



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

ASMFC Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Approves Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden *Atlantic Menhaden Board Sets TAC at 216,000 MT for 2018 and 2019*

Linthicum, MD – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Menhaden. The Amendment maintains the management program’s current single-species biological reference points until the review and adoption of menhaden-specific ecological reference points as part of the 2019 benchmark stock assessment process. It also addresses a suite of commercial management measures including allocation, quota transfers, quota rollovers, incidental catch, the episodic events set aside program, and the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery cap.

In addition to its Amendment 3 deliberations, the Board set the total allowable catch for the 2018 and 2019 fishing seasons at 216,000 metric tons with the expectation that the setting of the TAC for subsequent years will be guided by menhaden-specific ecological reference points.

“Through adoption of Amendment 3 and the setting of the 2018 and 2019 TAC at a risk-averse level, the Board has demonstrated its continued commitment to manage the menhaden resource in a way that balances menhaden’s ecological role with the needs of its stakeholders,” stated Board Chair Robert Ballou of Rhode Island. “While the Amendment maintains the current reference points, the Board placed the development of menhaden-specific ecological reference points as its highest priority. While the Board’s action was not supported by the majority of public comment received, it is still a conservative management action relative to our understanding of stock status and many of the positive signals we see in the current stock conditions. Specifically, the 2017 Stock Assessment Update indicated the resource remains healthy, with increases in abundance particularly in the norther states. Risks to the resource under our current reference points are well understood, while changes to the TAC under the general forage fish guidelines are not as well understood. Further, the approved TAC, which represents a modest 8% increase in the coastwide quota, has zero percent chance of subjecting the resource to overfishing or causing it to be overfished.”

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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Amendment 3 also changes fishery allocations in order to strike an improved balance between gear types and jurisdictions. The Amendment allocates a baseline quota of 0.5% to each jurisdiction, and then allocates the rest of the TAC based on historic landings between 2009 and 2011 (see table below). This measure provides fishing opportunities to states which currently have little quota while still recognizing historic landings in the fishery. The Board also agreed to maintain the quota transfer process, prohibit the rollover of unused quota, maintain the 6,000 lb trip limit for non-directed and small-scale gears following the closure of a directed fishery, and set aside 1% of the TAC for episodic events in the states of New York through Maine.

“The Board worked collaboratively and effectively to forge an outcome that is fair and responsive to the needs and interests of all East Coast states,” said Chair Ballou.

Table 1. Amendment 3 allocation percentages based on a 0.5% fixed minimum during the 2009-2011 timeframe.

State	Allocations (%)
Maine	0.52%
New Hampshire	0.50%
Massachusetts	1.27%
Rhode Island	0.52%
Connecticut	0.52%
New York	0.69%
New Jersey	10.87%
Pennsylvania	0.50%
Delaware	0.51%
Maryland	1.89%
Potomac River Fisheries Commission	1.07%
Virginia	78.66%
North Carolina	0.96%
South Carolina	0.50%
Georgia	0.50%
Florida	0.52%
Total	100%

Finally, the Amendment reduces the Chesapeake Bay cap, which was first implemented in 2006 to limit the amount of reduction harvest within the Bay, to 51,000 mt from 87,216 mt. This recognizes the importance of the Chesapeake Bay as nursery grounds for many species by capping recent reduction landings from the Bay to current levels.

States must submit implementation plans to the Commission by January 1, 2018 for final implementation by April 15, 2018. The Amendment will be available on the Commission’s website, www.asmfc.org, by the end of November. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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