**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Update to South Atlantic Fishery Management Council**

**Protected Resources Committee**

**March 4, 2014, Hilton DeSoto Hotel, Savannah, Georgia**

**American Eel Status Review**: The American Eel Status Review is being conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and is due by September 30, 2015. The FWS has assembled a Core Team of staff from all the FWS regions where American Eel occurs (Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6; see the FWS national web site for the map of Regions) to conduct the review. At present, no workshops are planned in association with the Status Review; rather we are reaching out to those with expertise on the American Eel migration and marine habitat issues. The one exception to that is with regard to the climate change information and how that may impact the American Eel spawning grounds.  We have discussed having a meeting, but more likely webinars, to explore that information once we have identified the appropriate people. If we get an indication as we move further through climate and eel data that we need to pull a small meeting together, we will. We are still accepting new information regarding American Eel.  At least one group of climate change researchers are deferring providing more information until he has presented findings at the Aug 2014 eel symposium at the American Fisheries Society annual meeting in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada. The FWS Northeast Region has the lead for the review (Lead Contact: **Krishna Gifford:** Krishna\_Gifford@fws.gov; Program Manager: **Steven Shepard**: Steven\_Shepard@fws.gov).

**Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment**: The Atlantic Sturgeon stock assessment is being conducted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). The ASMFC Atlantic Sturgeon Technical Committee has appointed a Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) to conduct the benchmark stock assessment. The ASMFC held a data workshop in 2013 to discuss the Atlantic Sturgeon data sets which are available and would be useful for conducting the assessment. Terms of reference for the benchmark assessment were drafted, reviewed by the Technical Committee, and approved by the ASMFC Sturgeon Management Board at their February 6 meeting. **Contacts**: Mike Waine, ASMFC Atlantic Sturgeon FMP Coordinator: MWaine@asmfc.org; Dr. Katie Drew, ASMFC Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment liaison: KDrew@asmfc.org; ASMFC Atlantic Sturgeon Technical Committee Chair, Dr. Dewayne Fox: DFox@desu.edu; ASMFC Atlantic Sturgeon Technical Committee Vice-Chair, Bill Post: PostB@dnr.sc.gov

**Red Knot Listing Proposal**: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing the Rufa Red Knot September 30, 2013, as threatened. Comments on the proposed rule were due by November 29, 2013. Information regarding this species may be found at the following link: <http://ecos.fws.gov/speciesProfile/profile/speciesProfile.action?spcode=B0DM>

Comments on the proposal may be found at the following link: <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=FWS-R5-ES-2013-0097>

As of March 3, 2014, there were 563 comments received, 405 of which are posted at www.regulations.gov, on the Proposed Rule. The FWS anticipates that Proposed Critical Habitat for the species will be published in late spring or early summer. The Final Rule needs to publish by September 30, 2014.

The FWS Northeast Region has the lead for this species. The lead FWS Southeast Region staff person for this species as of March 24, 2014, will be **Stefanie Blihovde** in our North Florida Office. In the meantime, any questions regarding Rufa Red Knot should be directed to: **Rob W. Tawes**, Chief, Branch of Conservation and Classification (Robert\_Tawes@fws.gov; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Regional Office, 1875 Century Boulevard, Atlanta, GA 30345; telephone: 404-679-7142; faxform:  404-679-7081.

**Sea Turtle Critical Habitat (terrestrial beach)**: Information on sea turtles may be located at the following link: <http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/SeaTurtles/2013_NWA_Loggerhead_CH/20130322_faq_Questions-n-Answers_proposed_loggerhead_critical_habitat.html>

The economic analysis of the proposed Critical Habitat was completed and was made available for review, with comments due by September 16, 2013. The analysis and additional information may be found at the following link: <http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/Releases-13/20130717_nr_Service%20release%20draft%20economic%20analysis%20and%20reopens%20comment%20period%20for%20proposes%20critical%20habitat%20for%20loggerhead%20sea%20turtles.html>

A total of 398 comments had been received/posted on the proposed Critical Habitat and/or the economic analysis as of March 3, 2014. Comments may be viewed at: <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=FWS-R4-ES-2012-0103>

Final Critical Habitat for the NW Atlantic Loggerhead should be published by July 1, 2014.

Our point of contact for the loggerhead Critical Habitat designation, and for the green turtle Status Review, is: **AnnMarie Lauritsen**, Regional Sea Turtle Coordinator; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 600 4th Street South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701; telephone: 904-731-3032, or 904-525-0661. Email: seaturtle@fws.gov