



SCeMFiS Announces Funding for Seven Research Projects Impacting Fisheries Management

May, 23, 2017, Ocean Springs, MS - The Industry Advisory Board (IAB) of the Science Center for Marine Fisheries (SCeMFiS) has allocated \$203,271 in funding for seven research projects and a continuing involvement with the marine mammal assessment process during the Spring IAB Meeting held April 26-27, 2017 in Ocean Springs, Mississippi.

SCeMFiS is sponsored by the Industry/University Cooperative Research Program (I/UCRC) of the National Science Foundation. The I/UCRC programs bring participants from industry, government, and other organizations in need of science-based solutions into contact with academic scientists capable of providing that expertise.

The SCeMFiS Industry Advisory Board is composed of members from the shellfish and commercial finfish industries and the NMFS-Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The organizational structure provided by the Center permits members to control the science agenda in exchange for financial support under the sponsorship of the NSF.

Guy Simmons, Vice-President of Marketing and Product Development at Sea Watch International, Ltd. and Chairman of SCeMFiS Industry Advisory Board states, "As participants in the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries, many of its stakeholders have been involved in cooperative research with the goal of reducing uncertainty in the fisheries management plan for many years. Since the formation of SCeMFiS, these efforts have been dramatically enhanced by the involvement of all the members as well as the guidance from the National Science Foundation. The projects, both shellfish and finfish, that have been funded by SCeMFiS, have already shown positive results in contributing to the "Best Science" available. I believe the success of the past four years has been validated by new membership recruitment and the acceptance of the science from management agencies. I am especially proud of the work that went into the development and approval of our seven new research projects at our April meeting in Ocean Springs, MS."

Funded projects are as follows:

- **Evaluation of Alternative Approaches to Risk-Based Catch Advice** – this project will review and evaluate methods applied by Scientific and Statistical Committees of regional fishery management councils to evaluate



forecast error and improve optimal yield within an appropriate consideration of uncertainty and risk. PI: Steve Cadrin, UMass Dartmouth

- **Stock Assessment Team** – the stock assessment team will provide external support to NMFS for benchmark assessment working groups with a focus in 2017 on the Atlantic mackerel assessment. PI: Eric Powell, USM
- **Independent Advisory Team for Marine Mammal Assessments - Phase V** – this team addresses uncertainties in slow growing marine mammal populations and the interactions between marine mammals and fishing operations. PI: Paula Moreno, USM.
- **Evaluation of Sampling Adequacy for Atlantic Menhaden Fisheries** – this project will evaluate the current Atlantic sampling program for the characterization of menhaden fishery catch leading to recommendations designed to increase sampling efficiency. PIs: Geneviève Nessler, UMCES & Robert Leaf, USM
- **Ocean Quahog Population Dynamics: Validation of Estimation Procedures for an Age-at-Length Key** – this study builds on previous work that developed the first population age frequencies for the U.S. stock by developing and testing approaches for deriving age-at-length keys from sparse datasets. PIs: Eric Powell, USM & Roger Mann, VIMS
- **Ocean Quahog Population Dynamics: Population Modeling to Interpret Population Age Frequencies** – this project will develop a population dynamics model to explain observed changes in abundance at age over the past 250 yr since ocean quahogs first colonized their present Mid-Atlantic range. PI: Eric Powell, USM



- **Survey of Surf Clams (*Spisula solidissima*) Southeast of Nantucket** – this will be the first survey of a region providing substantial surfclam catch to determine the need to expand the NMFS stock survey and to evaluate the distribution of complex habitat within the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area. PIs: Roger Mann, VIMS & Eric Powell, USM

For a list of the SCeMFIS research projects already underway, please click the following link, <http://scemfis.org/research.html>. The Industry Advisory Board will review each of its funded projects at its next meeting to be held October 31-November 1 in Cape May, New Jersey.

About SCeMFIS

The SCeMFIS mission utilizes academic and fisheries resources to address urgent scientific problems limiting sustainable fisheries. SCeMFIS develops methods, analytical and survey tools, datasets, and analytical approaches to improve sustainability of fisheries and reduce uncertainty in biomass estimates. SCeMFIS university partners, University of Southern Mississippi (lead institution), and Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William and Mary, are the academic sites. Collaborating scientists who provide specific expertise in finfish, shellfish, and marine mammal research, come from a wide range of academic institutions including Cornell University, Rutgers University, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, University of Maryland, and University of Washington.

The need for the diverse services that SCeMFIS can provide to industry continues to grow, which has prompted a steady increase in the number of fishing industry partners. These services include immediate access to science expertise for stock assessment issues, rapid response to research priorities, representation on stock assessment working groups. Targeted research leading to improvements in data collection, survey design, analytical tools, assessment models, and other needs to reduce uncertainty in stock status and improve reference point goals.

What is the importance of SCeMFIS? Economics. The fishing industry needs urgent answers to maintain the livelihood of many port towns along the coast. However, Tom Murray, emeritus professor of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, writes that this importance goes much further. He states, "Commercial fishery product landings begin the product development, processing and distribution changes which create additional economic value and impacts beyond the initial landed value and economic impact." In other words, the fishing industry is the catalyst to generate economic value not only in fishing ports but throughout a range of economic sectors including transportation, food services, and supporting manufacturing and financial services. Science in support of sustainable fisheries is a critical component underpinning this economic engine.

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