

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 January 2017 newsletter. It has been an exciting time for the CFRF. We have expanded our staff, launched new projects, and have more projects in the wings. The new year has brought a change in leadership to the Foundation as I have stepped down as president. I am extremely proud of the work that the Foundation has done. It has been an honor to have been involved with such a dedicated, passionate, and professional staff and board.

Fred Mattera is the new president and Chairman of the Board. I cannot think of a better person to assume this position. Fred has been involved with the Foundation since its inception many years ago when a group of fishermen pooled their groundfish disaster relief money in order to start this organization. Fred is widely known, very well respected, a dedicated advocate for this Foundation and for the industry that it serves. I am very confident that the leadership team of Anna and Fred, along with the Executive Committee, and Board will serve the Foundation well for many years to come.

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

NEW PROJECT: BLACK SEA BASS RESEARCH FLEET

In September 2016, the CFRF, in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM), launched the Black Sea Bass Research Fleet pilot project to develop a cost-effective method to collect, analyze, and communicate critically needed data on black sea bass in Southern New England. This project directly addresses concerns expressed by the commercial and recreational fishing communities in the northeast, which are deeply impacted by the shifting range and incidental catch of black sea bass. The CFRF Black Sea Bass Research Fleet employs eight Rhode Island fishermen encompassing nearly all gear types that interact with black sea bass to collect fishing effort and biological data throughout the year. The CFRF is pleased to welcome the following participants to the Black Sea Bass Research Fleet: Tim Baker (F/V Laura Lynn), Rick Bellavance (F/V Priority Too), Aaron Gewirtz (F/V Nancy Beth), Philip Merris (F/V Excalibur), Mike Monteforte (F/V Second Wind), Kenneth Murgo (F/V Johnny B), Todd Sutton (F/V Sweet Misery and F/V More Misery), and Trip Whilden (F/V Matrix and F/V Lucy Rose).



The goal of the pilot project is to apply and adapt the CFRF's research fleet design to the multi-gear black sea bass fishery and to begin addressing the data needs expressed by black sea bass stock assessment scientists. To do so, industry participants from the gillnet, trawl, fish pot, lobster, Jonah crab, commercial rod and reel, and charter fisheries use a specialized app on Android tablets to collect biological data from black sea bass catch and discards. In addition, fleet participants fishing in Rhode Island state waters collect a portion of their discarded black sea bass for laboratory analysis at RI DEM, including morphometrics, sexual maturity, and stomach contents. Black sea bass otolith samples are sent to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science to be incorporated in an extensive black sea bass aging study. A Project Steering Committee comprised of fishery scientists and managers, and members of the Rhode Island fishing industry, provide ongoing guidance on sampling protocols to ensure that all data is both efficiently collected and

immediately useful for scientists and managers. The pilot project, funded by the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, will run from September 2016 to August 2017.

For more information about the CFRF Black Sea Bass Research Fleet, please visit www.cfrfoundation.org/black-sea-bass-fleet .

Funded through Rhode Island DEM

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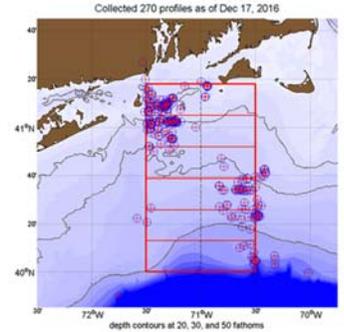
PROJECT UPDATE: SHELF RESEARCH FLEET



The Shelf Research Fleet project, conducted collaboratively by CFRF and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), has gathered oceanographic data from across the continental shelf south of Rhode Island for over two years. The CFRF welcomed a new participant, F/V Brooke C (Point Judith, RI), to the Shelf Research Fleet in December 2016. Fleet participants continue to use wireless Conductivity, Temperature and Depth instruments and iPads to conduct water column profiles, view their data, and communicate data to CFRF and WHOI partners. Recent technological advancements have expedited data collection by introducing automatic location identification. To date, the ten vessels participating in the Shelf Research Fleet have collected over 270 profiles from across the study area.

On January 25th, 2017 members of the Shelf Research Fleet will meet with WHOI scientists, Glen Gawarkiewicz and Magdalena Andres, to discuss recent oceanographic conditions, share at-sea observations, and develop a better understanding of how these changes impact the distribution and abundance of key fisheries resources. For more information about this event, please contact Aubrey Ellertson at aellertson@cfrfoundation.org.

Finally, the CFRF is excited to share that a new phase of the Shelf Research Fleet will be supported by the van Beuren Charitable Foundation. This phase will continue data collection through 2019 and will introduce extended outreach efforts surrounding project approaches and results. To view the project video titled “*Understanding Ocean Changes-The Story of a Unique Partnership between Commercial Fishermen and Scientists*” and for more information about the Shelf Research Fleet, please visit www.cfrfoundation.org/shelf-research-fleet.



Funded by the MacArthur Foundation

PROJECT UPDATE: QUAHOG RESEARCH FLEET

In August 2016, the CFRF, in partnership with Roger Williams University (RWU) and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM), welcomed Bo Christensen, David Ghigliotti, Jarrod Goulart, Gerald Schey, and Ernest Wilcox to the Quahog Research Fleet. On August 10th, CFRF held the first training session, during which fleet members were introduced to project sampling protocols and equipment. Ongoing feedback from fleet members has helped tailor the Quahog On-Deck Data application, sorting racks, and sampling work flow to suit their fishing practices.



Quahog Research Fleet participants use bullrakes to sample eight stations per month throughout the year, as part of routine fishing practices. Four sampling stations are selected by fleet participants at locations within their typical fishing grounds. Four other sampling stations are selected by CFRF, RWU, and RI DEM to maximize spatial coverage of Narragansett Bay and fill in areas not sampled by the RI DEM hydraulic dredge survey. At each station, fleet participants record the number of quahogs in each market class (little neck, top neck, cherrystone, chowder) as well as a suite of environmental data (depth, habitat, wind) 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. This project will continue through January 2018.



More information about the project can be found at www.cfrfoundation.org/quahog-research-fleet.

Funded through Rhode Island Sea Grant

PROJECT UPDATE: LOBSTER AND JONAH CRAB RESEARCH FLEET

The CFRF Lobster and Jonah Crab Research Fleet continues to collect and relay biological lobster and Jonah crab data and bottom water temperatures from the Gulf of Maine to Hudson Canyon. The Research Fleet continues to evolve and grow, with the addition of Jonah crab shell hardness to the On Deck Data app in May 2016 and the welcoming of the F/V Revolution (New Bedford, MA) to the fleet in August 2016. Since the start of the project in 2013, the 15 lobster and Jonah crab fishing vessels participating in the Research Fleet have collected biological data from more than 87,000 lobsters and 30,000 Jonah crabs, helping to fill major data gaps in poorly sampled areas and times of year.



The CFRF continues to work with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries to conduct Jonah crab sexual maturity analysis. To date, a total of 1,486 Jonah crabs have been sampled for maturity analysis from Southern New England, Georges Bank, and the Gulf of Maine. This work will continue through June 2017.

For more information, please visit the CFRF Lobster and Jonah Crab Research Fleet webpage at: www.cfrfoundation.org/jonah-crab-lobster-research-fleet.

Funded through NOAA Award # NA15NMF4270301

PROJECT COMPLETE: INVESTIGATING MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCUP

In September 2016, CFRF completed a project that explored and analyzed the factors essential to the development of local, regional, and national markets for scup (*Stenotomus chrysops*), an underutilized fish species in the northeast. Research activities included investigations into annual and seasonal trends in the landings and price of scup, the capability of fishermen and seafood processors to harvest and produce scup fillets, the local (Rhode Island) demand for scup fillets in retail and institutional settings, as well as technical challenges that prevent scup fillets from being brought to market. In addition to these research activities, CFRF also organized a series of outreach events to provide local fishermen, seafood processors, culinary students, restaurant chefs, and seafood consumers with the opportunity to learn about, cook, and taste scup. Outreach events included a cook-off with Johnson and Wales University to develop scup recipes for the home cook, a public scup tasting at Dave's Marketplace, and a Rhode Island Seafood Chef's Table to educate and encourage restaurant chefs to incorporate scup and other underutilized species into their menus. These events engaged over 500 individuals, and bolstered a state initiative to increase the integration of scup and other underutilized seafood species in the local food system.

Research efforts identified a number of factors that impact the scup fishery and supply chain, including: catch limits, seasonality, availability of higher-value species, ex-vessel price, fish size, at-sea handling, and market demand. If the scup fishery were to be fully realized, over 30 million pounds of scup (9 million pounds of scup fillets) would be available to seafood consumers. The high and variable volume of scup landings throughout the year, in combination with the need for a consistent supply for the market requires that the product be frozen and refreshed. These techniques, however, have not yet been developed.

Food institutions, retailers, restaurants, and seafood consumers in Rhode Island are keenly interested in expanding their knowledge and use of scup and underutilized seafood species. Access to scup fillets, the preferred product type, however, is very limited. Furthermore, scup has to compete with low cost, imported seafood products, such as tilapia. Realizing a competitive wholesale price while also maintaining a stable and sufficient ex-vessel price (>\$0.50 per pound) presents a major challenge for incorporating scup in domestic food systems.

Finally, during this project, CFRF Executive Director, Dr. Anna Mercer, was elected to serve on the Rhode Island Food Policy Council and will continue to work on CFRF's behalf to increase utilization of underutilized seafood, such as scup, in the local food system.

For more information about this project, please visit www.cfrfoundation.org/scup-marketing.

Funded through NFWF Project #47937



WELCOME TO CFRF'S NEW STAFF:

Thomas Heimann, Research Associate: Thomas received a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science from Prescott College in 2013 and Master's Degree in Marine Biology from Northeastern University in 2016. Thomas has experience working with the fishing industry in the Pacific Northwest, New England, Mexico, and Norway. Thomas's work at CFRF focuses on the Black Sea Bass Research Fleet.

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NEW PROJECT: ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF FISHERIES IN RHODE ISLAND

Despite the significance of the fishing industry to Rhode Island's coastal communities and food system, the overall economic value of this industry sector is largely unknown. In November 2016, CFRF began working with Dr. Thomas Sproul, a natural resource economics professor from the University of Rhode Island, to address this deficiency. CFRF and Dr. Sproul have developed a web-based survey program to collect the necessary information to assess the economic impact of the fishing industry in the state of Rhode Island, which will launch in January 2017. The project team will also conduct analyses of business databases to better understand the dynamics of the evolving fishing industry. Ultimately, this work will characterize the Rhode Island fishing industry work force, raise awareness of the value of Rhode Island's natural resources, and identify opportunities for growth. Ultimately, the CFRF and URI will develop suggestions and solutions to help overcome identified issues and promote growth of the fishing industry. The CFRF is grateful to The Rhode Island Foundation and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for providing financial support for this important work.



For more information about this project, please visit www.cfrfoundation.org/economic-impact-of-fisheries-in-rhode-island

Funded by The RI Foundation and RI DEM

CFRF PRIORITIES – RESEARCH & OUTREACH:

- ◆ Industry-based biological data collection
- ◆ Black seabass research
- ◆ Offshore wind energy research
- ◆ Oceanographic research
- ◆ Sustainable seafood outreach & education
- ◆ Summer flounder research
- ◆ Developing alternative uses for seafood processing waste
- ◆ Scup product development
- ◆ Conservation Gear Engineering



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