Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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Moratorium on Northern Shrimp Commercial Fishing Maintained for 2016 Season

Portsmouth, NH – In response to the depleted condition of the northern shrimp resource, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section extended the moratorium on commercial fishing for the 2016 fishing season. The 2015 Stock Status Report for Gulf of Maine (GOM) Northern Shrimp indicates abundance and biomass indices for 2012-2015 were the lowest on record for the 32-year time series. The stock has experience failed recruitment for five consecutive years, including the three smallest year classes on record. As a result, the indices of fishable biomass from 2012-2015 are the lowest on record.

Recruitment of northern shrimp is related to both spawning biomass and ocean temperatures, with higher spawning biomass and colder temperatures producing stronger recruitment. Ocean temperatures in western GOM shrimp habitat have increased over the past decade and reached unprecedented highs in 2011 and 2012. While 2014 and 2015 temperatures were cooler, temperatures are predicted to continue to rise as a result of climate change. This suggests an increasingly inhospitable environment for northern shrimp. The Northern Shrimp Technical Committee considers the stock to have collapsed with little prospect of recovery in the immediate future. The 2015 Stock Status Report is available at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5666017a2015NorthernShrimpAssessment.pdf.

To maintain the time series of data collected from northern shrimp commercial fishery catches, a cooperative winter sampling program was approved with a 22 metric ton research set aside quota. The goal of the program is to continue the winter time series of biological data (e.g. size composition, egg hatch timing) collected from GOM northern shrimp fishery catches in the absence of a fishery. Four trawl vessels will be contracted to fish four regions with a maximum trip limit of 1,800 pounds, and two trappers with a weekly trap limit of 40 traps and a 600 pound per week limit. Participating trawlers and trappers will be able to sell their catch. Trawlers will also be compensated $500/trip.

"Considering survey indices are the lowest on record, with an unprecedented five consecutive years of weak recruitment and continuing unfavorable environmental conditions, the Section maintained the moratorium in 2016," stated Northern Shrimp Section Chair Mike Armstrong of Massachusetts. "The Section is committed to protecting the remaining spawning biomass and allowing as much reproduction to take place as possible."

For more information, please contact, Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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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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