

Young Professional Spotlight

Young Professional members of AIFRB represent the next generation of leaders in fisheries science and management. Through *Briefs* and our social media platforms we will be highlighting our Young Professionals as a way to introduce them to the full membership and create opportunities for collaborations. AIFRB's Young Professional Representative, Mary Blasius (meblasius@gmail.com), will be showcasing a new Young Professional each month through a series of biographical interviews. This month's Young Professional Spotlight features Connor Capizzano, New England District and PhD Student at the University of Massachusetts Boston.



Connor Capizzano – New England District

What is your educational background, and where are you in your current program?"

I received a B.S. in Marine Biology at the University of Rhode Island in 2011 and a M.S. in Marine Science at the University of New England in 2015. Since the completion of my M.S. degree, I have been enrolled in the Marine Science & Technology PhD program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. I am also employed as a Research Technician in the Fisheries Science and Emerging Technologies (FSET) at the New England Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life.

What type of position are you interested in after graduating?

After receiving my PhD degree from the University of Massachusetts Boston, I'd be most interested in seeking out an assistant professor position at an accredited institution in the southern New England region.

What is the focus of your research and/or work?

My current dissertation research investigates the discard mortality of various gadoids in the Gulf of Maine recreational groundfish fishery in order to better aid stock assessments and management bodies with the future sustainability of such marine fish resources. Recent projects include deriving discard mortality rate estimates of Atlantic cod, haddock, and cusk in the Gulf of Maine recreational fishery and identifying recommended best practices to reduce the incidental mortality of such species. Future works hopes to probe deeper into the socio-ecological dynamics of the recreational fishery, such as examining the perceptions and motivations of anglers in the region targeting groundfish and identifying the most appropriate communication pathways when disseminating recommended best practices to the community.

How does your research apply to fishery management—local, state or federal?

Results from our recent discard mortality work on Atlantic cod and haddock were recently used to inform management bodies by incorporating them into stock assessments for quantifying total fishery removals. Derived discard mortality rates for Atlantic cod and haddock are also being considered for use in a bio-economic model that generates recreational management measures. Because our projects hinged heavily on collaborations with our industry partners and other institutions, including the Massachusetts Division of



Marine Fisheries, Rutgers University, University of New England, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, we have access to numerous outreach channels for ensuring the dissemination of results and recommendations to invested stakeholder groups and the general public.

What got you started studying fisheries?

I grew up in coastal Rhode Island and took part in a variety of outdoor activities, such as surfing and recreational fishing, so I always had a profound respect for the ocean and its inhabitants. Despite beginning my undergraduate career with a pre-medical track, my time as a NOAA Ernest F. Hollings scholar gave me the opportunity to be engulfed in the world of fisheries science.

What do you enjoy most about being a fishery scientist?

I most enjoy the opportunity to work with people of all fields and occupations to address complex problems. Every invested stakeholder, including industry partners, fisheries researchers, and managers, brings a different experience and set of skills to the process, which ultimately benefits the final product.



What drew you to AIFRB, and what does AIFRB do for you?

I was drawn to AIFRB through word-of-mouth from colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's School for Marine Science and Technology. Although I was initially unable to participate in events held by the New England District, AIFRB provided me with numerous opportunities, including professional networking, education, and travel funding.

Because AIFRB took the time to invest in my education and future, I wanted to reciprocate those efforts so AIFRB can continue to support the professional development of its younger members. Therefore, as the recently elected Young Professionals Representative, I am working to increase AIFRB's online presence in order to foster the recruitment of students and young professionals, especially those in the New England region.

Please contact Connor (connor.capizzano001@umb.edu) to continue the conversation!