Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Reduces 2027 and 2028 TAC and Lowers Chesapeake Bay Cap through Addendum II

Newport, RI – The Commission's Atlantic Menhaden Management Board adopted further reductions to both the coastwide total allowable catch (TAC) and the Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap. The Board set the 2027 and 2028 TAC at 170,000 mt and 155,000 mt, respectively. This represents a 17% reduction from the 2026 TAC and a 34% reduction from the 2025 TAC over the next two years. Projections indicated these TACs would have a 0% chance of overfishing in 2027 and 2028 but would still result in a high probability of fishing mortality *(F)* being above the Ecological Reference Point (ERP) *F* target. In setting the TAC, the Board considered both the ecosystem benefits of leaving more menhaden in the water and the socioeconomic harms of further restricting harvest. The Board chose TAC levels for 2027 and 2028 that are projected to bring *F* closer to the ERP *F* target while mitigating some of the negative socioeconomic impacts on the menhaden fisheries and the fisheries that rely on menhaden for bait.

The Board also approved Addendum II to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. The Addendum links the Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap to the coastwide TAC by setting the Cap as 21.8% of the TAC with a maximum of 51,000 mt. Previously, the Bay Cap was set by Amendment 3 statically at 51,000 mt. The new measures will result in a Bay Cap of 37,123 mt in 2027 and 33,847 mt in 2028 under the TACs approved by the Board. The Board took this action due to concerns about the impact of reduction harvest on the ecosystem and other fisheries in the Bay, which is an important nursery ground for species like striped bass, osprey, and menhaden themselves. Additionally, the Addendum adds a provision where the Board will revisit the Bay Cap at least every 3 years and consider whether to initiate a management document to adjust how the Cap is set.

"The Board received over 48,000 comments from stakeholders on both sides of these issues – those that advocated for leaving more fish in the water as forage and those who sought to protect the livelihoods of harvesters who rely on menhaden," said Board Chair Joe Cimino of New Jersey. "The ERPs we have chosen strike a balance between these priorities in managing this species that is critically important to both the ecosystem and Atlantic coast fisheries. This decision was not entered into lightly and the Board

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.

wrestled with some of the scientific uncertainties around the issues. The Board highlighted new state, federal, and industry funding dedicated to research on menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay. The Board looks

forward to receiving the results of this research over the next few years to help inform the future management of menhaden."

The 2027 TAC is effective January 1, 2027, and the Bay Cap will become effective May 1, 2027, ahead of the reduction fishing season in Chesapeake Bay. The Addendum will be available on the Atlantic Menhaden webpage at https://asmfc.org/species/atlantic-menhaden/ under News and Resources. For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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