



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration
well in progress by the year 2015*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASMFC Weakfish Board Approves Addendum III *Addendum Revises BRD Requirements*

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Weakfish Management Board approved Addendum III to Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Weakfish. The Addendum modifies Amendment 4’s bycatch reduction device (BRD) requirements for the penaeid shrimp trawl fishery to be consistent with those contained in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Shrimp Amendment 6.

Throughout its history, the weakfish management program has included management measures to reduce weakfish bycatch mortality in Southeast shrimp trawl fisheries. These requirements have been implemented to aid in the protection of weakfish stocks and complement bycatch reduction requirements in the Council’s Shrimp FMP. In 2004, the Council altered its BRD certification standard from a 40 percent reduction by number of weakfish and Spanish mackerel to a 30 percent reduction by weight of finfish. The Board supported this action for several reasons. The new protocols support an ecosystem approach and will facilitate the certification of new devices to reduce finfish bycatch and retain shrimp catch. Further, weakfish generally react favorably to BRDs and escape from the net as compared to many other finfish species. As such, the 30 percent reduction requirements will likely result in equal protection to weakfish.

The change implemented in Addendum III affects the certification of new BRDs only. All BRDs previously certified through the Council’s BRD certification program continue to be certified for the southern penaeid shrimp trawl fishery. Effective immediately, states will require vessels in this fishery to employ previously certified BRDs or those newly tested and certified to reduce the weight of finfish bycatch by 30 percent. Copies of the Addendum will be available by late May and can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400 or via the Commission’s website at www.asmf.org under Breaking News.

In other business, the Board also reviewed and approved the states’ 2007 biological sampling plans and the implementation plans for Addendum II (recreational creel limit, bycatch allowance, management triggers). Given that Massachusetts’ landings contribute less than 1 percent to the coastwide weakfish landings, the Commonwealth requested and was granted *de minimis* status. As a *de minimis* state, Massachusetts is exempt from certain requirements of the FMP. For more information, please contact Nichola Meserve, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or nmeserve@asmfc.org.

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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.

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