

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 and conduct collaborative fisheries research that assists in the achievement of sustainable fisheries in the southern New England region.

MESSAGE CORNER:

Welcome to the fourth edition of the CFRF Newsletter. The past months have been an exciting time for the CFRF, as we welcomed new staff, wrapped up a number of multi-year NOAA awards, and launched a variety of new projects. We are pleased to welcome a new Executive Director, Anna Malek Mercer, and Research Associate, Aubrey Ellertson, to the Foundation. Both have extensive experience working with the fishing industry and we are confident that their expertise will help the CFRF achieve its mission. To highlight CFRF's new initiatives and better share project information, we launched a new website, which can be accessed at www.cfrfoundation.org. We invite you to explore the new website to learn more about how the CFRF works to support sustainable fisheries and healthy seafood sources through collaborative research and public education.

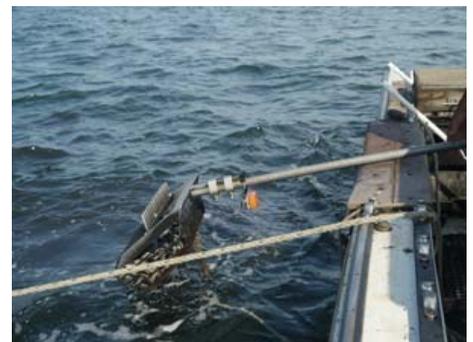
David Spencer, CFRF President, F/V Nathaniel Lee and Fred Mattera, CFRF Vice-President, NESTCO, Inc.

NEW PROJECT: QUAHOG RESEARCH FLEET

The CFRF, in partnership with Roger Williams University (RWU) and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM), with support from Rhode Island Sea Grant is launching a Quahog Research Fleet in Narragansett Bay comprised of commercial shellfishermen using Android tablets to collect biological quahog data via bullrake sampling to better inform the stock assessment and to promote sustainable management of the quahog resource. Quahog Research Fleet participants will sample eight stations per month throughout the year. Four sampling stations will be selected by participating shellfishermen at locations within their typical fishing grounds. Four other sampling stations will be selected by CFRF, RWU, and RI DEM to maximize spatial coverage of the bay and fill in areas not sampled by the RI DEM hydraulic dredge survey. At each station shellfishermen will record the number of quahogs in each market class (little neck, top neck, cherrystone, chowder) as well as a variety of environmental covariates (habitat, wind, tide) using a pre-programmed tablet application. The project team will calibrate the catch efficiency of bullrake sampling and the RI DEM hydraulic dredge survey via in-situ SCUBA observations to allow for direct integration of Quahog Research Fleet data with the existing dredge survey time series. In the end, CFRF hopes that by providing shellfishermen with an opportunity to be active participants in the data collection and stock assessment process that this project will lead to a more open and transparent quahog management system that promotes stakeholder engagement.

CFRF is soliciting applications from shellfishermen who are interested in participating in the Quahog Research Fleet. The application deadline is June 1, 2016. More information about the project, including application materials, can be found at www.cfrfoundation.org/quahog-research-fleet.

Funded through Rhode Island Sea Grant



Check out our new website www.cfrfoundation.org and new Facebook page.



PROJECT UPDATE: SHELF RESEARCH FLEET

The CFRF and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) launched the Shelf Research Project in October 2014. Since then a fleet of nine fishing vessels has been collecting oceanographic data from across the continental shelf south of New England. Participant fishermen use Conductivity, Temperature and Depth instruments (CTDs) and iPads to conduct water column profiles, view their data, and communicate data to WHOI and CFRF partners. Oceanographic data are processed and posted online in near real time (see: <http://science.whoi.edu/users/seasoar/cfrfwho>). The purpose of the project is to study changes in oceanographic conditions, particularly temperature, in order to better understand how these changes may impact the distribution and abundance of key fisheries resources. To date, the following vessels have contributed oceanographic data: F/V Aces High (Point Judith, RI), F/V Cailyn Grace (Sakonnet Point, RI), F/V Debbie Ann (Point Judith, RI), F/V Heather Lynn (Point Judith, RI), F/V Mister G (Point Judith, RI), F/V Virginia Marise (Point Judith, RI), F/V Erica Knight (Point Judith, RI), F/V Timberwolf (Point Judith, RI), and F/V Excalibur (Newport, RI).



In February, members of the Shelf Research Fleet met with WHOI scientists, Glen Gawarkiewicz and Frank Bahr, to discuss recent oceanographic conditions and to share at-sea observations. Discussions focused on recent formation of Gulf Stream warm core rings, severe winter storms, and the impacts of these events on fisheries resources in the region. Data collection has been very successful with 138 profiles completed thus far. For more information about the Shelf Research Fleet project, please visit: www.cfrfoundation.org/shelf-research-fleet.

Funded by the MacArthur Foundation

NEW PROJECT: INVESTIGATING MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCUP

In September 2015, the CFRF launched a project funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation focused on exploring ways to expand the utilization of local and sustainable seafood products, particularly scup (*Stenotomus chrysops*), in the state of Rhode Island. As part of this work, CFRF is compiling seafood product requirements and consumer preferences from universities, hospitals, markets, and restaurants to determine which local species and processing techniques best accommodate the state's seafood needs. In addition, CFRF staff are working with fishermen and processing companies to identify the factors that determine seafood availability throughout the year.



SCUP COOKOFF AND COOKING DEMONSTRATION HELD AT JWU.



Finally, the CFRF is partnering with Johnson & Wales University to educate the next generation of chefs about sustainable seafood options and ways in which they can support local fishermen throughout their culinary careers. As part of this work, CFRF has provided JWU students with opportunities to discuss harvesting practices with local fishermen, tour fishing vessels and processing facilities, learn how to identify and source sustainable seafood, practice preparing local/seasonal fish, and participate in a competition to develop scup recipes for home cooks.



TOUR OF POINT JUDITH BY JWU STUDENTS.

Check out www.cfrfoundation.org/scup-marketing for more information about this project and announcements of upcoming events.

Funded through NFWF Project #47937

PROJECT UPDATE: LOBSTER AND JONAH CRAB RESEARCH FLEET

The CFRF Lobster and Jonah Crab Research Fleet will enter its fourth year of data collection in June 2016. Captains and crew members from 14 lobster and crab fishing vessels continue to collect and relay biological lobster and Jonah crab data from a subsample of their commercial catch as well as ventless traps. To date, biological data for more than 70,927 lobsters and 21,466 Jonah crabs has been collected. All biological data has been communicated to state and federal agencies for application in the lobster stock assessment and Jonah crab Fishery Management Plan. The fleet also continues to collect and communicate bottom water temperature data ranging from the Gulf of Maine to Hudson Canyon.

In September 2015, CFRF received an award from NOAA's Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program which allows the project to continue through 2017. As part of this new award, the CFRF is working with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) to assess Jonah crab size at sexual maturity in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern New England. To Date, 623 Jonah crabs have been collected by Research Fleet vessels and analyzed by scientists at MA DMF for gonad maturity stage, ova stage, shell stage, and presence of sperm plugs. Preliminary results indicate that there are seasonal differences in gonad development for both male and female Jonah crabs. The project team will continue to collect and analyze Jonah crabs until all four seasons and regions have been sampled. For more information, please visit the CFRF Lobster Research Fleet project page at: www.cfrfoundation.org/jonah-crab-lobster-research-fleet.



Funded through NOAA Award # NA15NMF4270301

COMPLETION OF MULTI-YEAR NOAA AWARDS:

In December 2015, CFRF completed three major multi-year NOAA awards that spanned the past seven years. Through these awards, CFRF administered \$5.8 million that supported over 30 collaborative fisheries research projects covering subjects such as conservation gear engineering, bycatch reduction, lobster settlement and recruitment, spiny dogfish stock dynamics, discard mortality estimation, fish habitat characterization, shellfish larval dynamics, industry based biological data collection, underutilized species processing, state fishery profiles, and supplementary trawl and trap surveys. The work involved over 280 fishermen, researchers, students, and fisheries managers, and provided critical information and technologies for restoring and maintaining the sustainability of commercial fisheries in the southern New England region. For more information about the projects conducted as part of the multi-year NOAA awards, please visit www.cfrfoundation.org.



WELCOME TO CFRF'S NEW STAFF:

Anna Malek Mercer, Executive Director: Anna completed a PhD in Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island, Graduate School of Oceanography in 2015, where she employed a collaborative research approach to investigate fish community dynamics in Rhode Island's coastal waters. Prior to assuming the position of executive director, Anna spearheaded a number of research projects for the CFRF, with the goal of expanding fishermen's involvement with scientific data collection and application.

Aubrey Ellertson, Research Associate: Aubrey received a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Franklin and Marshall College in 2011. Prior to joining the CFRF, Aubrey worked as an At-Sea Monitor and Data Editor for the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program. Aubrey has also been extensively involved in outreach and education events at fishing ports throughout the northeast.

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PROJECT UPDATE: RESEARCH NEEDS AND APPROACHES FOR OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

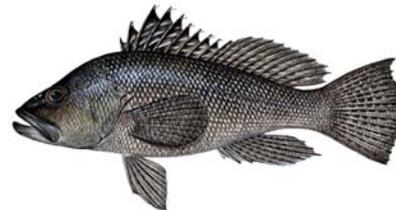
In November 2015, the CFRF completed a project for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) titled “Identifying Information Needs and Approaches for Assessing Potential Impacts of Offshore Wind Farm Development on Fisheries Resources in the Northeast Region”. The purpose of this project was to assist BOEM as it develops guidelines and regulations for offshore wind energy developers regarding research and monitoring requirements. The report developed for this project draws upon the experience and knowledge of those most directly connected with fisheries resources on a daily basis – members of the fishing industry, and fisheries scientists and managers. The CFRF’s report reviews concerns regarding potential impacts of offshore wind energy development on fisheries resource species, and provides a list of Best Practice Protocols for developing and implementing collaborative research programs in BOEM’s designated Wind Energy Areas. The report speaks to the need to engage representatives from industry, science, and management in a collaborative approach as comprehensive baseline and monitoring research programs are established, subsequent research is implemented, and the resultant data is analyzed. The CFRF hopes that this report will serve as an important first step in accomplishing that approach. To continue the conversations initiated during this project, CFRF has held a series of meetings with members of the fishing industry in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and plans to continue this effort in New York in the coming months. For more information about this project or to view the final report, please visit: www.cfrfoundation.org/fisheries-impacts-from-offshore-wind-energy-development.



Funded through BOEM Contract #M14PC00005

CFRF PRIORITIES – RESEARCH & OUTREACH:

- ◆ Black seabass research
- ◆ Ocean monitoring research
- ◆ Offshore wind energy research
- ◆ Sustainable seafood outreach & education
- ◆ Industry-based biological data collection



We encourage members of the fishing industry to reach out with research ideas and priorities!