



# *Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission*

## NEWS RELEASE

*Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

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### **ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section Establishes Moratorium for 2015 Commercial Fishing Season *Draft Amendment 3 PID Approved for Public Comment***

Portland, ME – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Northern Shrimp Section approved a moratorium for the 2015 commercial fishery. This action was taken in response to the findings of the 2014 Stock Status Report, indicating current fishable biomass is the lowest on record. A suite of indicators were used in the 2014 Stock Status Report. These include abundance and biomass indices from fishery-independent surveys for 2012-2014, which were at all-time lows, and recruitment indices for the 2010-2012 year classes, which were well below average. The recruitment index increased slightly in the 2014 survey, but these recruits are not expected to enter into the fishery until 2017. The Northern Shrimp Technical Committee considers the stock to have collapsed with little prospect of recovery in the immediate future. A 25 metric ton research set aside quota was also approved to maintain data collection for assessment and management purposes.

“The bleak status report and continuing unfavorable environmental conditions convinced the Section to maintain a moratorium in 2015 to protect the remaining spawning biomass and allow as much reproduction to take place as possible,” stated Northern Shrimp Section Chair Mike Armstrong of Massachusetts. “The Section will work with its industry and technical advisors to ensure the highest quality data is collected through the research set aside quota.”

In the Gulf of Maine, increasing water temperatures and a decline in phytoplankton abundance (a food source for shrimp) are factors which likely have and will continue to contribute to the poor recruitment in the stock. The increased abundance of northern shrimp predators (spiny dogfish, redfish and silver hake) may play a role in declining biomass. Northern shrimp stocks in other areas of the world (Greenland, Flemish Cap, Grand Banks) have also seen decreasing trends in abundance and recruitment, providing additional evidence that environmental conditions are impacting northern shrimp across their range. The 2014 Stock Status Report for Gulf of Maine Northern Shrimp is available at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/545aa7d1NShrimpStockStatusReport\\_2014.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/545aa7d1NShrimpStockStatusReport_2014.pdf).

The Section also approved the Public Information Document (PID) for Draft Amendment 3 for public comment. The Draft Amendment was initiated to consider establishing a limited entry program for the northern shrimp fishery for use in the future if and when the stock recovers and the fishery is re-opened.

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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.

While the fishery is managed through a total allowable catch and defined season, it remains an open access fishery and has experienced significant fluctuations in participation over the last 30 years. This open access, coupled with concern about the health of the stock, led the Section to move forward on a limited entry program to further control effort in the fishery. A limited entry program will consider the appropriate number of participants in the fishery given biological, environmental, and economic considerations. The Draft Amendment will also consider state-by-state allocations and revisit the fishery specifications process.

As the first step in the Commission's amendment process, the PID is intended to gather information concerning northern shrimp and provide an opportunity for the public to identify and comment on major issues relative to the management of this species. Following the initial phase of information-gathering and public comment, the Section will evaluate potential management alternatives and develop Draft Amendment 3 for public review. After the public comment period, the Section will specify the management measures to be included in Amendment 3. A tentative schedule for the completion of Amendment 3 is included in PID.

It is anticipated Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts will be conducting public hearings on the PID. A subsequent press release will announce the PID's availability as well as the details of the scheduled hearings. For more information, please contact, Marin Hawk, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mhawk@asmfc.org](mailto:mhawk@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

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