



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
August 19, 2004

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
(202) 289-6400

ASMFC Initiates Development of Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Croaker Plan *Assessment Yields Good News for Mid-Atlantic Stock Component*

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board approved the development of Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Croaker. The Amendment will incorporate information from the latest stock assessment and peer review, as well as revise the plan to comply with the mandates of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act.

“I am very pleased with the results of the croaker stock assessment and peer review process, which brings us good news about the Mid-Atlantic stock component and identifies our challenges in fully assessing the status of the South Atlantic component,” stated Board Vice-Chair, Spud Woodward of Georgia. “I particularly want to commend ASMFC staff, the Stock Assessment Committee and SEDAR Panel for their dedication and thoroughness.”

The latest peer-reviewed stock assessment, completed in 2004, found the stock status for the Mid-Atlantic region (North Carolina and north) not overfished and overfishing not occurring. The stock status for the South Atlantic region (South Carolina through the east coast of Florida) is unknown, due to lack of data. The stock assessment shows both fishing mortality and spawning stock biomass (SSB) for the Mid-Atlantic region as exhibiting a pronounced cyclical trend over the time series. Between 1999 and 2002, SSB ranged between 80,000 – 91,000 metric tons, well above the target and threshold recommended by the Technical Committee (TC). Fishing mortality remained relatively stable from 1997 to 2002 at approximately 0.11, well below the TC-recommended target and threshold. Although the stock assessment indicates that the croaker stock is healthy, estimates of fishing mortality and SSB do not include bycatch from the shrimp fishery, a potentially significant source of mortality.

The first step in the Amendment process is the development of a Public Information Document, which presents a general overview of the resource as well as possible management and research issues to be addressed in the Amendment. The Board is scheduled to review and approve the PID in November for public comment in early 2006. For more information, please contact Nancy Wallace at (202)289-6400 or nwallace@asmfc.org.
PR04-24

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.

1444 Eye Street, N.W. -- Sixth Floor -- Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 289-6400 (phone) (202) 289-6051 (fax) www.asmfc.org