



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
GREATER ATLANTIC REGION
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

October 13, 2020

Dr. John F. Quinn, Chairman
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear John,

On October 2, 2020, NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Fisheries formally determined that the Atlantic herring stock is overfished based on the best scientific information available.

Consistent with section 304(e)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, we are notifying the Council of this stock status change. Based on the updated overfished status, the Council must prepare and implement a rebuilding program for Atlantic herring within 2 years of the receipt of this notification letter, as required by section 304(e)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Consequently, I request that the Council take action to rebuild the Atlantic herring stock.

The Northeast Fisheries Science Center completed the most recent assessment of the Atlantic herring stock in June 2020 using data through 2019. This management track assessment, using an age-structured assessment model, showed that the stock is now overfished, but overfishing is not occurring. This assessment supports a determination that the stock is not subject to overfishing because the 2019 fishing mortality rate (0.25) is less than the maximum fishing mortality threshold (0.54), but is now overfished because spawning stock biomass in 2019 (77,883 mt) is less than minimum stock size threshold (134,500 mt). This is a change from the previous assessment in 2018 that indicated the stock was approaching an overfished condition and overfishing was not occurring.

We recommend that the Council submit the action within 15 months of this notice to ensure sufficient time to implement the appropriate regulations, if approved. We will support the Council's efforts to develop this rebuilding program. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Carrie Nordeen in the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9272, or by email at carrie.nordeen@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator

cc: Tom Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council
Robert Beal, Executive Director, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Dr. Jon Hare, Science and Research Director, Northeast Fisheries Science Center
Kelly Denit, Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries