



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 American Shad Stock Assessment Passes Peer Review *Findings Indicate that Most Shad Stocks Are Not Recovering*

Alexandria, VA – An independent panel of fisheries science experts has endorsed the 2007 benchmark stock assessment and provided recommendations for the improvement of future assessments. These findings were reported to the ASMFC Shad and River Herring Management Board for consideration in future management decisions.

Once one of the most important exploited fish species in North America, American shad stocks are currently at all-time lows and do not appear to be recovering. Recent declines of American shad were reported for Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Georgia stocks, and for the Hudson (NY), Susquehanna (PA), James (VA), and Edisto (SC) Rivers. Low and stable stock abundance was indicated for Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, the Chesapeake Bay, the Rappahannock River (VA), and some South Carolina and Florida stocks. Stocks in the Potomac and York Rivers (VA) have shown some signs of rebounding in recent years. Data limitations and conflicting data precluded the report from indicating much about the current status or trend of many of the stocks from North or South Carolina.

The report identified primary causes for stock decline as a combination of overfishing, pollution, and habitat loss due to dam construction. In recent years, coastwide harvests have been on the order of 500-900 metric tons, nearly two orders of magnitude lower than in the late 19th century. Given these findings, the panel recommended that current restoration actions need to be reviewed and new ones need to be identified and applied. The panel suggested considering a reduction of fishing mortality, enhancement of dam passage and mitigation of dam-related fish mortality, stocking, and habitat restoration.

Overall, the stock assessment report and its authors, the ASMFC Shad Stock Assessment Subcommittee, received high praise from the peer review panel who characterized the report, “as one of the most comprehensive collections of fisheries related data ever assembled for [American shad].” The 2007 benchmark assessment, which was four years in the making, contains an extensive compilation of data from many sources and examines status at the river-stock level for some 30 different stocks. The stock assessment included information from all local, regional, and federal management agencies, as well as independently funded academic studies. Copies of the stock assessment and peer review panel reports will be available by the end of September and can be found on the Commission’s website under Breaking News at www.asmfc.org or by contacting the Commission at 202/289-6400. For more information, please contact Megan Caldwell, Science Director, at 202/289-6400 or mcaldwell@asmfc.org.

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.