



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Approves Draft Amendment 3 for Public Comment

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Menhaden for public comment. The Draft Amendment seeks to manage the menhaden resource in a way that balances menhaden’s ecological role as a prey species with the needs of all user groups. To this end, the Draft Amendment considers the use of ecosystem reference points (ERPs) to manage the resource and changes to the allocation method. In addition, it presents a suite of management options for quota transfers, quota rollovers, incidental catch, the episodic events set aside program, and the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery cap.

The 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment Report identified the development of ERPs as a high priority for Atlantic menhaden management. Menhaden serve an important role in the marine ecosystem as prey for a variety of species including larger fish (e.g. weakfish, striped bass), birds (e.g. bald eagles, osprey), and marine mammals (e.g. humpback whales, bottlenose dolphins). As a result, changes in the abundance of menhaden may impact the abundance and diversity of predator populations, particularly if the availability of other prey is limited. ERPs provide a method to assess the status of menhaden within the broad ecosystem context. Draft Amendment 3 provides a variety of reference point options, including the continued development of menhaden-specific ERPs as well as the application of precautionary guidelines for forage fish species.

Draft Amendment 3 also considers changes to the allocation method given concerns that the current approach may not strike an appropriate balance between gear types and jurisdictions. Specifically, under the current allocation method, increases in the total allowable catch (TAC) result in limited benefits to small-scale fisheries, and to several states. Furthermore, the current method may not provide a balance between the present needs of the fishery and future growth opportunities. Draft Amendment 3 considers a range of allocation alternatives, including a dispositional quota (bait vs. reduction), fleet-capacity quota (quota divided by gear type), jurisdictional quota, including a fixed minimum quota for each state, and an allocation method based on the TAC. In addition, the document considers five allocation timeframes including 2009-2011, 2012-2016, 1985-2016, 1985-1995, and a weighted approach which considers both historic and recent landings.

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

It is anticipated the majority of states from Maine through Florida will be conducting public hearings on the Draft Amendment. The details of those hearings will be released in a subsequent press release. The Draft Amendment will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org (under Public Input) by August 11th. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Amendment either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM (EST) on October 20, 2017** and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Amendment 3). Organizations planning to release an action alert in response to Draft Amendment 3 should contact Megan Ware at (703)-842-0740.

Final action on the Amendment, as well as specification of the 2018 TAC, is scheduled to occur on November 14th at the BWI Airport Marriott, 1743 West Nursery Road, Linthicum, MD. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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