



United States Department of the Interior



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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Reply: South Atlantic Fisheries Coordinator, USFWS, Raleigh, NC
Subject: Update on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Activities
To: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Members and Staff

Colleagues:

The following are items of interest undertaken by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during the last calendar year quarter which may be of interest. If you have questions, please contact me.

New Regional Director and Deputy Director, Southeast Region

Director Sam Hamilton announced on November 5 that he was appointing Cynthia K. (Cindy) Dohner as Regional Director. Ms. Dohner has been with the FWS for 16 years, and served since 2004 as the Southeast Region Deputy Director. Cindy's background includes experience in fisheries, since she spent time as staff for the National Fishery Hatchery System while serving in FWS headquarters. She holds a BS in Marine Biology from the University of Millersville (1982) and a MS in Fisheries and Aquaculture from the University of Rhode Island (1984).

Regional Director Dohner announced November 30 that she was appointing Mark Musaus as Deputy Regional Director. Mark has been with FWS for 35 years, most recently as the Chief of Visitor Services and Communications for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Prior to that position, Mark was the Project Leader for Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee and Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuges on the Florida east coast, for nearly ten years. Mark has a BS in Biology from Grove City College (1975).

Contact: US Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Region Director, Atlanta, GA:
Cynthia.Dohner@fws.gov, telephone 404-679-4000.

South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative

Members of the Council's Habitat and Environmental Advisory Panel were previously briefed on the FWS Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) approach for landscape and fish and wildlife population conservation (see http://training.fws.gov/EC/resources/SHC/shc_finalrpt.pdf). As a component of the FWS climate change strategy, the Service further developed a proposal to establish Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) across the nation to provide scientific and technical support for conservation at landscape scales, defined in this case as the entire range

of a species, or group of species (e.g., the south Atlantic snapper-grouper complex). For more information, see <http://www.fws.gov/science/shc/lcc.html>. The FWS is pleased that Council Executive Director Bob Mahood and Chair Duane Harris have appointed Senior Fishery Biologist Roger Pugliese to serve on the FWS Interagency Scoping Team (IST), to assist in the development of the first LCC to be established in the Southeast Region, the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (SALCC). The SALCC will cover portions of the Piedmont and Coastal Plain, from southeastern Virginia through northern Florida, extending to the Gulf of Mexico via the Suwannee and Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint river basins. The SALCC-IST will be developing a detailed plan for SALCC operations, including designating priority species and habitats. The FWS Southeast Region's Regional Science Coordinator, Dr. Robert (Bob) Ford, is leading an interagency team which is preparing the initial plan. The Service plans to begin hiring staff for the SALCC early in 2010.

Contact: US Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Science Coordinator, Dr. Robert Ford: Robert_Ford@fws.gov, telephone: 901-327-3395.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Climate Change Strategic Plan

In November, the Service released a draft Strategic Plan for Climate Change and an accompanying Action Plan for Climate Change. Both plans can be accessed at the following web site: http://www.fws.gov/home/climatechange/strategic_plan.html. The plans lay the foundation for the agency's role in the Department of the Interior's national efforts to conserve fish and wildlife resources in a rapidly changing climate. The Action Plan details the specific actions the Service will take during the next five years to implement the Strategic Plan. Actions proposed by the Southeast Region are further detailed on the Regional climate change site: <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/climate/>.

Contact: US Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Science Coordinator, Dr. Robert Ford: Robert_Ford@fws.gov, telephone: 901-327-3395.

2010 Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise Planning

The Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise (Cruise) is an outstanding example of a highly successful state-federal science partnership which has persisted for 22 years (1988-2009, inclusive). The Cruise began in 1988 as a component of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's migratory striped bass management plan, as part of the coastwide migratory striped bass tagging program (for more information on the striped bass tagging program see: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/marylandfisheries/projects/Striped%20Bass.html>). While the Cruise was designed to tag striped bass on their wintering grounds off NC and VA, from the beginning Atlantic sturgeon were also tagged. During these years, the Cruise has tagged 43,558 striped bass, and 251 Atlantic sturgeon, and other species (horseshoe crabs, red drum, spiny dogfish, summer flounder and thresher shark) have been tagged, as well as documented and sampled for aging structures (skates, alosines, scianids). The tag return rate for migratory striped bass (those over 28 inches total length) has been 19 percent, with an overall rate of return (all fish tagged regardless of size) of 17 percent. The data provided by the Cruise are used in the management of Atlantic sturgeon, striped bass, spiny dogfish, and other species by the National

Marine Fisheries Service, by Fishery Management Councils, by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and by state co-managers. The Cruises have also supported a number of graduate student theses. Planning is well underway for the 2010 Cruise (23rd annual), pending the provision of funding for research vessel operations. Projects planned for 2010 include the continuation of sonic tag implantation in Atlantic sturgeon and spiny dogfish. Principal Cruise partners are the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Maryland Fisheries Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Virginia Marine Resources Commission.

Contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, South Atlantic Fisheries Coordinator, Dr. Wilson Laney: Wilson_Laney@fws.gov, telephone: 919-515-5019.

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Approved

In October, the National Fish Habitat Board formally approved the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) as one of the newest Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs). For more information on the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and other existing FHPs, see the NFHAP web site at: <http://fishhabitat.org/>. The geographic extent of the ACFHP stretches from Maine to the Florida Keys, including all or part of 16 States. It covers 476,357 square miles, including land areas inland to the headwaters of coastal rivers, and ocean areas outward to the continental slope. The ACFHP plans to work throughout the region, but will focus on estuarine environments and place less emphasis on coastal headwaters and offshore marine ecosystems. The ACFHP recently completed a species-habitat matrix which addresses the habitat relationships of all life stages of approximately 150 coastal fish species, by region (New England, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and South Florida). Both the Service and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council are signatories to the ACFHP Memorandum of Understanding.

Contact: Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, Coordinator, Emily Greene: EGreene@asmfc.org, telephone: 202-289-6400.