



# ***Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission***

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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*Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Moratorium on Northern Shrimp Commercial Fishing Maintained Through 2021**

#### ***Northern Shrimp Section Approves Addendum I to the FMP***

Portland, ME – In response to the continued depleted condition of the northern shrimp resource, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Northern Shrimp Section extended the moratorium on commercial fishing through 2021. This three-year moratorium was set in response to the low levels of biomass and recruitment and the fact that, should recruitment improve, it would take several years for those shrimp to be commercially harvestable.

The 2018 Stock Assessment Update indicates the Gulf of Maine northern shrimp population remains depleted, with spawning stock biomass (SSB) at extremely low levels since 2013. SSB in 2018 was estimated at 1.3 million pounds, lower than SSB in 2017 (1.5 million pounds). Recruitment has also been low in recent years, with 2018 recruitment estimated at two billion shrimp. This is below the time series median of 2.6 billion shrimp. Fishing mortality has remained low in recent years due to the moratorium.

High levels of natural mortality and low levels of recruitment continue to hinder recovery of the stock. Predation contributes significantly to the natural mortality of northern shrimp and has been at high levels over the past decade. In addition, long-term trends in environmental conditions have not been favorable for the recruitment of northern shrimp. Ocean temperatures in the western Gulf of Maine have increased over the past decade, with warmer water temperature generally associated with lower recruitment indices and poorer survival during the first year of life. With ocean temperatures predicted to continue to rise, this suggests an increasingly inhospitable environment for northern shrimp in the Gulf of Maine.

Given this change in the environment and the lack of change in stock status despite the fishery being under a moratorium for the past five years, the Section debated current management approaches and if they are appropriate in the face of changing ocean conditions. Ultimately, the Section unanimously agreed to establish a working group to evaluate management strategies for northern shrimp given changes in species abundance, particularly as a result of changing ocean conditions. In February 2018, the Commission approved guidance that species management boards and sections could use to address shifts in species abundance and distribution. The Section will have the opportunity to use this guidance to determine if or what management changes should be made if the stock has no ability to recover.

While industry members advocated for re-opening the commercial fishery in order to evaluate the stock status and provide economic benefits to local fishermen, Technical Committee analysis showed there is little-to-no possibility

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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.

of 2019 SSB being greater than it was in 2017, even in the absence of fishing. Given the low biomass of the stock, the Section did not establish a Research Set Aside; however, annual surveys including the summer shrimp survey and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center trawl survey will continue to collect important data on the stock.

The Section also approved Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp. The Addendum provides states the authority to allocate their state-specific quota between gear types in the event the fishery reopens.

Finally, the Section established a second working group to review the existing Gulf of Maine Summer Northern Shrimp Survey. This working group will evaluate ways to improve the reliability and efficiency of the survey, including shifting to greater commercial industry involvement in the collection of data. Transitioning the shrimp survey to a commercial platform would be one of the options considered by the working group.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

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### **Motions**

**Move to approve Option B in Addendum I. The implementation date is January 1, 2019.**

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion approved by consensus.

**Move to establish a Working Group made up of Section and PDT members to adjust management strategies based on ASMFC policy regarding changes in species abundance and distribution resulting from climate change.**

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. White. Motion passes by consensus.

**Move to implement a harvest moratorium in the northern shrimp fishery through 2021.**

Motion made by Mr. Armstrong and seconded by Mr. White. Motion passes (Roll Call: In favor – NH, MA; Opposed – ME).

**Move to establish a Working Group to review the summer shrimp survey. The Working Group will provide advice on the operational aspects of the management of the summer shrimp survey. This includes:**

- **Assisting with the development of options that would improve the consistency, reliability, and efficiency of the existing survey.**
- **Evaluating the ability to incorporate the commercial industry into the survey, including assessing the consequences of transitioning the shrimp survey to a commercial platform.**
- **Understanding the data needs of other species from this survey and ensuring that these are not lost.**

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion passes by consensus.