



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 Approves Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Croaker Plan

Galloway, NJ– The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Croaker. The Amendment revises the plan’s management goals and objectives, and establishes biological reference points (i.e., biomass and fishing mortality targets and thresholds) to manage the croaker resource (see table below). The Amendment also revises the management of Atlantic croaker to a regional basis (a Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic component).

Amendment 1 Biological References Points and 2002 Estimates

	FISHING MORTALITY RATE	SPAWNING STOCK BIOMASS
2002 ESTIMATES	0.11	201 million pounds (91,000 mt)
TARGET	0.29	63.8 million pounds (28,932 mt)
THRESHOLD	0.39	44.7 million pounds (20,252 mt)

Amendment 1 responds to and incorporates information from the latest stock assessment, indicating that Atlantic croaker abundance is high and fishing mortality is low in the Mid-Atlantic region (North Carolina and north). Recent estimates of spawning stock biomass (201 million pounds) and fishing mortality (0.11) are well above the targets and thresholds established by Amendment 1. The stock status for the South Atlantic region (South Carolina through the east coast of Florida) is unknown, due to a lack of data.

While the Amendment does not implement any new management measures for the Atlantic croaker fishery, it establishes, through biological reference points and adaptive management, a mechanism by which the Technical Committee and Management Board can closely monitor the resource and institute necessary management measures in a timely way. The Amendment also identifies research priorities to bolster future stock assessments and encourages the states and the federal government to continue ongoing juvenile and adult surveys for data collection purposes.

Atlantic croaker is an important resource for commercial and recreational fishermen throughout the Mid- and South Atlantic. In 2003, commercial fishermen landed 28 million pounds, primarily in the states of Virginia, North Carolina, New Jersey and Maryland. Between 1997 and 2003, recreational landings ranged from 9.1 to 13.2 million fish, with Virginia accounting for 68 percent of the total landings.

Amendment 1 will be available by December and can be obtained via the Commission’s website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. For more information, please contact Nancy Wallace, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or nwallace@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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