



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for 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 Adopts Addendum IV in Response to Depleted Stock Status

Newport, Rhode Island – The Commission’s Weakfish Management Board approved measures to reduce exploitation by over 50 percent in both the recreational and commercial sectors. Addendum IV requires states to implement a one fish recreational creel limit, 100 pound commercial trip limit, 100 pound commercial bycatch limit during closed seasons, and 100 undersized fish per trip allowance for the finfish trawl fishery. All other management measures previously adopted to conserve the stock and reduce bycatch remain in effect.

The Board’s action comes in response to the stock status of weakfish. A recent peer-reviewed assessment found the weakfish stock to be depleted, with spawning stock biomass estimated to be three percent of an unfished stock, well below the 20 percent threshold and 30 percent target reference points also approved by the Board as part of Addendum IV. The decline in biomass reflects a sustained rise in natural mortality after 1995, rather than fishing mortality which has been modest and stable over the same time period.

“The Board received a significant amount of public comment supporting a coastwide moratorium. In recognition of this, it chose to implement measures that would discourage directed fishing, limit bycatch mortality, and ensure that critical sampling programs remain on track,” stated Board Chair Roy Miller.

While the decline appears to have resulted from a change in the natural mortality of weakfish in recent years, it is further exacerbated by continued removals by commercial and recreational fisheries. However, given the high mortality levels, the stock is also unlikely to recover rapidly. The Addendum’s measures are intended to reduce the level of harvest without creating a large amount of discards.

Addendum IV will be available via the Commission’s website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News by November 15. For more information, please contact Nichola Meserve, Fishery 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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