



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section Extends Moratorium on Commercial and Recreational Fishing Through 2024

Arlington, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Northern Shrimp Section (Section) has extended the moratorium on commercial and recreational fishing for northern shrimp through 2024. This action responds to the results of the 2021 Stock Assessment Update, which indicates the Gulf of Maine northern shrimp population remains depleted. The 2021 summer survey indices of abundance, biomass, and recruitment were at time-series lows since this data began to be collected in 1984. Predation and other environmental factors, such as warming water temperatures continue to impact the ability of the resource to rebuild.

At the meeting, several industry members voiced support for re-opening a limited commercial fishery or possibly a personal use fishery in order to aid in the collection of data to evaluate the stock status, as well as provide socioeconomic benefits to local communities. The Section did not support opening a commercial fishery due to the negative impact this would likely have on the stock. However, the Section did consider opening a small recreational fishery consisting of a two-week season, three-trap limit per person, and a 25 pound possession limit. Ultimately, the Section did not pursue this management option due to concerns about stock status, equitable access to the resource, the difficulty of preventing the illegal sale of shrimp, controlling effort, and monitoring harvest levels.

Given the continued poor condition of the resource, the extremely low likelihood of being able to fish sustainably, and the value of maximizing spawning potential to rebuild the stock if environmental conditions improve, the Section determined that a continuation of the moratorium was the best course of action. This decision aligns with the primary management objective within the Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP) that requires the Section to protect and maintain the stock at sustainable levels that support a viable fishery. An additional FMP objective requires the Section to minimize the adverse impacts the shrimp fishery may have on other natural resources, including other commercially important fish that prey on northern shrimp.

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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The Section received a work group progress update on evaluating management strategies for northern shrimp given changes in species abundance. The Section agreed that this work should be continued with particular focus on further developing a management option for recreational fishing that allows for the personal consumption of harvested shrimp. The work group was also directed to explore how the northern shrimp fishery would be managed if the Commission relinquished control of the fishery management plan. Since future funding for the summer shrimp survey remains uncertain, the Section also tasked the work group with discussing options for maintaining stock assessment updates without the data that this survey provides. The work group will continue to discuss these topics in consultation with representatives from the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board, the Northern Shrimp Technical Committee, and the Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel.

Finally, the Section elected Senator David Miramant of Maine as Section Vice-Chair. Section members thanked Raymond Kane of Massachusetts for his two years of service as Chair; Ritchie White of New Hampshire is the new incoming Chair.

The 2021 Stock Assessment Update is available at http://www.asmf.org/uploads/file/61bd06a5NShrimpAssessmentUpdateReport_2021.pdf. For more information, please contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Coordinator, at dleaning@asmfc.org.

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