



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Approves Draft Addendum I for Public Comment

Episodic Event Set Aside Program also Extended and Revised to Include New York

Alexandria, VA – The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved Draft Addendum I to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Menhaden for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes modifying the FMP's bycatch allowance provision. Specifically, it considers allowing two licensed individuals to harvest up to 12,000 pounds of menhaden bycatch when working from the same vessel fishing stationary, multi-species gear - limited to one vessel trip per day. Bycatch represents less than 2% of the total coastwide landings.

The practice of two permitted fishermen working together from the same vessel to harvest Atlantic menhaden primarily occurs in the Chesapeake Bay pound net fishery. This practice enables the fishermen to pool resources for fuel and crew. However, the practice is currently constrained by the FMP's bycatch allowance provision, which includes a 6,000 pound/vessel/day limit. The Draft Addendum seeks comment on whether the provision should be revised to accommodate the interests of fixed-gear fishermen who work together, as authorized by the states and jurisdictions in which they fish.

The intent of Draft Addendum I is to add flexibility to one element of the bycatch allowance provision while the Board prepares to address menhaden management more comprehensively through the development of Draft Amendment 3 to the FMP over the next two years. A subsequent press release on the public hearing schedule and Draft Addendum I availability will be distributed once state hearings have been scheduled.

In a separate action, the Board extended the episodic event set aside program until the finalization of Amendment 3. It also conditionally approved a request from New York to be added as an eligible state. The program reserves 1% of the coastwide total allowable catch to be used by New England states in areas and times when menhaden occur in higher abundance than normal. Rhode Island opted into the program in 2014 and 2015, and harvested a portion of the set aside each year. As a result of the Board's decision to extend the program, the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut remain eligible to participate in the program in 2016.

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.

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New York is currently reporting unusually large amounts of menhaden in the Peconic Bay estuary, raising the potential for more large fish kills, similar to last year, as the waters warm. New York sought Board approval to participate in the episodic event set aside program so fishermen can harvest a portion of the large build-up of menhaden in the Peconic Bay estuary to mitigate the impacts of additional fish kills. The Board approved the request subject to a one million pound harvest cap under the episodic event set aside.

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