



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration
well in progress by the year 2015*

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ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section Establishes Moratorium for 2014 Fishing Season

Portland, ME – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Northern Shrimp Section approved a moratorium for the 2014 northern shrimp fishing season. The results of the 2013 Assessment Report for Gulf of Maine Northern Shrimp indicate the northern shrimp stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring. Northern shrimp abundance in the western Gulf of Maine has declined steadily since 2006. Current biomass (500 mt) is the lowest value in recent history, estimated at 5.2% for the biomass reference period (1985-1994), and well below the biomass threshold of 9,000 mt and the biomass limit of 6,000 mt. Additionally, there has been recruitment failure for the past three years. The Northern Shrimp Technical Committee considers the stock to have collapsed with little prospect of recovery in the near future.

“Given the overwhelming evidence of recruitment failure and stock collapse, and continuing unfavorable environmental conditions, the Section felt it was necessary to close the 2014 fishery to protect the remaining spawning biomass and allow as much hatch to take place as possible,” stated Northern Shrimp Section Chair Terry Stockwell of Maine. “When environmental conditions are poor, the ability of the stock to withstand fishing pressure is reduced. With the stock at all time lows and only failed year classes to come, there is even greater loss of resilience for this stock.”

The 2013 season, which was classified as a “do no harm” fishery, still resulted in a fishing mortality rate (0.53) above the target (0.38). This was despite the fact that only 49% of the total allowable catch was harvested (307 mt of 625 mt). Since the fishery targets 4- and 5- year old females, the 2013 fishery targeted the 2008 and 2009 year classes. Projecting this forward, the 2014 fishery would fish on the 2009 and 2010 year classes, with the 2010 year class representing the first year of failed recruitment in the fishery. The Section noted that due to this recruitment failure, it is possible that the moratorium could extend beyond one year.

In the Gulf of Maine, increasing water temperatures and a decline in phytoplankton abundance (a food source for shrimp) are factors which likely have and will continue to contribute to the poor recruitment in the stock. The increased abundance of northern shrimp predators (spiny dogfish, redfish and silver hake) may play a role in declining biomass. Northern shrimp stocks in other areas of the world (Greenland,

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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Flemish Cap, Grand Banks) have also seen decreasing trends in abundance and recruitment, providing additional evidence that environmental conditions are impacting northern shrimp across their range.

The 2013 Assessment Report for Gulf of Maine Northern Shrimp is available at <http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/528fa8f12013NorthernShrimpAssessment.pdf>. The benchmark stock assessment is scheduled to be peer reviewed January 27-31, 2014. This assessment uses a new model which incorporates additional data sets that are not included in the stock assessment update. Once the benchmark assessment has been reviewed by a panel of independent experts through the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Review Committee, the Section will consider the report for management use.

The northern shrimp fishery is jointly regulated by Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts through the Commission's Northern Shrimp Section. The cooperative management program has been in place since 1972 and is currently managed under Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp. For more information, please contact Marin Hawk, FMP Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or <mhawk@asmfc.org>.

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