



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 4, 2023

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ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section Maintains Fishery Moratorium for the 2024 Fishing Year and Initiates Amendment to Extend Moratorium and Implement Stock Monitoring Tool

Portland, ME – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Northern Shrimp Section (Section) initiated an amendment to consider implementing a new stock monitoring tool, termed the wake-up index, for Gulf of Maine northern shrimp which would inform when an ongoing moratorium should be re-evaluated if there are signs of improved stock condition. While the amendment is under development, the Section maintained the current moratorium through the 2024 fishing year. The Section also passed a motion tasking the Northern Shrimp Technical Committee to evaluate the potential for an industry-based research program given the Northeast Fisheries Science Center’s (NEFSC) suspension of the Summer Northern Shrimp Survey.

This action is in response to the northern shrimp stock remaining at low levels of biomass over the past decade despite the fishing moratorium, first implemented in 2014. The 2023 data update revealed new time series lows for indices of abundance, biomass, and recruitment. Additionally, environmental conditions for the species remain unfavorable with high water temperatures and increased predation in recent years compared to historical levels.

The current management plan for northern shrimp requires specifications to be set and reviewed on an annual basis. However, given the continued poor condition of the stock, the Section supported initiation of a new plan amendment to consider extending the current moratorium until signs of recovery are indicated as opposed to taking action each year to continue the moratorium. To monitor signs of stock recovery, the draft amendment will propose the use of Northern Shrimp Technical Committee-proposed wake-up index, a tool comprised of biological indicators to serve as a trigger to indicate when the northern shrimp stock approaches a healthy population level that may be able to

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.

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support a viable fishery. If the wake-up index were to be triggered, it would prompt a more thorough evaluation of stock health to inform the Section's consideration of reopening the northern shrimp fishery.

Although the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) suspended the long-running Summer Northern Shrimp Survey after the 2023 sampling season, two other surveys in the Gulf of Maine will continue to provide information on northern shrimp stock status and inform the wake-up index: the Maine-New Hampshire Inshore Trawl Survey and the NEFSC Fall Bottom Trawl Survey. The Commission's Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel proposed an industry-based sampling program due to the suspension of the NEFSC Summer Survey. The Section supported exploring an industry-based research program, acknowledging that some Section members expressed concerns about the impact of allowing any level of removals when the stock was in such poor conditions. The Section tasked the Technical Committee with investigating methods, research goals, cost, and catch caps for an industry-based research program to ensure that such a program could provide useful scientific and management information with minimal risk to the stock. The Technical Committee will consult with the Advisory Panel for industry input and report back to the Section at its next meeting.

Finally, the Section elected Doug Grout of New Hampshire as Section Chair. The 2023 Data Update is available at https://asmfc.org/uploads/file/656e083bNShrimp_2023DataUpdate.pdf. For more information, please contact Chelsea Tuohy, Fishery Management Coordinator, at ctuohy@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to elect Mr. Doug Grout from New Hampshire as Chair of the Northern Shrimp Section.

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to task the Northern Shrimp Technical Committee (TC) to investigate an industry-based research program. The TC should weigh:

- **Information that would provide utility to management and science (indicators of stock abundance? Summer sampling given residency of shrimp in offshore waters? Other TC suggestions).**
- **Appropriate methodology to support that research goal, including breadth of sampling in time and place, and across years.**
- **Approximate estimate of cost, if possible.**

The Section indicates that an industry-based research program would operate under a catch cap. As conversations progress, the TC should collaborate with the AP to get feedback on research priorities and metrics.

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to initiate an amendment to implement an ongoing moratorium until the wake-up index is triggered.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Dr. Armstrong. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to continue the moratorium for the commercial and recreational/personal use fisheries for the 2024 fishing year.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Ms. Ferrara. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

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