



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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Moratorium on Northern Shrimp Commercial Fishing Maintained for 2018 Season

Portland, ME – In response to the depleted condition of the northern shrimp resource, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Northern Shrimp Section extended the moratorium on commercial fishing for the 2018 fishing season. The Section also approved a 13.3 metric ton (mt) research set aside (RSA) and tasked the Technical Committee to develop the RSA program design and report back to the Section for final approval by December 14.

Industry members continued to express concern about the economic impacts of the fishery closure, especially in light of a lack of positive signals in terms of stock rebuilding. Based on these concerns, the Section agreed to include in future discussions the possibility of opening a directed fishery if improvements in stock condition (e.g., strong recruitment or biomass indices) are not realized.

The 2017 Stock Status Report for Gulf of Maine (GOM) Northern Shrimp indicates abundance and biomass indices for 2012–2017 are the lowest on record of the 34 year time series, with 2017 being the lowest observed. Recruitment since 2011 has been poor and includes the four smallest year classes on record. The recruitment index in 2017 (2016 year class) was the second lowest observed. Current harvestable biomass is mainly comprised of females from the weak 2013 year class and some small, early-maturing females from the below-average 2015 year class.

Recruitment of northern shrimp is related to both spawning biomass and ocean temperatures, with higher spawning biomass and colder temperatures producing stronger recruitment. Ocean temperatures in western Gulf of Maine shrimp habitat have increased over the past decade and reached unprecedented highs within the past several years. While 2014 and 2015 temperatures were cooler, 2016 and 2017 temperatures were again high, and temperature is predicted to continue rising as a result of climate change. This suggests an increasingly inhospitable environment for northern shrimp and the need for strong conservation efforts to help restore and maintain the stock. The Northern Shrimp Technical Committee considers the stock to be in poor condition with limited prospects for the near future. The 2017 Stock Status Report is available at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5a1deb972017NorthernShrimpAssessment_Final.pdf.

For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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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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Motions

Move to set a 500 metric ton fishing season in 2018, not to open before February 21 and open until May 31 or until the total allowable catch is caught. A compound grate is required.

Motion made by Mr. Train and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion fails (Roll Call: In favor – ME; Opposed – NH, MA).

Main Motion

Move to continue the moratorium on the northern shrimp fishery for the 2018 fishing year with an RSA set aside of 13.3 metric tons. Have the TC develop the RSA program design and report back to the section for final approval by December 14.

Motion made by Dr. Armstrong and seconded by Mr. Grout.

Motion to Substitute

Move to substitute to set the RSA quota at 200 mt with the goal of gathering information to maximize the potential of a future small scale fishery. All effort should be made to reduce the impact on small and egg-bearing shrimp. It is imperative to structure the start date of the fishery, and future fisheries, to allow for the greatest potential of eggs to drop.

The Technical Committee (TC) shall develop the parameters of the fishery to include:

- **Continuing the winter sampling program to maintain the time series of biological samples collected from commercial shrimp catches during the winter months**
- **Explore the effectiveness of the compound grate, and allowing the TC the opportunity to develop an effective experimental design**
- **Maximize the potential of future small scale fisheries, all effort should be made to reduce the impact on small and egg-bearing shrimp. It is imperative to structure the start date of the fishery to allow for the greatest potential of eggs to drop**

TC will develop the 2018 fishery and report back to the Section by December 10. The Section shall meet via conference call to finalize the season.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher. Motion fails for lack of a second.

Main Motion

Move to continue the moratorium on the northern shrimp fishery for the 2018 fishing year with an RSA set aside of 13.3 metric tons. Have the TC develop the RSA program design and report back to the Section for final approval by December 14.

Motion made by Dr. Armstrong and seconded by Mr. Grout.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to strike 13.3 and to replace with 32 metric tons.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher. Motion fails for lack of a second.

Main Motion

Move to continue the moratorium on the northern shrimp fishery for the 2018 fishing year with an RSA set aside of 13.3 metric tons. Have the TC develop the RSA program design and report back to the section for final approval by December 14.

Motion made by Dr. Armstrong and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion carries (Roll Call: In Favor – NH, MA; Opposed – ME).

Move to initiate an addendum to address the quota split between shrimp trappers and draggers.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. White. Passes without objection.

Move to nominate Raymond Kane from MA as Vice-Chair.

Motion made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Keliher. Motion passes without objection.