

**Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**  
**Semi-Annual Progress Report**  
**Grant Number NA16NMF4740177**  
***Administrative Support to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program***

Period of Performance: March 1, 2016 - February 28, 2021

Period Covered by this Report: March 1, 2020 – August 31, 2020

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) received grant number NA16NMF4740177 pursuant to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA, 474). The purpose of this grant is to provide administrative support, design and implementation of a cooperative state-federal marine and coastal fisheries-dependent statistics program. The mission of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) is to 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. The Program's vision is to be the principal source of fisheries-dependent information on the Atlantic coast through the cooperation of all program partners for the purposes of fisheries science and management.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- 1. Create and manage a fully integrated data set that represents the best available fisheries data**
- 2. Continue working with partners to improve fisheries data collection in accordance with the ACCSP standards**
- 3. Strengthen collaboration and involvement among partners at all levels**
- 4. Monitor and improve the usefulness of ACCSP's products and services**
- 5. Improve outreach and education and maintain support from all stakeholders and constituents**
- 6. Support nationwide systems used for collecting, managing, and disseminating marine fisheries information as defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006**
- 7. Support Program Partners in managing and improving fisheries dependent data collection**

ACCSP Staff continued to provide information system services, outreach activities, and coordination of programmatic and committee activities, including routine coordination with the Coordinating Council and Leadership Team as needed. The ACCSP budget performance was reviewed monthly.

The ASMFC Executive Director and Director of Finance & Administration, as well as other ASMFC staff, provided in-kind support to the ACCSP through meeting preparation, travel authorization, travel reimbursement, and other administrative and financial activities.

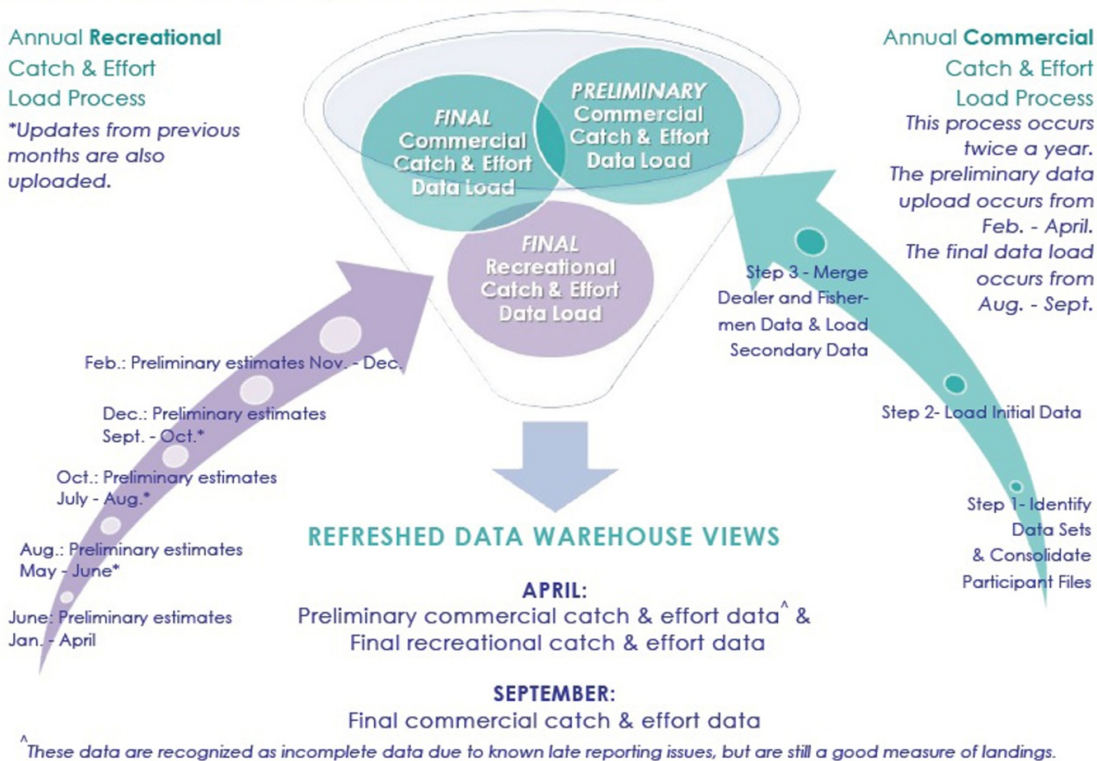
During this period, the Program has been operating under the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission 2020 Action Plan, attached as Appendix 1.

The following text describes the major accomplishments achieved during this reporting period.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Create and manage a fully integrated data set that represents the best available fisheries data**

ACCSP ultimately aims to be the premier source of data for Atlantic coastal fisheries. In order to accomplish this goal, the staff has worked to complete the commercial catch/effort dataset in the Data Warehouse and to create the longest time series possible. The target of this effort was to provide data dating back to 1950; this was achieved in prior reporting periods. Staff now works to maintain these data, making corrections and updates as needed based on both internal research (data integrity verification) and input from the Program partners that supplied these data. Data intended for the Data Warehouse come from a wide variety of sources and are loaded using a standardized process (Table 1).

**Annual Commercial & Recreational Load Process**



**Table 1:** Annual data load process.

Landings and catch and effort data are either provided to the Program by the Program partners or pulled directly from the Program’s primary data collection tool, the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). Staff coordinates the data feed schedule, writes or modifies software to merge data sets together, cross-references fisheries participants, and executes the data loads.

In addition, the Program manages the collation of data for NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species (HMS) eDealer system, which is used for HMS data submission, quota and compliance monitoring. Data pulls have been established from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission data warehouse for HMS managed landings in the Gulf of Mexico. These data are then combined with SAFIS HMS landings and other electronically submitted data from the Atlantic coast and provided to eDealer on a daily basis.

In many cases, additional levels of detail are available for data from the original sources, giving ACCSP the ability to provide effort and economic data as well. For several key species, biological data have also been loaded, allowing the ACCSP to provide the majority of data needed for management and science analysis of these species. The data source matrix may be found in Appendix 2. The fall data load of 2019 data is completed on schedule as of the writing of this report.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Continue working with partners to improve fisheries data collection in accordance with the ACCSP standards**

Staff provided logistical and programmatic support to committee and subcommittee conference calls and meetings held to continue the development and implementation of the program (Table 2). Meeting summaries and minutes for the reporting period are provided at <https://www.accsp.org/who-we-are/committees/>. In order to minimize costs, the Program has elected to conduct meetings electronically when possible.

COMMITTEE	DATE	LOCATION
COMMERCIAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE	24-Mar-2020	Virtual Meeting
INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE	25-Mar-2020	Virtual Meeting
OPERATIONS & ADVISORS COMMITTEES	15-Apr-2020	Virtual Meeting
COORDINATING COUNCIL	05-May-2020	Virtual Meeting
SAFIS REDESIGN WORKING GROUP	11-May-2020	Virtual Meeting
RECREATIONAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE	14-May-2020	Virtual Meeting
RECREATIONAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE	04-Jun-2020	Virtual Meeting
RECREATIONAL TECHNICAL NORTHEAST	22-Jun-2020	Virtual Meeting
RECREATIONAL TECHNICAL SOUTHEAST	23-Jun-2020	Virtual Meeting
RECREATIONL TECHNICAL MIDATLANTIC	25-Jun-2020	Virtual Meeting
RECREATIONAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE	14-Jul-2020	Virtual Meeting
OPERATIONS & ADVISORS COMMITTEES	16-Jul-2020	Virtual Meeting
COORDINATING COUNCIL	03-Aug-2020	Virtual Meeting
RECREATIONAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE	05-Aug-2020	Virtual Meeting
RECREATIONAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE	27-Aug-2020	Virtual Meeting

**Table 2:** List of committee meetings since March 1, 2020.

**a. Development and Maintenance of Standards**

ACCSP standards are maintained in the *Atlantic Coast Fisheries Data Collection Standards*, which are revised on an ongoing basis. Species codes are modified as changes are made to the Integrated Taxonomic Information Species codes (which are the Program standard). Additional changes currently under consideration include the ability to track trans-shipments of landings, changes in permit tracking to better account for effective dates, and more detailed fishing gear specifications. Demand for census-based for-hire reporting is causing the Program to review and revise the related standards. These efforts are ongoing as federal logbooks are implemented. A separate cross-discipline Standard Codes Committee has been

created to ensure coding consistency across modules. This committee completed work on valid ports and new gears.

At the request of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), the ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee developed a five-year Atlantic Coast Recreational Implementation Plan in 2017. The plan was approved by MRIP and now guides the development of both MRIP and ACCSP future projects and funding designed to improve recreational statistics.

Most recreational work is funded under a separate cooperative agreement.

## **b. Maintenance and Expansion of SAFIS**

SAFIS is an electronic reporting system that was initially piloted in Rhode Island in 2003 for the purpose of dealer data collection. Since initial deployment, SAFIS electronic dealer reporting (eDR) has become the de-facto dealer reporting system for most ACCSP partners. A corresponding electronic trip reporting system (eTrips) was developed later and is also used by many of the partners. SAFIS now includes five modules: 1) electronic dealer reporting (eDR), 2) electronic trip reporting (eTrips), 3) voluntary angler logbooks (eLogbook), 4) a combined landings/catch/effort electronic data collection system specifically developed for use in the southeast (e-1Ticket) and 5) the SAFIS Management System (SMS), which provides administrative functions to Program partner staff.

Staff develops, operates, and maintains SAFIS. The Software Development Team modifies the system as required by our Program partners or in response to changes in regulations or available technologies. To this end, separate platforms are available for development, testing, and production.

A collaborative effort continues with NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species (HMS) to integrate their data reporting into SAFIS, providing seamless, non-duplicative reporting for HMS dealers. This project includes participation from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Regional Office of NOAA Fisheries, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and Regional Office of NOAA Fisheries, the Gulf States Fisheries Information Network, ACCSP, and the various partner states. ACCSP and the aforementioned partners have developed the software and processes needed to support HMS requirements using extant data collection systems wherever possible. The integrated HMS Dealer reporting system went live on January 1, 2013. Staff continues to work with HMS to monitor system performance and make necessary adjustments as issues arise. The most recent release of eTrips/Mobile version 2, released in August of 2020, now incorporates the HMS fisher requirements dynamically based on the species reported so the user can fulfill their existing requirement in addition to the HMS reporting requirement with the single eTRIPS/mobile submission.

The Program contracted for development services to build a trip reporting interface using hand-held (tablet) technology. Designed to be platform-independent, the tool enables tablet users to create and submit trip reports electronically. SAFIS eTrips/Mobile went live on March 15, 2016, in the Rhode Island charter and headboat fishery. The tool is partner-independent and flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of requirements. SAFIS eTrips/Mobile is the primary reporting tool used to meet both the Mid and South Atlantic Fisheries Management Councils' for-hire electronic trip reporting mandates. A significant update to the eTrips/Mobile version 2 (previously released April, 2019), was released in August of 2020 with ongoing enhancements released on a monthly basis. This version expands the application's

capabilities by adding HMS data elements to integrate commercial and for-hire data collection needs and the use of a switchboard that allows partners to customize reports through optional partner controlled data fields.

Staff are working with SERO/SEFSC to ensure that adequate support processes are in place and the data management infrastructure is prepared. SAFIS eTrips/Mobile will likely also be the primary reporting tool used in the Gulf of Mexico to meet the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council's for-hire reporting mandate scheduled to go into effect later this year. Efforts are underway to integrate multiple federal permits in a single flexible eTRIPS mobile application. Upon release (expected in 2021) this will reduce centralize reporting requirements for users submitting logbooks to SAFIS eTRIPS database.

There are ongoing tablet-based development efforts for dealer reporting (eDR/Mobile) underway as well. Staff are currently working with contractors, Maine, Massachusetts and GARFO, and have deployed a dealer reporting interface that allows identification of harvesters through the use of swipe cards. Work has been completed on both the Maine and Massachusetts versions of the tool. Work is underway to modify the tool to allow it to be used in other partner agencies with or without swipe cards in lieu of the on-line interface. This work was completed in CY 2019. The eDR/mobile tool is currently available and in use. ACCSP will be making minor modifications so that GARFO federal dealers can begin using eDR/mobile as desired in December 2020.

Finally, using funding from FIS and other sources, ACCSP is redesigning its supporting database and software. The primary goal is to create a more flexible and integrated reporting tool that will be more readily adaptable to the needs of our constituents.

### **c. Systems and Network Operations**

Staff continued to acquire, install, maintain, and manage all hardware and software that support the Data Warehouse, SAFIS and all related data systems. This includes acquisition, installation and maintenance of LINUX and Windows-based servers used for the Oracle-based database systems (SAFIS and the Data Warehouse); administrative file and printer servers; and web servers. In addition, staff maintains—with some contractor support—routers and firewalls designed to provide state-of-the-art security, while at the same time allowing access to the data systems for our end users.

During early 2019 a security audit was completed. The Program was classified as a Moderate Non-Federal system by the NMFS Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and separate funding was secured for contract services to conduct the review. The audit found no critical or high level security concerns. An additional contractor was hired to write a FISMA-compliant systems security plan and action plan to deal with the mid and low level remediation items. A significant amount of work was dedicated to the FISMA certification and maintenance process during this period.

May 5, 2020: A second external FISMA audit successfully completed

June 9, 2020: ACCSP granted NOAA Authority to Connect (ATC) by OCIO

Summer 2020: Recent Plan of Actions and Milestones (POAMs) Security-Enhancement Projects

--Begin continuous monitoring--

### **d. Annual Funding Process**

A portion of ACCSP funding is allocated to partner projects. A request for proposals for project funding in FY 2021 was issued in May 2020 with a deadline of June 15, 2020. A total of 15 proposals (including the administrative budget) were received, for a total request of \$3,614,312. These proposals received a preliminary review by both the Operations and Advisory Committees in July 2020 and recommendations and comments were provided back to the Primary Investigators. The Operations and Advisory Committees will meet in September 2020 for a final review and ranking in preparation for the Coordinating Council approval in October in accordance with ACCSP policy. A summary of the proposed projects may be found in Appendix 3. The complete schedule and access to all relevant documents may be found at <https://www.accsp.org/what-we-do/partner-project-funding/>

#### **e. Program Partner Staff Support**

In order to enable data collection, some Program partners have requested additional support through the annual funding process. While most staff support activities are accomplished by grants to the partners, some staff are directly hired and included in the ACCSP Program funding with local supervision.

Staff are in place in New Jersey providing services such as data collection, auditing, onsite support (for dealers and harvesters) and data entry. In New Jersey, additional tasks are performed to better characterize the lobster and tautog fisheries and to take adequate biological samples of ASMFC-managed species. See OBJECTIVE 7 for more details.

A coastwide help desk to provide support to SAFIS end users has been operational since 2018. Initially, the help desk focused on supporting the rollout of tablet-based trip reporting via eTrips/Mobile, and now also includes general SAFIS support.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: Strengthen collaboration and involvement among partners at all levels**

ACCSP staff continued a concerted effort to participate in the stock assessment and analysis processes. They regularly participated in the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process and provided data for numerous SEDARs. The Program participated in other data-related activities such as meetings of various Fisheries Management Councils and ASMFC technical committees.

Although the end user query interface was in use, staff responded to numerous custom data requests. Submitted by many different organizations and individuals, these requests ranged widely and often required significant analysis. Please find examples of the queries performed below:

Since March 1, 2020 the Data Team has fulfilled over 60 custom data requests. These include supporting stock assessments and management (Addendums, Amendments and FMP reviews) for species including:

- |                     |                     |                      |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| • American Eel      | • Golden Tilefish   | • Scup/Summer        |
| • Atlantic Croaker  | • Red Drum          | Flounder             |
| • Atlantic Menhaden | • Red Snapper       | • Snowy Grouper      |
| • Black Drum        | • Scamp/Yellowmouth | • Spot               |
| • Cobia             | Grouper             | • Tautog and others. |
| • Dolphin/Wahoo     |                     |                      |

Other highlights include:

- COVID 19 Impact Assessment Survey (NOAA Staff, survey frame development)

Development of a strengthened collaborative relationship between the Program partners and ACCSP continues. The Director and Deputy Director have been in active discussions with NOAA Fisheries-GARFO and SEFSC and state partners regarding tighter integration of data collection and management programs, partially in response to regional data management visioning projects. ACCSP representation on the GARFO Fisheries Dependent Data Integration and Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) processes and participation as a PI on the FIS One Stop Reporting project ensure ACCSP develops the enhanced capabilities to meet their needs.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: Monitor and improve the usefulness of ACCSP products and services**

Staff scheduled and conducted routine communications with partners who have active ACCSP-funded projects and tracked the status of all current projects (including project reports).

- Conference calls were scheduled with the Operations and Advisory Committees to review proposed projects.
- Staff reviewed progress reports for current ACCSP-funded projects and provided comments and approval to the NOAA Grants Administrator.
- Staff compiled available reports for ACCSP projects. They are available at <https://www.accsp.org/what-we-do/partner-project-funding/>. Reports are searchable by partner, year, and module.

ACCSP has established mechanisms to create and maintain a feedback loop with end users of Program systems. The opportunity to comment on the Data Warehouse is provided to users directly through the website. SAFIS contains software that allows end users to provide comments and feedback directly to staff.

#### **OBJECTIVE 5: Improve outreach and education and maintain support from all stakeholders and constituents**

The Program maintained a robust outreach effort. Collateral materials are created for the broader ACCSP, as well as partner specific. These materials are shared with advisors and distributed among partner offices. Also, staff distributes these materials at appropriate venues (i.e., quarterly ASMFC meetings and national events such as the American Fisheries Society meetings). In addition, the following materials were produced and distributed:

##### **ACCSP Outreach March 1, 2020 – August 31, 2020**

- ACCSP Submissions to ASMFC Fisheries Focus for May/June and July/August issues (see Appendix 4)

May/June: ACCSP Hold Recreational Survey Regional Trainings Pg. 13. Vol 29. Issue 2

- Monthly Committee Newsletter (Appendix 5)
  - April
  - May
  - June
  - July
  - August
- Email notices to users:
  - SAFIS Downtime Notice
    - 24-Apr-2020
    - 22-June-2020
    - 27-Aug-2020: Outage to deploy eTRIPS/mobile v2
  - Notices to Admins and Users
    - 07-Apr-2020: Grade and Gear Code Changes – Admin Notice
    - 21-Apr-2020: Grade and Gear Code Changes – Admin Second Notice
  - GARFO Service/Notices
    - 09-May-2020: Unexpected Outage
    - 11-May-2020: Outage Resolved
  - Software
    - 12-May-2020: SERO Permit Implementation
    - 19-May-2020: Planned SAFIS upgrade
    - 21-May-2020: SERO Permit Implementation (Reminder)
    - 30-Jul-2020: Move to eTRIPS/Mobile V2
    - 20-Aug-2020: Switchboard Training
    - 31-Aug-2020: eTRIPS/mobile available
- Blog posts on ACCSP website (these are automatically sent out to subscribers' email accounts as well)
  - March 2020
    - ACCSP Announces FY20 Funding Recipients
  - April 2020
    - Planned ACCSP Updates
    - 2019 Fisheries Commercial Data are Now Available in the ACCSP Data Warehouse
    - Changes to Gear Codes and Grade Codes
  - May 2020
    - ACCSP Issues Request for FY2021 Proposals
  - June 2020
    - ACCSP Director comments on impacts of COVID-19 on fishery-dependent data collection
    - NOAA Fisheries provide states along coast \$3M to improve recreational fisheries data collection
- Social media (Twitter, Facebook)



**OBJECTIVE 6: Support nationwide systems used for collecting, managing, and disseminating marine fisheries information as defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006.**

Regional coordination continued among ACCSP, the Gulf Fisheries Information Network (GulfFIN), the Pacific FIN (PACFIN), and Pacific Recreational FIN (Pac RecFIN) to promote a consistent national data collection and data management system. The ACCSP and GulfFIN programs held regular coordination meetings during the annual FIN meetings hosted by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The Director, Deputy Director, and staff participated in the following:

- **Fisheries Information System (FIS):**
  - Staff held numerous conversations with NOAA Fisheries Science and Technology staff regarding development of FIS
  - The Deputy Director sits on the FIS Program Management Team and participates in routine conference calls
  - The Data Team Lead sits on the Quality Management Continuous Improvement Program Specialty Group, which guides the integration of quality management principles and tools into daily business practices to ensure continuous process improvement.
- **Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP):**
  - The Director sits on the MRIP Regional Implementation Council which coordinates MRIP activities
  - Staff served as members of several MRIP committees, attended meetings, and participated in MRIP projects as requested
  - The Program now manages and executes the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, the For-Hire Telephone Survey, and related activities from Maine to Georgia.
  - The Program also supports the Large Pelagic Intercept Survey in Maine, HMS Catch Card Census Programs in Maryland and North Carolina, and the Large Pelagic Biological Survey in NC.

**OBJECTIVE 7: Support Program Partners in managing and improving fisheries-dependent data collection.**

ACCSP continues to support the continued expansion of SAFIS and biological sampling for the commercial fisheries of New Jersey.

## **1. Objectives**

### **a. Fisheries Dependent At-Sea Observer Program**

**Lobster Landing Statistics.** Continue at-sea biological sampling based on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) American Lobster Management Board's (LMB) recommendations. Provide the LMB with another year of at-sea lobster observer data which is unique to New Jersey (NJ).

**Tautog Landing Statistics.** Characterize the commercial and recreational tautog fisheries along the coast of NJ through the utilization of the at-sea tautog observer trips as well as the recreational party and charter boat industry. All aging will continue to be covered under an alternative Federal Grant-In-Aid project.

### **b. Biological Characterization of Commercial Fisheries**

Continue implementing biological sampling for ASMFC regulated species, particularly weakfish, Atlantic croaker, American shad, Atlantic menhaden, and American eel through dependent port sampling and NJ Ocean Trawl Survey. Summer flounder, black sea bass, and river herring (alewife and blue back) are collected through the independent NJ Ocean Stock Assessment Survey.

### **c. ACCSP Data Feeds**

Maintain direct entry of data for the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) via the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) and the ACCSP Data Warehouse ultimately used in the Fisheries of the U.S. report produced by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

### **d. Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting (eTRIPS) & Electronic Dealer Reporting (eDR)**

Standardize commercial trip level landings electronically through the ACCSP eTRIPS application. Apply ACCSP minimum data elements to commercial harvest of state fisheries. Provide commercial fisheries data entry platform for NJ staff.

Continue the facilitation and implementation of the SAFIS eDR system for state and federally permitted seafood dealers in NJ for the quota-based management of key regulated species including summer flounder, black sea bass, bluefish, Atlantic menhaden, and scup.

## **2. Activities Completed**

### **a. Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting (eTRIPS)**

Since September 1, 2010, NJ has acquired a total of 515 user accounts in SAFIS for individual fishermen participating in commercial fisheries. NJ ACCSP staff continued to update user accounts, provide logistical support for fishers entering data, and supply new users with the tools necessary to report

commercial landings successfully. A total of 808,259 positive and negative trips have been recorded for NJ fishermen in the SAFIS eTRIPS program.

NJ ACCSP staff completed the process of merging all commercial fishermen accounts within SAFIS as of January 2019. Fishermen that fish multiple gear types will be merged into a single gear license that is represented by the fisherman's New Jersey Bureau of Marine Fisheries Identification Number (BMFID). This merge will streamline the reporting process. Commercial fisherman using eTRIPS will only have to enter a positive or negative harvest report once instead of multiple times. This resulted in the combining of no harvest reports to one license, displaying a decrease in total reports recorded as well as total user accounts.

## b. New Jersey Harvester Trip Reporting

Starting January 1, 2016 NJ ACCSP staff began implementing the New Jersey Commercial Harvester Trip Reporting Program. The New Jersey Harvester Trip Reporting Form was created to help standardize all trip level data collected and provide fishermen with a single comprehensive reporting form for all issued commercial licenses. A summary of New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife commercial trip reporting since the NJ ACCSP project's initiation is described in Table 1.

Fishery	Year								
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016-2020
AMERICAN SHAD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CRAB DREDGE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
BAIT NET									X
CRAB POT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
LOBSTER, FISH, CONCH POTS									X
DRIFTING GILL NET									X
FYKE NET									X
GILL NET MESH EXEMPTION PERMIT (GNMEP)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
HAUL SEINE									X
MENHADEN							X	X	X
MINIATURE FYKES OR POTS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
POUND NET									X
SHIRRED NET, PURSE SEINES, OTTER/BREAM TRAWLS									X
SHRIMP TRAWL									X
STAKED AND ANCHORED GILL NET									X
TAUTOG	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
WIRE POUND NET									X

Table 1. History of New Jersey Commercial Trip reporting by gear type and fishery.

As fisherman submit harvester trip reports, staff enters them into SAFIS in a timely manner. This is followed by a QA/QC protocol. As of August 31, 2020, preliminary data shows 7,264 positive

harvester trip reports have been entered since March 1, 2020. A summary of trip reports entered in SAFIS can be found in Figure 1.

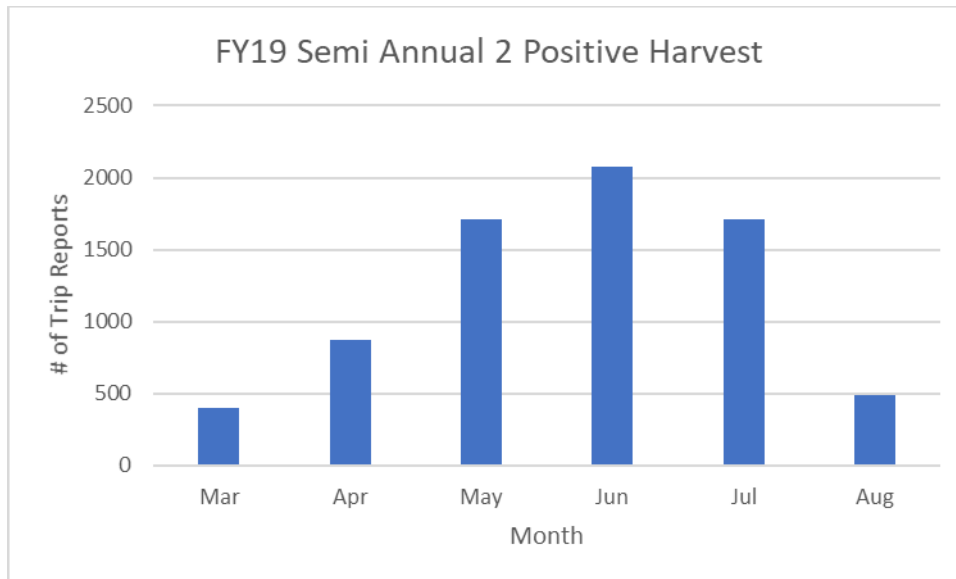


Figure 1. Preliminary Summary of FY19 Semi-Annual New Jersey Harvester Trip Reports (March 1 through August 31).

### c. Biological Characterization of Commercial Fisheries

NJ ACCSP staff continued to sample the commercial fisheries of NJ to characterize specific species through dockside/port intercept modes. Species included in portside sampling were American eel, American shad, Atlantic menhaden, and tautog. Additional species sampled are from New Jersey's ocean trawl survey as well as staff commercial fisheries observer trips. All samples collected were processed for length and weight before hard parts for aging were removed. After acquisition of hard parts (opercula/otoliths/scales), the age structures were distributed to the appropriate aging facility where samples will be aged for annular growth. These facilities include, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, NMFS Beaufort lab and NMFS Woods Hole Lab. A summary of progress can be found in Tables 2 and 3.

NJ ACCSP Biological Sampling Summary FY19 Reporting Period 2		
	# of lengths sampled	# of Age Structure Samples Collected
Atlantic croaker	0	0
Atlantic menhaden	890	890
Tautog	0	0
American lobster	0	N/A
Black sea bass	0	0
Summer flounder	0	0
Weakfish	0	0

American eel	0	0
American shad	0	0

Table 2. Summary of samples taken for commercial biological samples during FY19 reporting period 2 (March 1, 2020-August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020)

NJ ACCSP Biological Sampling Summary 2006-2020		
	# of lengths sampled	# of Age Structure Samples Collected
Atlantic croaker	4443	3911
Weakfish	3798	3536
American eel	4360	3680
American shad	813	791
Atlantic menhaden	12499	12501
Tautog	7541	6416
River herring	4893	4677
American lobster	94746	N/A
Black sea bass	1236	1231
Summer flounder	3341	3331

Table 3. Summary of samples taken for important commercial species covered under the NJ ACCSP Biological Characterization.

Sampling continued during this period but at a lower level due to COVID-19 limiting the ability of fishermen to get out and staff to safely sample.

#### **d. Dependent Fisheries Sampling Program**

**Lobster Landing Statistics.** In January 2008, at-sea sampling commenced aboard lobster vessels fishing in Lobster Conservation Management Areas 4 and 5 off the coast of NJ. NJ ACCSP staff completed 0 lobster observer trips in FY 19 reporting period 2 (March- August), collecting 0 lengths.

**Tautog Landing Statistics.** The collection of dependent tautog data has been ongoing since 1993. Recently, however the collection of data has become more comprehensive encompassing the entire year and seasonality of the fishery including length, weight, sex, and age data. Data is collected from two primary sources: the commercial fishery, and the recreational party/charter boat sector. Both fishery dependent sources provide data points that do not overlap. From the commercial fishery, length, live weight, and sex data is obtained from fish greater than 381 mm TL with the addition of age data from fish

less than 381 mm TL. From the recreational fishery, length, sex, and age data is collected from only fish greater than or equal to 381 mm TL.

**e. ACCSP Data Feeds**

NJ ACCSP staff now inputs New Jersey Harvester Trip Report data directly into SAFIS, resulting in a continuous and accurate data feed. This allows more up to date data to be available from SAFIS and provides a more efficient QA/QC process. During this reporting period, trip reports were submitted on schedule.

**f. Electronic Dealer Reporting (eDR)**

The NJDFW has mandatory dealer reporting for summer flounder, black sea bass, Atlantic menhaden, and scup. In addition to the preceding species, NJ ACCSP staff monitored the quota for commercially important species using eDR. Continuation and maintenance of electronic dealer reporting through SAFIS is imperative for the improvement of NJ's commercial fishery landings data collection.

The NJDFW expects continued success with SAFIS eDR as well as improved timeliness of reports by dealers. Through constant monitoring and quality control of data reported by dealers, consistent quota management is achieved.

**3. Problems Encountered During This Period**

NJ staff faced significant challenges to data collection this period due to COVID-19 mandated shutdowns of fishing operations and state safety precautions. This severely limited the opportunities for sampling. NJ Staff has been working from home since March 18, 2020 due to coronavirus outbreak. NJ Staff was unable to conduct observer trips and had limited biological sampling during this time. The New Jersey Ocean Stock Assessment Survey was unable to conduct survey work during this time and, therefore, did not provide biological samples.