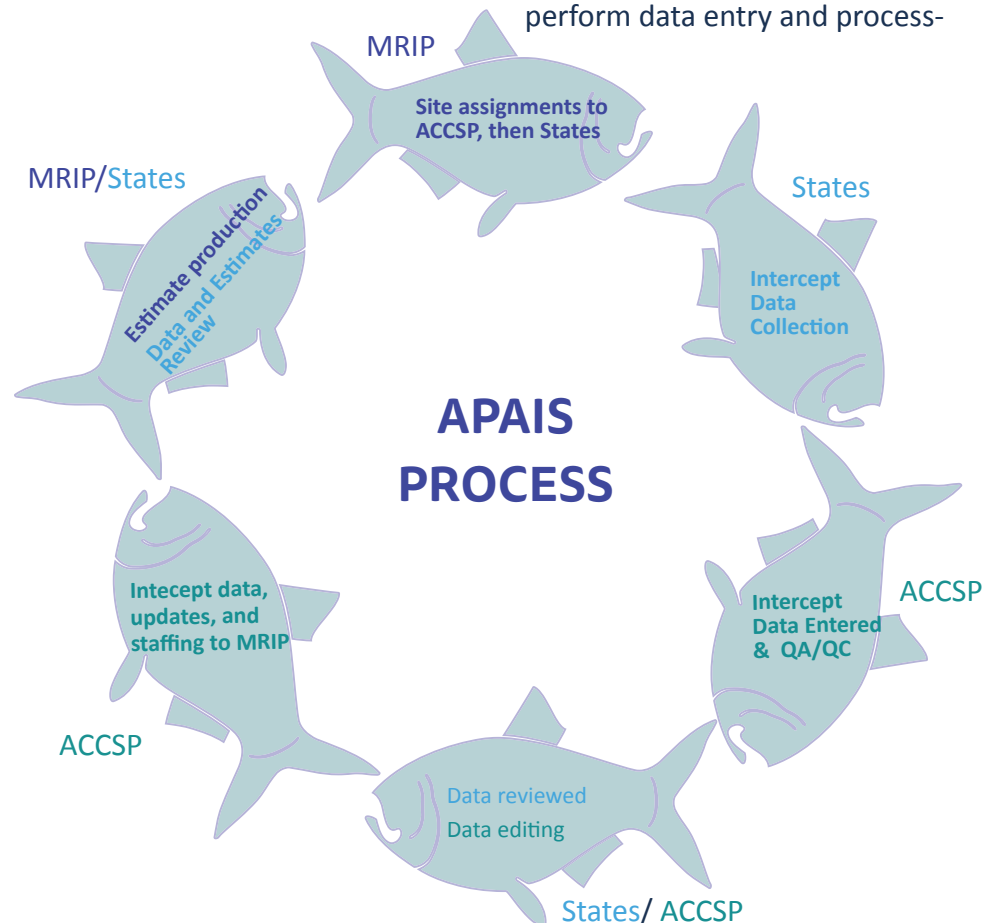
In 2015, a cooperative agreement developed between NOAA Fisheries, ASMFC, and the ACCSP transferred responsibility for APAIS management from a federal contractor to the ASMFC/ACCSP and responsibility for APAIS conduct to the Atlantic states. Experiences in states that already conduct APAIS- including the Gulf states, the Pacific states, and several Atlantic states have demonstrated the benefits of greater state involvement in recreational data collection.

Benefits of State Conduct

State conduct of APAIS brings local knowledge to survey operations; strengthens fishery agency relationships with anglers; improves angler response rates and minimizes refusal rates, improving data precision over time; and, ultimately, builds stakeholder confidence in the recreational fisheries data upon which management decisions are based.

Progress To-Date

During 2015, preparations were made for state data collection by putting the administrative and logistical infrastructure in place. The cooperative agreement between the ACCSP, ASMFC, and NOAA Fisheries was completed and individual contracts with each state were established. Field training materials were updated, three regional training sessions held, and systems needed to perform data entry and process-





ing were purchased and installed. In addition, ACCSP hired four additional staff members to handle the increased workload.

Beginning in January 2016, Wave 1 data (January-February) were collected in North Carolina, then successfully processed and submitted by ACCSP staff to NOAA Fisheries. In February, the states from Rhode Island to Virginia performed training sampling assignments. Wave 2 (March-April) data collection began on March 1 for Massachusetts through Georgia and has gone smoothly thus far.

Overall, APAIS implementation via ACCSP is on track and exceeding expectations. Initial data collection has gone exceptionally well, and the partnership approach is already showing benefits along the coast.

Transition Timeline

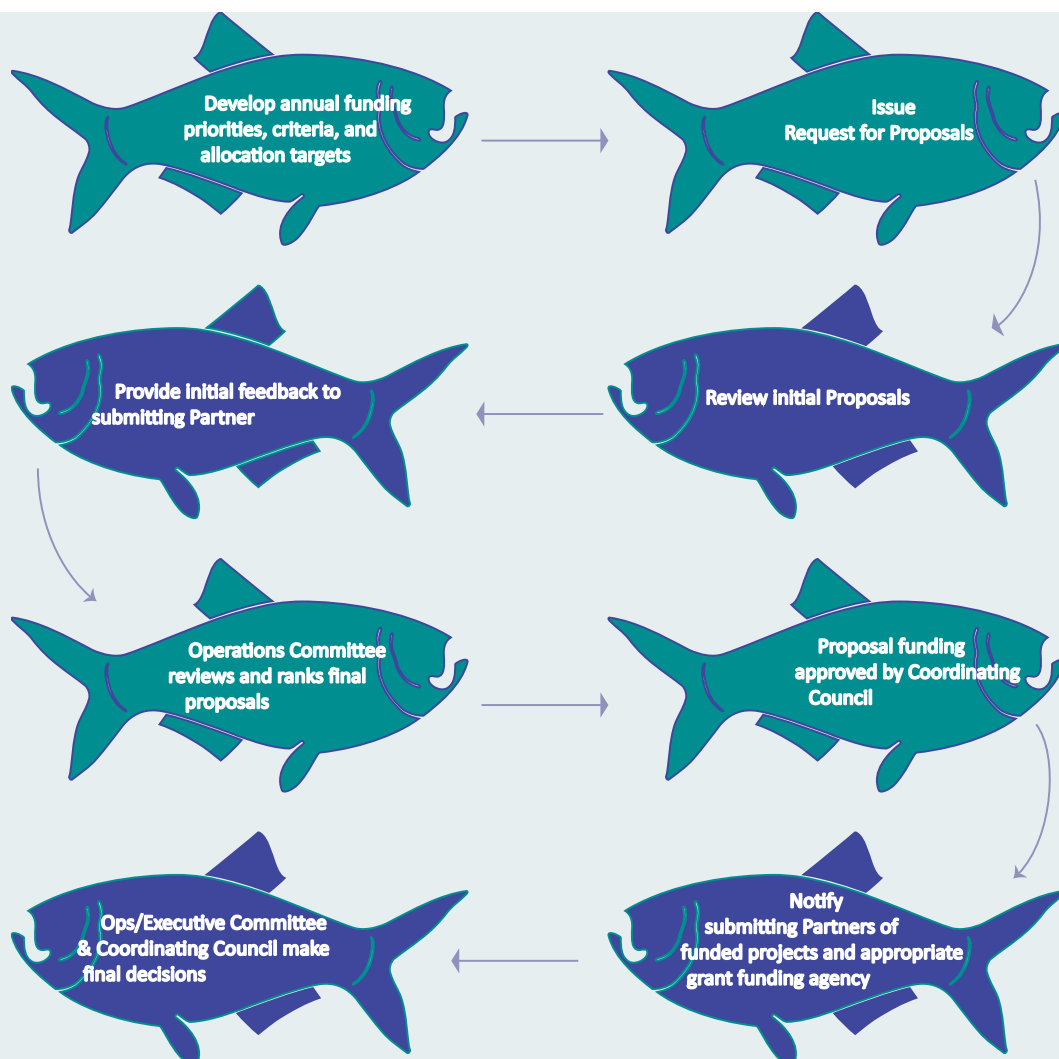
Nov 2014	Transition plan for 2015 and 2016 developed
Mar 2015	Final ASMFC and state implementation plans and budgets submitted
Apr 2015	APAIS Program Manager hired
May 2015	Cooperative agreement submitted to NOAA Fisheries Visited GSMFC to evaluate data processing activities
July 2015	Distributed standard state agreements for review Identified software development items
Sept 2015	Cooperative agreement 2016 approved by NOAA Fisheries. Funding available from MRIP to start state conduct. Transition states hire lead biologists.
Oct 2015	Lead biologist/APAIS personnel training and state infrastructure acquisition/testing
Dec 2015	Testing of field survey and central data processing Three regional field interviewer trainings held
Jan 2016	State conduct of APAIS begins in NC with ASMFC/ACCSP as central coordinator.
Feb 2016	Transition states (RI-VA) perform preliminary training assignments including maintenance of site registry information.

ACCSP Funds Partner Projects

In addition to its data collection and processing activities, ACCSP supports program partners by awarding grants for data collection and data management projects. Projects are evaluated based on their potential to help achieve Program goals. In 2015, these goals were, in order of priority, improvements to:

1. Catch, effort, and landings data
2. Biological data
3. Releases, discards and protected species data
4. Economic and sociological data

In FY2015, the ACCSP allocated nearly \$2 million to its partners for selected data collection and management projects. A brief overview of each project awarded funding is provided on the adjacent page.



2015 Partner Projects

Program Partner	Funding Type	Project	Award
Maine Department of Marine Resources	Maintenance	Dealer and Harvester Reporting	\$176,373
Maine Department of Marine Resources	Maintenance	Portside Commercial Catch Sampling and Comparative Bycatch Sampling for Atlantic Herring, Atlantic Mackerel, and Atlantic Menhaden	\$136,306
New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game	New	Improve the American Lobster Biological and Catch/Effort Data for Georges Bank and Characterize Seasonal Egger Aggregation in Closed Area II	\$74,423
Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife	Maintenance	Maintain and Coordinate Fishery-Dependent Data Feeds	\$79,719
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation	Maintenance	Improve Trip-level Reporting and Quota Monitoring for State License Participants in New York's Marine Fisheries	\$62,928
New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife	Maintenance	Electronic Reporting and Biological Characterization of its Commercial Fisheries and Process and Age Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Otoliths	\$155,126
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries	New	Update and Enhance the Data Transmission Methods	\$75,620
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources	Maintenance	Collection Method for the ACCSP Commercial Module	\$165,824
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission & Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	Maintenance	Observer Program for the Mid-Atlantic and Rhode Island Small Mesh Otter Trawl Fishery	\$183,200
NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center	Maintenance	Processing and Ageing Biological Samples Collected from U.S. South Atlantic Commercial and Recreational Fisheries	\$250,831
ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee	Maintenance	Increase At-sea Sampling Levels for the Recreational Headboat Fishery on the Atlantic Coast (New Hampshire through Florida)	\$168,738

Partner Projects

Improving American Lobster Biological & Catch/Effort Data for Georges Bank, and Characterizing Seasonal Egger Aggregation in Closed Area II

In 2015, with the support of the ACCSP, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NH FGD) conducted a study to increase understanding of the offshore American lobster population segment in Closed Area II on eastern Georges Bank through increased sampling and data collection.

The productive offshore lobster fishery found in Closed Area II has been fished seasonally for over 30

years; for the past 20 years, the area has been closed to bottom tending mobile gear. Despite observation of a consistent aggregation of ovigerous (egg bearing) females in the area, the NEFMC began to explore the possibility of opening the area to bottom tending mobile gear in 2015.

Concerned that this move could negatively impact both the Closed Area II population segment and potentially inshore populations, NH FGD sought to increase offshore sampling in order to develop a better understanding of the stock connectivity between inshore and offshore populations, larval recruitment and settle-

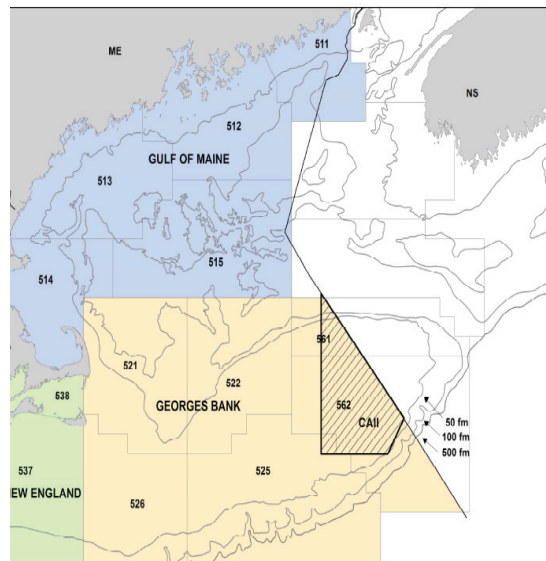


Figure 1. Chart showing fisheries management statistical areas, lobster stock delineations and Closed

ment, and the spatial distribution of ovigerous females.

Between July and October of 2015, fisheries observers were deployed aboard federal lobster vessels to collect catch, effort, biological, and bycatch data. Observers were deployed on 5 trips, totaling 45.6 sea-days. NH FGD worked with the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association (AOLA) to develop and distribute voluntary logbooks to lobster fishing vessels in order to record the location and count of egg bearing females caught for each trawl.

Five of these logbook were completed and returned. Together, these five lobster vessels caught and counted 48,342 lobsters- 19,051 of which were egg-bearing females- over 13, 047 trap hauls. NH FGD also added a tagging component to the project to understand the movements of ovigerous females; this component

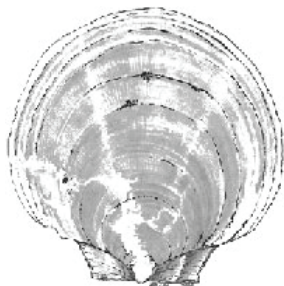


was administered by AOLA. The fisheries observers tagged 2,674 female lobsters over the course of the 5 observation trips, while researchers from the Coonamessett Farm Foundation tagged an additional 407. As of March, 2016, 66 tag recaptures had been recorded.

The NH FGD expects to complete its final report in May 2016. The data collected will be provided to the ASMFC's Lobster Stock Assessment. All biological data will be made available through the Data Warehouse (p. 12).

Swipe Card Pilot Implementation for Massachusetts Trip Level Shellfish Transactions and Maine Species-specific Transactions

In 2014, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) began a new project to develop a swipe card application that would capture primary transactions electronically at the trip level and submit them directly to SAFIS. At the beginning of the project, the ACCSP added the Maine Division of Marine



Resources to this effort, as they had applied for ACCSP funding to develop a similar application to expand their existing swipe card system originally developed for the elver fishery.

In the system, a commercial harvester presents their swipe card, to a dealer at the beginning of a transaction. The dealer swipes the card, reads the information stored on the card (including the harvester's permits and vessel) using a mobile device, and then records specifics of the transaction, including: port, landing date, purchase date, species (including grade, market category, and unit), and price. Once the dealer submits the report, the application communicates with SAFIS and uploads that report.

The swipe card system shows clearly which permit and vessel are associated to the catch, and allows the dealer to identify whether a harvester has a commercial permit for each of the species they are selling. By enabling electronic submission from a mobile device, the application will increase the accuracy and speed with which landings and transactions are recorded. The system may also facilitate electronic tracking through the seafood distribution chain, helping mitigate seafood traceability issues.

The partners intend to use their swipe card systems in different ways. MA DMF aims to pilot an optional swipe card system capable of collecting both harvester and dealer data for state-permitted shellfish dealers. ME DMR plans to implement a mandatory swipe card system designed to collect dealer-only data for specific species: sea urchins, scallops, and elvers. ME DMR also plans to include federally permitted dealers in its system.

The application has been developed in such a way that it can satisfy both partners' requirements and is nearly complete. MA plans to run a pilot of the application in the spring of 2016, while ME DMR plans to roll out the application later in the year.



Partner Projects

Observer Program for Mid-Atlantic (New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia) and Rhode Island Small Mesh Otter Trawls

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) through its Management and Science Committee and ISFMP Policy Board identified the need for at-sea observer data on discards, age/length samples, and catch/effort data as a critical research priority. In addition, a recurring high priority recommendation from stock assessments and fishery management plans (FMPs) for several species managed by the ASMFC is to increase at-sea observer coverage to obtain commercial discard and associated biological data. This project was created to address these issues and collect biological and discard data for commercially and recreationally important species from the small mesh otter trawl fisheries in the mid-Atlantic region (New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia) and Rhode Island using at-sea observers.

This ongoing project has been supported by ACCSP since 2011. Because many of the primary species taken in small-mesh trawl fisheries are co-managed by ASMFC and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) (e.g. black sea bass, scup, summer flounder, bluefish, and spiny dogfish) the ASMFC and MAFMC have collaborated on this project. The primary goal of this endeavor

is to increase observer coverage on the small mesh bottom trawl fishery. All observers are deployed on commercial vessels that utilize small mesh (<5.5") otter trawls in state and federal waters of the Mid-Atlantic and Rhode Island. The Observer Program for the Mid-Atlantic and Rhode Island contracts sea days from the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fishery Observer Program (NEFOP) and takes single or multi-day trips each month throughout the year. The days and time periods are adjusted by region to ensure that observer coverage is effectively applied to species of interest. The observers document the discards and collect biosamples from species of interest, which include river herring, scup, weakfish, croaker, bluefish, black sea bass, summer flounder, and spiny dogfish. All of these species are identified in the upper quartile of the ACCSP Biological Matrix.

The collected specimens are sexed, enumerated, measured, and weighed in accordance to the NEFOP protocols, and the data are submitted in compliance to ACCSP guidelines. Besides collecting biological data from samples, the observers also extract age structures as well. After 90 days, the data that observers collect are loaded into the NEFOP database and then made available to ACCSP at the end of each year. This program has accomplished hundreds of sea days' worth of coverage since its implementation in 2011. The fifth year of operation has been running smoothly,

with 70 sea days completed from August 2015 through January 2016. A preliminary sample size analysis (Wigley et al. 2013) of additional sea days provided by this observer program (beyond the NEFOP-funded days) indicate that the increased number of trips increased precision for four species groups: summer flounder/scup/black sea bass, squid/butterfish/mackerel, small mesh groundfish, and large mesh groundfish.

Obtaining discard and biological information is critical to adequately characterize the quantity, length, and age compositions of fishery catches that can subsequently be used in stock assessments. Additionally, the catch and effort data obtained from these trips are supplied to the appropriate partner(s) to be able to validate vessel reported and landings information.

Given the transient nature of vessels involved in many fisheries, a multi-state/regional program is the best approach to address observer coverage needs. This also promotes consistency in data collection and utilization in coast-wide stock assessments. The greatest benefit that the ASMFC/MAMFC Observer Program provides is the biological information obtained from the discards of commercial fisheries. This supplies stock assessment scientists and fisheries managers with more precise data that can be utilized to enhance modeling and decision-making across the Mid-Atlantic region.

National Networking

Fisheries Information System

In 2003, NOAA Fisheries created the Fisheries Information System (FIS) under its Office of Science and Technology to improve fisheries-dependent data collection and dissemination at the national level. The system is a collaborative effort among NOAA Fisheries, the NOAA Fisheries Regional Offices and Science Centers, the Fisheries Information Networks, and regional and state marine fisheries agencies.

The FIS uses a partnership approach to provide customers with easy access to comprehensive, high-quality, timely information on the nation's fisheries. The program works to coordinate and support projects and initiatives that:

- Improve data collection processes and promote efficient data integration
- Develop relationships among data providers, managers, and users to explore, test, and share ideas to address common issues and challenges.
- Demonstrate proof of concept and create on-the-ground realities to better collect, manage, and disseminate data.

Mike Cahall, Program Director, is a member of the Program Management Team which provides overall guidance to FIS. Karen Holmes, Software Team Leader, is a member of the Electronic Reporting Program Specialty Group and Julie Defilippi, Data Team Leader, is a member of the Fisheries One Stop Shop (FOSS) Program Specialty Group. The FOSS ap-

plication is produced by FIS. This application is intended to provide public access to U.S. commercial and recreational non-confidential landings (three or more vessels or companies) information for U.S. vessels, as well as U.S. landings in foreign ports.



The Fisheries Information Networks (FINs) are regional fisheries data repositories that, as members of FIS, provide a link between national and state/regional data collection programs. The ACCSP's Data Warehouse is the Atlantic coast system for fishery-dependent landings for FIS.

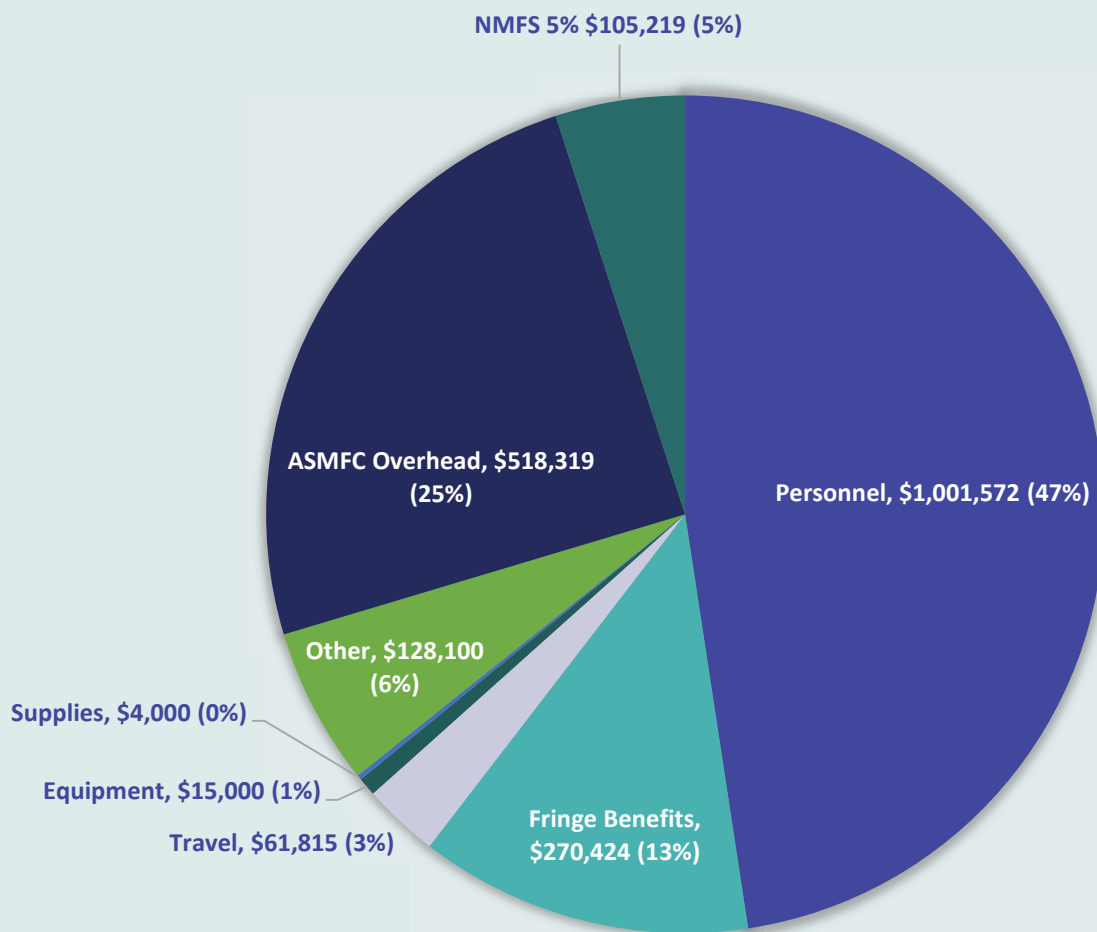
- Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)
- Gulf Fisheries Information System (GulfFIN)
- Pacific Fisheries Information System (PacFIN)
- Alaska Fisheries Information System (AKFIN)
- Western Pacific Fisheries Information System (WPacFIN)



Funding

As in previous years, a majority of the funds that are allocated to the Program are distributed to program partners for data collection projects. This year the program allocated nearly \$2 million for partner projects.

The remaining funds, collectively known as the Administrative Grant, account for slightly less than 45% of the overall budget (detailed in the chart below). The administrative grant budget allocates funds for staff support, information systems resources, committee travel, and various outreach projects. For 2015, personnel costs constituted the majority of the administrative budget, followed by ASMFC overhead.



Looking Forward

Looking back on this last year, it's hard to believe the coming one will likely be even busier. In the past year, tablet-based trip and dealer reporting have become a reality. The harvester swipe card version of eDR/Mobile will be deployed in both Massachusetts and Maine by the end of the year and other states have already expressed great interest in adopting the same technology in the near future. With the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office's (GARFO) recent authorization of our data feed, we expect eTrips/Mobile use to gradually expand in federally managed fisheries, reducing the duplicate reporting load and speeding up the data processing and delivery. At the same time, we are actively working with our state partners to expand deployment of the tool for state-managed fisheries.

Working with our state and federal partners and the ASMFC, we have successfully transitioned the conduct of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) to our state partners and are now handling its management and coordination.

In the year to come, we will continue to identify and explore opportunities to streamline data collection and processing for the recreational sector. Using our recent experiences with

tablet-based trip and dealer reporting, we are investigating the possibility of expanding tablet-based data collection to recreational intercept surveys. Using tablet-based interview software could trim a great deal of time from our data processing work and improve data accuracy. We will be conducting a pilot study to develop and test tablet-based interview software in the Southeast Region later this year.

Our new Data Warehouse end user query interface, developed in close cooperation with our partners, will deploy this spring. The new interface should make data more easily accessible to the user and simplify our IT infrastructure by allowing us to shut down some older, unreliable systems. I'd like to thank the NOAA Fisheries FIS program for funding this project. The Data Warehouse will also deploy its biological module, which includes a new upload interface that will make it easier for Program Partners to provide us with data.

In the coming year we will also be embarking on a redesign of SAFIS. In 2016, we will work to develop requirements based on the SAFIS vision to develop a multi-agency, integrated reporting system that covers catch, effort, landings, bycatch and biological sampling in the same system. It's going to take a few years to develop, but



Mike Cahall, ACCSP Director

the end result will be well worth the effort.

As always, we'll continue to fund partner projects, and are looking towards reviewing Program Priorities this year with an eye towards putting a greater emphasis on biological data collection. I feel like I've barely scratched the surface of what's to come. Working with our Partners we've achieved much, but there's so much left to do and the need is ever-changing and ever-growing. I eagerly look forward to our journey together to help the Program fulfill its mission as the, "Principal source of dependable and timely marine fishery statics for Atlantic coast fisheries".

Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michael S. Cahall". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael S. Cahall
ACCSP Director

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people and agencies for the use of their photographs and images in this document:

Bycatch image, p. 8	Maine DMR
Commercial image, p. 8	Caroline Wicks, Integration & Application Network (IAN)
Lobster pots, p. 12	New Jersey DFW
Fishing rods, p. 15	Ben Furtig, IAN
Lobster, p. 18	New Jersey DFW
Map of Georges Bank study area, p. 18	New Hampshire F&G
Massachusetts swipe card, p. 19	Massachusetts DMF







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