

Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation

The Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) is a non-profit, private research foundation founded and directed by members of the commercial fishing industry and other support businesses based in Rhode Island. Its primary mission is to support teams of scientists and fishing industry members working together collaboratively on research and data collection projects important to the fishing industry in the southern New England region.

MESSAGE CORNER:

Welcome to the first edition of the CFRF newsletter. As the CFRF works to complete two of its multi-year research programs and launches into new initiatives, we will use a series of newsletters to update the fishing community on research findings and new work underway. We are always interested in hearing from industry members in terms of what the research needs and priorities are as they relate to our industry based here in southern New England. Feel free to make this a two way communication by contacting our staff or Board members with your ideas and comments. Bringing industry into the field of fisheries research in a collaborative way is our number one mission.

-David Spencer, CFRF President, F/V Nathaniel Lee

LOBSTER FLEET UPDATE:

In June 2013, the CFRF launched the field component of its Lobster Research Fleet Pilot Project, naming it the "On-Deck Data Program". A fleet of twelve lobster vessels fishing in Lobster Management Areas 2 and 3 took to the water equipped with Google Nexus tablets and electronic calipers to sample a minimum of either 300 lobsters or 60 traps per month, whichever comes first. To date, biological data has been reported for over 24,000 lobsters (from the Gulf of Maine to the Mid-Atlantic Bight, from inshore bays to offshore canyons).



Lobster biologists, managers and industry leaders will continue to direct the pilot project as it continues for one more year. A beta testing phase is underway that is aimed at adding Jonah crab data and bottom temperature data to the mix. The first round of data has been conveyed to scientists at the ASMFC for use in the upcoming lobster assessment, with more to come. View a short video documentary of the project and follow project updates on the CFRF Lobster Fleet website at www.cfrfoundation.org/lobster-research-fleet.

Funded through NOAA Award#NA09NMF4720414 and NA10NMF4720285

CONSERVATION GEAR ENGINEERING PROJECT:

Dr. Pingguo He, graduate student Natalie Jones, and others from SMAST, UMass Dartmouth, have been working in partnership with Captains Tom and Aaron Williams of the F/V Tradition, and Tor Bendiksen of Reidars Manufacturing Co., to test experimental large mesh trawling gear with "escape windows" aimed at reducing the bycatch of winter flounder and sub-legal Atlantic cod, while retaining legal size cod. The team has been working with members of the CFRF Conservation Engineering Review Panel to determine the most effective net configuration as well as targeted fishing locations. Modifications to the experimental net have begun to show promise, but the challenge has been finding the target species in significant numbers in the southern New England stock area in order to complete the field trials. The team is scheduled to finish their research and report findings in the coming year. For more information on this project, visit the CFRF Challenge Grant Program for Conservation Engineering Projects webpage at www.cfrfoundation.org/challenge-grant-program/.

Funded through NOAA Award# NA09NMF4720414

UPCOMING PROOF OF CONCEPT RFP OPPORTUNITY

The CFRF Board of Directors was able to re-direct funding from proceeds from sale of fish and other remaining funding in the Challenge Grant Program to provide a new Proof of Concept opportunity that will be issued late spring/early summer of 2014. The Proof of Concept RFP will be a call for proposals to test ideas on how to reduce juvenile butterfish bycatch. Additional information will be forthcoming on the CFRF website homepage (www.cfrfoundation.org) and in e-mail announcements.

Funded through NOAA Award #NA08NMF4720595

WORKSHOPS COMPLETED

Short-lived Species Workshop

The CFRF, in partnership with Rutgers University and MARACOOS (Mid-Atlantic Regional Association Coastal Ocean Observing System) organized and hosted a workshop on September 4-5, 2013 focusing on what we know and do not know about short-lived species, such as squid and butterflyfish. Some 24 participants including members of the commercial fishing industry, stock assessment scientists, state and federal managers, physical oceanographers, ecologists, and fisheries biologists discussed a series of topics that ranged from the natural history of these species, their role in marine food webs, distribution and stock delineations, and response to changing environmental factors, as well as modeling capabilities, and information sharing techniques. A final summary report is available online at: <http://cfrfoundation.org/short-lived-species-workshop-september-2013> or by calling (401) 515-4892.



Funded through CFRF through NOAA Award# NA08NMF4720595

International Collaborative Research Summit

The CFRF, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center, hosted an International Collaborative Research Summit at the Village Inn in Narragansett, RI on October 1-2, 2013. The goal of the summit was to provide an opportunity to learn from case studies in other parts of the world where fishermen are successfully working with scientists to provide data that is used in stock assessments, and to discuss how lessons learned might be applied to the U.S. Northeast. The highlighted case studies included: 1) A lobster research fleet approach in Nova Scotia, Canada, 2) A Norwegian Reference Fleet, and 3) An industry-based squid data collection system in the Falkland Islands. The event was well attended by members of the commercial fishing industry from New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Gulf regions, state and regional managers, scientists from academic institutions, and representatives of environmental organizations. Additional information on the summit can be found at www.cfrfoundation.org/summit. A final summary report has been drafted and is expected to be released shortly.

Funded through CFRF through NOAA Award#NA08NMF4720595, a grant from the Walton Family Foundation, and financial contributions from The Nature Conservancy

NEW PROJECT:

Research on Scup Processing:

The CFRF has begun research on methods for efficiently processing scup, an underutilized species here in the southern New England/Mid-Atlantic region. Work has begun with two seafood processing equipment manufacturers to investigate existing fillet machines, potential modifications, and future development of a machine to fillet scup cost effectively. Whole scup have been shipped from Pt. Judith to the collaborating companies, and equipment research/development is underway. The CFRF will communicate results to local processing companies soon as they are forthcoming. If promising, the CFRF will seek funding to pursue a scup marketing research project.

Funded through NOAA Award # NA09NMF4720414

SNECRI:

The CFRF Southern New England Collaborative Research Initiative, begun in 2008 with an earmark obtained through efforts made by U.S. Senator Jack Reed, is coming to a close. The program covered a wide variety of research topics and funded 19 project teams, involving some 92 scientists and students, 22 fishing vessels and fishing businesses, and 11 academic, private research institutions and state agencies. Future newsletters will highlight the results from the individual research projects. SNECRI project summaries can also be found at www.cfrfoundation.org/snecri/.

Funded through NOAA Awards #'s NA09NMF4720414, NA08NMF4720595 and NA10NMF4720285

What we are currently seeking funding support for:

- *Scup processing and marketing research
- *Juvenile butterflyfish bycatch reduction
- *Pioneer Array Project – data sharing and ongoing communications with the industry
- *Testing and verification of “flounder friendly” gear approaches in the small mesh trawl fishery
- *Continued funding for Lobster Research Fleet beyond 2015, adding environmental data collection
- *Research to further develop technology for fishermen-collected data approaches
- *Development of research fleet approach in other fisheries.

NEAMAP Project:

The CFRF was able to support the northern leg of the well-respected NEAMAP survey over the course of four years (2009-2013) through the SNECRI research program. CFRF Board members and staff are hopeful that the results of this work, conducted by VIMS scientists and the captain/crew of the F/V Darana R, will be used to inform stock assessments and management plans for key resource species in the southern New England/Mid-Atlantic region.

The NEAMAP team was asked by the CFRF to report on how the data for key commercial species surveyed in northern waters is being used in stock assessments. The following information on data usage as it relates to assessments, was included in their final report submitted on August 21, 2013. A full NEAMAP project report is available at www.cfrfoundation.org/projects/neamap.

Uses of Data Generated by the NEAMAP Mid-Atlantic/Southern New England Nearshore Trawl Survey, 2007-2013 (as of May 31, 2013)

Data provided to & incorporated into past assessments	
Atlantic Menhaden	Predator diet data for inclusion in Multispecies VPA
Atlantic Sturgeon	Abundance data for ESA listing and subsequent re-evaluation
Longfin Squid	Abundance, distribution, & length
River Herring (Alewife & Blueback)	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, & maturity
Winter flounder	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & age

Data provided to but not Incorporated* into an assessment	
Atlantic Sea Scallop	Abundance, distribution, & length
Black Drum	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & age
Bluefish	Abundance, distribution, length, & age
Scup	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & age
Skate complex (Clearnose, Little, & Winter)	Abundance, distribution, & length
Spiny Dogfish	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & diet
Weakfish	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & age

*(Due to short time series of data available, NOT because of data quality)

Data provided to an assessment & assessment results currently pending	
American lobster	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, berry status & stage, shell disease
Atlantic croaker	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & age
Black Sea Bass	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & age
Butterfish	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & age
Horseshoe crab	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, & maturity
Smooth dogfish	Distribution & abundance
Spot	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & age
Striped Bass	Length, sex, maturity, & age
Summer Flounder	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, maturity, & age
Tautog	Abundance, distribution, length, sex, & maturity

Funded through NOAA Award # NA09NMF4720414

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GEAR TRIALS PROGRAM UPDATE:

The CFRF will continue its Gear Trials Program for one more year. The program provides financial assistance in the form of vouchers for fishing vessels installing one or two types of gear modifications: 1) a 12" drop chain, and 2) a large mesh belly panel. Both gear types have been tested and proven to be effective in reducing winter flounder bycatch in the small mesh trawling fishery while retaining targeted species such as squid. To date 47 fishing vessels have applied for the vouchers, which can be used at either Superior Trawl in Pt. Judith or Reidars Manufacturing in New Bedford. Vouchers are still available for an additional 25 vessels.

On the research side, Cornell scientists have been working with the captains/crew of the F/V Lightning Bay and F/V Excalibur out of Point Judith, to test the two gear types in the whiting fishery. Preliminary results indicate that the drop chain and belly panel modifications are effective in reducing winter flounder bycatch while retaining whiting. Qualitative information coming back from the fishing vessels participating in the Gear Trials Program is also being compiled.

As the NEFMC moves towards accountability measures such as closed areas, it is becoming increasingly important for the small mesh trawling fleet to participate in programs such as Gear Trials to demonstrate that the fishing industry is taking proactive measures to fish selectively.

To apply for gear vouchers, visit www.geartrials.org or call the CFRF office at (401) 515-4892.

Help demonstrate an alternative to closed areas.



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