

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: September 1, 2019 – February 29, 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 FY19 Action Plan. The FY19 Action Plan is 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

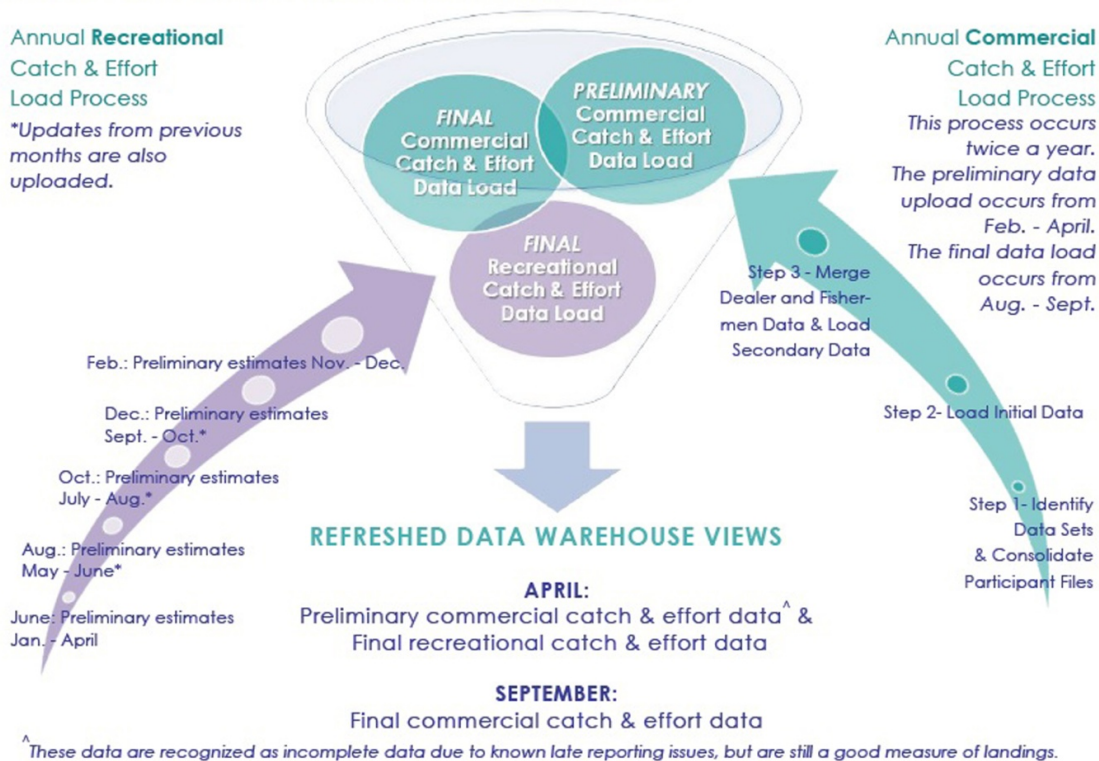


Table 1: Annual data load process.

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. During this period the fall load was completed for 2018 data, and the spring load of 2019 data is underway as of the writing of this report. The current data source matrix may be found in Appendix 2.

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
OPERATIONS & ADVISORY COMMITTEES	24/25-Sept-2019	Arlington, VA
BIOLOGICAL PSA SMALL GROUP	01-Oct-2019	Call/Webinar
BIOLOGICAL PSA SMALL GROUP	02-Oct-2019	Call/Webinar
BIOLOGICAL PSA SMALL GROUP	03-Oct-2019	Call/Webinar
BIOLOGICAL PSA SMALL GROUP	21-Oct-2019	Call/Webinar
BIOLOGICAL PSA SMALL GROUP	22-Oct-2019	Call/Webinar
BIOLOGICAL PSA SMALL GROUP	23-Oct-2019	Call/Webinar
COORDINATING COUNCIL	28-Oct-2019	New Castle, NH
FUNDING SUBCOMMITTEE	14-Jan-2020	Call/Webinar
BIOLOGICAL REVIEW PANEL	11-Feb-2020	Call/Webinar
BYCATCH PRIORITIZATION COMMITTEE	12-Feb-2020	Call/Webinar

Table 2: List of committee meetings since September 1, 2019.

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 updates to the disposition codes, which are being implemented in both SAFIS and the Data Warehouse, and are currently working 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 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. The eTrips/Mobile version 2 was released to the public in April, 2019 with ongoing enhancements released on a monthly basis. This version expands the application's capabilities by adding support for Windows 10 desktop/tablets and Android and Apple smartphones. Updates to eTRIPS in early 2020 include HMS data elements to integrate commercial and for-hire data collection needs.

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 2020) 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.

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 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 has been hired to write a FISMA-compliant systems security plan and action plan to deal with the mid and low level remediation items. All remediation items were completed in fall 2019. For example, all staff computers are now running windows 10 operating system, and servers were replaced or updated to current operating system versions. Documentation of security practices is ongoing in cooperation with the NOAA OCIO and regional fisheries offices. ACCSP expects FISMA certification to be completed in 2020, with required continued adjustments to security protocols and continuous monitoring of network activity. .

d. Annual Funding Process

A portion of ACCSP funding is allocated to partner projects. A request for proposals for project funding in FY 2020 was issued in May 2019 with a deadline of June 10, 2019. A total of 14 proposals (including the administrative budget) were received, for a total initial request of \$3,993,375. These proposals received a preliminary review by both the Operations and Advisory Committees in July 2019 and recommendations and comments were provided back to the Primary Investigators. The Operations and Advisory Committees met in September 2019 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 without fees, as approved for funding by the Coordinating Council, can 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 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 September 1, 2019 the Data Team has fulfilled over 50 custom data requests. These include supporting stock assessments and management (Addendums, Amendments and FMP reviews) for species including:

- American Eel
- Atlantic Croaker
- Atlantic Herring
- Black Sea Bass
- Coastal Sharks
- Dolphin/Wahoo
- Penaeid Shrimp
- Scamp
- Scup
- Shad/River Herring
- Spanish Mackerel
- Spiny Dogfish
- Spot
- Striped Bass
- Summer Flounder
- Tautog
- Weakfish
- Winter Flounder and others.

Other highlights include:

- Fishing area statistics for offshore windfarm lease area determination

- Pêches et Océans Canada request for U.S. monthly lobster landings to support Canadian fisheries management
- Port statistics to support Working Waterfronts (NOAA Office for Coastal Management)

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 September 1, 2019 – February 29, 2020

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

April/ May: ACCSP Announces FY19 Funding Recipients Pg. 14. Vol 28. Issue 2

June/ July: Updates to its Confidential Fisheries Data Access application. Pg. 9 vol. 28 issue 3

August / September: SAFIS eTRIPS/mobile Migrates to Version 2. Pg 11. Vol 28. Issue 4

- Email notices to users:
 - SAFIS Downtime Notice
 - 9/20/2019
 - Updates to Port List
 - 10/24/2019
 - 11/06/2019
 - Notices to Admins and Users regarding changes to display of species common names
 - 9/3/2019
 - 9/20/2019
 - GARFO Maintenance Reminder
 - 02/11/2020
 - News Technical Glitch
 - 01/30/2020
 - Commercial Tautog Tagging Program
 - 02/05/2020
 - Gear Changes Notice
 - 02/11/2020
 - 02/06/2020
- Blog posts on ACCSP website (these are automatically sent out to subscribers' email accounts as well)
- Social media (Twitter, Facebook)
- Updated SAFIS eTRIPS/mobile brochure

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 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.
- **Fisheries Information Management Modernization (FIMM)**
 - The Director and Deputy Director participated in the National FIMM meeting in Silver Spring, MD in September 2019. ACCSP presented approaches and perspectives while sitting on several panels.

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

ACCSP continues to support several project selected for funding and contracts managed through the Program grant. Relevant project reports covered below.

1. NJ expansion of SAFIS and biological sampling for the commercial fisheries.

See Appendix 5 for full project activities during this reporting period. Program Objectives include:

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 Trawl.

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. Law Enforcement Application Project

The project was started in May 2019 and included Living Marine Resource Officers from Rhode Island, Georgia and the US Coast Guard training center in Charleston, SC. The state of Rhode Island chose Scallops as the Fisheries Management Plan they wished to target with the application. The RI LMRO's wished to have an application to help them quickly find scallop rules and regulations when boarding a vessel, usually at the dock. The regulations around Scallops do not change often and the users did not wish to collect any data about the boarding but use the tool solely as a boarding reference tool.

Users from the State of Georgia Department of Marine Fisheries and the USCG wanted a tool that was more fluid and had the ability to be updated quickly. They explained that the Fisheries Management Plan they wished to target was Shrimp. They originally had the idea of sharing boarding information amongst each other, ie: Georgia and USCG and possibly adding the evidence collected via the app to a boarding report. This was later scaled back due to internal SOPs about sharing data in the USCG MARVIN system.

After attending a USCG fisheries training class we were able to understand the entire boarding process from start to finish. It became evident that the two user groups, Scallops and Shrimp, had enough differences between them that it made sense to build two different apps. One app would essentially be static and used as a dockside reference tool. The other would be an application capable of being easily updated as new rules and regulations became available.

Internal building and testing have begun on each of the applications. We sent a video of the progress to the users in October 2019. We expect to continue to build and test the applications in-house and have a version ready for testing in the field in Spring of 2020.

3. MA/RI VMS Project

The project was started in May of 2019 with PIs from the MA Division of Marine Fisheries and the RI Division of Marine Fisheries. The objective of the project is to develop an API-based integration of geographical vessel-monitoring data with real-time electronically reported data in the eTRIPS mobile application for small scale inshore fisheries. This objective includes deliverables such as a comparative cost analysis of various VMS devices and investigation of the capabilities of hail in/hail out features and geofencing. Participants from both state agencies have been meeting bi-weekly since the beginning of 2020 with the contractor, HarborLight Software, and ACCSP staff. The project has decided on the following VMS devices based on cost, perceived reliability, and availability.

- Faria Beede
- Succorfish
- Pelagic
- Woods Hole Group – CLS
- GPS tablet integration with eTRIPS/m

The portion of this project that is covered under this grant is solely the contract with HarborLight Software. The relevant project accomplishments to date include:

- Development of a special release of eTRIPS/mobile that has incorporated options to link the software to a particular VMS device
- Software to gather location data from device APIs for Faria Beede and Succorfish, translate those data and send them to the ACCSP API.

Current projections show that the software contract may come in under budget, allowing for potential additional accomplishments.

4. ME & MA Electronic Tracking Pilot in American Lobster and Jonah Crab Fishery

The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) began work on the pilot tracking program, with support from ACCSP and ASMFC, in April 2019. Between May and November 2019, ACCSP ordered eight units each of three different types of trackers for testing, as well as, purchasing approximately one-year data plans for each unit. The three tracking devices being tested are the Succorfish SC2, Pelagic Data Systems vessel tracker, and the Rock Seven vessel tracker. The 24 tracking devices were split evenly between Maine and Massachusetts; each state getting twelve. As of this date, Massachusetts and Maine have each deployed eight devices on commercial lobster vessels. Arrangements are being made with other volunteer commercial lobstermen to get the rest of the rest of the devices deployed over the next month and installed prior to fishing ramping up this spring.

Device testing and data collection are ongoing at this time. Commercial fishermen are providing their feedback on installation and any other issues that arise. Maine DMR and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries are providing support to these fishermen, assessing data collected, and keeping track of all feedback.