



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Tautog Board Accepts Benchmark Assessment & Peer Review Results for Management Use

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Tautog Management Board approved the 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use. Unlike previous assessments, which assessed the stock on a coastwide basis, the 2015 assessment evaluated stock status regionally to reflect differences in life history characteristics and harvest patterns. The assessment is the most comprehensive evaluation of stocks to date and provides multiple alternatives for how tautog can be managed regionally.

Based on analysis of all available data, including life history information, the assessment presents a preferred stock structure as three regional stocks: a Southern New England region (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut), a New York-New Jersey region, and a DelMarVa region (Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina). Due to overlapping harvest patterns along tautog’s range and considerations for consistent management, the assessment also provided an alternative three-region definition where Connecticut is part of the NY-NJ region, and a two-region definition with a Northern stock (Massachusetts through New York) and a Southern stock (New Jersey through North Carolina). The assessment includes stock status and reference points for these alternative stock units as a comprehensive set of options for management use.

Based on the assessment findings for the preferred stock structure, the Southern New England stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) for this region is estimated to be 20% below the proposed SSB threshold of 2,300 metric tons (mt) and 40% below the proposed SSB target of 3,000 mt. The three-year average of fishing mortality (0.45) is above both the proposed fishing mortality target (0.26) and the threshold (0.44).

The New York-New Jersey stock is overfished but not experiencing overfishing. SSB is estimated to be 21% below the proposed SSB threshold of 2,600 mt and 42% below the proposed SSB target of 3,500 mt. Current fishing mortality (0.25) was found to be between the proposed target (0.17) and threshold (0.26), meaning overfishing is not occurring.

Conditions of the DelMarVa stock mirror those of the New York-New Jersey stock, with the stock being considered overfished but not experiencing overfishing. SSB is estimated to be 8% below the proposed SSB

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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threshold of 1,600 mt and 30% below the proposed SSB target of 2,000 mt. Current fishing mortality (0.17) is between the proposed fishing mortality target (0.16) and threshold values (0.24).

After reviewing the results of the stock assessment and peer review report, the Tautog Management Board accepted the 2015 benchmark stock assessment for management use. However, it expressed concern with the preferred stock structure that would split Long Island Sound harvest between two regions. In the absence of conclusive biological evidence to define the regional boundaries, the Board will consider the management and assessment implications of regionalization and choose its preferred regions for future management. In addition, the Board tasked the Tautog Technical Committee to develop reference points that provide consistent metrics to determine stock status across regions. Results will be presented to the Board at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May.

A more detailed description of the stock assessment results is available on the Commission's website at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/54da8a572015TautogAssessmentOverview_Feb2015.pdf. The final assessment and peer review reports will be posted to the Commission website, www.asmfc.org, on February 13th, on the Tautog webpage. For more information on the stock assessment, please contact Katie Drew, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, at kdrew@asmfc.org; and for more information on tautog management, please contact Melissa Yuen, FMP Coordinator, at myuen@asmfc.org.

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