SEMI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 1 FY 2021

Project Title:	Continued Dealer Reporting, Trip Level Reporting, and Biological Sampling for Commercial Fisheries in NJ
Report Period Dates:	From: September 1, 2021 To: February 28, 2022
Project Period Dates:	From: September 1, 2021 To: August 31, 2022
Submitting Partner:	New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish & Wildlife
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Amount of Grant:	$63,146
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1. Objective

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 464 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 1,303,589 positive and negative trips have been recorded for NJ fishermen in the SAFIS eTRIPS program.

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- 2022
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/BEAM 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 February 28, 2022, preliminary data shows 9,329 positive harvester trip reports have been entered since September 1, 2021. A summary of trip reports entered in SAFIS can be found in Figure 1.

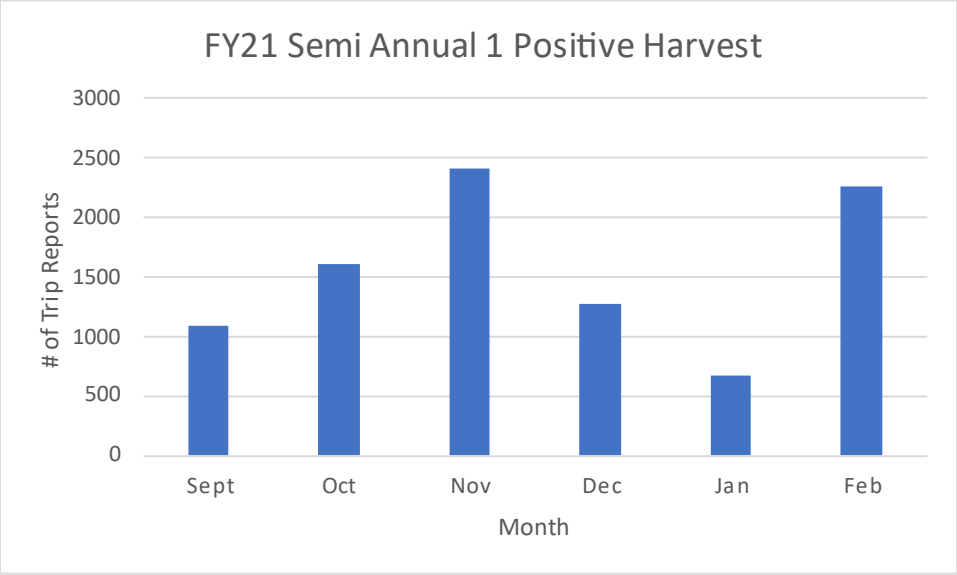

Figure 1. Preliminary Summary of FY 21 Semi Annual New Jersey Harvester Trip Reports (Sept. 01 through Feb. 28).

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 to date can be found in Tables 2 and 3.

NJ ACCSP Biological Sampling Summary FY21 Reporting Period 1		
	# of lengths sampled	# of Age Structure Samples Collected
Atlantic croaker	0	0
Atlantic menhaden	670	670
Tautog	199	199
American lobster	0	N/A
Black sea bass	91	91
Summer flounder	0	0
Weakfish	0	0
American eel	93	92
American shad	0	0

Table 2. Summary of biological samples taken during FY21 Reporting Period 1 (September 1-Feburary 28).

NJ ACCSP Biological Sampling Summary 2006-2022		
	# of lengths sampled	# of Age Structure Samples Collected
Atlantic croaker	4443	3911
Weakfish	3848	3536
American eel	4372	3795
American shad	813	791
Atlantic menhaden	14027	13819
Tautog	7800	7418
River herring	4893	4677
American lobster	94746	N/A
Black sea bass	1405	1390
Summer flounder	3341	3331

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

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 21 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.

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 began working from home on March 18, 2020 due to coronavirus outbreak. During this reporting period, NJ Staff first implemented a hybrid office schedule, then returned to the office full time. Due to restrictions still in place, 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