



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section Approves Public Hearing Document on Draft Amendment 3 for Public Comment

St. Augustine, FL – The Commission’s Atlantic Herring Section approved the Public Hearing Document for Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Herring for public comment. Draft Amendment 3 was initiated to strengthen spawning protections in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) and address concerns raised by the commercial fishing industry. The Public Hearing Document proposes (1) alternatives to the spawning monitoring program (protocol, default start dates, area boundaries, and length of the closure period); (2) removing the fixed gear set-aside rollover provision, and (3) requiring a vessel’s fish hold to be emptied before leaving on a fishing trip.



Today’s rebuilt herring population is comprised of a broader range of age classes with older and larger fish compared to the population during overfished conditions. Analysis of more than a decade’s worth of data suggests larger herring spawn first and the timing of the start of spawning varies from year-to-year. Proposed alternatives to the current spawning monitoring program address inter-annual differences and provide additional measures to more adequately protect spawning fish in the areas where they spawn.

At the request of the fishing industry, the Public Hearing Document includes an option to adjust the fixed gear set-aside rollover provision. Currently, the set-aside of 295 mt is available to fixed gear fishermen through November 1, after which the remaining set-aside becomes available to the rest of the Area 1A fishery. The November 1 date was set because, typically, herring have migrated out of the Gulf of Maine by that time. Anecdotal evidence suggests herring are in the Gulf of Maine after November 1, therefore, fixed gear fishermen requested the set-aside be made available to them for the remainder of the calendar year.

Members of industry also suggested a requirement for fish holds to be empty of fish prior to trip departures. This provision would allow for full accountability and encourage less wasteful fishing practices by creating an incentive to catch herring to meet market demands. The New England Fishery Management

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.

Council included a complementary provision in its Framework Adjustment 4 to the Federal Atlantic Herring FMP.

The states will be conducting public hearings on the Public Hearing Document this winter. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Public Hearing Document either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. A subsequent press release will announce the availability of the Public Hearing Document, details of the scheduled hearings, as well as the deadline for the submission of public comment. For more information, please contact, Ashton Harp, FMP Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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