Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Atlantic Herring Management Board

November 9, 2026
9:30 – 10:15 a.m.

Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary.

1.	Welcome/Call to Order *(E. Reid)*	9:30 a.m.
2.	Board Consent • Approval of Agenda • Approval of Proceedings from August 2026	9:30 a.m.
3.	Public Comment	9:35 a.m.
4.	Set Specifications for the 2027-2029 Fishing Years *(E. Franke)* **Final Action**	9:45 a.m.
5.	Set Quota Period for the 2027 Area 1A Fishery *(E. Franke)* **Final Action**	9:55 a.m.
6.	Consider Approval of Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance for the 2025 Fishing Year *(E. Franke)* **Action**	10:05 a.m.
7.	Update from New England Fishery Management Council *(J. Cournane)*	10:10 a.m.
8.	Other Business/Adjourn	10:15 a.m.

This meeting will be held at The Hotel Viking (One Bellevue Avenue, Newport, RI; 844.806.4895) and via webinar; click here for details.

MEETING OVERVIEW

Atlantic Herring Management Board
November 9, 2026
9:30 – 10:15 a.m.

Chair: Eric Reid Assumed Chairmanship: 11/26	Technical Committee Chair: Vacant	Law Enforcement Committee Representative: Delayne Brown (NH)
Vice Chair: Vacant	Advisory Panel Chair: Vacant	Previous Board Meeting: August 4, 2026
Voting Members: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, NMFS, NEFMC (9 votes)		

2. Board Consent

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Proceedings from August 2026

3. Public Comment – At the beginning of the meeting public comment will be taken on items not on the agenda. Individuals that wish to speak at this time must sign-in at the beginning of the meeting. For agenda items that have already gone out for public hearing and/or have had a public comment period that has closed, the Board Chair may determine that additional public comment will not provide additional information. In this circumstance the Chair will not allow additional public comment on an issue. For agenda items that the public has not had a chance to provide input, the Board Chair may allow limited opportunity for comment. The Board Chair has the discretion to limit the number of speakers and/or the length of each comment.

4. Set Specifications for the 2027-2029 Fishing Years (9:45-9:55 a.m.) Final Action

Background

- In September 2026, the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) recommended a 2027-2031 specifications package for Atlantic herring to be submitted to NOAA Fisheries **(Briefing Materials)**.
- Per the Interstate FMP, the Board can set specifications for up to three years.

Presentations

- Overview of NEFMC-recommended specifications by E. Franke

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- Set specifications for the 2027-2029 fishing years for Atlantic herring, pending release of a rule by NOAA Fisheries

5. Set Quota Period for the 2027 Area 1A Fishery (9:55-10:05 a.m.) Final Action

Background

- Per Amendment 3 (Section 4.2.3), quota periods shall be determined annually for Area 1A using bi-monthly, trimester, or seasonal quota periods.
- For the current 2026 fishing year for Area 1A, the Board adopted a seasonal quota approach with 72.8% available June-September, and 27.2% available October-December.

Presentations

- Overview of Amendment 3 quota period system by E. Franke

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- Set quota periods for the 2027 Area 1A fishery

6. Fishery Management Plan Review (10:05-10:10 a.m.) Action

Background

- State Compliance Reports were due on February 1, 2026.
- The Plan Review Team (PRT) reviewed each state report and compiled the annual FMP Review **(Briefing Materials)**.

Presentations

- Overview of FMP Review Report by E. Franke

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- Accept 2026 FMP Review and State Compliance Reports for the 2025 Fishing Year

7. New England Fishery Management Council Update (10:10-10:15 a.m.)

Background

- In December 2026, the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) will discuss its 2027 work priorities.

Presentations

- Update on NEFMC Atlantic herring activity by J. Cournane

8. Other Business/Adjourn

DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

ATLANTIC HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Westin Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia
Hybrid Meeting

August 4, 2026

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the Atlantic Herring Management Board.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Call to Order 1

Approval of Agenda 1

Approval of Proceedings from October 27, 2025 1

Public Comment 1

Consider 2025 Research Track and 2026 Management Track Stock Assessment 1
- Presentation of Stock Assessment Reports 1
- Presentation of Peer Review Panel Reports 2
- Consider Acceptance of NEFS Research Track Stock Assmt. and Peer Review Report for Management Use 10

Update from New England Fishery Management Council on Atlantic Herring Activity 11

Adjournment 13

INDEX OF MOTIONS

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).

2. **Approval of Proceedings of October 27, 2025** by consent (Page 1).

3. **Move to accept the 2025 Research Track Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use** (Page 10). Motion by Ray Kane; second by Dennis Abbott. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 10).

4. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 13).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Megan Ware, ME, proxy for C. Wilson (AA)
Rep. Allison Hepler, ME (LA)
Renee Zobel, NH (AA)
Doug Grout, NH (GA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)
Melanie Griffin, MA, proxy for D. McKiernan (AA)
Raymond Kane, ME (GA)
Rep. Sarah Peake, MA (LA)
Nicole Lengyel Costa, RI, proxy for J. McNamee (AA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)
Matt Gates, CT, proxy for S. Madsen (AA)
Robert LaFrance, CT, proxy for B. Hyatt (GA)
Rep. Joesph Gresko, CT (LA)
John Maniscalco, NY, proxy for M. Gary (AA)
Scott Curatolo-Wagemann, (NY), proxy for E. Hasbrouck (GA)
Sen. Monica Martinez, NY (LA)
Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)
Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
Allison Murphy, NMFS

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Ex-Officio Members

Staff

Bob Beal
Toni Kerns
Tina Berger
Madeline Musante
Alexander Law
Caitlin Starks
Emilie Franke
Tracey Bauer
James Boyle
Chelsea Tuohy
Katie Drew
Jeff Kipp
Samara Nehemiah
Jainita Patel

The Atlantic Herring Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Jefferson Ballroom of the Westin Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Tuesday, August 4, 2026, and was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Douglas E. Grout.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR DOUGLAS E. GROUT: Good morning, everybody. If everybody could take their seats and we'll get this Atlantic Herring Board meeting going. My name is Doug Grout; I am the Chair. We have a couple of agenda items here, one to consider the Research Track and Management Track Stock Assessments, and then we'll have an update on Fishery's Management Council on herring activities.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR GROUT: To begin with, I would like to see if there is an approval of the agenda here. Are there any objections to the agenda, any additions to the agenda, I should ask first. Seeing none; is there any objection to approving the agenda? It's approved by unanimous consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR GROUT: We also in our meeting materials we have proceedings from the October 2025 meeting. Are there any changes or edits that people would like to make? Seeing none; is there any objection to approving the minutes? Approved by unanimous consent. We now have public comment. Is there anybody out in the audience that would like to public comment? Yes, come on up.

PUBLIC COMMENT

MR. JASON JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Commissioners. My name is Jason Joyce; I am a Maine lobsterman and Director of Advocacy at the New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association. NEFSA does not object to accepting the 2025 Research Track as an ecological foundation for the '26 Management Track.

We appreciate the additional data and revisions made since the Research Track. However, several important uncertainties remain. The assessment still lacks an independent Age 1 recruitment index. State survey information has not been incorporated and questions remain regarding the independent biological evidence supporting the model's estimate of current stock abundance.

The assessment also acknowledges unresolved numbers at age patterns, and continued uncertainty in the projections. We respectfully ask the Board to clarify that acceptance for management use does not mean these issues have been resolved, but that the Research Track should independently determine stock status or catch levels. These uncertainties should remain clearly documented and be fully considered when future management measures and catch limits are established. Thank you.

CHAIR GROUT: Thank you, Mr. Joyce. Is there any other public comment here? Any online? Okay, Toni has an announcement.

MS. TONI KERNS: My favorite part of the meeting, to mess up who is online. This morning, we have Sarah Peake, Melanie Griffen, Scott Curatolo Wagemann and Alli Murphy online.

CHAIR GROUT: Thank you.

CONSIDER 2025 RESEARCH TRACK AND 2026 MANAGEMENT TRACK STOCK ASSESSMENT

CHAIR GROUT: Item 4 on the agenda is to Consider the 2025 Research Track and 2026 Management Track Assessments, and we have John Deroba, who will be giving a presentation on that, I assume remotely. John, are you ready?

DR. JOHN DEROBA: I'm ready. We can just dive right in.

PRESENTATION OF STOCK ASSESSMENT REPORTS

DR. JOHN DEROBA: I'm going to start with a summary of the Research Track. This will be brief, because it's almost two years old now, and it's I

think a bit more impactful to talk about the Management Track. There is the Research Track Working Group and all the folks that contributed.

I just wanted to acknowledge them, because it was really a great working group with a lot of great people pitching in some good stuff. Thanks to everybody that was involved in the Research Track.

PRESENTATION OF PEER REVIEW PANEL REPORTS

DR. DEROBA: The Peer Review was completed in March of '25. There is the Review Panel with Conor McManus as the Chair, Henrik Sparholt, Gary Melvin and Florian Berg.

They concluded that all the Terms of Reference were met and the methods were accepted. I'll quickly go over Terms of Reference 1 through 3, and then jump into a little more detail on the modeling. Term of Reference 1 is considered ecosystem and climate. This was a really massive undertaking.

The place where it contributed the most was it identified likely covariates for us to evaluate, particularly covariates affecting recruitment we tested in the assessment later. The covariates identified were temperature, planktonic food sources, and haddock acting as predators on herring eggs that might be limiting recruitment.

Term of Reference 2 was, get the catch data together. We didn't make a whole lot of changes here, because you can make changes to data in management tracks in the future, so we didn't really focus much on making data changes. We did switch to the Catch Accounting Monitoring System, CAMS, that is close for what it stands for, and that begins in 2020.

Term of Reference 3 was, get the survey data together. Like catch we didn't make a whole lot of changes here. The survey inputs were similar to previous assessments, used the NMFS Spring, Fall and Summer Bottom Trawl Surveys, and an acoustic index that is collected during the Fall Bottom Trawl Survey.

We did examine the Maine/New Hampshire and Massachusetts Bottom Trawl Survey. The trends were generally consistent with assessment outcomes, but due to their small spatial footprint they weren't included in the assessment model. But we are working on trying to combine the state surveys with the federal surveys. As the gentleman mentioned, lacking Age 1 observations is a weakness, and the state surveys do catch some Age 1 fish. We are hoping to resolve that issue by combining the Federal and State surveys moving forward in the future. We did try to use an index of recruitment based on sea bird diet.

There is a publication out about that now that describes in great detail why it's not ready for prime time and some of the challenges associated with that. We gave that a shot but it needs some more follow up. Term of Reference 4, which I like to call, do a stock assessment. Our major priority here was move from the ASAP platform to the Woods Hole Assessment Model WHAM platform.

We used a broad range of model selection criteria, evaluated nearly everything under the sun, statistical properties, start year, time varying selectivity, natural mortality, all sorts of random effects. As I mentioned, recruitment covariates, and I'm sure some other things that I'm not remembering any longer.

Wd did well over 300 model variants. On the recruitment covariate topic, we didn't find any single recruitment covariate was a main driver, although all the ones we evaluated probably to some extent, are having some minor effect, but none of them made it into the final model as a main driver.

Ultimately, we ended up with a preferred model that had two fishing fleets. If you followed the herring assessment it has a mobile fleet, which is trawls and purse seines and a fixed gear fleet, which is largely Canadian weir catches. The model began in 1987; it used to begin in 1965. Beginning in 1987 was a necessity, because that is when age data begins in the surveys.

To evaluate all the bells and whistles available in WHAM, age data is kind of imperative, so we had to start in '87. M ended up being constant at 0.35, which was the status quo approach. We tried all sorts of things with natural mortality, and either the models didn't behave, they had diagnostic problems, or there was just not enough support in the data to estimate anything different.

Selectivity does not change through time. Recruitment is an independent and identically distributed random effect, that means there is no correlation to years, just each year recruitment can go wherever it would like, with no relationship to previous years or future years. The numbers at age random effects were correlated among ages.

I'll get into more detail about this when I get to the Management Track, but it's an interesting pattern, like I said, I'll talk more about that. What you're seeing here in the top graph is the recruitment time series and the spawning stock biomass time series in the bottom panel. The purple line is the 2024 Management Track using the ASAP Platform.

The yellow line is the preferred model coming out of the 2025 Research Track using the WHAM Platform. You can see in the Recruitment Time Series there are broad similarity. There are some peaks and valleys that don't quite jive, but broad similarity and spawning stock biomass is very similar as well. Reference Points, we could not estimate a stock recruitment curve, so we continued the use of proxies F40% and B40%. F40% only for the mobile fleet, which is the U.S. Fleet is used for official status. A truncated recruitment time series, which was supported in the old ASAP Platform Assessments was no longer supported using the WHAM Platform. We used a measure of long term mean recruitment is what that sub-bullet really says.

Using the WHAM Platform approach there is the reference points that resulted and the terminal year estimates. Research Tracks don't report stock status. But if you were to do the math, the stock is overfished, overfishing is not occurring. Retrospective pattern adjustments were unnecessary.

Projections, the recruitment random effect process continues into the projection period. That is different from what was happening in the ASAP Platform, where the recruitment was autocorrelated two years. Numbers at age random effects do not continue into the projection period. That became a bit of a sticking point in the Management Track.

Life history traits equaled five-year averages. Mobile fleet catches were projected using the New England Council's hockey stick control rule, and the fixed fleet, which again is largely Canadian is not quota controlled, and so typically we set that equal to a ten-year average in the projection period. That is considered a management uncertainty that can be tweaked by the New England Council.

Spawning stock biomass increased very quickly into the projection period, with a great deal of uncertainty. The Working Group and Review Panel had concerns that these were overly optimistic. That concern also carried over into the Management Track. Here is the spawning stock biomass time series, although somehow the year labels went missing.

But the vertical line is the delineation point between the estimation period and the projection period, and you can see the SSB increased quite rapidly. Those are 95% confidence intervals that range from nearly 0 to something astronomical. The quantitative and measurable uncertainty is pretty substantial, especially in the projection period.

Here is another example of basically the same thing, so the yellow line is the spawning stock biomass time series, and the purplish bars are recruitment. You can see into the projection period, which is again denoted by the vertical dash line, SSB increases very rapidly and recruitment in the projection period is basically reversed to a long-term mean. Term of Reference 7 and 8.

Seven was research recommendations from the 2024 Management Track. I'm not going to review those in detail here. Many of the recommendations were addressed during the Research Track, things like evaluate natural mortality, selectivity, move to WHAM, so on and so for. TOR 8 was the backup approach, which was not needed in this case. That is what I had on the Research Track, would you like me to pause there or just carry on into the Management Track?

CHAIR GROUT: Go ahead and carry on into the Management Track, and then we'll take questions after that on both.

DR. DEROBA: Okay, on to the Management Track then. Sorry, I didn't know I had animations in here, I often don't. I like having boring slides. Management Track summary assessed using the Woods Hole Assessment Model as I mentioned. We made no structural changes since the Research Track timeframe is 1987 to 2025.

Still using two fleets, same indices of abundance and surveys, as I mentioned, constant natural mortality, proxy reference points, and we'll get into the strong correlation among ages and the numbers at age random effects in a moment. Term of Reference 1, which is get your catch data together.

Again, we used CAMS since 2020 and there is a plot of the fixed fleet catches, which is the reddish line, and the greenish blue line is the mobile fleet. You can see catch has declined substantially as the stock has declined, and the Councils have ratcheted down quotas. As I mentioned, Canada is responsible for nearly all of the fixed-fleet catches, and they revised some of their methodologies.

What you are seeing here in the red line is their old catch time series, and that run by bluish green line is the updated time series that we used. This had almost no effect on the assessment, so they are still broadly similar. This is the age composition data for the mobile fleet. These are proportions not numbers, so if you could see the data behind this.

If you summed these values across ages within a year they would sum to 1. What you are seeing here, if you tack the bubbles sort of from high left to low right, you are seeing a cohort tracking. That is where the model gets information about recruitment and cohort size. This is a similar plot but for the fixed fleet.

You can see the fixed fleet catches almost exclusively Age 2 fish. Because of that there is no ability to track cohorts. On to Term of Reference 2 and the indices. Here is the Spring NMFS Bottom Trawl Survey time series, at least since the Bigelow came online in 2009.

No matter how you slice it, recent observations are much lower than they use to be. There is the NMFS Fall Bottom Trawl Survey. I am trying to remember if 2025 wasn't the lowest in the time series it was the second lowest. Again, no matter how you slice it, recent observations are lower than they were. This is the Summer Bottom Trawl Survey.

This survey has been paused or suspended, I'm not sure what kind of word they are using, but it hasn't been done since 2023, so there is really no new data here that we didn't already have during the Research Track. One nice thing about this survey is that there are no vessel changes, so it spans the transition from the Albatross to the Bigelow, which makes it a nice addition to the model.

Again, generally speaking, recent observations are lower than they use to be. This is the acoustic index that is collected during the Fall Bottom Trawl Survey. There is no 2025 data point here, because some calibration, I'm not an acoustician, so I don't know the details. Some piece of equipment wasn't calibrated correctly, so there are no 2025 data. The 2024 data point, which is the last one in the time series you see in front of you is the lowest in the time series. Term of Reference 3 is fit the stock assessment. We made a few minor changes, none of which had any significant impact on the assessment or reference points. Switch to a new version of WHAM, which was completely irrelevant, had no effect.

Added two years of data. I showed you the revised Canadian catch time series. We changed input effective sample sizes, which the model uses to sort of weight age composition matrices relative to each other. I was using year specific effective sample sizes, but we're now using a self-weighting likelihood that made that unnecessary, so I just simplified it.

The joy of it, at least from a statistical stock assessment standpoint is you can now compare parameters from the self-weighting likelihoods and directly infer which age composition matrices the model is treating as relatively precise and fitting well versus ones that it maybe thinks is more uncertain.

I made a correction to how I was calculating spawning stock biomass weights at age. I won't get into the details, but long story short it had a relatively minor effect on reference points, but was generally an improvement for what I was doing. This is the spawning stock biomass time series as a stacked bar plot.

You can see the contributions from each age. I just make a note there that 9 of the 10 lowest spawning stock biomass estimates have occurred since 2017, and 2025 is the second lowest in the time series. Here are the fleet-specific fully selected fishing mortality rates. The purple line is the mobile fleet; the yellow line is the fixed fleet.

You can see other than that anomalous year; F has generally come down for the mobile fleet. It has varied, but been relatively stable for the fixed fleet. This is the estimated recruitment time series. Seven of the 10 lowest have occurred since 2015, and 2024 was the second lowest in the time series.

You can see the horizontal dash line, I believe it is actually the geometric mean, it's essentially a measure of the long term mean of the recruitment. You can see most recent recruitments are well below it. Okay, numbers at age random effects. I'll spend a little bit of time on this. Each row here is an age.

The bottom row is Age 1, so that is basically a colored depiction of the recruitment time series. For example, I just mentioned most of the recent recruitments are below average, and you can see that in recent years they are all dark blue, which is indicative of a poor recruitment. The lighter yellow shades would be indicative of good recruitment.

For ages 2 through 8, the numbers at age random effects are essentially either killing fish faster than fishing and natural mortality alone, or actually causing fish to survive better and overcome some of the mortality being caused by fishing and natural mortality. You can see all the colors in a given year for all the ages are broadly similar.

I report the estimated correlation coefficient is 0.84. Perfect correlation would be a value of 1, so 0.84 is quite high. There was no support for correlation among years, although if you're looking at this and your eye tells you that there are more dark colors in recent years than there was early in the time series. You would be correct. But WHAM doesn't have features available to model and estimate sort of longer-term trends in these numbers at age random effects. One consequence of what you're seeing on screen, especially in recent years is you see a lot more darker blues across all ages for ages 2 through 8, meaning fish at older ages are disappearing faster than just fishing and natural mortality alone.

Not only has recruitment been poor, you can call it survival. We don't know what is causing these movements, no idea. But long story short, not only is recruitment terrible, but survival of older ages has also been rather poor, how we ended up in the state we are in. I mentioned the sort of longer-term trend that WHAM isn't capable of modeling at the moment.

That is one of the reasons when I get to projections you will hear more talk about them being overly optimistic, because these numbers at age random effects don't carry forward into the projection period. There are the updated reference points. The B40% is a bit lower than what came out of the Research Track.

That is partially because of the change I made to spawning stock biomass weights at age. But the bigger contributor is actually, as recruitment remains poor, the long-term mean recruitment is systematically shifting lower and lower. The mean recruitment is also quite a bit lower in this Management Track than it was even just two years ago in the Research Track.

There is F40% MSY. You can go to the next slide and it will have the status plot, I think. Stock is overfished; overfishing is not occurring. Retrospective adjustments were unnecessary. I think most folks are used to seeing this type of plot, F/ Fmsy proxy on the vertical, SSB/SSBmsy proxy on the horizontal, 90% confidence intervals with the black dot and the lines.

Then the red dot would be what happens if you do account for the retrospective pattern, but you can see the red dot is well within the confidence intervals and so generally we don't adjust. Projections, we didn't make any changes to the research track methods. Recruitment effectively goes back to a long-term mean.

As I had talked about those random effects do not continue into the projection period. Mobile fleet is going to use the control rule. Fixed fleet is set to a ten-year average. As with the Research Track, what you are seeing here is a 10-year projection, which I kind of did by default, because herring are in a rebuilding plan, so I just defaulted to providing 10-year projections. The vertical dash line is again the delineation point between the estimation period and the projection period.

You can see recruitment returns to a long-term mean, immediately another projection period, and SSB immediately sky rockets. SSB is the yellow line. We compared this to what came out of the Research Track. Even though this is believed to be optimistic, it is actually far more pessimistic than what came out of the Research Track. But since we're using the same methods, the concern remains that these are overly optimistic projections. Again, mostly because of the NAA random effects not continuing into the projection period, and also there is still no strong support in this model for correlation and recruitment through years, so we are still assuming recruitment immediately lives to a long-term mean. Future management tracks, I'm definitely going to have to just keep reevaluating that and reconsider what we're doing here, because staying on this treadmill of overly optimistic, overly optimistic is probably not a wise way forward. Here are the projected catches for the fixed fleet, which is red.

Again, they are going to be constant in a projection period, because it is assumed to be equal to a 10-year average. The mobile fleet is the bluish line, that is calculated using the New England Council's Harvest Control Rule. You can see given that SSB rapidly increases, stock status improves into the projection period and catches also quickly increase in the projection period.

With the exception of the second year. The vertical dash line is at 2025, the point immediately to the right of that would be 2026, which is set equal to the ACL. Then 2027 you can see catch goes down with a mobile fleet catch based on the Control Rule of somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,000 tons.

Really, really bad news in the short term, but again that overly optimistic projection allows that to recover very rapidly. Research recommendations. Term of Reference 6. There were lots of recommendations from the Research Track, but given the short turnaround time we didn't really make a whole lot of progress on them.

There was enough that going through three slides of research recommendations is not very interesting. During this Management Track, this Review Panel had 10 recommendations. I highlight the two that they chose as the most important. First was continue work on development of a VAST model.

VAST is just the fancy statistical approach that we would use to combine the State and Federal Surveys, and hopefully get some more information in this assessment on Age 1 fish. Then secondly, investigate the potential for auto correlation and

recruitment, which I just mentioned, and also see if we can come up with reasons that the numbers at age random effects look as they do.
I honestly do not have a whole lot of hope for that one, if I may speak freely. You know for years this assessment and many assessments in the region had retrospective patterns that for 20 to 30 years nobody has really been able to explain very well. What the numbers at age random effects are doing are implicitly accounting for whatever was causing the retrospective patterns that we couldn't explain.

Asking to explain why they look the way they do is akin to asking, please explain retrospective patterns, which we have failed to do for 30 years. I do think the pattern is interesting, and worth some thought. I do fear that it is a bit of a fool's errand though, but anyway. That's all I had.

CHAIR GROUT: Thank you, John, I appreciate that. It was great seeing both the Research Track and Management Track assessments and some of the things that you did in between them. I am going to go out to the Board here to see if there are any questions you might have. Melanie Griffen, I hear you have a question.

MS. MELANIE GRIFFIN: I do, Doug, thank you. Thanks, John, for the presentations. My questions are kind of next step questions. You know with the assessments going into management advice. My understanding is there is going to be some sensitivity information. I don't know if you or the member of the PDT or if Dr. Cournane is on, could speak a little bit more to what is anticipated with that. Then I do just have a follow up. I do find the research recommendations interesting, so I do have just a question on those after this question.

DR. DEROBA: I can speak to that. One thing I neglected to tell you all, and I probably should have, is that the projection term of reference was only deemed partially met, which leaves the Herring PDT at the moment with no clear path forward. What I did, and the PDT is doing, I think we have a meeting Friday to follow up on this.

We did the standard projection, which everyone believes is overly optimistic. I did another projection where I do continue the numbers at age random effects into the projection period, which gives as you would expect, a more pessimistic view of the future. The reason that wasn't our preferred way forward in this Management Track is that we're kind of on the cutting edge here.

Nobody has really figured out what to do with those numbers at age random effects in the projection periods. In the ISIS world they have had numbers at age random effects in assessment models for 15 or more years now, and still just ignore them in their projection methodologies. That doesn't seem to be the best way forward to me, but long story short, I'll quit rambling.

Basically, nobody has figured out how to do it best yet. There is very little evaluations on what to do with those numbers at age random effects int the projection period. What I did for a sensitivity was just ad hoc sort of willy nilly, let's let them persist into the future. But I don't have a good justification for putting it forward as a preferred approach.

We also did another projection, where the numbers at age random effects continue into the projection period and recruitment uses a recent 10-year average, rather than reverting back to a long-term mean. As you can expect, that was also sort of doubly pessimistic. I think we did one more tweaking catch in the bridge or something.

But that is what is out there right now. When we do continue the members at age random effects into the projection period, it does lead to fishery closures based on the New England Council's Control Rule. The conversations I expect to be quite interesting. I don't think I've been formally asked to do any other sensitivities yet.

I know industry at one point was asking for sort of averaging over the projection years, so sort of soften the blow of the hockey stick control rule really, really ratcheting down catch early in the projection period. But yet to be seen where that is going to go

MS. GRIFFIN: Thanks, John, yes, I think, I mean the takeaway for me is that these assessments are the best information we can use. I know it's a little awkward with the Commission right now, but actually wanting to understand how it is going to flow into the management discussion with the SSC. That all sounds good to me. Recognizing the concern that was expressed by both views about the projection uncertainty. It's not being ignored, you are trying to do what you can with sensitivity analyses, and that information will come before the SSC. That is what I'm getting from what you just provided us. My other question to you, on the research recommendations.

Because I think it is important for us again to keep an eye, we recognize, I mean there is always a need for improvement generally in assessments, with the very specific issues with this one. I know we don't know when our next assessment will be, but I think it's always good for us to understand, for the managers as well what is happening there.

As you say, the VAST modeling of the State Age 1 Index, that seems to be a consensus priority. There are the NAA random effects that sounds like you're going to continue looking at. I would say there is also some potentially actionable progress on the U.S./Canada catch uncertainty. Is there anything you can tell us kind of about any concrete steps, in terms of what the Science Center is? I mean are you committed to working on this?

Is there like, what roadblocks might there be to getting this information into whenever we do have the next assessment? I think this may be something, those assessment work sheets that have been going out, which are so great, I think, in terms of providing transparency, not just to managers but to the public.

Might the next steps on research recommendations be included in that. That was a lot, but just basically, what transparency and understanding you can give us on how these research recommendations might be acted upon.

DR. DEROBA: Yes, on the VAST model and to integrate the State and Federal Surveys. I am working with Conor McManus who is, what's the name of his branch? Advanced Technologies, because not only does he have an interest in one, integrating the state and federal surveys, but also folding in perhaps the acoustics as well.

He's got some thoughts as to how to maybe take better advantage of acoustics, and examine herring distribution and not just develop indices of abundance. That would also be happening. But long story short, myself and the Advanced Tech Branch have some similar interest in advancing these VAST models, again with an eye towards obviously improving the indices of abundance and getting Age 1 observations in there.

But from the Advance Tech standpoint, folding in some other data sources and making some better inference about herring distribution, and that work has already begun, although barely since the Management Track is still warm. That work has actually begun; we're committed to it. I don't have a timeline for it.

But I am hoping whenever the next assessment would be, certainly probably not before two years. I'm hoping to have something at least significant to report back on. I think the second recommendation there about numbers at age random effects. I think where more progress is likely to happen would be in evaluating how to do the projections better and treat the numbers at age and recruitment time series into the projection period better. As some of you may know, there was a Projections Research Track that has been paused. I think the NRCC voted not to resume that, which is all well and good. But the population dynamics branch has informally started to spin up in house some research plan, some evaluations on how to basically do projections better, because the optimism of projections isn't unique to herring. Typically, when the stock is in poor condition, we assume some reversion to a mean and all of our projections are probably optimistic.

That never seems to actually be what happens. The opposite is true as well. When things are in relatively good condition, we assume some reversion to a long-term mean and things decline pessimistically, think black sea bass. Anyway, internally but not formally, we are spinning up some research ideas and some sort of formal thinking on what we can do there.

CHAIR GROUT: Any other questions for the Board? Megan Ware.

MS. MEGAN WARE: Thanks, John, appreciate it and I appreciate all the PDTs work on the different sensitivity runs. I do think it is the right approach given the lack of confidence in the projection runs coming out of the Management Track. My question is on, I think you mentioned there was a bridge year catch sensitivity run, and I was wondering if you could speak to that a little bit. I know we did that last time, and that is what got implemented.

I think maybe what is different this year is we're in August and less than 10% of the total ACL has been caught, which I think is pretty unusual for this time of year. We can dig into why that is. But I think there is potential for real underages this year, and if those persist, I'm just curious kind of the range of bridge year catch that has been used in some of those projections.

DR. DEROBO: Even though I just did this recently, I'm still struggling to remember exactly what we did on bridge year catch. I don't know if Jamie is on, but I recall Jamie asking me. I think we did 75% of the ACL in the bridge year. We only did 1 sensitivity changing the bridge year catch. I think it was 75% of the ACL. I'm guessing we might have to sit on our hands for a little longer, before we figure out what that value might more realistically be. But that is all I've done thus far at the request of the PDT.

MS. WARE: Okay, thanks. I think we'll learn more rather quickly on the Area 1A situation. We'll see where that is. It might be helpful not to have you do more work, John, but understanding if there is a tipping point, in terms of if their bridge year is a certain percentage of the ACL that makes a meaningful difference versus 75 or 80% maybe doesn't make a difference, but good luck.

CHAIR GROUT: John, I might have a question for you. My name is Doug Grout. I wish we had Figure 2 from your Management Track Assessment. This is the one that gives the fishing mortality rate for Ages 7 to 8. Then also provided what the fishing mortality was on that ASAP with confidence intervals and then the current assessment.

Then it also has the current Fmsy proxy of 0.72. The thing that struck me, if you think a figure or picture is worth a thousand words is that this shows that we have been overfishing for a long time, which is not what the previous assessments had shown, at least wile I was the Herring Committee Chair on the Council. We had a period in the 1990s to the early teens where we brought fishing mortality right down. We weren't overfishing until the latter part of the teens. What I saw from this is that yes, looking back and comparing, the reference points had dropped the F40% MSY. The values had dropped from 0.5 or 0.48 down to the current 2.72.

But I also noticed that fishing mortality under the WHAM model was generally higher than what it had been. I'm just trying to, is WHAM saying that we've been overfishing all along, or has it been a factor of the Fmsy 40% has been dropping that makes us looking like we've been overfishing all along?

DR. DEROBA: It's the latter. The way WHAM is calculating F40%, specifically for the mobile fleet is, it solves for a single value of F40% that then gets multiplied through selectivity curves for each fleet, and so on and so forth. You do some per recruit analyses. But what WHAM is calling selectivity for the purposes of the reference point, is it takes recent fishing mortalities at age for each fleet, and rescales them treating them as selectivity.

The implication there is that as the relative amount of catch from each fleet changes through time, the F40% will also change pretty dynamically through time. Let's say we go back 10, 15 years. The F40% would have been much, much higher for the mobile

fleet, because more catch was coming form the mobile fleet, so the F would have been much higher.

At the moment there is a great deal of catch coming from the Age 2 fixed fleet, which has the run on consequence of requiring a reduction in the mobile fleet F40%. That plot you are referencing, I think that actually came up during the review as well. It is not really fair to compare the current WHAM reference point to the F backwards in time.

Because if you were to say, start the model in 2012, the reference points would be completely different and there would be no evidence of overfishing. Yes, I don't like that plot, because that point gets missed. The reference points would also change because of life history traits being different backwards in time.

The long-term recruitment would be higher, which would have the effect of increasing the B40%. Long story short, that F reference point is going to be quite dynamic through time as the long-term recruitment changes, which is impacting the B40%. Then as the relative catch from each fleet changes that is also going to create quite a lot of a dynamic nature in the F40%.

CHAIR GROUT: Basically, this is appropriate reference points for this period of time, not so much for historically. Maybe, like you said, you didn't, I think like that graph in the future that we should say, F40% 272 is the reference point for now, but not for the dash line all the way back through the years with it.

DR. DEROBA: That is correct, yes. It is probably better to just go back 5, and certainly no more than 10 years. WHAM does produce plots of the dynamic reference points, but we don't use them. But I was going to try to just look up how dynamic the F reference point was, just to give you a sense of, I might not be able to find it in a sensible amount of time either.

CHAIR GROUT: Don't worry about it, I just offered a suggestion that in future assessments they put up a graph that makes that clear, as opposed to having a dotted line that goes back forever.

DR. DEROBA: Yes, that is a good suggestion, and just FYI. NOAA Fisheries Headquarters if pushing for a nationally standardized assessment reporting approach. Don't know what that is going to look like yet, but that will come online sometime in 2027. You might not ever see a plot that looks like that again, because we're working through a national assessment report sort of process. I don't know if that is good or bad, but we're doing it.

CHAIR GROUT: Thank you. Any other questions from the Board? Seeing none; thank you, John, very much for a very thorough and great explanations about how all these things work, and thank you again for your effort.

DR. DEROBA: Thanks, hopefully it wasn't too rambling or techy.

CHAIR GROUT: It was fine for me.

CONSIDER ACCEPTANCE OF NORTHEAST FISHERIES SCIENCE RESEARCH TRACK STOCK ASSESSMENT AND PEER REVIEW REPORT FOR MANAGEMENT USE

CHAIR GROUT: I believe we need to have a motion to accept the Management Track Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use. Just the Research Track, okay. Is there anybody who would like to make that **motion to accept the Northeast Fisheries Science Center Research Track Stock Assessment and Peer Review for management use**?

MR. RAYMOND C. KANE: Ray Kane.

CHAIR GROUT: Makes the motion, is there a second? Dennis Abbott. Since I read it in, does Ray need to enter it? Okay. I'll try it the easy way first, **is there any objection to this motion? Seeing none; it passes by unanimous consent**.

CHAIR GROUT: Item 5, Update on the New England Fishery Management Council and Atlantic Herring activity. Emily, I believe you are on.

UPDATE FROM NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL ON ATLANTIC HERRING ACTIVITY

MS. EMILY BODELL: Good morning, everyone, my name is Emily Bodell, I am on the New England Fishery Management Council staff and I support the Atlantic Herring Plan. I'm just here today to provide a few updates on what the Council has been working on with regards to Atlantic herring this year.

Just starting out with our Atlantic herring outlook by quarter. We have a few priorities that we are working on this year. The first is Atlantic herring specifications for 2027 to 2031. The next is an action which will include river herring and shad measures, as well as some additional management measures. I will elaborate on that in just a moment.

You also heard from Dr. Deroba about the Management Track Stock Assessment. The Council staff has been supporting that and following along. Then the Council will also establish 2027 priorities a little bit later in the year.

Originally, the Council set out to complete one action regarding Atlantic herring this year, which would have included the specifications as well as river herring and shad management measures and some additional measures. The Plan Development Team has been working on some analyses in support of this action. It's been presented to the Advisory Panel and the Committee, ultimately this information was brought to the Council, and they received a status update at our June 2026 Council meeting. It was decided at that point to split the action into two, which is why it is listed in two different categories on our work that I just reviewed.

The following motion was made in June, which was to set the Atlantic herring specifications for fishing years 2027 to 2031 as a standalone action for final action in September, and then in a separate action for April 2027, final action target date.

The Plan Development Team would continue working on modifying Atlantic herring management measures to avoid or minimize the catch of river herring and shad through time/area closures with and without the existing catch cap methodology, updating the Atlantic herring specifications process and modifying carryover provisions for unharvested catch.

I'll just go over the kind of two actions that we are developing, the first being the specifications action. We are anticipating this to be a really straightforward specifications action. It will include things like the overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, management uncertainty, the ACL and subsequent management area sub-ACLs, river herring and shad catch caps, and there are some other components that are included in a typical herring specifications action.

I will note that the Council is considering making an adjustment to the fixed gear set-aside, which comes out of the Area 1A Sub-ACL. That will be discussed at upcoming meeting. Then on the right here we just have kind of a flow chart of how we reach our management area sub-ACLs. Just to go over some upcoming meetings.

As we discussed a little bit during John's presentation, the Scientific and Statistical Committee will be meeting August 11 and 12, so next Tuesday and Wednesday. That will be in New Beford, or you can attend via webinar. They will be discussing herring OFLs and ABCs. The documents should be posted for that meeting in the coming days, so if you're interested in reviewing what the Plan Development Team has proposed for that meeting, please feel free to take a look, also happy to point folks in that direction as needed.

This will be followed by a couple of herring AP and Committee meetings. They will first meet on August 18 via webinar, and then on September 2 we will be meeting in Boston as well as via webinar to discuss the specifications action. Then we are

anticipating final action at the New England Council meeting in September, that will be in Plymouth, and it's via webinar.

This is in support of a target implementation date for the specifications action of January 1, 2027, so the start of the fishing year for herring. I'll just go over a little bit more detail on river herring and shad and some of the other management measures. This will be in, again this other action anticipated for final action in 2027.

Right now, we're looking at this action including river herring and shad management measures, as well as updates to the Atlantic herring specifications process and carry over provisions for unharvested catch. At that June Council meeting the Council received an update on some recent activity, including that the Committee recommended developing two alternatives for carry over, as well as recommended continuing development on an alternative to update the specifications process.

The Herring Plan Development Team also completed some tasking that they received from the Council regarding river herring and shad, and the results of that were presented to the Council in June. Just briefly to go over these three main river herring and shad related tasks, and some of the PDT analyses that were competed.

The first was related to assessing data availability and analyzing and developing alternatives that would implement time and area closures, where aggregations of river herring and shad are overlapping with the Atlantic herring fishery. The Plan Development Team has been working to develop species distribution models for river herring, shad and Atlantic herring, as well as some hypothetical time and area closures.

This work is going to be peer reviewed by a sub panel of the New England Council's SSC. That will be coming up in the fall. The next task had to do with again, data availability and developing alternatives that would implement revisions to the basis of river herring and shad catch cap values.

The PDT worked to summarize some potential catch cap approaches, and we also discussed assembling some data using, as we're calling a CAMS modified approach. We can summarize river herring and shad catch data by kind of a series of qualifiers there. That data analysis is ongoing, so we're anticipating an update at a future meeting.

Then finally, the PDT also was tasked with analyzing and developing some recommendations for implementing improvements to the accuracy and precision of river herring and shad catch estimates in the directed Atlantic herring fishery. This task was completed, so the PDT developed four different analyses to compare some potential estimation methods.

Ultimately, they didn't recommend making any major change to the current estimation methods, but they did suggest using a gear specific global rate when that information is available. Just to wrap up finding a few upcoming meetings with regards to just river herring and shad in additional management measures action.

As I mentioned the SSC and an SSC Sub Panel will be reviewing the river herring and shad work. That will be occurring via webinar. We do not have a date for that peer review yet, but that information will be posted on the Council website when it is available. Then again, anticipating final action or targeting final action for April 2027.

The New England Council meeting, that will be in Mystic and held vis webinar. Then of course we'll be adding some additional meetings that will be scheduled as needed. We can definitely provide some of those updates, and those are always available on our Council website. That is about all I have for you this morning. Thank you so much for the time, and I am happy to take questions as time allows.

CHAIR GROUT: Any questions from the Board for Emily? Seeing none; thank you very much, Emily for that presentation, and we will be working with you folks over the next few months.

ADJOURNMENT

We are down to other business. Does anybody have any other business to bring up before the Board today? Seeing none; this meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, August 4, 2026)

New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 23, 2026

PRESS CONTACT: Alex Dunn
978-465-0492 ext. 112; adunn@nefmc.org

Council Takes Action on Scallops, Herring, and Habitat; Elects Officers

The New England Fishery Management Council met from September 15-17, 2026, in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The following is a summary of actions taken, updates, and other business affecting multiple Fishery Management Plans. Meeting materials, motions, and the meeting audio recordings will be available on the September 2026 meeting page.

COUNCIL ELECTS LEADERSHIP; WELCOMES NEWEST MEMBER

The Council opened its September 2026 meeting with the annual election of officers. The Council reelected **Daniel Salerno** (New Hampshire) as Chair and **Melanie Griffin** (Massachusetts) as Vice Chair. The Council filled the three remaining Executive Committee seats by electing **Megan Ware** (Maine), **Michael Pierdinock** (Massachusetts), and **Jackie Odell** (Massachusetts) from a slate of five candidates.



Melanie Griffin and Daniel Salerno



Kirby Aarsheim

The Council also welcomed its newest voting member, **Kirby Aarsheim** (Massachusetts), who took the Oath of Office and committed to a three-year term. A partner at Farrell Smith O'Connell Aarsheim Aprans LLP, Aarsheim brings a lifetime of commercial fishing experience and expertise in fisheries management. She has served on the Council's Sea Scallop and Enforcement Advisory Panels and remains active in regional maritime policy, including leadership roles with the American Bar Association's Admiralty & Maritime Law Committee and the Propeller Club Port of Boston. She is also a commercial scallop vessel owner in New Bedford. Returning members **Daniel Salerno**, **Terry Alexander** (Maine) and **Jackie Odell** (Massachusetts) were also sworn in for new three-year terms. Council member bios are available here.

HERRING SPECIFICATIONS APPROVED; LEVELS REMAIN LOW

Atlantic Herring Specifications 2027–2031 (metric tons)		
OFL	**ABC**	**ACL**
13,165	10,532	6,926

The Council took final action to set Atlantic herring specifications for fishing years 2027–2031. The Council voted to set annual catch limits **(ACL) at 6,926 metric tons,** a 24% decrease from the 2026 level of 9,134 mt, and at a constant level for each year (2027-2031). The Council recognized the potential for continued negative economic impacts on the fishing industry. The decision factored in the results of the 2026 stock assessment and peer review, the Council's Risk Policy, recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the Herring Committee, with input from the Advisory Panel and Plan Development Team. The Council also discussed a separate action that would modify **River Herring and Shad Management** through an amendment as part of a multi-year priority. The current river herring and shad catch caps will remain at status quo levels while this work continues.

SCALLOP SURVEY AND WORK PLAN UPDATES

The Council received an update on the **2026 scallop surveys,** which indicate continued growth of a large scallop cohort in the southern Nantucket Lightship, strong signs of recruitment in eastern Closed Area II, and sustained growth and productivity in the Mid-Atlantic, while the Northern Gulf of Maine shows shifting biomass distribution and a small incoming year class. The Council reviewed these results and discussed implications on FY 2027 specifications, including Days-at-Sea and access area fishing in the Nantucket Lightship.

The Council also reviewed the Committee-approved, **Scallop Work Plan for 2027–2029**, highlighting its connection to the Council's Holistic Strategic Plan. This work plan serves as a tool to sequence work priorities that were identified in the Scallop Strategic Plan, focusing on building greater flexibility and adaptability into the Scallop Fishery Management Plan.

The Council affirmed the scope of **Framework 42**, which considers region-specific Scallop Days-at-Sea management and sub-area boundaries in the Northern Gulf of Maine. Work on this action will continue into 2027, with the Committee focusing on 2027-2028 specifications between now and December.

HABITAT FRAMEWORK APPROVED; SURFCLAM REPORT IS REVIEWED

The **2026 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Designation Framework** was approved by the Council. The framework updates EFH designations for 16 species using new survey and environmental data spanning from 2002–2022, based on predictive outputs of species distribution models. The Council reviewed the draft designations and feedback received during the development of the action on map boundaries, species biology, and EFH text descriptions. Updated EFH designations will be used to support future Council actions.

The Council also received a **Great South Channel Surfclam Exemption Evaluation Report**. The report compiles updated information since the program's 2020 inception and represents the first Council review of the program

and its objectives, including the dynamic and diverse habitats of the management area and the presence of multiple federally managed species.

SSC REPORTS ON DYNAMIC REFERENCE POINTS WORK

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reported on its June workshop that examined dynamic reference points (DRPs) which are benchmarks that can be used to determine stock status, inform management measures such as ABCs, and define rebuilding targets. DRPs are time-varying reference points that can account for changes in stock productivity and persistent ecosystem changes. The workshop reviewed current regional and national approaches, evaluated when DRPs would be appropriate for use with NEFMC stocks, considered alternative methods and data requirements, and identified implementation challenges, and tradeoffs. The SSC recommended creating an SSC subgroup to further develop approaches for evaluating and implementing DRPs in the region. The Council will consider making the work a 2027 priority during the December 2026 meeting. The SSC report is available here.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Council approved the Holistic Strategic Plan by unanimous consent, making it effective immediately. The Council will now begin implementation and tracking of Goal 1 which aims to "build flexibility and adaptability into Fishery Management Plans and streamline the process of developing management measures." The four major strategies to achieve this include:

1. Revise the annual priority setting process
2. Reduce redundancy in information sharing throughout action development
3. Set specifications through streamlined processes, decoupled from other management measures
4. Focus analyses and documentation on identified action objectives

The plan, which was developed with support from The Parnin Group, included a year-long effort with discovery, analysis, and strategy phases. Moving forward, plan progress will be guided and monitored using a series of actions and key performance indicators that are outlined in the staff presentation to Council.

PARTNER UPDATES

The **Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP)** gave an update on the recent Regional Industry Based Trawl Survey (RIBTS) work which is using fishing vessels (F/V). While the 2025 government shutdown stalled the work for several weeks, the survey working group is looking to advance to a two-boat model, potentially in Fall of 2027.

The **Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Team** presented on a 60-day public scoping period with the goal of gathering industry and public input on gear modifications and spatial closures in place to sustain the North Atlantic right whale recovery. Stakeholders are urged to participate in the public webinars or submit formal comments via www.regulations.gov using docket #NOAA-NMFS-2025-0041 by October 16, 2026. The team reported some good news citing an estimated population increase from 359 individuals in 2020 to roughly 380 today.

Northeast Fishery Science Cetner (NEFSC) Cooperative Research on Mackerel: The NEFSC reported on current work with industry vessels to advance understanding of Atlantic mackerel, updating data that in some cases are nearly 100 years old. The collaborative effort focuses on acoustic detection, egg surveys, spawning seasonality, movement and mixing, and ecosystem drivers to strengthen future stock assessments in support of management. Some of this collaborative research is underway and the NEFSC will be seeking industry partners for 2027 research, including an acoustic detection project, egg surveys, and more. The NEFSC also planted the seeds for similar, future cooperative research on Atlantic herring. For questions, please contact Anna Mercer at anna.mercer@noaa.gov. View the full report here.

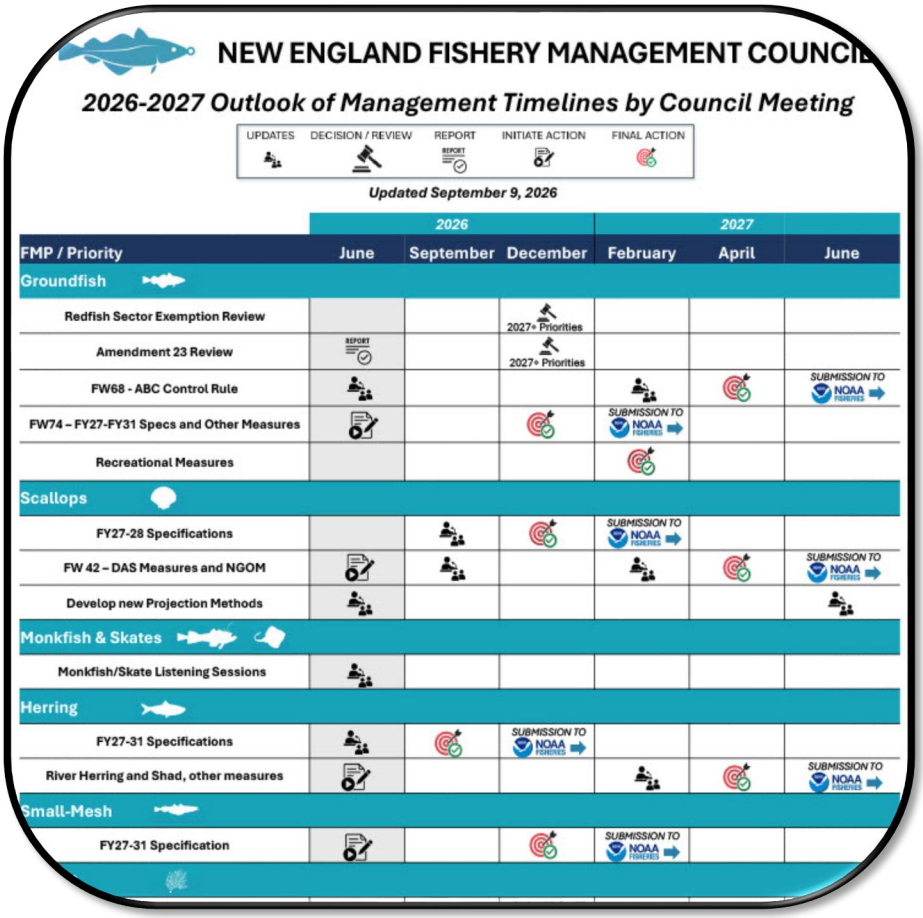
A **Draft Regional Offshore Wind Fisheries Compensation Framework** has been released by the Regional Fund Administrator (RFA) and is now open for public review and feedback. The *Draft Regional Offshore Wind Fisheries Compensation Framework* is open for public comment through November 3, 2026. Feedback can be submitted electronically through the RFA Contact Us page or by email at Contact@RFAInfo.com. The RFA will host a **public webinar on September 30, 2026**, to provide an overview of the Draft Framework and explain how stakeholders can participate in the public comment process. Register for the webinar.

LOOKING AHEAD

A **Management Timeline** can now be found on the Council's homepage. This new visual tool breaks down Council work by FMP/Priority across multiple meetings, giving a better visual tracker for major decisions and actions. The timeline document will be updated periodically, so please check back before and after each Council meeting.

The Council will hold its next meeting **December 8 – 10, 2026** in Newport, RI. An agenda and meeting materials will be posted on the meeting page as they become available. Some of the anticipated actions include specifications setting for:

- Atlantic scallops for FY27-28
- Groundfish for FY27-31
- Small-Mesh for FY27-31



#2

New England Fishery Management Council
50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492
Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 30, 2026

TO: Cate O'Keefe, Ph.D., Executive Director

FROM: Scientific and Statistical Committee

SUBJECT: Report on 1) discussion of Risk Policy implementation, 2) updates from the Social Sciences Subcommittee, 3) overfishing limits and acceptable biological catches for Atlantic herring for FY2027 to FY2031, and 4) follow-up from workshop on dynamic reference points

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) met in person and via webinar on August 11-12, 2026, to discuss four topics. First, the SSC received an update on the Council's implementation plan for the Risk Policy and discussed how the SSC is expected to use the policy when recommending overfishing limits and acceptable biological catches. Second, the SSC received an update from the Social Sciences Subcommittee (SSS) and provided feedback to the SSS on forwarding its workplan. Third, the SSC addressed Terms of Reference (TOR) for recommending overfishing limits (OFL) and acceptable biological catches (ABC) for Atlantic herring for FY2027 to FY2031. Fourth, the SSS addressed TORs for following up from the SSC workshop on dynamic reference points held in June 2026.

SSC members in attendance: Dr. Conor McManus (Chair), Dr. Edward Camp (Vice-Chair), Dr. Anna Birkenbach, Dr. Lauran Brewster, Dr. Adam Delargy, Dr. Alex Hansell, Dr. Lisa Kerr, Dr. Gareth Lawson, Dr. Kai Lorenzen, Dr. Jason McNamee, Dr. Richard Merrick, Dr. Mateja Nenadovic, Dr. Kevin St. Martin, Dr. Fred Serchuk, Dr. Michelle Staudinger, Dr. Sam Truesdell, and Dr. John Wiedenman.

RISK POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The SSC received a presentation from Council staff on the implementation plans for the Council's Risk Policy, as approved by the Council in June 2026. Primary updates since the SSC last discussed the Risk Policy in March 2026 included the addition of risk tolerance tiers derived from Z-scores and advice regarding how the SSC should consider using the Risk Policy to inform its recommendations in the near-term (e.g., 2026 matters). No changes have been made to how the SSC will implement ABC control rules pertaining to upcoming ABC decisions; however, risk policy matrices, Z-scores, risk probabilities, and resulting risk tolerance tiers should be considered qualitatively when formulating advice. Future applications of the Risk Policy may consider quantitative applications linked directly to ABCs.

SSC Comments on Implementation Plan

The SSC discussed some applications of qualitative risk tiers in decision-making. Tiers could impact the risk tolerance associated with out-year ABCs, inform research recommendation prioritization, or warrant recommending a stock's assessment or catch advice be revisited before other stocks. Drafters of the Policy indicated that stocks in the high or low risk tolerance categories are candidates for more frequent assessment. The NRCC's Assessment Working Group could consider the tiers assigned to each stock as an indicator of assessment priority as they develop an assessment schedule proposal. The risk tiers may have further downstream applications as well; for example, they could inform management decisions beyond specifications. The SSC specifically noted the three individual pieces of information that is now available to them through this implementation (tiers, Z-scores, and recommended probability) and can be considered moving forward.

An SSC member observed that a broad range of socioeconomic factors, some of which appear as factor scoring subcategories and some of which may not, are distilled down into a single "Commercial Fishery Characterization" factor in the risk policy matrix and it is unclear whether this factor is weighted appropriately relative to the other factors, or whether additional factors may be needed to represent the fishery. The SSC observed that one of the benefits of the functional relationship between the scoring and the recommended probability is that the number of factors could easily be adjusted in the future while still following the same methodology.

The SSC noted that the uncertainty associated with assessment quantities such as spawning stock biomass (SSB) and recruitment does not appear in the current formulation of the risk policy. The utility of the SSB and recruitment risk matrix factors depend on these metrics being well determined. The SSC should consider this and also recall that uncertainty in these quantities can vary across assessments. It was noted that although uncertainty was considered by the Risk Policy Working Group as an additional factor, it was ultimately removed for now given questions around defining uncertainty and that uncertainty is partially accounted for within the assessment (e.g., effort to avoid "double-counting" uncertainty). Incorporating uncertainty in the Risk Policy more explicitly in future iterations would be informative. Beyond the qualitative applications considered at present, a future Fishery Management Action Team could consider uncertainty in any quantitative advice that may be applied through the Risk Policy in coming years. Similarly, the Risk Policy Working Group also considered fish condition as an additional factor intended to incorporate some ecosystem conditions. However, this factor has been paused from inclusion given challenges in interpreting what changing fish condition means; future work could reconsider this or other possible indicators of ecosystem conditions.

The SSC's discussion was informed by public comment. A member of the public asked for clarification on how the Commercial Fishery Characterization factor is scored, and felt that for the Atlantic herring worked example, the fishery may be under more stress than the score indicates. NEFMC staff detailed the scoring method and noted that there will be some learning along the way as the new approaches get implemented. Another member of the public commented that scoring is backward-looking as opposed to forward-looking, noting that, for example, although Atlantic herring has not been a choke species for mackerel in the recent past, it may well constrain catch next year. This commenter also noted that in other regions, such scoring is an iterative process that multiple groups contribute to. Staff clarified that scoring is

intended to be as objective as possible, follow detailed guidelines, and the AP input component is forward-looking.

SOCIAL SCIENCES SUBCOMMITTEE

The SSC received a presentation from the SSS and the Social Science Branch (SSB) of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) on updates from SSS meetings held in November 2025 and March 2026, and a workshop held in March 2026. The SSB presented updates on their work to enhance fisheries-dependent data and socioeconomic considerations for management. Key priorities include (1) standardizing fishery performance reporting into concise summaries, (2) improving socioeconomic data products used for Risk Policy evaluation, (3) improving the SSB indicators at the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) level, and (4) facilitating incorporation of social science information and Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) into stock assessments through collaboration between industry and scientists. The workshop, supported through the Cooperative Institute for the North Atlantic Region (CINAR), focused on fishing industry generated information and highlighted that substantial industry information currently exists, but its use is constrained by inconsistent formats, its treatment is often considered as anecdotal or supplementary only, is incorporated late in the decision-making process. The workshop also noted challenges regarding mistrust and informant fatigue, institutional barriers, and reduced scientific capacity. Proposed solutions focused on standardizing existing data streams, integrating socioeconomic data directly and earlier into the process, using automated reporting and analytical tools to synthesize information, and strengthening coordination across the management system.

SSC Comments on SSS Activities

The SSC sought additional clarification regarding examples of industry-generated information, data standardization, communication, and information use in decision-making. The SSS noted that workshop participants identified several existing information sources, such as groundfish sector reports, vessel monitoring system and vessel trip report data, Study Fleet data, Advisory Panel (AP) input, and public comment, as valuable but often underutilized due to inconsistent formats, confidentiality constraints, and unclear pathways for incorporating them into the decision-making process. Participants also discussed how artificial intelligence (AI) and qualitative analysis tools could create new opportunities to extract, organize, and standardize information from heterogeneous sources, potentially enhancing their use without imposing additional burdens on industry.

The SSC further elaborated on how existing communication channels, including groundfish sectors, APs, and regular industry meetings could be strengthened through greater emphasis on communicating findings back to the industry and demonstrating how their information is being incorporated into analyses and decision-making processes. Participants also discussed continuing uncertainty regarding how socioeconomic information fits within the National Standards and broader management process. SSB's ongoing mapping effort should shed light on how National Standard 1 and FMP objectives relate to socioeconomic concepts, indicators, and metrics, which may help clarify these connections. Lastly, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) use of structured AP questions was highlighted as a potentially useful model for generating consistent information over time, identifying emerging concerns, and evaluating whether and how industry observations are recognized and addressed before they become formally identified as management issues.

ATLANTIC HERRING OFLS AND ABCS

The SSC received a presentation from the NEFSC on the 2026 management track stock assessment for Atlantic herring, comments from the chair and a panelist of the assessment's peer review panel who are also SSC members, and a presentation from the Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team on the development of possible OFLs and ABCs for FY2027-FY2031. The SSC noted that the 2026 assessment was the first management track use of the Woods Hole Assessment Model (WHAM) for Atlantic herring which indicated that the stock continues to be overfished but overfishing is not occurring. Discussion focused on the substantial uncertainty in the stock projections, biological reference points, and the interaction of those quantities within the existing Atlantic herring ABC control rule. As part of their report, the peer review panel concluded that "the PDT and SSC should view the projections and sensitivity analysis as context for catch advice setting but that each has challenges that limit their utility." The SSC considered the management track assessment peer review conclusions, including that the projection TOR was only partially met, and that the projections and sensitivity analyses should be viewed as context for catch advice, rather than values to directly inform management.

Terms of Reference

A. Consider the information provided by the Council's Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team (PDT) and ASMFC's Technical Committee (TC) on the most recent stock assessment for Atlantic herring and its peer review, and information on stock projections.
B. Recommend OFLs and ABCs for Atlantic herring for fishing years (FY) 2027-2031 that will prevent overfishing, are consistent with the Council's Atlantic herring ABC control rule and rebuilding plan, and consider the Council's Risk Policy Statement and Concept.

TOR Findings

The SSC recommends an OFL of 13,165 mt and an ABC of 10,532 mt, held constant for FY 2027-2031, for the Atlantic herring stock. The recommended OFLs and ABCs aim to prevent overfishing, have connections to or informed by the Council's ABC control rules (though do not follow the control rule explicitly), and consider the Council's Risk Policy Statement.

For Atlantic herring TOR A, the SSC considered the 2026 WHAM assessment, the peer review findings, and projection analyses and sensitivities provided by the PDT/TC (though no recommendations were provided), and the Council's Risk Policy output. The SSC did not use the projections to directly inform catch advice due to issues associated with their estimation.

For Atlantic herring TOR B, the SSC adopted an interim constant catch approach rather than directly applying the existing herring ABC control rule. The SSC used the 2026 ABC of 13,165 mt as the OFL for FY2027-2031 and applied a 20% reduction to establish a constant ABC of 10,532 mt. Using only 80% of the OFL for the ABC provides a precautionary reduction consistent with the intent of the Risk Policy and also reflects the maximum 80% allowance embedded in the existing Atlantic herring ABC control rule, while recognizing that the current advice departs from a mechanical application of that control rule.

Rationale Including Significant Sources of Uncertainty

The stock remains in poor condition with persistent low recruitment and warrants a precautionary approach. The SSC found substantial uncertainty in the ability to characterize the rebuilding trajectory using the available projections. For example, the standard WHAM

projections assume a return toward long-term mean recruitment and do not carry recent negative NAA random effects forward, resulting in a quick, overly optimistic rebound in SSB, while sensitivities using recent recruitment or recent NAA random effect conditions are substantially more pessimistic. The more pessimistic projections include scenarios in which rebuilding does not occur. The divergence among these scenarios demonstrates that rebuilding conclusions are highly dependent on assumptions of future survival and recruitment. Due to these challenges in specifying projections and consistent with the peer review advice, the SSC treated the projections as context rather than values to be used in determining catch advice.

The SSC also identified a disconnect between the existing Atlantic herring ABC control rule and the new approach to assessment using WHAM. The control rule was developed and evaluated under the previous assessment framework (ASAP) and with the transition to WHAM, the estimation of assessment quantities and biological reference points have changed substantially. Notably, reference points are estimated in a different manner with WHAM estimating a global selectivity across U.S. and Canadian fisheries whereas ASAP ignored the Canadian fleet in these estimates. The large differences in selectivity between the two fleets had a significant impact on the F_{MSY} proxy (F40% was equal to 0.45 in 2024 and 0.27 in the 2026 assessment) and was considered by members of the SSC as an inappropriate modeling choice given the F/F_{MSY} ratio is used in the ABC control rule to inform the exploitation rate of the mobile fleet only (U.S. fleet). The 2026 management track assessment cautioned that ASAP and WHAM reference points are not directly comparable due these methodological differences, and the peer review identified concerns regarding the scaling of the WHAM reference points, recruitment assumptions underlying them, and whether F40% remains the appropriate F_{MSY} proxy. Many of the same unresolved assumptions affecting the projections also affect the reference points.

Given these uncertainties, the SSC concluded that a constant interim ABC provides a reasonable bridge until an updated assessment and/or additional technical work provides greater confidence in projections, reference points, and their interaction within the control rule. The Council's Risk Policy output indicated Low Risk Tolerance, supporting a precautionary reduction in OFLs and ABCs. The SSC discussed several reduction strategies, namely 80%, 75%, and 70% of the OFL for the uncertainty buffer. The SSC also considered using an ensemble approach with the projections (i.e., averaging the outcome OFLs and ABCs from the provided projections; see minority report below). Some members preferred a reduction greater than 20%, because they did not view 80% as sufficiently conservative; however, the SSC did not identify a scientific basis for the 75% or 70% alternatives that were proposed (see Appendix I). The ensemble approach was not preferred due to the SSC's lack of confidence in the projections, and the assessment's peer reviewers cautioned against using the projections directly for advice (which was also noted in the PDT/TC's report). The SSC majority therefore agreed to an ABC equal to 80% of the proposed OFL, or 10,532 mt. The ABC recommendation of a 20% reduction from the recommended OFL (the 2026-2027 ABC value) is intended to acknowledge a level of precaution outlined in the ABC control rule limiting fishing mortality at 80% of F_{MSY} when biomass is greater than 0.5 for the ratio of SSB/SSB_{MSY}). This recommendation is not intended to suggest the current SSB/SSB_{MSY} is greater than 0.5; the use of 80% is used to inform an additional level of precaution that acknowledges the ABC control rule. In this decision, the SSC also recognized the socioeconomic challenges that this industry has been experiencing for the past several years; the recommended 20% decrease also intended to align with these raised concerns.

The SSC believes it's recommended ABCs are not likely to result in overfishing for this stock as the 10,532 mt ABC is 20% below the recommended OFL, represents a precautionary reduction from the 2026 ABC, and was judged by the SSC to provide an appropriate interim level of catch given the stock's low biomass, the Council's Low Risk Tolerance, and the uncertainty in the information available such as the projections and reference points.

The treatment of Canadian catch in the assessment and management of Atlantic herring was discussed by the SSC. Canadian catch primarily comes from Southwest New Brunswick (SWNB) coastal waters (migrant juvenile weir fisheries). The Canadian catches in this region largely consist of "migrant juveniles". Previous tagging studies demonstrate that these juvenile fish originate from the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank spawning components, meaning they are inherently part of the U.S. stock complex. This assumption needs to be revisited to understand the degree of stock mixing occurring in Canadian and US waters. Furthermore, the current approach to US allocation takes a recent average of Canadian catch from the ABC as part of the management uncertainty deductions. This is a projection as it is not known at the time of setting catch advice how much the Canadian fishery will actually catch. This approach has a more pronounced impact on available catch under smaller stock sizes. The SSC noted that there may be opportunities for the Council to make management adjustments to the treatment of Canadian catch and proportion of ABC available to the U.S. fishery as they broadly consider the treatment of Canadian catch in assessment and management.

The SSC's discussion and recommendations were informed by public comment (written and comments made during the meeting). Concerns from the herring fishery included the potential for some of the projections to only allow one trip or less per year by the herring vessels, that biomass shifts out of certain stock areas has prevented full quota utilization (among other reasons cited), and that state surveys should be included more directly in stock assessments to inform recruitment estimates. Other commenters asked how predator consumption is included in the assessment and about the impacts of the loss of the shrimp survey to the assessment. The assessment scientists clarified that diet data is used in the assessment, challenges persist with using some data sources, but that outcomes generally match external research; the pausing of the shrimp survey increases uncertainty.

In summary, the most important sources of uncertainty include continued poor recruitment; the treatment and interpretation of NAA random effects; the mismatch between recent conditions and conditions used for the assumptions from some projection and reference point calculations; uncertainty in WHAM biological reference points and their comparability with the former ASAP framework; and missing or limited recent survey information. The SSC also noted that survey indices remain low but have not shown a recent precipitous decline, adding to concern about the apparent disconnect between the control rule catch advice and the available empirical information.

Additional Comments and Research Recommendations

The SSC supports the peer review research recommendations and emphasizes several of those as top priorities: continued development of the vector autoregressive spatiotemporal (VAST) model to incorporate additional surveys which could improve information on age-1 herring; investigation of potential autocorrelation in annual recruitment and covariates that may be aliased in the NAA random effects; and improved treatment of NAA random effects in projections.

The SSC also recommends reevaluating the performance of the Atlantic herring ABC control rule in the context of changes associated with the new assessment framework (WHAM), further investigate potential spatial changes in stock distribution, reexamine stock structure, and reassess the appropriate treatment of Canadian catch and fleet selectivity informing the assessment model and biological reference points. The constant OFL and ABC recommendations should be viewed as an interim approach and revisited if an updated assessment or additional technical analyses become available during the specification period. As a final thought, the SSC believes the stock should be prioritized for assessment again as soon as possible.

This was the first application of the Council's new Risk Policy. The SSC discussed the Risk Policy approach and outcomes at length during their discussions, and voiced appreciation as it provided more pertinent information to the decision process than the previous risk policy did. Additionally, the enhanced risk policy matrix provided a good assemblage of really important information. Some SSC members felt that the outcome did not reflect the actual level of stress being experienced by the industry, and therefore note that there may be some additional scrutiny applied to the socioeconomic factor portions of the risk policy procedure to make sure it is functioning the way the Council intends. In total, the SSC felt the new Risk Policy was a positive step forward in the process.

Summary of Recommendations

1. The SSC recommends an OFL of 13,165 mt for FY2027-2031 for Atlantic herring.
2. The SSC recommends an ABC of 10,532 mt for FY2027-2031 for Atlantic herring.
3. The SSC recommends treating the constant OFL and ABC as an interim approach and revisiting the specifications when updated assessment information or additional technical work resolves key uncertainties in projections, reference points, and their interaction with the herring ABC control rule.
4. The SSC recommends the following research priorities:
    a. Prioritize work on age-1 survey information potentially using VAST to synthesize the different available trawl surveys,
    b. Investigate causes for the poor recruitment and negative NAA random effects,
    c. Examine best practices for NAA random effect treatment in projections,
    d. Reevaluate the performance of the Atlantic herring ABC control rule with the changes associated with WHAM, and
    e. Investigate potential spatial changes in Atlantic herring distribution.

Fishing Year	OFL (mt)	ABC (mt)
2027-2031	13,165	10,532

Minority Report

A minority of the SSC supported alternative approaches to setting the Atlantic herring OFL and ABC, as described in Appendix I.

DYNAMIC REFERENCE POINTS

The SSC received a presentation from the SSC Chair that summarized the outcomes of the SSC's workshop on dynamic reference points held on June 1-2, 2026. The SSC remains interested and committed to their recommendations documented in their SSC Dynamic Reference Point (DRP) Workshop report, with some slight modifications based on changes in the NEFMC-related science or activities since the DRP Workshop. Specifically, the SSC recommended altering the priority species of interest, developing a subcommittee to help with executing the concept mapping, and an additional factor to consider.

Terms of Reference

A. Consider the outcomes of the SSC workshop on dynamic reference points, and make any refinements to the recommendations for indicators, candidate stocks, and other recommendations for next steps.

TOR Findings

The SSC recommended modifying their original stock recommendations for carrying through the concept mapping process to evaluate the utility of dynamic reference points. First, the SSC recommended deprioritizing witch flounder. Though the stock is to be assessed within the next two years, and thus would be an opportunity to evaluate and implement some form of DRPs, the assessment framework is empirical and not an analytical framework. As such, the SSC recommended efforts be placed elsewhere. With this de-prioritization, the SSC noted that white hake and the four Atlantic cod stocks would be strong candidates to evaluate DRPs through the concept mapping exercise.

White Hake: The SSC recommended white hake be a prioritized species for DRP consideration, based research for this stock to-date. The SSC has reviewed multiple pieces of work on this topic, one that evaluated changes in recruitment using change point analyses (Cadrin 2023) and another that used dynamic linear modeling to understand changes in productivity via the stock-recruit relationship (Collie 2023). These works together showed that the method of which one uses can influence the detectability of changes in recruitment or productivity, and that the dynamic linear modeling exercise revealed a significant decline in white hake stock productivity in recent decades. White hake has continued to represent a stock where accounting for changes in stock productivity using dynamic reference points, accompanied with a time-varying harvest control rule, can be advantageous for stocks where productivity change signals are strong (Collie et al. 2026). White hake is scheduled to be assessed in 2027, and thus the SSC envisions that work conducted as part of this effort could be useful in the near future. Recent management track assessments and projections used in guiding catch advice have also highlighted the importance of better understanding recruitment for improved projections and understanding rebuilding plan probability.

Atlantic Cod Stocks: The SSC began their deliberations recommending specifically the Georges Bank (GB) and Southern New England (SNE) cod stocks, but later noted that all of these stocks could benefit from the concept mapping exercise. As part of the 2023 Atlantic Cod Research Track Stock Assessment, the cod stocks were evaluated for ecosystem or environmental influence on their vital rates (including recruitment), leveraging both empirical data and integrating fishers' ecosystem knowledge (the final stock assessment report can be found in the Stock Assessment Support Information

Portal, and additional examples of this effort can be found in Kerr et al. 2026). The development of these exercises and processes could provide a basis or starting place for further applying the concept mapping exercise to cod stocks. These stocks are to be assessed in 2027.

The SSC discussed at length the number of stocks to recommend for DRP evaluation given the level of effort required for this exercise, the number of stocks being suggested for consideration, and the unforeseen challenges likely to be encountered when working through the concept mapping process for the first time. While there was interest from the SSC in specifically picking individual cod stocks for evaluation to focus efforts, ultimately, the SSC opted to propose these five stocks based on their scientific merit as opposed to other logistical constraints. The SSC understands that these stocks may face other priorities as part of their next management track assessments that may preclude them from being tested with the DRP concept mapping exercise, but the SSC does believe these five stocks may benefit from stock productivity, recruitment, and DRP evaluation. Some members of the SSC expressed concern with proposing five stocks. Given the DRP Workshop envisaged a rigorous weight-of-evidence based analysis to establish whether a shift to DRPs is warranted, recommending this number of stocks may be overly ambitious (especially with these stocks all to be assessed in 2027), and could warrant testing a single stock.

The SSC also recommended that an SSC Subgroup be established to assist with the implementation or testing of the DRP concept mapping for the candidate stock(s). Strong support was expressed for creating an SSC subgroup to collaborate directly with NEFSC analysts, assist with scoping, and help establish a consistent, standardized approach across stocks.

Lastly, the SSC recommended including the addition of changes in natural mortality (*M*) as a factor to evaluate within the concept mapping exercise. While empirical data on *M* are largely lacking for stocks, information that could inform changes in *M* for a stock would be insightful for understanding stock productivity changes.

Summary of Recommendations

1. The SSC recommends considering White Hake and the Atlantic Cod stocks (GB, SNE, eGOM, wGOM) for consideration for the DRP concept mapping exercise.
2. The SSC recommends a subgroup of the SSC be formed to help partners with executing the concept mapping exercise for the recommended stocks.
3. The SSC recommends including potential natural mortality indicators in the biological indicator category for evaluation.

MEETING DOCUMENTS

Risk Policy

1. Presentation on Risk Policy Concept and implementation, J. Peros, NEFMC
2. Risk Policy Statement and Concept, August 4, 2026

Social Science Subcommittee

1. Presentation on SSS updates, SSS members
2. SSS report, November 21, 2025

3. SSS report, April 1, 2026
4. CINAR Workshop Report, July 31, 2026

Atlantic Herring

1. June 2026 Management Track Assessment*
    a. Assessment presentation
    b. Atlantic Herring 2026 Management Track Assessment Report, June 5, 2026
    c. 2026 Management Track Assessment Peer Review Report
2. Herring PDT information
    a. PDT presentation
    b. Atlantic Herring PDT and TC memo to the SSC on OFLs and ABCs for FY 2027-2031
    c. Risk Policy Report for Atlantic herring
3. Framework Adjustment 9 Affected Environment (Section 5.0, p. 25-75), February 11, 2022
4. Previous SSC recommendations
    a. July 2024 for FY2025-2027
        i. Meeting materials, July 30-31, 2024
        ii. SSC report, August 16, 2024
    b. April 2025, for FY 2025-2027
        i. Meeting materials, April 4, 2025
        ii. SSC report, April 10, 2025

Dynamic Reference Points

1. Presentation by SSC Chair
2. Workshop final report, July 30, 2026

Other Documents

1. Presentation on Other Business topics
2. NOAA/NEFSC State of the Ecosystem Reports for the Northeast U.S. Shelf

APPENDIX I - MINORITY REPORT FOR ATLANTIC HERRING OFLS AND ABCS

A minority of the SSC supported alternative approaches to setting the Atlantic herring OFL/ABC which are based on the projection runs of the assessment scientist and the herring PDT and also more closely honor the existing Atlantic herring harvest control rule.

Each of the seven projection runs produced a unique OFL and ABC by varying the assumptions for Numbers At Age (NAA), recruitment, and catch (see presentation by NEFMC PDT staff lead for details). We believe this approach honors the recommendation by the Atlantic herring management track assessment peer reviewers that the original two sets of projections and sensitivity analysis provide "context for catch advice setting" and that by developing the additional five sets of projections the PDT has extended the projections sufficiently that they are no longer limited in their utility.

Following this logic, we recommend that the seven sets of OFLs and ABCs be treated as an ensemble and averaged together. This yields for fishing year 2027 an OFL of 13,656 mt (CV = 20.2%) and an ABC of 5,162 mt (CV = 17.1%). The low CV suggests the projections produce relatively similar results despite varying NAAs, recruitment and catch assumptions. We further recommend that OFL and ABC be held constant at the same level for fishing years 2028-2031.

Recognizing concerns raised during the SSC discussions over the decreasing Fmsy and ramped portion of the control rule, we additionally recommend as an alternative a constant ABC based on 70% of the OFL, corresponding to 9,559 mt. The 80% value recommended by the majority reflects the maximum fraction from the control rule for when the stock is above 50% of SSB_{MSY} and was explicitly intended to account for the role of herring as forage (i.e., leaving 20% for the ecosystem). The control rule, notably including the ramped portion that decreases the ratio of F/Fmsy below the 80% maximum as biomass drops below 50% of SSB_{MSY}, was also accepted as the rebuilding plan for the stock. Given the overfished status and low biomass of the stock, it being in the fifth year of a rebuilding plan, and the strong scientific uncertainty associated with the assessment, we recommend the 70% as a lower and more cautious value than the 80% value that is intended for when the stock is in healthy status.

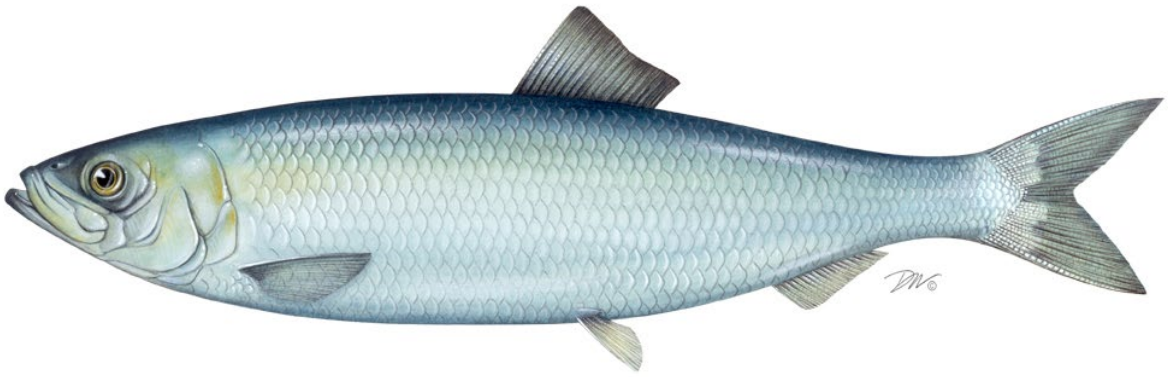
Finally, we believe that these approaches honor the low risk tolerance recommended for the stock by the NEFMC's new approach to assessing risk. From the PDT's factor scoring and Council weightings under the new risk policy, the calculated probability of management success is 94%, putting the stock well into the low risk tolerance category. Here the risk to management is of setting ABCs that lead to overfishing and failing to rebuild, and the risk policy would suggest targeting 6% likelihood of these outcomes. Under the set of 7 projections provided by the PDT, the probability there is overfishing in 2026 under the previously set catch limits ranges from 52 to 100%, with an average of 76%. The probability of being rebuilt by the 2031 target date ranges from 0 to 63%, with an average of 26%. Acknowledging that these numbers are based on uncertain projections, and that setting a constant ABC mitigates risk, these likelihoods nonetheless suggest a strong risk of failing to achieve management success. Our recommended approaches suggest the ABC for this declining stock should be set at a level below the current ABC, increasing the likelihood of management success in the form of avoiding overfishing and promoting rebuilding.

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR ATLANTIC HERRING
(Clupea harengus)

2025 FISHING YEAR



Prepared by the Atlantic Herring Plan Review Team
Draft for Board Review
October 2026

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Table of Contents

I. Status of Fishery Management Plan 1
II. Status of the Stock 5
III. Status of the Fishery 6
2025 Fishing Season 8
Days Out Provisions for Area 1A 9
Spawning Area Closures 10
IV. Status of Research and Monitoring 11
V. Status of Assessment Advice 13
VI. Management Measures and Issues 13
VII. PRT Recommendations 13
IX. References 16
X. Figures 17
Appendix. Days Out and Spawning Closure Notices from 2025 20

I. Status of Fishery Management Plan

Date of FMP Approval	November 1993
Amendments	Amendment 1 (February 1999) Amendment 2 (March 2006) Amendment 3 (February 2016)
Addenda	Addendum I to Amendment 1 (July 2000) Technical Addendum #1A to Amendment I (October 2001) Addendum II to Amendment I (February 2002) Technical Addendum 1 to Amendment 2 (August 2006) Addendum I to Amendment 2 (March 2009) Addendum II to Amendment 2 (December 2010) Addendum V to Amendment 2 (October 2012) Addendum VI to Amendment 2 (August 2013) Addendum I to Amendment 3 (May 2017) Addendum II to Amendment 3 (May 2019)
Management Unit	US waters of the northwest Atlantic Ocean from the shoreline to the seaward boundary of the Exclusive Economic Zone (East Coast of Maine), and from the US/Canadian border to the southern end of the species range (Cape Hatteras, North Carolina).
States With Declared Interest	Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey
Active Boards/Committees	Atlantic Herring Management Board (Since August 2018; previously Section), Advisory Panel, Technical Committee, Stock Assessment Subcommittee, and Plan Review Team

Atlantic herring (*Clupea harengus*), also known as sea herring, are an oceanic fish that occur in large schools and undergo seasonal inshore-offshore migrations. Herring are important to the Northwest Atlantic ecosystem as a forage species and to the fishing industry as bait for lobster, blue crab, and tuna. To a lesser degree this resource also serves as a food, typically canned, pickled, or smoked. The U.S. Atlantic herring fishery is currently managed as a single stock through complementary plans by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC).

The stockwide annual catch limit (ACL) is divided amongst four distinct management areas (Figure 1): inshore Gulf of Maine (Area 1A), offshore Gulf of Maine (Area 1B), Southern New England/Mid- Atlantic (Area 2), and Georges Bank (Area 3). The Area 1A fishery is managed by ASMFC's Atlantic Herring Management Board (Board), which includes representatives from Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.

Amendment 1 (February 1999) was developed in order to maintain consistency between the ASMFC and NEFMC FMPs. This amendment establishes the same overfishing definition and biological reference points as the NEFMC, which were created under guidelines stipulated in the revised Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act prior to the 2006 re-authorization. The overfishing and biological reference points are based on an estimate of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for the entire stock complex.

Amendment 1 also establishes "days out" control measures which prohibit directed fishing on Friday and Saturday when 50% of the TAC is projected to be harvested, Friday through Sunday when 75% of the TAC is projected to be harvested, and Thursday through Sunday when 90% of the TAC is projected to be harvested.

Addendum I (July 2000)
The Section developed Addendum I (to Amendment 1) to re-address the protection of spawning areas because NOAA Fisheries rejected the spawning closures in federal waters for Management Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine). Specifically, Addendum I redefines the state waters spawning areas outlined in Amendment I. This addendum also changed the due date for annual state compliance reports to February 1st.

Technical Addendum 1a (October 2001)
The Section approved Technical Addendum #1a (to Amendment 1) to change the delineation of the Eastern Maine spawning boundary because the spawning aggregations were not adequately protected in 2000.

Addendum II (February 2002)
Addendum II (to Amendment 1) was developed in conjunction with the NEFMC's Framework Adjustment I to allocate the Management Area 1A Total Allowable Catch (TAC) on a seasonal basis. Addendum II also specifies the procedures for allocating the annual Internal Waters Processing (IWP) quota.

Amendment 2 (March 2006)
Amendment 2 was developed in close coordination with the NEFMC as they developed Amendment 1 to the Federal Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring. The NEFMC's Amendment 1 is complementary to ASMFC Amendment 2 in that both documents' goal is optimum yield through coordinated management between state and federal waters. Amendment 2 altered the management boundaries, set biological reference points, expanded on the TAC specification setting process, established research set-asides, altered days out measures, removed any allowance for fishing during spawning closures, and granted exemptions for east of Cutler fixed gear fishermen.

Changes to the management boundaries were based on recommendations from the 2003 TRAC to better reflect spawning distributions and minimize reporting errors. The new boundaries result in a larger boundary for Area 3.

The biological reference points, based on MSY = 220,000 metric tons (mt), give a measurable criteria for overfishing and overfished and allow management to determine if rebuilding efforts are necessary. The TAC process only changed slightly with Amendment 2. Amendment 2 allows analytical approaches other than those defined in Amendment 1 to establish area-specific TACs. These changes allow the TC to use the best available science when recommending TACs rather than binding them to methods that were the best when Amendment 1 was created. Another change to the TAC process under Amendment 2 is that the Section will set the TACs for three years with the flexibility to adjust in interim years.

Research set asides were established under Amendment 2 allowing up to 3% of an area to be designated for and allocated to research.

In addition to establishing a number of new management measures, Amendment 2 altered several measures enacted in Amendment 1. Default percentages for setting days out were removed to allow states adjacent to an area to meet and agree on which days to take out as best meets the needs of the fishery for that given year. The 20% spawning tolerance for directed fishing during spawning closures was removed and a "Zero-Tolerance" measure was enacted. Amendment 2 also granted exemptions for east of Cutler fixed gear fishermen from days out and spawning closure restrictions established in Amendment 1. These exemptions were granted because the east of Cutler landings are part of a New Brunswick stock and have been insignificantly small historically. These herring do not often migrate inshore until after the Area 1A TAC is harvested making exemptions the only way to protect this historical fishery. These landings are counted against the overall Area 1A TAC.

Technical Addendum I (August 2006)

Technical Addendum I was developed to clarify the intent of the "Zero Tolerance" spawning provision of Amendment 2. Some states were interpreting the zero tolerance to mean that you could still fish in an area closed to spawning as long as no spawn herring were present in the area. This addendum makes it clear that *any vessel is prohibited to fish for, take, land, or possess herring from or within a restricted spawning area.*

Addendum I (February 2009)

Addendum I (to Amendment 2) was developed to control effort in Area 1A using a combination of quotas, additional days out restrictions, and weekly state reporting requirements to effectively manage quota. Specifically, Addendum I allows states adjacent to Area 1A to select bimonthly, trimester, or seasonal quotas as best meets the needs of the fishery. States also have the flexibility to save quota from January – May and distribute it to later in the year when price and demand are often higher. Fishermen are restricted to one landing per day and state-only fishermen must report weekly in order to effectively manage quota.

Addendum II (December 2010)

Addendum II was designed to mirror the NEFMC Amendment 4 and changes the specifications' definitions (and associated acronyms), modifies the process to set specifications, and establishes accountability measure (AM) paybacks. Under Addendum II, the overall quota is

now called an annual catch limit (ACL) and the quota allocated to each management area (Area 1A, 1B, 2, 3) is called a sub-ACL (previously TAC). In addition, if harvest in any area is exceeded, the sub-ACL will be reduced by an amount equal to the overage the first year after final landings are available.

NEFMC's Amendment 4 includes provisions to bring the Herring FMP into compliance with provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006. It changes the specification setting process and definitions to include an overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, annual catch limits, and accountability measures, as well as involvement of a Science and Statistical Committee.

Addendum V (August 2012)
Addendum V refines and clarifies current spawning regulations without making significant changes. Specifically, Addendum V establishes when closures are triggered based on the percent of stage III – V spawn herring that are greater than or equal to 23 cm and increased the number of samples states are required to collect from 50 to 100 (states are currently sampling at this level). The Addendum replaces all spawning regulations in previous management documents to provide a single, clear document for states to use when complying with ASMFC spawning regulations.

Addendum VI (August 2013)
The Addendum improves alignment between state and federal Atlantic herring management by allowing the use of consistent tools across all four management areas of the species range. The Addendum's measures include (1) seasonal splitting of the annual catch limit sub-components (sub-ACLs) for Areas 1B, 2, and 3; (2) up to 10% carryover of a sub-ACL for all management areas; (3) the establishment of triggers to initiate the closing of directed fisheries; and (4) the use of the annual specification process to set triggers.

Amendment 3 (February 2016)
Amendment 3 refines the spawning closure system, modifies the fixed gear set-aside, and includes an empty fish hold provision contingent on federal adoption. The Amendment allows for the use of a modified GSI-based spawning monitoring system to track reproductive maturity in an effort to better align the timing of spawning area closures with the onset of spawning, which was tested and evaluated for effectiveness during the 2016 fishing season. Additionally, the fixed gear set-aside that was previously available to fixed gear fishermen exclusively only through November 1, is now accessible to them as long as the directed fishery is open. Amendment 3 consolidates prior amendments (and associated addenda) and recent management decisions into a single document; it is now the comprehensive document for Atlantic herring management in state waters.

Addendum I (May 2017)
Addendum I includes management measures intended to stabilize the rate of catch in the Area 1A fishery and distribute the seasonal quota throughout Trimester 2 (June through September), which has 72.8% of the season's allocation. For the 2017 fishing season, the addendum

established that the Section would separately address days out provisions for federal herring Category A vessels and small-mesh bottom trawl vessels with a federal herring Category C or D permit. In addition to landing restrictions associated with the days out program, Category A vessels are now prohibited from possessing herring caught from Area 1A during a day out of the fishery. Small-mesh bottom trawl vessels with a Category C or D permit must notify states of their intent to fish in Area 1A prior to June 1st. The addendum also implements a weekly harvester landing limit for vessels with a Category A permit for the 2017 fishing season. Forty-five days prior to the start of the fishing season, Category A vessels will notify states of their intent to fish in Area 1A, including a specification of gear type, to provide states with an estimate of effort to calculate the weekly landing limit. States may also either implement measures that herring caught in Area 1A can only be landed by the respective harvester vessel (i.e. no carrier vessels) or that herring carrier vessels are limited to receiving at-sea transfers from one harvester vessel per week and landing once per 24-hour period. Through the addendum, NOAA Fisheries granted access to vessel monitoring system-submitted daily catch report data for select staff in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts to provide real-time data for the states to implement a weekly landing limit. The Section also approved continuing the use of the GSI30-based forecast system to determine spawning closures in Area 1A.

Addendum II (May 2019)

Addendum II strengthens spawning protections in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) by initiating a closure when a lower percentage of the population is spawning (from approximately 25% to 20%), and extending the closure for a longer time (from four to six weeks). The Addendum also modifies the trigger level necessary to reclose the fishery, with the fishery reclosing when 20% or more of the sampled herring are mature but have not yet spawned. These changes to spawning protections are in response to the results of the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment which showed reduced levels of recruitment and spawning stock biomass over the past five years, with 2016 recruitment levels the lowest on record.

II. Status of the Stock

A research track assessment was completed (NEFSC 2025) and underwent peer review in March 2025. The peer review determined that all terms of reference were adequately addressed. Notably, the research track assessment transitioned the stock to the Woods Hole Assessment Model (WHAM), a state space modeling approach, to allow for future consideration of environmental covariates and to estimate additional uncertainty for the stock.

The following 2026 Management Track Stock Assessment (NEFSC 2026) applied the new model to determine stock status and was completed by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in June 2026. The management track assessment, which includes data through 2025, indicates the Atlantic herring stock is overfished but not experiencing overfishing based on the biological reference points for spawning stock biomass (SSB) and fishing mortality (*F*). This is the same stock status as determined by the 2024 management track assessment. SSB was estimated to be 35,528 metric tons in 2025, well below the SSB target of 188,214 metric tons. Fishing mortality was estimated to be 0.121 in 2025, also below the overfishing threshold of 0.272. The

assessment indicates continued poor recruitment and poor survival in recent years is driving stock status.

The management track peer review found all terms of reference were met except for the projections term of reference, which was considered partially met (Merrick et al. 2026). Similar to prior assessments, one of the continued concerns is that the projections are overly optimistic.

III. Status of the Fishery

There is an Atlantic herring fishery in the United States and Canada (Figure 3). Herring in the US are primarily caught using mobile gear (e.g., purse seines and mid-water trawls). Herring in Canada and a small portion of US-caught herring are caught using fixed gear (e.g., weir fishery).

The U.S. Atlantic herring fishery is controlled by annual catch limits (ACL) set by NOAA Fisheries. The stockwide ACL is distributed among the four management areas. Specifications are set every three years and adjusted annually to account for overages or underages from the previous fishing season. Once 92% of the sub-ACL for an area is reached, the respective fishery is closed. The stockwide fishery closes when 95% of the total ACL is projected to be reached. Following a closure, there is a 2,000 lb. trip limit to allow for incidental bycatch of Atlantic herring for the remainder of the fishing year. In addition to quota-based closures, the "days out" and spawning closure programs in Area 1A provide additional measures to control fishing effort.

For the 2025 fishing season, initial specifications were in place through early December when they were revised based on updated information from the previous stock assessment. The revised ACL was 4,556 metric tons (MT). The ACL is further subdivided into sub-ACLs by the Atlantic herring management areas as follows per the revised 2025 specifications: Area 1A = 1,317 MT; Area 1B = 196 MT; Area 2 = 1,267 MT; and Area 3 = 1,777 MT. The fixed gear set-aside was 30 MT. There was no research-set-aside for 2025. The Board established the following seasonal allocations for the 2025 Area 1A sub-ACL: 72.8% available from June 1 – September 30 and 27.2% available from October 1 – December 31.

The domestic Atlantic herring fishery is predominantly commercial; preliminary data indicate recreational harvest accounted for less than 1% of landings in 2025. For the past five years (2021-2025), recreational harvest has accounted for an average 1.0% of total landings each year.

Since 2000, annual commercial landings by the United States Atlantic herring fleet averaged roughly 133.6 million pounds (60,584 MT) (ACCSP, Figure 4). Since 2013, commercial landings have generally decreased and reached the lowest levels the time series in 2025 at 6.96 million pounds (3,158 MT) (Figures 3-4).

The Interstate FMP implements specific effort control measures for Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine). Catch, in metric tons, from Area 1A is shown in Table 1a. In 2025, 1,786 MT were caught in Area 1A, representing 77% of the final Area 1A sub-ACL. The initial Area 1A sub-ACL was 783 MT which was caught (and the area closed with a 2,000 pound possession limit) by August 5. Following the reallocation of 1,000 MT from the management uncertainty buffer based on New Brunswick weir landings, the additional quota was caught and the area closed with a 2,000 pound possession limit on November 24. After implementation of the revised, increased quota in early December, the states set one landing day for December 23. However, the quota was not caught that day due, at least in part, to poor fishing conditions.

Table 1a: Area 1A catch, sub-ACL, and associated directed fishery closures from 2016-2025. 2024 data are preliminary. Source of catch information: NOAA Fisheries.

Year	Area 1A Sub-ACL (mt)	Area 1A Catch (mt)	% Utilized	Area 1A Sub-ACL Closure
2016	30,524^	27,806	91%	Oct-18
2017	32,115^	28,682	89%	NA
2018	28,038	24,861	89%	NA
2019	5,223^	4,916	94%	Nov-27
2020	4,244^	4,353	103%	Nov-11 Nov-7 state waters
2021	2,609^	2,856	109%	Nov-11 Nov-8 state waters
2022	2,075^	2,325	116%	Nov-8 Nov-7 state waters
2023	4,345^	4,444	102%	Nov-8 Nov-6 state waters
2024	6,504^	6,112	94%	Nov-14 Nov-12 state waters
2025	2,317^	1,786	77%	Closed Aug-5 and Nov-24 under initial quotas; full quota not caught after revised quota implemented

^Area 1A sub-ACL increased by 1,000 mt from the management uncertainty buffer during the season as required when the New Brunswick weir fishery lands less than a specified amount through Oct 1.

For other areas in 2025, starting January 8, a 2,000 pound possession limit was implemented in Area 1B due to the quota being reached for that area.

Catch, in metric tons, from all management areas is shown in Table 1b for the last five years.

Table 1b: Catch and sub-ACL for all management areas 1A, 1B, 2, and 3 from 2021-2025. Source: NOAA Fisheries

Year	Area	Sub-ACL (mt)	Catch (mt)	% Utilized
2021	1A	2,609	2,856	109%
	1B	239	0	0%
	2	652	191	29%
	3	2,181	2,222	102%
	Overall	**5,128**	**5,268**	**103%**
2022	1A	2,075	2,325	112%
	1B	0	6	-
	2	1,300	79	6%
	3	1,824	1,825	100.1%
	Overall	**4,813**	**4,234**	**88%**
2023	1A	4,345	4,444	102%
	1B	555	199	36%
	2	3,589	465	13%
	3	4,806	5,120	107%
	Overall	**13,287**	**10,228**	**77%**
2024	1A	6,504	6,112	94%
	1B	819	82	10%
	2	5,449	66	1%
	3	7,484	4,179	56%
	Overall	**20,141**	**10,439**	**52%**
2025	1A	2,317	1,786	77%
	1B	196	215	110%
	2	1,267	77	6%
	3	1,777	1,093	61.5%
	Overall	**5,556**	**3,171.5**	**57%**

2025 Fishing Season

Coastwide landings in 2025 were approximately 6.96 million pounds, which is about a 68% decrease from 2024 landings. This aligns with the 72% decrease in quota in 2025 relative to 2024.

Maine and Massachusetts accounted for the majority (>98%) of the commercial Atlantic herring landings in 2025 (Table 2), similar to previous years. Landings in Maine decreased by over 70% relative to 2024 and landings in Massachusetts decreased by over 50% relative to 2024.

Rhode Island landings were about the same in 2025 as the previous year. Rhode Island landings decreased substantially from a high in 2023 of 1.6 million pounds back down to less than 150,000 pounds in 2024-2025, similar to the 2022 landings. Landings in Connecticut and New York remain very low at less than 1% each of the coastwide total. Connecticut noted the very low landings in recent years and are substantially less than landings in the early 2000s, and

noted the Atlantic herring fishery for bait component has diminished with the reduction in the number of active Connecticut commercial lobstermen in the last twenty years.

It is also important to note that some vessels regularly land herring in states outside of their homeport state (e.g., New Jersey vessels often land in other states).

The PRT noted that Atlantic herring landings can be variable in some states, particularly from Areas 2 and 3, dependent on the occurrence of mackerel trips. Additionally, Atlantic herring may overlap with other species in those areas in certain gears (e.g., small mesh bottom trawls and midwater trawls), which can be challenging for harvesters if possession limits are in place for some overlap species. For example, Atlantic mackerel trips limits have been restrictive to midwater trawl vessels targeting Atlantic herring.

A small portion of total Atlantic herring landings are from fixed gear, primarily in Maine state waters. Fixed gear harvesters in Maine utilized the entire 30 MT fixed gear set-aside in 2025 by early June. Over the past few years, anecdotal reports from Maine fixed gear harvesters indicate consistent sightings of adult Atlantic herring returning to state waters in early spring, as well as observations of a more mixed size range of fish. The ability of Maine's fixed gear harvesters to catch herring depends on several factors including the timing of herring availability relative to other species and associated bycatch limitations of species like river herring.

Fixed gear harvest in other states has been very low or zero in recent years. New Hampshire has had zero fixed gear landings for the past ten years. Massachusetts fixed gear landings have been less than 20,000 pounds each year for the past ten years (further details are confidential). Rhode Island fixed gear landings are inconsistent and confidential.

Table 2. 2025 commercial landings by state and percent of total harvest. Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse.

	Commercial Landings (lbs.)	**Percent of Total**
ME	3,489,533	50%
NH	0	0%
MA	3,350,790	48%
RI	120,073	<2%
CT	0	0%
NY	1,004	<1%
NJ	0	0%

Days Out Provisions for Area 1A

Table 3 outlines the 'days out' program and effort control measures which were implemented in Area 1A in 2025. The Board implemented seasonal allocations for the 2025 fishery which allocated the Area 1A sub-ACL between Season 1: June-September (72.8%) and Season 2: October-December (27.2%). Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts delayed the start of

the fishery until July 27. Specifications for Season 1 established five (5) consecutive landing days a week for vessels with a Category A permit, and six (6) consecutive landing days a week for vessels with a Category C or D permit. Vessels with a Category A permit were also limited to a weekly landing limit of 240,000 pounds (6 trucks) per harvester vessel. The fishery moved to zero (0) landings days starting August 5 through September 30 as the harvest had exceeded the Area 1A sub-ACL under the initial quota.

Landing days were set at zero for Season 2 from October 1 through November 24. Following the reallocation of 1,000 MT from the management uncertainty buffer to the Area 1A sub-ACL based on catch information from the Canadian New Brunswick weir fishery, the fishery moved to two consecutive landing days per week starting November 24 at 12:01 a.m. and the fishery in state waters closed and landings were prohibited effective November 24 at 6:00 p.m. as 92% of the sub-ACL was projected to have been harvested. In early December, NOAA Fisheries implemented the revised, increased quotas. In response, the states set one landing day for December 23. However, the quota was not caught due, at least in part, to poor weather conditions.

Table 3: 2025 'days out' program for seasonal quota periods in Area 1A.

Seasonal quota periods	Date Effective	Consecutive Landing Days for Category A Permit	Weekly Landings Limit for Category A Permit	Consecutive Landing Days for Category C/D Permits	Poundage that can be Transferred to a Carrier Vessel
1	Jul 27*-Aug 5	5	240,000	6	0
	Aug 5-Sept 30	0	0	0	0
2	Oct 1-Nov 24	0	NA**	NA**	NA**
	Nov 24	2	NA**	NA**	NA**
	Nov 24-Dec 22	0	NA**	NA**	NA**
	Dec 23	1	NA**	NA**	NA**
	Dec 24-Dec 31	0	NA**	NA**	NA**

**Zero landings days were specified for June 1 until the start of the fishery. Fishery did not begin until July 27 in all three Area 1A states (Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts).*

***Weekly Landing Limits, Landing Days for Category C/D Permits, and Carrier Vessel limits can only be specified through Sept 30*

Spawning Area Closures

The Atlantic Herring Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) fishery regulations include seasonal spawning closures for portions of state and federal waters in Eastern Maine, Western Maine and Massachusetts/New Hampshire. In 2017, the Commission's Atlantic Herring Section permanently implemented the GSI_{30} Based Forecast System for spawning closures in Area 1A. This forecasting method relies upon at least three samples, each containing at least 25 female

herring in gonadal stages III-V, to trigger a spawning closure. If sufficient samples are not available, the spawning closure occurs on the default dates outlined in Amendment 3. As noted in the Status of the Fishery Management Plan section, Addendum II to Amendment 3 further modified the trigger for initiating a closure as well as the length of closures.

In 2025, the Eastern Maine spawning area closed on the default date of August 28th through October 8th, given there were no samples from the area at the time. The Western Maine and Massachusetts/New Hampshire spawning closed on the default date of September 23rd through November 3rd given there were insufficient samples for both areas.

IV. Status of Research and Monitoring

Under Amendment 3, states are not required to conduct monitoring for Atlantic herring. However, state survey programs designed to catch other species may encounter herring regularly, so some states do collect biological information on Atlantic herring. A summary of these surveys results from the state compliance reports follows.

Maine and New Hampshire: These states jointly operate an inshore bottom trawl survey in the spring and fall that is designed to catch groundfish, but regularly encounters adult Atlantic herring. In 2025, the survey reported Atlantic herring observations during both the Spring and Fall surveys. In the Spring 2025 survey, Atlantic Herring were caught in 86 of the 104 tows, and a maximum of 20,742 were caught in one tow (nearly three-fold increase from Spring 2024). In the Fall survey, Atlantic Herring were caught in 62 of the 82 tows, and a maximum of 16,423 were caught in one tow (a decrease from the maximum tow in Fall 2024).

Maine Department of Marine Resources also conducts commercial portside catch sampling. In 2025, a total of 9 biological sampling events occurred, covering purse seine and single mid-water trawl trips. The collection of samples in 2025 was a decrease from 2024 when 44 samples were collected. This reflects the decline in sub-ACLs and fishing activity.

New Hampshire Fish and Game Department also conducts a juvenile finfish seine survey in the Great Bay, its tributaries, and other coastal harbors. In 2025, 97,505 Atlantic herring were observed during the months of June, July, and September. This is much higher than the 2021-2024 observations.

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries noted that along with Gloucester Marine Genomics Institute, Maine DMR, and Canada Department of Fisheries Oceans, were awarded a NOAA Saltonstall-Kennedy grant to investigate genetic stock structure of Atlantic herring. Collection of samples began in Spring 2024 and continued through 2025. Two commercial otter trawlers and one commercial tuna/lobster vessel were contracted, and they collected six 150-fish samples from punitive spawning grounds. These samples were processed, and biological information was collected in support of genetic analysis. Fisheries dependent samples were also collected in support of the grant and will be processed in 2026.

MA DMF conducts the seasonal Resource Assessment Program trawl survey each spring and fall in waters of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The spring survey ran from May 5 to May 21, caught 5,141 Atlantic herring on 33 out of 100 hauls (33%). The mean fork length was 5.52 cm with a standard deviation of 1.59. The fall survey operated from September 2 to September 18 caught 493 Atlantic herring on 6 out of 100 hauls (6%). The mean fork length was 26.46 cm with a standard deviation of 1.77.

Rhode Island Division of Marine Fisheries conducts a Seasonal Trawl Survey to develop abundance indices for Atlantic herring. The survey is conducted seasonally (spring/fall) in Rhode Island and Block Island Sound and monthly in Narragansett Bay. 2025 survey results will be added when available. Fishery-independent monitoring for 2024 revealed significantly contrasting signals between monthly and seasonal surveys. There was higher monthly biomass (3.9 kg/tow) and abundance (527.17 fish/tow) in 2024 when compared with the five-year average (2019-2023) of 81.46 fish/tow and 0.41 kg/tow. The seasonal spring survey trawls had a higher number of fish than the five-year spring average with 290.1 fish/tow, and less total biomass of 1.0 kg/tow in 2024, as compared to 2019-2023 with 115.73 fish/tow, and 1.23 kg/tow. Overall, the number of individuals and biomass of herring per tow in the monthly surveys continues to trend upward for 2023-2024. Additionally, Rhode Island occasionally sees a few Atlantic herring in winter-set fyke nets in the south coast salt ponds, less than 20 per winter, which may mean there is some Atlantic herring biomass staging in Rhode Island waters during winter, but not enough for small state vessels to target.

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection monitors Atlantic herring through the Long Island Sound Trawl Survey (LISTS), which is conducted each spring and fall since 1984. All scheduled sampling for the Long Island Sound Trawl Survey was canceled in 2025 with no tows being completed during the spring or fall cruises. Operations are expected to resume during the spring of 2026. Over the last ten years, Atlantic herring abundance has been lower than the time-series average of 1.67 fish/tow. The 2024 spring index of 1.45 fish/tow increased substantially from the previous three years and from the 2015-2017 period of low catch (2017 at 0.11 fish/tow). Although more herring were observed in 2024, they were small herring—not the adults that were historically observed. Most of LISTS catches typically have occurred in the month of April, prior to herring leaving the Sound, however warming water temperatures in Long Island Sound particularly have affected the timing of Atlantic herring leaving, and this is likely one of the main drivers of recent low catches. Most Atlantic herring taken in LISTS spring survey are greater than 20 cm fork length, however, LISTS has seen numerous catches of smaller herring (<10cm) during the spring of 1997-1999 and 2004-2013 and again in the last two years. Typically few fish appear in the fall survey and those present are generally less than 15 cm.

New York has *de minimis* status and does not conduct directed monitoring of Atlantic herring.

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife monitors Atlantic herring through the New Jersey Ocean Trawl Survey, which collects samples during five surveys conducted throughout the year

(January, April, June, August, October) between Sandy Hook, NJ and Cape Henlopen, Delaware. In October 2024 and all of 2025, the Ocean Trawl was not conducted due to vessel issues.

V. Status of Assessment Advice

Priority research recommendations from the 2025 Research Track Assessment are listed on pdf page 21 in the Research Track Peer Review Report. Additional discussion of research recommendations are on page 17 of the June 2026 Management Track Peer Review Report.

VI. Management Measures and Issues

Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring lists the following state regulatory requirements:

1. Each jurisdiction shall prohibit the landing of herring when the management area sub-ACL has been attained.
2. Vessels are prohibited from landing more than 2,000 lbs. of Atlantic herring from Area 1A when the fishery is closed, during a 'day out' or during spawning closures.
3. Jurisdictions will close the directed fishery when 92% of a management area's sub-ACL is projected to be harvested.
4. Each jurisdiction must enact spawning area restrictions that are at least as restrictive as those in Section 4.2.6.
5. States adjacent to Area 1A will implement days out restrictions as identified in Section 4.2.4.1.
6. States are required to implement weekly reporting by all non-federally permitted fishermen on Atlantic herring (including mobile and fixed gear).
7. Any herring vessel transiting a management area that is under a herring spawning closure or a 'day out' must have all of its fishing gear stowed.
8. The harvest of herring for the primary purpose of reduction to meal or meal-like product is prohibited.
9. Internal Water Processing operations will be prohibited from processing herring caught in all state waters.

VII. PRT Recommendations

State Compliance

All states with a declared interest in the management of Atlantic herring have submitted compliance reports and have regulations in place that meet the requirements of the Interstate Fisheries Management Plan for Atlantic Herring as described in Amendment 3.

Request for *De Minimis* Status

A state may be eligible for *de minimis* status if its combined average of the last three years of commercial landings (by weight) constitute less than 1% of the coastwide commercial landings for the same three-year period. **New York has requested *de minimis* status and meets the requirements.** New York's 2023-2025 combined average commercial landings is <0.1%.

PRT Recommendations
The PRT recognizes the decreasing capacity for fishery-dependent data collection over the past few years, due largely to limited resources and low quota and catch levels. It is important for the Board to recognize this challenge and discuss how to move forward with sampling the fishery in a low-capacity scenario, especially with the low quota levels for 2025 and 2026.

One challenge for fishery-dependent data collection is the current lack of funding to continue the Maine Department of Marine Resources' (ME DMR) Atlantic herring portside commercial sampling program, which is currently funded through 2025. ME DMR has been sampling the commercial herring fishery since the 1960s, and the sampling includes age, length, maturity, sex, and other important biological attributes. Without funding, ME DMR is unable to collect biological samples out of state and unable to conduct portside bycatch sampling. These samples have been and are being used in management for the inshore spawning closures and for documenting the effect of management action on the size and age of fish harvested. The commercial sampling program is a vital data source for the WHAM stock assessment model, which is fundamentally age structured. Without this sampling program, Atlantic herring would likely revert to an index, or biomass-based method of assessment, increasing uncertainty. If commercial sampling were halted, it would negatively impact the ability to effectively monitor the rebuilding program for Atlantic herring and severely curtail the ability to provide projections for sustainable quota development using the current harvest control rule.

In Progress: As previously recommended by the PRT, the states are coordinating a sampling plan moving forward for states to collect samples and send them to MEDMR for processing. The states are also coordinating with available NOAA portside sampling capacity.

Another challenge is the insufficient number of samples to inform the three Area 1A spawning closures in some recent years, which may be due, in part, to the timing of Area 1A fishery operation. The Area 1A fishery was at zero landing days from mid-late August through September during 2021-2023 due to the June-September seasonal allocation being reached in early-mid August. Spawning in Area 1A typically occurs in late summer/early fall during this break in directed harvest, and along with reduced effort from small mesh bottom trawl vessels, these factors have contributed to very few samples available to inform spawning closures.

Medium-term: The PRT recommends the Atlantic Herring Technical Committee review the spawning closure protocol in Addendum II and determine if there are any concerns with prolonged periods of insufficient samples and implementation of the default closure dates. In addition, the TC should discuss any recent data on the timing of spawning. The PRT recommends the TC conduct this review within the next five years. In August 2024, the Board noted this should not be a near-term priority for the Technical Committee given the very low quotas and limited new spawning samples in recent years. The PRT recommends this review still occur within the next five years to investigate any potential change in spawning timing and potential overlap with future harvest in Area 1A.

Finally, the PRT also discussed current fixed gear landings and factors impacting fixed gear harvest in Maine where the majority of fixed gear landings occur. Maine's fixed gear harvest was high in 2025 and 2026, which is a departure from the previous few years when fixed gear harvest was well below the 30 mt set-aside level. Over the past few years, anecdotal reports from Maine fixed gear harvesters indicate consistent sightings of adult Atlantic herring returning to state waters in early spring. This indicates that the opportunity for fixed gear harvest could be changing, and the Board should continue to monitor fixed gear landings closely. From a management perspective, the PRT notes the Interstate FMP defines Atlantic herring fixed gear as only stop seines and fish weirs; however, there are other fixed gears being used to harvest Atlantic herring like pound nets and anchored gill nets.

<u>Medium-term</u>: The PRT recommends the Board consider which gears are defined in the FMP as 'fixed gear' during the next management action for Atlantic herring.

IX. References

Merrick, R., Barrett, T., Kerr, L., & Kindsvater, H. 2026. June 2026 Management Track Peer Review Panel Report. 26p.

Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). 2025. Atlantic Herring Research Track Stock Assessment Report. US Dept Commer, Northeast Fish Sci Tech Memo. 335; 91p.

NEFSC. 2026. Atlantic Herring 2026 Management Track Assessment Report (draft working paper for peer review only). US Dept Commer; 8p.

X. Figures

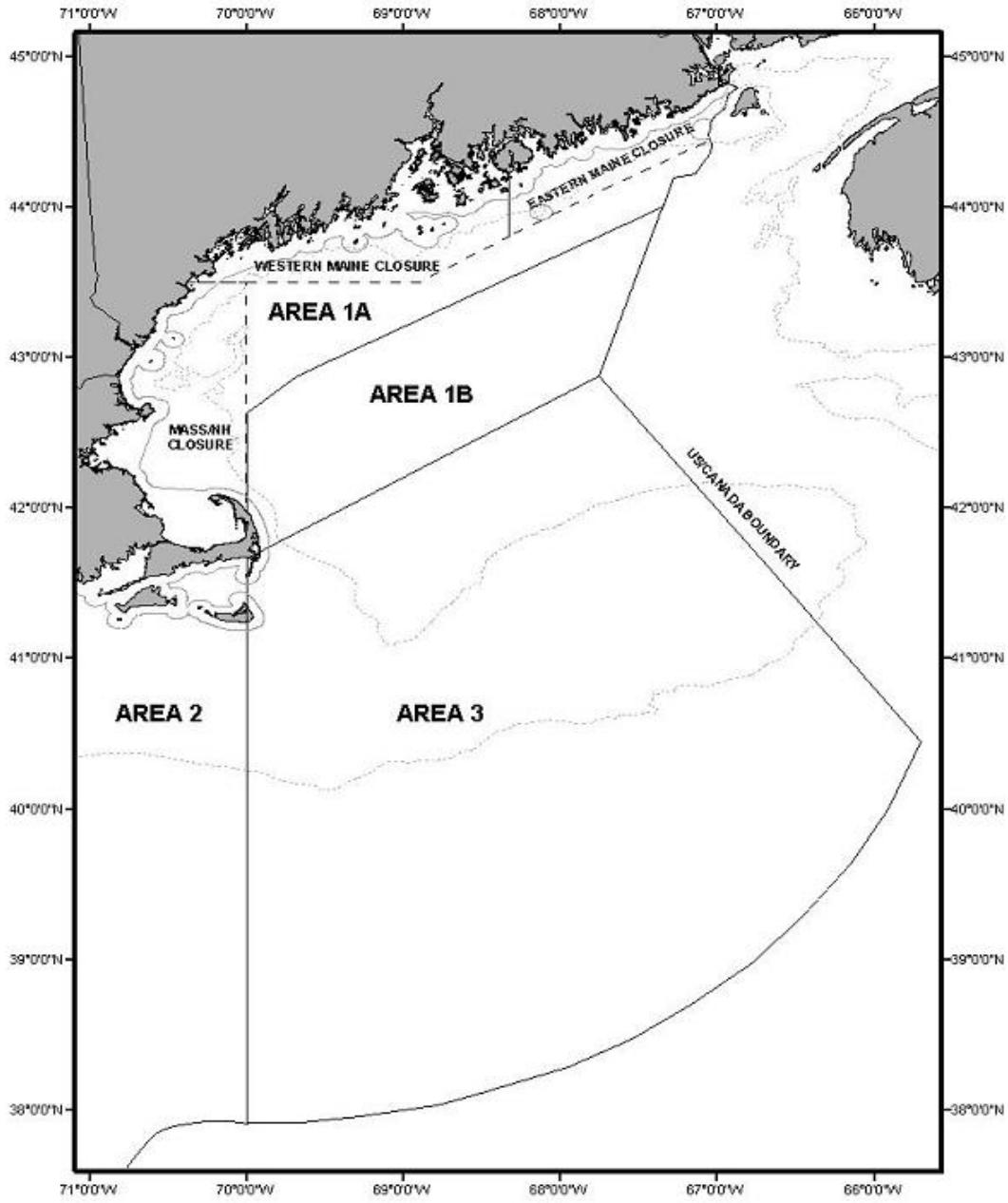


Figure 1. Map of Atlantic herring management areas with boundaries and the three spawning areas are within Area 1A, the inshore region of Gulf of Maine.

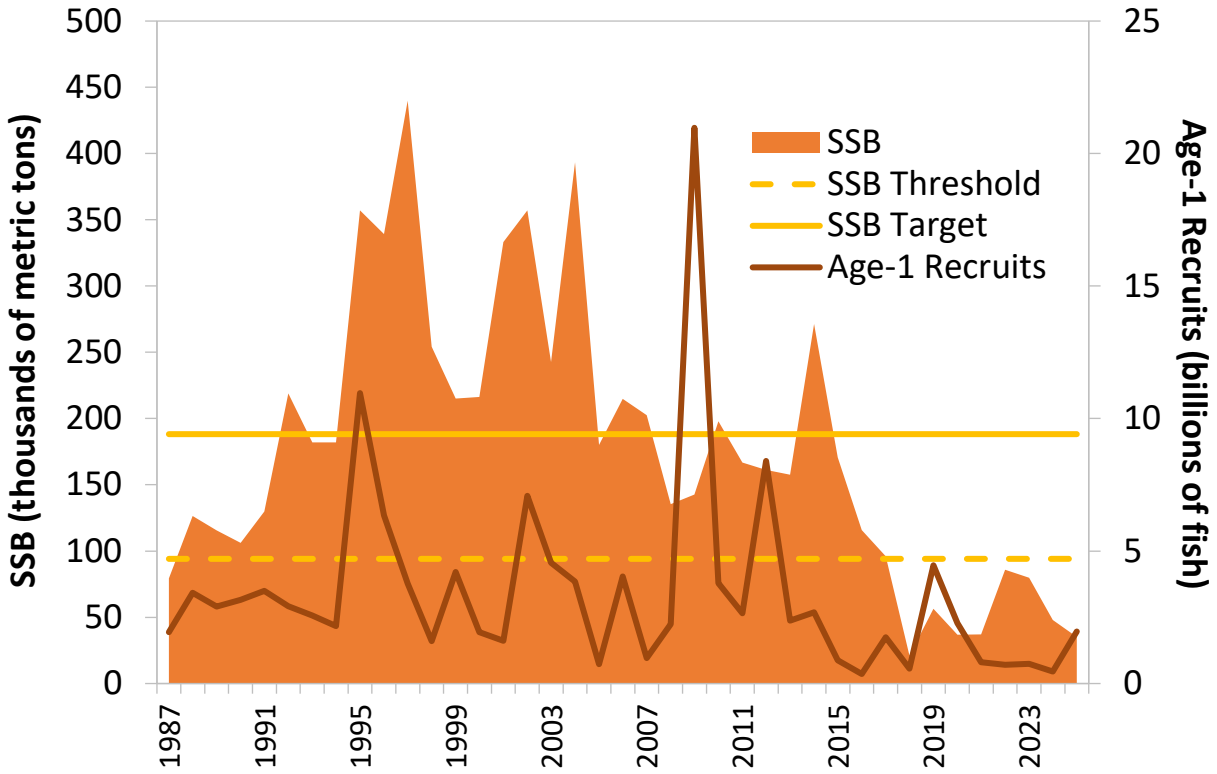


Figure 2. Spawning stock biomass and recruitment from 1987 to 2025. Source: 2026 Management Track Assessment

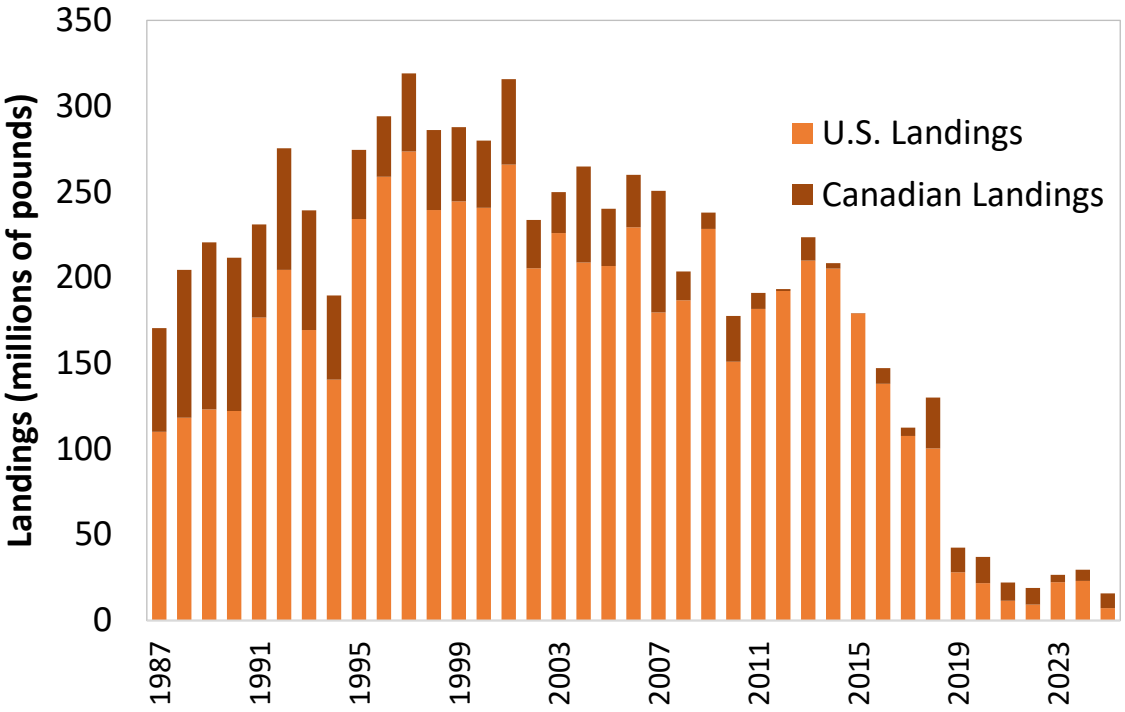


Figure 3. U.S. and Canadian commercial landings from 1987 to 2025. Source: 2026 Management Track Assessment

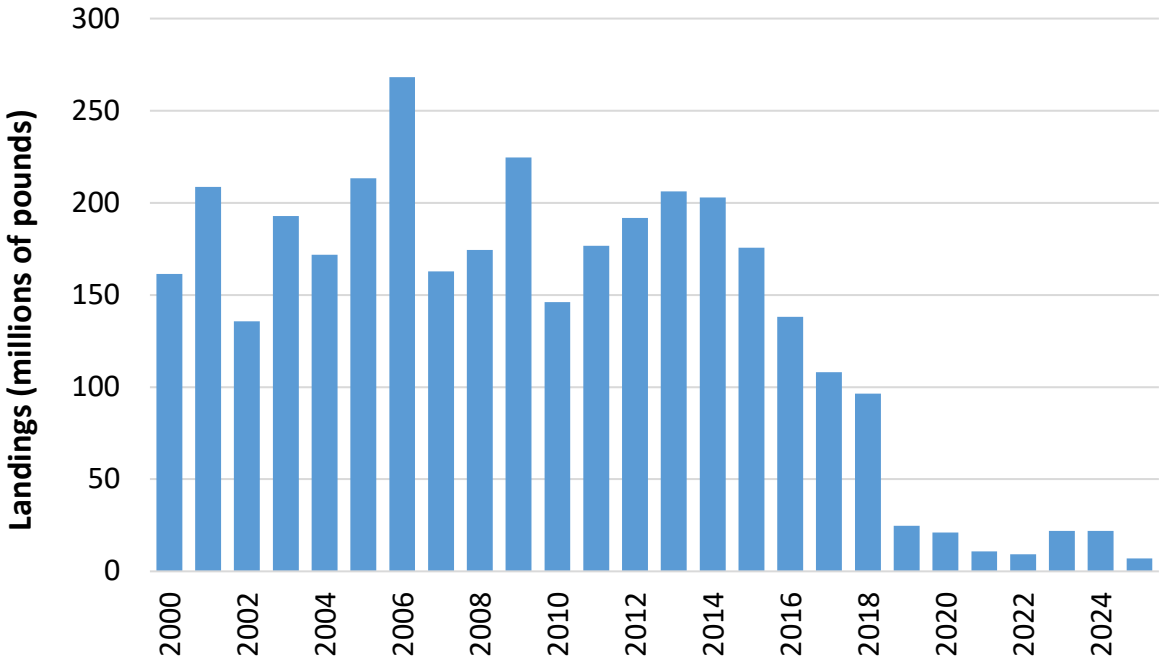


Figure 4. Commercial Atlantic herring landings (non-confidential landings only) by the U.S. fleet from 2000-2025. Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse Non-Confidential.

Appendix. Days Out and Spawning Closure Notices from 2025

2025 days out and spawning closure notices are enclosed in the following pages.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Atlantic Herring Technical Committee, Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel, Interested Parties**

FROM: **Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director** TMK

DATE: **May 15, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Area 1A 2025 Effort Controls**

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Atlantic Herring Management Board members from Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts set the effort control measures for the 2025 Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) fishery for June 1 – September 30.

The Area 1A sub-annual catch limit (ACL) is 1,184 metric tons (mt) after adjusting for the 30 mt fixed gear set-aside and the fact that Area 1A closes at 92% of the sub-ACL. In October 2024, the Board established the following seasonal allocations for the 2025 Area 1A sub-ACL: 72.8% available for season 1 (June 1 – September 30) and 27.2% available for season 2 (October 1 – December 31).

2025 Atlantic Herring 1A Quota Allocation by Season

Season	Area 1A Quota
1. June 1-September 30	862 mt
2. October 1-December 31	322 mt

Days Out of the Fishery

- Landing days will be set at zero (0) from June 1 until the start of the fishery on July 27 at 6:00 p.m.
- Landing days begin on Sunday of each week at 6:00 p.m. starting July 27.
- Vessels with an Atlantic herring Limited Access Category A permit that have declared into the Area 1A fishery may land herring five (5) consecutive days a week. The week shall begin at 6:00 p.m. on Sundays and conclude at 6:00 p.m. on Fridays. One landing per 24 hour period. Vessels are prohibited from landing or possessing herring caught from Area 1A during a day out of the fishery.
- Small mesh bottom trawl vessels with an Atlantic herring Limited Access Category C or Open Access D permit that have declared into the fishery may land herring six (6) consecutive days a week. The week shall begin at 6:00 p.m. on Sundays and conclude at 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays.

Weekly Landing Limit

- Vessels with an Atlantic herring Category A permit may harvest up to 240,000 lbs. (6 trucks) per harvester vessel, per week starting July 27.

At-Sea Transfer and Carrier Restrictions

The following applies to harvester vessels with an Atlantic herring Category A permit and carrier vessels landing herring caught in Area 1A to a Maine, New Hampshire, or Massachusetts port.

- A harvester vessel may transfer herring at-sea to another harvester vessel.
- A harvester vessel may not make any at-sea transfers to a carrier vessel.
- Carrier vessels may not receive at-sea transfers from a harvester vessel.

Harvesters are prohibited from landing more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip from Area 1A until July 27, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. Landings will be closely monitored and the fishery will be adjusted to zero landing days when the season 1 quota is projected to be reached.

Please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740 for more information.

Motions

Move to implement for the 2025 Area 1A herring fishery in Season 1:

- **Zero landing days before Sunday, July 27 at 6:00 pm;**
- **For Category A vessels, 5 landing days per week;**
- **For Category A vessels, a 6 truck (240,000 lbs.) weekly landing limit;**
- **Allow harvester-to-harvester transfers but not allow transfers to carriers;**
- **For Category C/D SMBT vessels, 6 landing days per week.**

Motion made by Ms. Ware, seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Atlantic Herring Technical Committee, Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel, Interested Parties**

FROM: **Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director** TMK

DATE: **May 15, 2025 Revised July 23, 2025 with Quota Update**

SUBJECT: **Area 1A 2025 Effort Controls**

This updated memorandum reflects current Atlantic herring quotas given the final rule with revised 2025 Atlantic herring specifications has not been published yet. There are no changes to the start date, number of days out, or weekly landing limit in the Area 1A fishery at this time.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Atlantic Herring Management Board members from Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts met on May 13, 2025 to set the effort control measures for the 2025 Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) fishery for June 1 – September 30.

Quota levels for Area 1A have been updated to reflect the lower quotas that are still in place. Higher revised quotas were expected to be implemented by NOAA Fisheries in July, however, they have not yet been implemented and there is no estimated implementation date.

The Area 1A sub-annual catch limit (ACL) is 692 metric tons (mt) after adjusting for the 30 mt fixed gear set-aside and the fact that Area 1A closes at 92% of the sub-ACL. In October 2024, the Board established the following seasonal allocations for the 2025 Area 1A sub-ACL: 72.8% available for season 1 (June 1 – September 30) and 27.2% available for season 2 (October 1 – December 31).

2025 Atlantic Herring 1A Quota Allocation by Season

Season	Current Area 1A Quota	Revised Area 1A Quota yet to be Implemented by NOAA Fisheries
1. June 1-September 30	504 mt	862 mt
2. October 1-December 31	188 mt	322 mt

When landings are projected to reach the current Season 1 quota of 504 mt, the fishery will be adjusted to zero landing days. If NOAA Fisheries implements the revised quota before the fishery moves to zero landing days, then the fishery can operate to the revised 862 mt for Season 1. If the revised quota is implemented after the fishery moves to zero landing days, a

days out call will be scheduled as soon as possible to discuss potential re-opening of the Season 1 fishery and/or possible rollover to the Season 2 fishery.

The following Area 1A measures remain the same for June 1-September 30:

Days Out of the Fishery

- Landing days will be set at zero (0) from June 1 until the start of the fishery on July 27 at 6:00 p.m.
- Landing days begin on Sunday of each week at 6:00 p.m. starting July 27.
- Vessels with an Atlantic herring Limited Access Category A permit that have declared into the Area 1A fishery may land herring five (5) consecutive days a week. The week shall begin at 6:00 p.m. on Sundays and conclude at 6:00 p.m. on Fridays. One landing per 24 hour period. Vessels are prohibited from landing or possessing herring caught from Area 1A during a day out of the fishery.
- Small mesh bottom trawl vessels with an Atlantic herring Limited Access Category C or Open Access D permit that have declared into the fishery may land herring six (6) consecutive days a week. The week shall begin at 6:00 p.m. on Sundays and conclude at 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays.

Weekly Landing Limit

- Vessels with an Atlantic herring Category A permit may harvest up to 240,000 lbs. (6 trucks) per harvester vessel, per week starting July 27.

At-Sea Transfer and Carrier Restrictions

The following applies to harvester vessels with an Atlantic herring Category A permit and carrier vessels landing herring caught in Area 1A to a Maine, New Hampshire, or Massachusetts port.

- A harvester vessel may transfer herring at-sea to another harvester vessel.
- A harvester vessel may not make any at-sea transfers to a carrier vessel.
- Carrier vessels may not receive at-sea transfers from a harvester vessel.

Harvesters are prohibited from landing more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip from Area 1A until July 27, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. Landings will be closely monitored and the fishery will be adjusted to zero landing days when the season 1 quota is projected to be reached.

Please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740 for more information.

Motions

Move to implement for the 2025 Area 1A herring fishery in Season 1:

- **Zero landing days before Sunday, July 27 at 6:00pm;**
- **For Category A vessels, 5 landing days per week;**
- **For Category A vessels, a 6 truck (240,000 lbs.) weekly landing limit;**
- **Allow harvester-to-harvester transfers but not allow transfers to carriers;**

- **For Category C/D SMBT vessels, 6 landing days per week.**

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Technical Committee, Advisory Panel, Interested Parties**

FROM: **Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director** TMK

DATE: **August 5, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Atlantic Herring Area 1A Fishery Moves to Zero Landing Days on August 5 at 6:01 p.m.**

The Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) Atlantic herring fishery is projected to have harvested 92% of the Season 1 (June 1 – September 30) allocation by August 5. Beginning at 6:01 p.m. on Tuesday, August 5, the Area 1A fishery will move to zero landing days through September 30, 2025, as specified in Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring. However, if NOAA Fisheries implements the anticipated revised 2025 quota which would increase the available quota for Area 1A, a Days Out Call will be scheduled as soon as possible to discuss potential re-opening of the Season 1 fishery and/or possible rollover to the Season 2 fishery (October 1 – December 31).

Vessels participating in other fisheries may not possess more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip per day harvested from Area 1A. In addition, all vessels traveling through Area 1A must have all seine and mid-water trawl gear stowed.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or efranke@asmfc.org.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Technical Committee, Advisory Panel, , Interested Parties**

FROM: **Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director** TMK

DATE: **August 21, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Atlantic Herring Eastern Maine Spawning Closure in Effect Starting August 28 through October 8, 2025**

The Atlantic herring Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) fishery regulations include seasonal spawning closures for portions of state and federal waters in Eastern Maine, Western Maine, and Massachusetts/New Hampshire. The Commission's Atlantic Herring Management Board approved a forecasting method that relies upon at least three samples, each containing at least 25 female herring in gonadal stages III-V, to trigger a spawning closure. However, if sufficient samples are not available then closures will begin on predetermined dates.

There are currently no samples from the Eastern Maine spawning area to determine spawning condition. Therefore, per the Addendum II default closure dates, the Eastern Maine spawning area will be closed starting at 12:01 a.m. on August 28, 2025 extending through 11:59 p.m. on October 8, 2025. The Eastern Maine spawning area includes all waters bounded by the following coordinates:

Maine coast 68° 20' W
43° 48' N 68° 20' W
44° 25' N 67° 03' W
North along the US/Canada border

Vessels in the directed Atlantic herring fishery cannot take, land or possess Atlantic herring caught within the Eastern Maine spawning area during this time. The incidental bycatch allowance of up to 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip per day applies to vessels in non-directed fisheries that are fishing within the Eastern Maine spawning area. In addition, all vessels traveling through the Eastern Maine spawning area must have all seine and mid-water trawl gear stowed.

In addition to this spawning closure, the Area 1A fishery is currently at zero landing days. A days out call will be scheduled for September to discuss the Season 2 fishery (October 1 – December 31). Note this spawning closure extends into Season 2.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or efranke@asmfc.org.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Atlantic Herring Technical Committee, Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel, Interested Parties**

FROM: **Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director** TMK

DATE: **September 18, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Western Maine and Massachusetts/New Hampshire Spawning Closures in Effect Starting September 23 through November 3, 2025, and Days Out Measures for Season 2 of the 2025 Atlantic Herring Area 1A Fishery**

This memorandum announces closure dates for the Western Maine and Massachusetts/New Hampshire spawning areas; and days out measures for the 2025 Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) Atlantic herring fishery for Season 2 (October 1 – December 31).

Spawning Area Closures

The Atlantic herring Area 1A fishery measures include seasonal spawning closures for portions of state and federal waters in Eastern Maine, Western Maine and Massachusetts/New Hampshire. The Commission's Atlantic Herring Management Board approved a forecasting method that relies upon at least three samples, each containing at least 25 female herring in gonadal stages III-V, to trigger a spawning closure. However, if sufficient samples are not available then closures will begin on predetermined dates.

There are currently insufficient samples from both the Western Maine and the Massachusetts/ New Hampshire spawning areas. Therefore, per Addendum II default closure dates, the Western Maine and Massachusetts/New Hampshire spawning areas will be closed starting at 12:01 a.m. on September 23 extending through 11:59 p.m. on November 3, 2025.

The Western Maine spawning area includes all waters bounded by the following coordinates:

43° 30' N Maine coast
43° 30' N 68° 54.5' W
43° 48' N 68° 20' W
North to Maine coast at 68° 20' W

The Massachusetts/New Hampshire spawning area includes all waters bounded by the Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine coasts, and 43° 30' N and 70° 00' W.

Vessels in the directed Atlantic herring fishery cannot take, land, or possess Atlantic herring caught in either the Western Maine or Massachusetts/New Hampshire spawning areas during this time and must have all fishing gear stowed when transiting through the area. The incidental

bycatch allowance of up to 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip per day applies to vessels in non-directed fisheries that are fishing within the Western Maine or Massachusetts/New Hampshire spawning areas.

Days Out Measures for Season 2

The Commission's Atlantic Herring Management Board members from Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts met September 18 via webinar to set effort control measures for the 2025 Area 1A fishery for Season 2 (October 1 – December 31). The 2025 Area 1A sub-annual catch limit (sub-ACL) is 783 metric tons (mt). This does not take into account the possible reallocation of 1,000 mt to the Area 1A sub-ACL based on catch information from the Canadian New Brunswick weir fishery, nor does it take into account potential revised quotas that may be implemented by NOAA Fisheries.

Landings from Area 1A have exceeded the current sub-ACL and are at an estimated 937 mt as of mid-September and, therefore, the fishery is currently closed. Without a change in the quota from one of the mechanisms listed above, the Area 1A fishery will remain closed with a 2,000-pound possession limit.

The days out measures for Season 2 are as follows:

- Landing days will be set at zero (0) from October 1 through November 4.
- If 1,000 mt is reallocated to Area 1A by October 31, the fishery will move to two (2) consecutive landing days starting at 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, November 5 until 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught. Landing days would be Wednesdays from 12:01 a.m. through Thursdays at 11:59 p.m., weekly.
- If the revised higher quotas have been implemented by October 31 but there has not been a 1,000 mt reallocation, the fishery will move to one (1) landing day starting at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, November 5 until 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught. The weekly landing day would be Wednesday.
- If the revised higher quotas have not been implemented and there has not been a 1,000 mt reallocation by October 31, landing days will remain at zero (0) from November 5 onward. If there is a subsequent change in available Area 1A quota, then another Days Out call will be scheduled.

While landing days are set at zero (0), harvesters are prohibited from landing more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip from Area 1A during Season 2. If quota becomes available as listed above, fishing for and possession of Atlantic herring may begin prior to landing days during Season 2 as long as fishing is not occurring in spawning areas during a spawning closure.

Please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740 for more information.

Days Out Meeting Motions (September 18, 2025)

Main Motion

Move to set the following schedule for Area 1A Season 2:

- **Set zero landing days from October 1st through Tuesday, November 4th.**
- **If by October 31 there has been a 1000mt transfer from the Canadian weir fishery, move to 3 consecutive landing days per week starting Wednesday, November 5th at 12:01am until 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught. Landing days would be Wednesday-Friday.**
- **If by October 31 higher herring quotas have been implemented but there has been no 1000mt transfer from the Canadian weir fishery, move to 1 consecutive landing day per week starting Wednesday, November 5th at 12:01am until 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught. The landing day would be Wednesday.**
- **If by October 31 higher herring quotas have not been implemented and there is no 1000mt transfer, maintain zero landing days starting November 5th. A future Days Out call would be scheduled to set landing days if there is a subsequent change in available Area 1A quota.**

Motion made by Ms. Ware and second by Ms. Griffin. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Motion to amend to replace 'three landing days' with 'two landing days' (Wednesday – Thursday) for the second bullet.

Motion made by Mr. Abbott and seconded by Ms. Ware. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

Main Motion as Amended

Move to set the following schedule for Area 1A Season 2:

- **Set zero landing days from October 1st through Tuesday, November 4th.**
- **If by October 31 there has been a 1000mt transfer from the Canadian weir fishery, move to 2 consecutive landing days per week starting Wednesday, November 5th at 12:01am until 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught. Landing days would be Wednesday-Thursday.**
- **If by October 31 higher herring quotas have been implemented but there has been no 1000mt transfer from the Canadian weir fishery, move to 1 consecutive landing day per week starting Wednesday, November 5th at 12:01am until 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught. The landing day would be Wednesday.**
- **If by October 31 higher herring quotas have not been implemented and there is no 1000mt transfer, maintain zero landing days starting November 5th. A future Days Out call would be scheduled to set landing days if there is a subsequent change in available Area 1A quota.**

Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Atlantic Herring Technical Committee, Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel, Interested Parties**

FROM: **Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director** TMK

DATE: **October 31, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Zero Landing Days Continue for Season 2 of the 2025 Atlantic Herring Area 1A Fishery**

This is an update on Season 2 (October 1 – December 31) of the 2025 Area 1A fishery for Atlantic herring. In September 2025 (Memorandum 25-81), the Atlantic Herring Management Board members from Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts decided the fishery would be set at zero landing days from October 1 through November 4 and would only open for landing days on November 5 if one or both of the following quota adjustments occur: reallocation of 1,000 metric tons based on landings from the Canadian New Brunswick weir fishery and/or revised quotas implemented by NOAA Fisheries. Due to the lapse in federal government appropriations, neither of the above quota adjustments has been processed by NOAA Fisheries.

As a result, the Area 1A fishery remains at zero landing days for the foreseeable future. The fishery will not open in early November.

While landing days are set at zero (0), harvesters are prohibited from landing more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip from Area 1A during Season 2. If additional quota becomes available, a days out call will be scheduled.

Please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org, or 703.842.0740 for more information.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Atlantic Herring Technical Committee, Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel, Interested Parties**

FROM: **Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director** TMK

DATE: **November 19, 2025**

SUBJECT: **2025 Atlantic Herring Area 1A Fishery Season 2 Days Out Measures**

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Atlantic Herring Management Board members from Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts met November 19 via webinar to set effort control measures for the 2025 Area 1A fishery for Season 2 (October 1 – December 31) following an increase in available quota for Area 1A. The 2025 Area 1A sub-annual catch limit (sub-ACL) is now 1,783 metric tons (mt) due to the reallocation of 1,000 mt to the Area 1A sub-ACL based on catch information from the Canadian New Brunswick weir fishery.

After accounting for the fixed gear set-aside, 2025 landings so far from Area 1A, and the 8% buffer (Area 1A closes at 92% of the sub-ACL), **there are an estimated 632 metric tons available for harvest.**

Currently, the Area 1A fishery is at zero landing days. The days out measures moving forward for Season 2 are as follows:

- Landing days will continue to be set at zero (0) through Sunday, November 23.
- The fishery will move to two (2) consecutive landing days starting at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, November 24 until 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught. Landing days will be Mondays from 12:01 a.m. through Tuesdays at 11:59 p.m., weekly.

While landing days are set at zero (0), harvesters are prohibited from landing more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip from Area 1A. Fishing for and possession of Atlantic herring may begin prior to landing days during Season 2.

Please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740 for more information.

Days Out Meeting Motions (November 19, 2025)
Move to set the following schedule for Area 1A Season 2:

- **Set zero landing days through Sunday, November 23.**

- **Starting 12:01AM on Monday, November 24, move to two consecutive landing days per week until 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught. Landing days would be Monday-Tuesday.**

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Atlantic Herring Technical Committee, Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel, Interested Parties**

FROM: **Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director** TMK

DATE: **November 24, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Directed Atlantic Herring Fishery Closure for Management Area 1A**

NOAA Fisheries and the states of Maine and New Hampshire, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts project the Atlantic herring fishery will catch 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL by November 24, 2025. The Area 1A directed fishery will close effective 6:00 p.m. on November 24, 2025 and remain closed until further notice. Vessels that have entered port before 6:00 p.m. on November 24, 2025 may land and sell, from that trip, greater than 2,000 pounds of herring from Area 1A.

During a closure, vessels participating in other fisheries may retain and land an incidental catch of herring that does not exceed 2,000 pounds per trip or calendar day. In addition, directed herring vessels traveling through Area 1A must have all fishing gear stowed.

Please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 703.842.0716 or efranke@asmfc.org for more information.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Atlantic Herring Technical Committee, Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel, Interested Parties**

FROM: **Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director** TMK

DATE: **December 15, 2025**

SUBJECT: **December Update on 2025 Atlantic Herring Area 1A Fishery Season 2 Days Out Measures**

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Atlantic Herring Management Board members from Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts met December 15 via webinar to set effort control measures for the 2025 Area 1A fishery for Season 2 (October 1 – December 31) following an increase in available quota for Area 1A. The 2025 Area 1A sub-annual catch limit (sub-ACL) is now 2,317 metric tons due to implementation of the new 2025-2027 specifications package.

After accounting for the fixed gear set-aside, 2025 landings so far from Area 1A, and the 8% buffer (Area 1A closes at 92% of the sub-ACL), **there are an estimated 289 metric tons available for harvest.**

Currently, the Area 1A fishery is at zero landing days. The Area 1A days out measures moving forward for Season 2 are as follows:

- Landing days will continue to be set at zero (0) through Monday, December 22.
- The fishery will move to one (1) landing day starting at 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, December 23.
- The fishery will move to zero (0) landing days when 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught or at 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, December 24, whichever comes first. The fishery will remain at zero (0) landing days through the end of 2025.

While landing days are set at zero (0), harvesters are prohibited from landing more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip from Area 1A. Fishing for and possession of Atlantic herring may begin prior to landing days during Season 2.

Please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740 for more information.

Days Out Meeting Motions (December 15, 2025)
Main Motion

Move to set the following schedule for Area 1A Season 2:

- **Set zero landing days through Sunday, December 21**
- **Starting 12:01AM on Monday, December 22, move to one landing day**
- **Move to zero landing days when 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught or at 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, December 23, whichever comes first, through the end of 2025.**

Motion by Ms. Ware, second by Ms. Griffin.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to set the landing day to Tuesday, December 23.

Motion by Mr. Abbott, second by Ms. Ware. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Main Motion as Amended

Move to set the following schedule for Area 1A Season 2:

- **Set zero landing days through Monday, December 22**
- **Starting 12:01AM on Tuesday, December 23, move to one landing day**
- **Move to zero landing days when 92% of the Area 1A sub-ACL has been caught or at 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, December 24, whichever comes first, through the end of 2025.**

Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Herring Management Board, Atlantic Herring Technical Committee, Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel, Interested Parties**

FROM: **Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator**

DATE: **December 23, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Atlantic Herring Area 1A Fishery Moves to Zero Landing Days on December 24 at 12:01 a.m.**

The Area 1A Atlantic herring fishery will move to zero landing days beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, December 24 through December 31, 2025, as specified by the days out measures set for the Area 1A fishery this month.

While landing days are set at zero, harvesters are prohibited from landing more than 2,000 pounds of Atlantic herring per trip from Area 1A.

Please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 703.842.0716 or efranke@asmfc.org for more information.