



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*

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ASMFC Adaptive Resource Management Framework Important Tool in Red Knot Rebuilding

At the end of September, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced that it will be considering the listing of red knot as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. In its press release, the USFWS acknowledged the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's recent actions with regards to horseshoe crab management, particularly the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework and its positive impact on the red knot. The ARM Framework takes into account the abundance of horseshoe crabs and red knots in order to determine a sustainable harvest level for crabs which will provide adequate food for migratory shorebirds such as the red knot.



Red knots feeding on horseshoe crab eggs.
Photo © Gregory Breese, USFWS

“The Commission is grateful to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for acknowledging the states’ efforts in sustainably managing horseshoe crabs to account for the forage needs of migratory shorebirds as well as the needs of commercial bait fishermen and the biomedical industry,” states Robert E. Beal, ASMFC Executive Director. “The Service, along with the U.S. Geological Survey, played a major role in the development of the ARM Framework by partnering with the Atlantic states and providing necessary technical expertise to complete this innovative tool that recognizes the relationship between horseshoe crab eggs and shorebirds in the Delaware Bay Region.”

The Commission has been managing horseshoe crabs since 1998 with the adoption of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Horseshoe Crabs. A primary goal of the FMP is to manage horseshoe crabs at sustainable levels to ensure adequate abundance of horseshoe crab eggs for use by migrating shorebirds. Addendum I, implemented in 2000, reduced harvest of horseshoe crabs by 25% from historical levels. In 2004, Addendum III further reduced harvest in and around the Delaware Bay to accommodate the findings of the USFWS Shorebird Advisory Panel. Since that time, horseshoe crab harvest has remained steady, well under the Commission’s quotas. Addendum IV, implemented in 2006, further limited harvest to a male only fishery for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin.

The USFWS will be accepting public comment on the proposed rule through November 29, 2013. Additional information and the proposed rule can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/redknot/>.

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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.