

# Fishery-dependent Data & Stock Assessments



**ACCSP**  
Good Data, Good Decisions

The vision of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) is to be the principal source of fishery-dependent data on the Atlantic coast by the cooperative collecting and processing of fisheries data, and distribution of the data for science and management.

The scope of the ACCSP encompasses commercial, recreational, and for-hire fishery-dependent statistics for all living marine resources including finfish; crustaceans and shellfish; live rock and corals; marine mammal and endangered species release, discard, and protected species interactions; aquaculture; and highly migratory and internationally managed species.

## What is the difference between fishery-dependent data and fishery-independent data?

Factors such as limited seasons, moratoriums, and quotas can make fishery-dependent data more difficult to collect. Consequently, fishery-dependent data may not be providing all the information needed for consideration by fisheries scientists or managers while making decisions. Independent data are also needed to fill those data gaps and to remove the bias dependent data causes.

Fishery-independent data are collected independently of commercial, for-hire, and recreational harvesters. These data may be collected by scientists performing resource surveys which are specifically designed to follow consistent methods using the same gear for the duration of the survey in order to develop unbiased and independent indices of abundance. It's important to understand that scientists must collect fishery-independent data on a fish population throughout its entire geographic range, not just where the species is most abundant.

Fishery-dependent data are collected directly from the commercial, for-hire, and recreational harvesters. These data may be collected from trip-ticket programs, observer programs, or even electronic monitoring programs.

Fishery-dependent recreational landings data are collected through a number of different survey programs along the Atlantic coast. The largest and most comprehensive of these is NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), which includes dockside creel surveys, telephone surveys, head boat observer sampling, and for-hire



*Offloading herring.*

*Image (c) Peter K. Prybot, Commercial Fisheries News*

surveys. This is the data set integrated into the Data Warehouse one week after its been released by MRIP. MRIP releases the data 45 days after each collection period, known as a "wave" is complete. Each wave is a two month interval (i.e., January and February = wave 1, March and April = wave 2, May and June = wave 3, July and August = wave 4, September and October = wave 5, November and December = wave 6).

ACCSP supports various data collection programs along the Atlantic coast for the collection of fishery-dependent commercial landings data. These data (as well as other fishery-dependent data that are not directly ACCSP funded) are also incorporated into the Data Warehouse. First, these data are uploaded as preliminary data in May and again uploaded in September when they are considered final data.

While the trip-ticket programs can distinguish various fisheries by collecting the number of fishermen, vessels,

## Overview of Stock Assessment Process

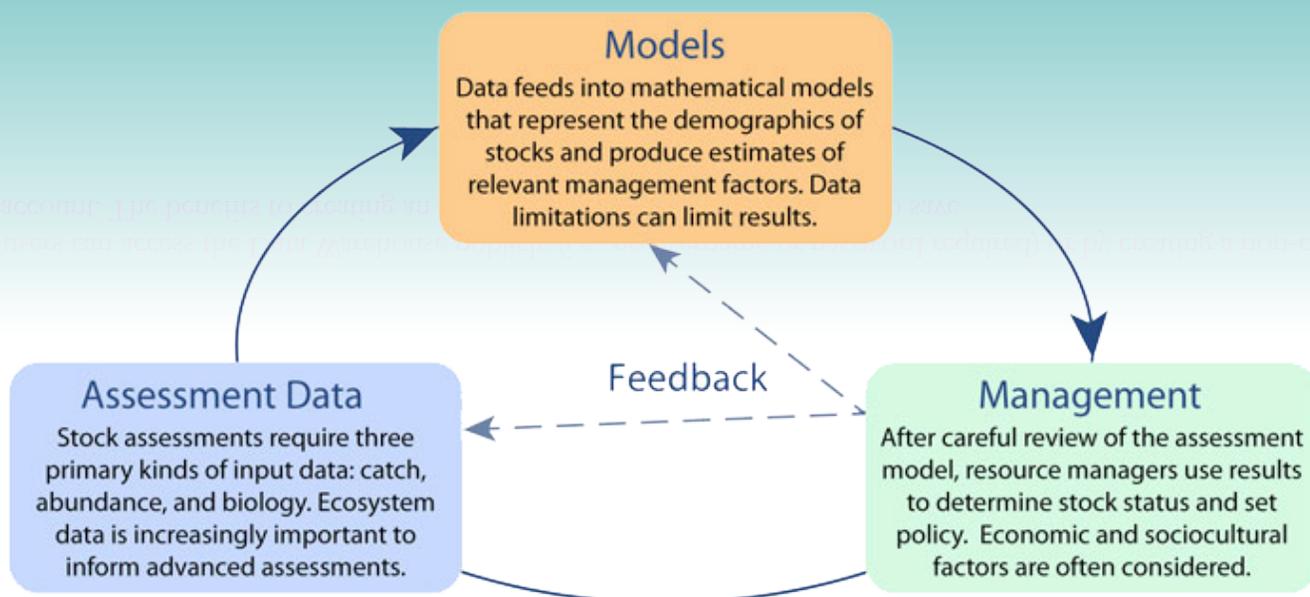


Image (c) NOAA Fisheries

dealers, and trips, as well as purchase data by dealers or processors those programs cannot always accurately collect the gear used, location, effort, certain socio-economic information, or the fish that were caught incidentally. Therefore, ACCSP also supports observer programs which are set up to collect this supplemental fishery-dependent data from commercial, as well as recreational, fisheries. Highly trained, committed, and unbiased observers sample the commercial or recreational catch to measure, weigh, collect gonads, or even extract biological ageing samples. Biological ageing samples can be otoliths (ear bones), scales, or spines. All of this biological data makes a significant difference when it comes to characterizing the size and age distribution of the catch, and ultimately about the harvested population.

### What is the value of ACCSP participating in a stock assessment?

Ideally, all of these high quality fishery-dependent data result in fisheries closing without going over the annual catch limit and also form the basis for robust stock assessments. Stock assessments are fundamental to fisheries management. Stock assessments 1) study the effects of fishing to evaluate fish stocks and 2) predict how fish stocks will react to current and future management ac-

tions. For management purposes, fish species are divided into stocks. Stocks can be classified by geographic distribution, movement patterns, or even genetic relationship.

An integral part of stock assessments is a review of the data between all of those involved. ACCSP is an important contributor to this process due to the Program's ability to compile and disseminate fishery-dependent data for various audiences. Additionally, ACCSP is often on hand throughout the "assessing data" (see the above graphic) portion of stock assessments to 1) guide scientists in properly submitting data requests, 2) direct technical committees members to specialized formats for data tables, and 3) provide details about particular records. Not only does participation in the stock assessment process increase visibility for ACCSP and enable the process to move along in an efficient and timely manner, but the Program is able to see firsthand how the information in the Data Warehouse is used.

For more information on the fishery-dependent data in the Data Warehouse, please visit <http://www.accsp.org/data-warehouse.htm>.

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