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SCeMFiS Announces Funding for Four New Research Projects Impacting Fisheries Management

Williamsburg, VA. The Science Center for Marine Fisheries (SCeMFiS) is sponsored by the Industry & University Cooperative Research Program (I/UCRC) of the National Science Foundation. 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 industry, commercial and recreational finfish interests and government agencies such as the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The organizational structure provided by the Center permits members to control the science agenda in exchange for financial support. The SCeMFiS mission utilizes academic and fisheries resources to address urgent scientific problems limiting sustainable fisheries.

SCeMFiS develops methods, tools and analytical approaches to maximize sustainable fisheries and reduce uncertainty in abundance 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, and University of Washington.

The Industry Advisory Board (IAB) of SCeMFiS has allocated $139,000 in funding for three new research projects and a continuing involvement with the marine mammal assessment process during the Fall IAB Meeting held October 13-14, 2016 in Williamsburg, Virginia (see http://scemfis.org/research.html for a list of research projects underway). The new initiatives are:

- Biostatistical and fishery-dependent sampling of Atlantic chub mackerel (*Scomber colias*), Phase II,
- A meta-analysis of the impact of forage fish abundance on predator productivity, and

- Design of a cooperative winter pelagic survey for Atlantic menhaden (*Brevoortia tyrannus*) in the Mid-Atlantic.

Currently, there is a growing need for the diverse services that SCeMFiS can provide to industry which has prompted a steady increase in their fishing industry partners. These services include immediate access to science expertise for stock assessment issues, rapid response to research priorities, and representation on stock assessment teams within the various fisheries management councils.

SCeMFiS members identify target species of interest, provide research leading to improvements in models and assessment designs to quantify stock status and develop reference points, determine economic and societal impacts of changes within the fishing industry, and fill critical knowledge gaps in fisheries science. The Center's research projects are intended to validate and quantify benefits for a sustainable harvest of finfish and shellfish while trying to maintain ecological stability.

"Collaborative research that involves the industry, science and management community is our goal and is crucial to our collective success," says Greg DiDomenico, Executive Director, Garden State Seafood Association. Funding this October emphasizes research on forage fish. “The management of important forage fish species, like Atlantic menhaden and chub mackerel is challenged by concerns that managers are not leaving enough of these fish in the water to provide necessary ‘ecosystem services’. We are supporting research that balances this view with the opportunity to manage forage fish species to the benefit of coastal communities and the Nation, on a sustainable basis. Providing for the future needs of humans in the system also demands rigorous scientific inquiry. One of SCeMFiS’ core missions is to reduce uncertainties in marine fisheries stock assessment in the region, which directly leads to ensuring robust sustainable fisheries.”, says Jeff Kaelin, SCeMFiS chair and government relations coordinator for Lund’s Fisheries, Inc., a family-owned, vertically-integrated seafood company located in Cape May, New Jersey.

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 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.

The IAB will review each of their funded projects at its next meeting that will be held April 26-27, 2017 in Ocean Springs Mississippi at the Gulf Coast Research Lab, University of Southern Mississippi. Learn more about SCeMFiS at http://www.SCeMFiS.org.

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The Science Center for Marine Fisheries (SCeMFiS) Mission:,

...SCeMFiS uses academic, recreational, and commercial fisheries resources to address urgent scientific problems limiting sustainable fisheries,

.. provides academic research products essential for the sustainable management of shellfish and finfish resources, and

.. seeks to simultaneously achieve the goals of sustainable fish and shellfish stocks and sustainable fish and shellfish fisheries.