



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Shad and River Herring Management Board

FROM: Shad and River Herring Advisory Panel

DATE: February 19, 2025

SUBJECT: Continued Advisory Panel Review of 2024 River Herring Benchmark Assessment

The Shad and River Herring Advisory Panel (AP) met via conference call and webinar on Monday, December 2nd, 2024, to continue discussing the results of the 2024 River Herring Benchmark Assessment and receive an update on the progress of the New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) Atlantic Herring Amendment 10. The AP will meet in 2025 to review the management alternatives in Draft Amendment 10 when they are available.

AP Members in attendance: Pam Lyons Gromen (Chair), Edward Hale (DE), Bill Lucey (CT), Deb Wilson (ME), Mike Thalhauser (ME), Paul Perra (MA), Steve Gephard (CT)

ASMFC Staff: James Boyle, Katie Drew

Other: Matthew Jargowsky, Kevin Job, Emily Bodell, Jamie Cournane, Jaclyn Higgins, Allison Colden, Alan Bianchi, Bailey Bowden

2024 River Herring Benchmark Assessment

- The AP discussed the contrast in the assessment results between Northern New England and Southern New England, particularly considering that the report notes both regions have significant restoration programs. One member believes it is an oversight for the report not to have mentioned the possible effects of Atlantic herring spawning closures in Area 1A on reducing bycatch of river herring from rivers in the Gulf of Maine. Furthermore, the AP strongly felt that there should be a greater emphasis on identifying the key features of management programs in systems that have shown increasing trends when compared to systems that have not. **The AP recommends the Board task the Technical Committee (TC) to document the numbers of commercial fisheries by state over time and use those trends to identify and evaluate attributes of effective management programs, including assessing the impact of the Atlantic Herring Area 1A seasonal closures on the relative success of Maine river herring runs.**
- Of the high-priority research recommendations in the stock assessment, **the AP recommends prioritizing genetic sampling of river herring at-sea bycatch, particularly with portside sampling programs, as well as the development of a uniform ageing protocol between states to reduce uncertainty in the assessment results.** There was general agreement that there needs to be greater monitoring of offshore fisheries and that more of the burden of sustainability should be placed on offshore fisheries that

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have a high incidence of river herring bycatch rather than in-river fisheries. Portside sampling was seen as the most efficient method to acquire the data necessary to evaluate the possibility of disproportionate effects of bycatch on different systems.

- One member of the AP expressed concern that the assessment process does not involve the AP before the assessment is approved for management use.
- One member of the AP that was unable to attend the meeting submitted written comment expressing the need for rapid action in response to the lack of improvement in many systems despite their harvest closures and restoration efforts.

NEFMC Atlantic Herring Amendment 10

James Boyle provided an update on the timeline of Amendment 10 and the [guidance provided](#) to the PDT by the Council. The AP will plan to meet again to review the management alternatives and provide recommendations on their preferred options.

- **The AP recommends the Commission support the development of management alternatives to consider time/area closures, incidental catch caps, and improvements to incidental catch monitoring accuracy and precision in Atlantic Herring Amendment 10.**

General

- **The AP recommends the Board identify mechanisms for improving public access and transparency of data between stock assessments.** The group specifically referenced the Manomet River Herring Portal as an example to follow to provide coastwide run count and fishery-independent sampling information across years and in a more comprehensive and timely manner than the annual FMP Review. Additionally, the AP would recommend the TC develop a consistent reporting method that would enable a theoretical data portal to be easily filtered by different run count and sampling methodologies.
- **The AP recommends the Board investigate the use of external collaborators for data collection.**