



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
February 4, 2010

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
(202) 289-6400

Horseshoe Crab Benchmark Assessment Indicates Increased Abundance in the Southeast and Delaware Bay Region and Decreased Abundance in New York and New England *Board Initiates Addendum to Address Future Management Measures*

Alexandria, VA – In its report to the Commission’s Horseshoe Crab Management Board, an independent panel of scientists endorsed the use of the 2009 horseshoe crab benchmark stock assessment and its accompanying multispecies Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) framework for management use.

The assessment indicates abundance has increased in the Southeast and Delaware Bay Region (New Jersey through coastal Virginia), and decreased in the New York and New England. In the Delaware Bay Region, increasing trends were most evident for juveniles, followed by adult males. An increase in adult females is now beginning to be observed in the Virginia Tech Benthic Trawl Survey. These patterns are indicative of population recovery, given that horseshoe crab females take longer to mature than males.

In contrast, declining abundance was evident in New York and New England. Declines in the New England population were also apparent in the 2004 assessment; however, declines in New York represent a downturn from the 2004 assessment. The Technical Committee believes decreased harvest quotas in Delaware Bay encouraged increased harvest in nearby regions. The Technical Committee recommends continued precautionary management to address effects of redirected harvest from Delaware Bay to outlying populations.

The ARM framework includes modeling that links management of horseshoe crab harvest to multispecies objectives, particularly red knot shorebird recovery. It was developed jointly by the Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Geological Survey in recognition of the importance of horseshoe crab eggs to several shorebird species in the Delaware Bay. Within the ARM framework, a set of alternative multispecies models have been developed for the Delaware Bay to predict the optimal horseshoe crab harvest strategy that would address the needs of red knot population as well as the fishing industry. Both the peer review panel and Horseshoe Crab Management Board accepted use of the ARM framework as a tool to provide guidance for the multispecies management of horseshoe crab.

-over-

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

In response to these findings and in anticipation of the expiration of the Addendum V in October 2010, the Management Board initiated the development of Draft Addendum VI to the Horseshoe Crab Fishery Management Plan. The Draft Addendum will propose options to extend the current management measures under Addendum V as well as incorporate a number of options that have been included in the ARM framework. The Board will meet during the Commission's Spring Meeting in May to consider approval of the Draft Addendum for public comment.

A more detailed overview of the horseshoe crab stock assessment is available on the Commission website (www.asmfc.org) under Breaking News (Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment Overview). It was developed with the intent of aiding media and interested stakeholders in better understanding the Commission's stock assessment results and process. Copies of the Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment Report, Delaware Bay ARM Report, and Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment Peer Review Advisory Report will also be available on the Commission website by February 10. For more information, please contact Brad Spear, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator for Policy, at (202) 289-6400.

###