CFRF NEWSLETTER

NEW PROJECT: EXPLORING THE FEASIBILITY AND MARKET POTENTIAL OF A COMMON SPIDER CRAB FISHERY

The goal of this project is to catalyze the creation of a fishery for common spider crab in southern New England. Spider crabs are commonly caught as bycatch and frustrate fishermen by consuming bait, increasing processing time, and taking up space in traps intended for commercially valuable species. Despite their status as a pest along the Atlantic coast, a variety of spider crabs are enjoyed worldwide and are known for their sweet meat. The first objective of this project is to evaluate all available data sources to help determine whether enough data of sufficient quality would be available to conduct a stock assessment. This data evaluation will also include fishermen's knowledge about the relative abundance and seasonality of bycaught spider crabs, and how this may be changing over time. A second objective will explore the processability of spider crabs in a commercial setting in collaboration with Atlantic Red Crab Co. Thank you to The Campbell Foundation for supporting this work! Learn more here!

NEW PROJECT: ENGAGING THE FISHING COMMUNITY TO UNDERSTAND DISEASE AND REPRODUCTIVE DYNAMICS OF ATLANTIC SEA SCALLOP

The Atlantic sea scallop is the second most valuable fishery in the United States, however a changing climate has begun to impact the biology of the species through the emergence of diseases and changes in reproductive dynamics. This project will utilize the Research Fleet approach to investigate the impacts of climate change on sea scallops by engaging fishermen to collect data on the distribution and incidence of grey meats, nematodes, shell blister disease, and reproductive condition. This project aims to better comprehend Atlantic sea scallop health, inform fisheries management decisions

and provide the sea scallop fishing industry with the tools needed to understand and plan for the impacts of climate change. Interested in participating in data collection? Please visit the project webpage to learn more and to download the application! Thank you to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission for supporting this project!

PROJECT UPDATE: SOUTH FORK WIND FARM GILLNET SURVEY

We officially completed the second year of the gillnet survey in December, which represents the end of the pre-windfarm construction phase of this survey! This survey primarily targets monkfish and winter skate, and the baseline data we have collected on these and other species thus far will be used as a comparison to data that will be collected during and post-windfarm construction to determine any impacts of windfarm development on these species. So far, the most dominant species caught by the gillnet survey were winter skate, little skate, monkfish, bluefish, spiny dogfish, and Atlantic menhaden. Winter skate and monkfish had the highest catches in terms of weight, followed by bluefish, little skate, summer flounder, spiny dogfish and barndoor skate. We are grateful to Greg Mataronas and crew on the F/V Cailyn and Maren and Todd Sutton and crew on the F/V More Misery for their hard work throughout the two years of this survey! More information on this project can be found here.

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Project Update: South Fork Wind Farm Ventless Trap Survey

From May-November of 2021 and 2022, CFRF staff and URI staff and graduate students have worked in partnership with the F/V Amelia Anne, F/V Ashley Ann II, and F/V Erica Knight to successfully complete the two years of pre-construction ventless lobster trap survey for the South Fork Wind Farm. The goal of this survey was to collect baseline data on the seasonal abundance, distribution, movement, and habitat use of lobster and Jonah crab in the South Fork Wind Farm development area as well as surrounding areas. This data will continue to be collected during and post-windfarm construction, which will help identify any impacts of windfarm development on these commercially important species. With the conclusion of the pre-construction phase of the survey, the project team is moving forward to the construction phase which will begin in May 2023.

We would like to extend our appreciation to the captains – Greg Lisi, Mark Sweitzer, and Brian Thibeault – and crews of our three participating vessels for their continued commitment and efforts for this survey! Learn more about this project on the webpage.

Education and Outreach

- Nick Piscitelli completed his internship with the CFRF! Reflecting on his experience, Nick said, " I value the training and professional development I gained at CFRF, as well as the opportunity to contribute to projects involving the emerging topic of offshore wind farms. I look forward to drawing on the skills, knowledge and connections I acquired from this experience throughout my career in fisheries management." We wish Nick all the best moving forward!


- In December, CFRF Research Associate Susan Inglis hosted a community workshop to discuss our upcoming Ghost Gear Removal Program for Rhode Island. Thanks to everyone who joined us! You can learn more about the CFRF's ghost gear removal work on the project webpage.

- In December, CFRF Research Biologists Thomas Heimann and Noelle Olsen hosted a meeting for the commercial fishing industry to discuss the preliminary results and lessons learned from our project to pilot an automatic jigging machine in Southern New England squid fisheries. You can learn more about this work on our website!

- The CFRF and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution hosted another Ocean Conditions meeting in December to discuss results from this summer's Shelf Research Fleet and Salinity Maximum Intrusions research! Thanks to Dr. Glen Gawarkiewicz and all of the fishing industry members who attended!
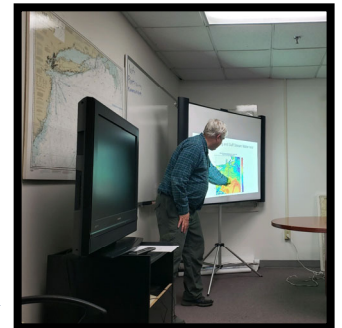
Don't forget to follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter for regular updates on our work!

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