



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Approves Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Tautog

Norfolk, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Tautog, which includes new management goals and objectives, biological reference points, fishing mortality targets, and stock rebuilding schedules. The Amendment institutes a fundamental change in tautog management, moving away from coastwide management towards regional management. Specifically, the Amendment delineates the stock into four regions due to differences in biology and fishery characteristics: Massachusetts – Rhode Island (MARI); Long Island Sound (LIS); New Jersey – New York Bight (NJ-NYB); and Delaware – Maryland – Virginia (DelMarVa).

The 2016 stock assessment update indicated that all regions except MARI were overfished, and overfishing was occurring in the LIS and NJ-NYB regions in 2015. As such, LIS and NJ-NYB would be required to take harvest reductions, while MARI and DelMarVa would not have to take harvest reductions, but are proposing regional measures.

Amendment 1 replaces the goal of the FMP to sustainably manage tautog over the long-term using regional differences in biology and fishery characteristics as the basis for management. Additionally, the Amendment seeks to promote the conservation and enhancement of structured habitat to meet the needs of all stages of tautog's life cycle. The plan objectives were modified to achieve this new goal.

Under Amendment 1 the four regions will implement measures to achieve the regional fishing mortality target with at least a 50% probability. No consistent schedule is required to achieve targets, but if the current fishing mortality exceeds the regional threshold, the Board must initiate corrective action within one year. A stock rebuilding schedule can be established via an addendum.

In addition, Amendment 1 establishes a commercial harvest tagging program to address an illegal, unreported and undocumented fishery. The tagging program will be implemented in 2019. Reports of illegally harvested fish have been documented in cases against fishermen, fish houses, and at retail markets and restaurants. The tagging program, which will accommodate both the live and dead

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 anadromous species.

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commercial markets, was recommended by the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee to increase accountability in the fishery and curb illegal harvest. Tags will be applied by the commercially-permitted harvester at harvest or prior to offloading. Tautog must be landed in the state that is identified on the tag.

The states will submit implementation proposals by December 1, 2017 and all measures in the Amendment except for the commercial tagging program will be implemented by April 1, 2018. The commercial tagging program must be implemented by January 1, 2019.

The final Amendment will be posted to the Commission's website on the Tautog webpage the week of October 31st. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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