



## ***MARINE FISHERIES DIVISION***

### ***QUARTERLY REPORT***

**December 2011**

#### ➤ **Fisheries Monitoring & Research:**

◆ One sea-sampling trip was taken in western Long Island Sound from September through November 2011. Numerous dead lobsters, including egg-bearing females, were observed during this trip and 12 animals were collected and taken to the UCONN Veterinary Diagnostic Medical Lab for testing. Test results are still pending.

◆ The **2011 larval lobster index ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> out of the 29 year time series** and continued to low levels of production seen in the past ten years. Since 2000, production levels in the Sound have been below the median level, with the exception of 2007.

◆ Staff attended meetings of the New England Fisheries Management Council's Whiting Plan Development Team. The team is continuing to develop Amendment 19 to the Small Mesh Multi Species Management Plan. Under this plan, annual catch limits and accountability measures will be established for both the northern and southern stocks of Silver and Red Hake.



Newly hatched lobster.

*Photo credit: K Arruda*

◆ Staff hosted three Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Public Hearings on American lobster management in September and October. The purpose of the hearings were to obtain comments on a draft addendum that presented a suite of management options to reduce fishing exploitation on the Southern New England stock of American lobster by 10% starting in July 2013.

◆ Staff volunteered to **collect blue mussels off the CT River breakwater for NOAA's Mussel Watch Program in order to maintain this 25-year monitoring program** which lost much of its federal funding. Mussel Watch is the longest running continuous contaminant monitoring program in U.S. coastal and Great Lakes waters which analyzes bivalve tissues and sediment for over 100 organic and inorganic contaminants, including



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PAHs, PCBs, DDTs and its metabolites, TBT and its metabolites, chlorinated pesticides and toxic trace elements.

◆ Staff completed analyses of coastwide lobster landings for years 2007-2009 tabulated by month and Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA) so that managers could determine which fishery closure dates would meet the mandated 10% removal of landing opportunity. Landings by size were also analyzed for the effect of raising the minimum harvest size or lowering the maximum size. These management options are part of the newly passed addendum to the interstate management plan, with the goal of conserving the Southern New England lobster stock which was declared in recruitment failure in 2010.

◆ The 2011 Connecticut River juvenile alosine seine survey was completed in late October. **The juvenile American shad index ranked 23rd out of the 34 year time series. The juvenile blueback herring index ranked 25th out of 33.** Due to the high river flows from Hurricane Irene in 2011, sampling could not be conducted for 2 weeks during the sampling season. Catches of juvenile alosines dropped off significantly after the large spike in river flows.





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#### ➤ **Fisheries Monitoring & Research – Long Island Sound Trawl Survey:**

◆ R/V John Dempsey finished the fall Long Island Sound Trawl Survey during September and October. The vessel was underway for 20 days to complete the 80 fall tows. A total of 172 tows (41 sampling days) were completed in 2011.

◆ The 2011 LIS Trawl Survey has collected **1,931 ageing samples; 894 winter flounder (April-May), 734 scup (368 spring and 366 fall samples), 103 tautog (92 spring and 11 fall), 31 summer flounder (26 spring and 5 fall) and 169 weakfish (14 spring and 155 fall)**. These samples, once aged, will allow us to get an idea of the age structure of fish populations in LIS. Currently all winter flounder and scup samples have been aged and datasets are complete. Ageing of summer flounder and weakfish is underway.

◆ Trawl Survey staff have completed data entry for both the spring and fall cruises and all QA/QC has been performed for the Spring samples. Fall error checking is currently underway. Some spring highlights include good catches of spiny dogfish with 2011 having the second highest abundance in twenty-eight years of sampling. **Black sea bass were abundant with a rank of fourth highest in the spring time series.** Several species that typically have better fall indices were also abundant this spring including: summer flounder with 3.9 fish/tow (highest in 28 yrs), scup with 22.3 fish/tow (4<sup>th</sup> highest), clearnose skate (3<sup>rd</sup> highest), and smooth dogfish (#1 spring rank). **This past spring two species were at their respective lows: red hake abundance recorded only 0.6 fish/tow and American lobster abundance declined another 39% to 0.8 lobsters per tow.** Spring lobster abundance has declined precipitously since 1998 when 18.5 lobster per tow were recorded. Abundance of winter flounder (16.7/tow, rank 26<sup>th</sup>), tautog (0.4/tow, rank 26<sup>th</sup>), fourbeard rockling (0.2/tow, rank 25<sup>th</sup>), and little skate (1.2/tow, rank 26<sup>th</sup>) were also low this spring.



◆ Preliminary fall results show record low abundance for three species: American Lobster (0.4 lobsters/tow), bluefish (11.1 fish/tow), and butterfish (39.62 fish/tow). Record high abundance was recorded for spotted hake (2.6 fish/tow) and northern kingfish (0.2



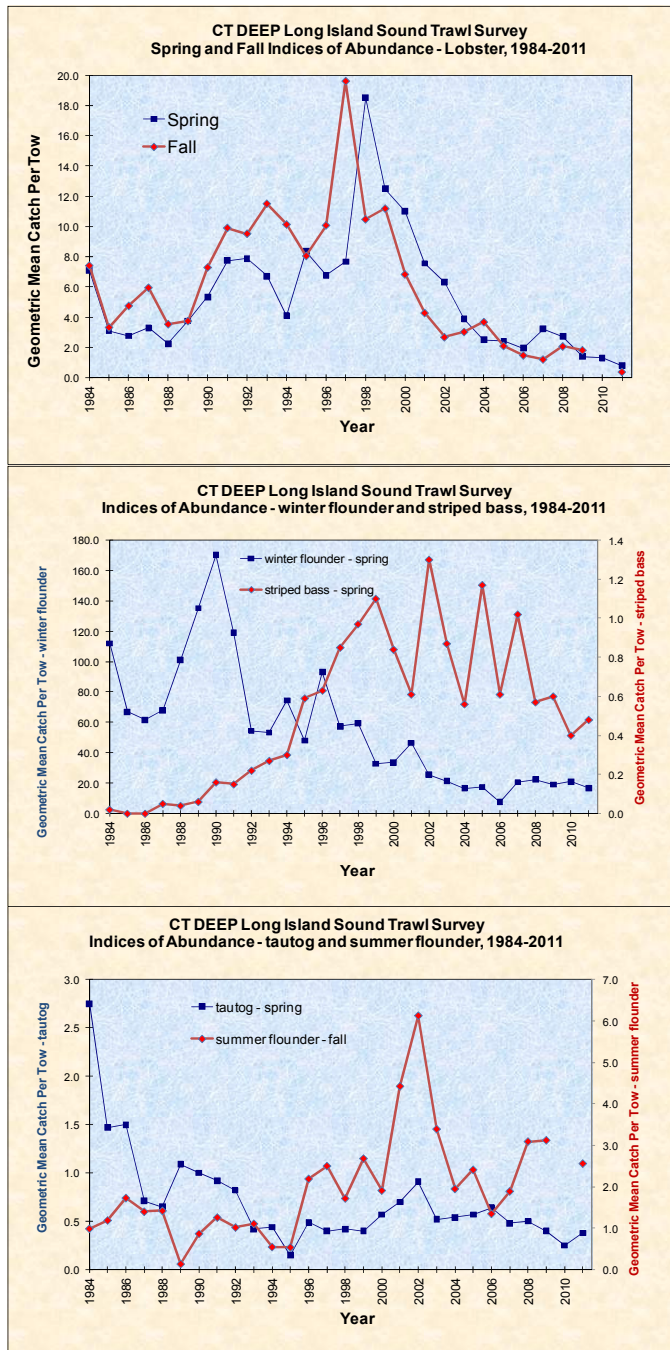


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fish/tow). Hogchoker and rough scad also had higher than normal abundance, ranking 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the time series respectively.



Indices of abundance for American lobster, winter flounder, striped bass, tautog and summer flounder from the spring and fall trawl surveys (2011).



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#### ➤ **Marine Recreational Fisheries - Marine Angler Survey:**

◆ Marine Fisheries Division staff has **completed 151 assignments for NOAA Fisheries**, Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). The table below shows the breakdown of how many interviews were conducted with marine recreational anglers from March through November.

#### **Number of Marine Anglers interviewed, March – November 2011**

Shore	213
Private Boat Owners	541
Charter Boat	146
Headboat/Partyboat	<u>358</u>
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b><i>1,258</i></b>



*Kendall Owens with his 23 pound 9 oz, 33 inch NEW State Record Tautog caught at Two Tree Island on October 28, 2011*



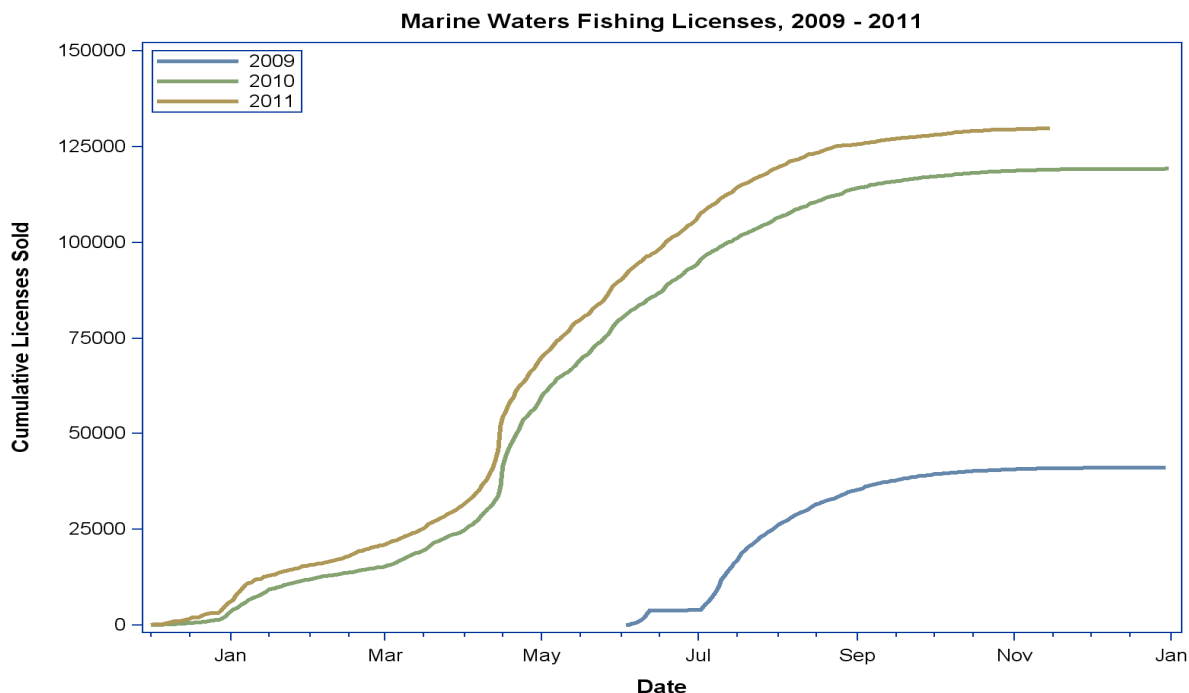
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### ➤ Marine Recreational Fisheries – Marine Fishing Licenses:

The sale of 2011 marine recreational and combination licenses has continued to outpace the sales of 2010 licenses.



Issued Thru November 15, 2011, 6:58:35 AM



*Jared M. with his NEW State Record 10 pound 4 ounce, 29.5 inch Summer Flounder (Youth Category) caught off Harkness State Park on July 24, 2011.*





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#### Marine Waters Fishing Licenses 2009-2011

**Licenses by Type, issued through November 14th of each year.**

	Year		
	2009	2010	2011
1296 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic	28,857	28,595	20,728
1297 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic (Non-Res)	3,100	4,134	3,697
1337 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Age 65 Plus	8,417	18,228	20,357
1345 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic (1-day)	7	341	435
1346 - All Waters Fishing Lic	25	44,447	55,229
1347 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic	2	161	307
1348 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic	46	17,585	22,260
1349 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Archery Deer / Small Game Lic	2	1,037	945
1350 - AW Fish Lic / Firearms SS Lic (FA Hunt; S/R PL Deer; PL Sp Trky)	.	3	.
1351 - AW Fish Lic / Archery SS Lic (Arch Deer / Sm Gm; PL Sp Trky)	.	741	631
1352 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic (3-day) (Non-Res)	64	1,263	1,105
1353 - All Waters Fishing Lic (Non-Res)	.	971	1,156
1354 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic (Non-Res)	1	82	120
1355 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic (Non-Res)	.	16	17
1475 - AW Fish Lic / Firearms SS Lic (FA Hunt; S/R/Mz PL Deer; PL Sp Trky)	.	470	1,823
10195 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Code 9 (Intellect Disabled)	65	267	304
10196 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Code 5 (Blind)	96	91	92
10197 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Type 17 (Handicapped)	147	522	512
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,829</b>	<b>118,954</b>	<b>129,718</b>

#### Notices to Fishermen:

12/2/2011 [\*\*Notice to Commercial Summer Flounder Fishermen\*\*](#)

*Effective 0001 hours, Sunday, December 4, 2011, the possession limit for the commercial harvest of summer flounder is increased to 1,500 pounds twice per week. (N11-20)*

11/22/2011 [\*\*ASMFC Lobster Management Area 6 Lobster Conservation Management Team Meeting\*\*](#)

*A meeting of the Area 6 Lobster Conservation Management Team has been scheduled to assure consistency between New York and Connecticut waters in LMA 6. (N11-19)*  
**Meeting to be held December 6, 2011**

10/28/2011 [\*\*Notice to Commercial Fishermen\*\*](#)



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*Commercial trip limit adjustments have been made to black sea bass, summer flounder and scup effective November 1, 2011. (N11-18)*

10/7/2011 **Commercial Trip Limit Adjustments**

*Effective immediately, the possession limits for the commercial harvest for scup, bluefish, black sea bass have been adjusted.*

9/23/2011 **ASMFC Public Hearing on Draft Addendum V to the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Management Plan**

*The DEEP Marine Fisheries Division is hosting ASMFC Public Hearings on Atlantic Menhaden management. (N11-16)*

***Public Hearings to be held September 28, 2011, October 5, 2011 and October 12, 2011***

9/22/2011 **Notice to Scup Fishermen**

*The recreational scup fishery closure scheduled to occur on September 27 (October 12 for Party/Charter vessels) has been suspended. (N11-15)*

9/15/2011 **ASMFC Public Hearing on Draft Addendum XVII to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan**

*The DEEP Marine Fisheries Division is hosting Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Public Hearings on American lobster management. These hearings have been scheduled to take place in Bridgeport, Old Lyme and New Haven in an effort to provide convenient locations for fishermen to attend. (N11-14)*

***Hearings to be held on September 20, 2011, September 22, 2011 and October 4, 2011.***

9/9/2011 **Notice to Commercial Black Sea Bass Fishermen**

*Effective 0001 hours, Monday, September 12, 2011, the possession limit for the commercial harvest of black sea bass is reduced to zero pounds. (N11-13)*

#### **➤ Public Outreach:**

◆ In 2011, 65 marine anglers submitted Marine Fisheries Trophy Fish Award Affidavits. Twelve species were represented along with 12 new state record marine fish (8 adult and 4 youth). This year, there were 21 trophy-sized Scup, followed by 15 Summer flounder, eight Tautog, four striped bass and three trophy-sized Black Sea Bass, Bluefish and Oyster Toadfish. The 4<sup>th</sup> annual Trophy Fish Award Ceremony will be Saturday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at the Northeast Fishing and Hunting Expo at the Hartford Convention Center.