

NEFSC Cooperative Research Makes 2014 Mid-Atlantic RSA and 2014/2015 Herring RSA Awards

The NEFSC Northeast Cooperative Research Program has made three awards under the 2014 Mid-Atlantic and 2014/2015 Herring Research Set-Aside programs.

Research Set-Aside (RSA) programs are unique to federal fisheries in the northeast region, which includes the mid-Atlantic. Under RSAs, no federal funds are provided to support the research; rather, funding is provided by granting the awardees Set-Aside allocations for certain quota managed or days-at-sea (DAS) managed fisheries. The allocations are then harvested and sold to provide funds for the research. Current RSAs include programs for Atlantic sea scallops, Atlantic herring, monkfish, and mid-Atlantic multi species which include Atlantic mackerel, black sea bass, bluefish, butterfish, *Illex* squid, *Loligo* squid, scup, summer flounder, and tilefish.

Mid-Atlantic RSA Awards

Under the 2014 Mid-Atlantic RSA, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) has been granted approximately \$1,105,620 worth of allocations to support the project “Data Collection & Analysis in Support of Single & Multispecies Stock Assessments in the Mid-Atlantic & Southern New England: Northeast Area Monitoring & Assessment Program Near Shore Trawl Survey, 2014,” also known as the NEAMAP Near Shore Trawl Survey.

Headed by principal investigators Chris Bonzek and Robert Latour, the NEAMAP Near Shore Trawl Survey is a fishery-independent survey designed to collect information on the late juvenile and adult stages of a majority of finfish species (including RSA species summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, butterfish, and bluefish) and several invertebrate species (including Longfin squid) inhabiting the near shore waters of the Mid-Atlantic Bight, Block Island Sound, and Rhode Island Sound.

Allocations worth approximately \$319,174 were awarded to Cockeyeast Fisheries, Inc. for the project, “Industry Based Survey of Black Sea Bass Utilizing Ventless Traps.” Principle investigators Laura Skrobe, Captain Charles Borden, Najih Lazar, & Dr. Steven Cadrin will complete a fishery-independent black sea bass survey of five separate hard bottom sites in Southern New England (SNE) and Mid-Atlantic waters. Unvented black sea bass pots will be fished on each site for five months running from June through October in SNE, and April through August in the Mid-Atlantic. Five commercial vessels will conduct the fieldwork and the University of Rhode Island (URI) and University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth - School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) will oversee project administration and data analysis. Staff from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) Division of Fish and Wildlife, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MADMF), New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NEDEP) Fish and Wildlife, New York State Department of Environmental (NYSDEC), and Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) will also collaborate on the project.

Herring RSA Award

Under the 2014/2015 Herring RSA program, the project “Characterizing and Reducing River Herring Incidental Catch in the Atlantic Herring Mid-Water Trawl Fishery” has been approved.

Led by University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth - School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) principal investigators Kevin Stokesbury and Dave Bethony, this project was awarded approximately \$1,046,160 in allocations over the next two years.

The project will 1) portside sample at least 50% of mid-water trawl landings in Massachusetts, 2) estimate the total amount of river herring taken by mid-water trawl vessels in 2014 and 2015, 4) describe the length, number, and maturity and of river herring incidental catch by location and time 5) continue near-real time river herring avoidance mid-water trawl fleet communication systems, and 6) place net sensors on gear of mid-water trawl vessels.

The goal of this project is to increase the accuracy and precision of river herring incidental catch estimates by sampling mid-water trawl vessels at a high rate. This information could be used to inform future decisions related to river herring incidental catch. The project also hopes to reduce river herring incidental catch and provide fishermen with a tool to fully harvest target species without being hindered by excessive catches of river herring.