



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 24, 2018

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Atlantic Herring Board Initiates Draft Addenda to Protect Spawning Herring in Areas 1A and 3

New York, NY – The Commission’s Atlantic Herring Management Board initiated Draft Addenda II and III to Amendment 3 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring to consider strengthening spawning protections in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) and extending spawning protections to Area 3 (off of Cape Cod and Georges Bank). This action responds to the results of the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment which showed reduced levels of recruitment and spawning stock biomass over the past five years, with 2016 recruitment levels the lowest on record.

Currently, the Board uses a series of closures to protect spawning aggregations in the Gulf of Maine. These closures, which were implemented through Amendment 3, extend for four to six weeks; their timing is informed by samples which are used to project the start of spawning. Recent analysis by the Atlantic Herring Technical Committee found that while the current spawning closure system was significantly improved under Amendment 3, the protocol could continue to be strengthened by considering when, and for how long, a closure is initiated. Specifically, the analysis showed, under the current protocol, spawning closures are initiated when there are approximately 25% spawners in the fishery; greater protection could be provided by initiating a closure when a lower percentage of the population is spawning and extending the closure for a longer time. As a result, the Board initiated Draft Addendum II to consider these modifications to the Gulf of Maine spawning closure protocol.

In addition, the Board initiated Draft Addendum III to consider the establishment of a spawning protection program in Area 3. This management area encompasses Georges Bank and the back side of Cape Cod. While both are recognized as important spawning areas for herring, they do not currently have protections specific to spawning. By initiating this addendum, the Board seeks to protect spawning in this region in order to promote stock rebuilding.

Finally, to support future management of the stock, the Commission’s Executive Committee allocated funds to carry out sampling of the Atlantic herring fishery. This sampling will focus on investigating spatial and temporal spawning patterns in Georges Bank and Nantucket Shoals. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.