



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 Weakfish Board Approves Addendum II *Addendum to Control Expansion of the Fishery*

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Weakfish Management Board approved Addendum II to Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Weakfish. Under the Addendum, the states of Massachusetts through North Carolina will be required to implement a six fish creel limit at their current size limit for the recreational fishery. South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, because of their insignificant weakfish landings, will maintain their current creel and size limits. The Addendum establishes a coastwide commercial landings limit of approximately 3.7 million pounds (based on the average landings for 2000-2004). The Addendum also reduces the allowable bycatch limit from 300 pounds to 150 pounds per day or trip.

The Board’s action was taken in response to a significant decline in stock abundance and increasing total mortality since 1999. As a result of weakfish’s depleted stock size, the Board is required under Amendment 4 to adjust the management program to help rebuild spawning stock biomass. This issue is compounded by the fact that natural mortality, rather than fishing mortality, has been indicated as the lead cause for stock decline.

In order to provide a greater probability of the stock rebounding, the Board has implemented a more conservative recreational creel limit, a commercial bycatch limit, and an annual commercial landings limit. These management measures will be re-evaluated when either the coastwide commercial landings equal or exceed 80% of the commercial landings limit or any single state’s landings exceed its five-year mean by more than 25% in any single year.

States are required to fully implement the Addendum by October 29, 2007. Copies of the final Addendum will be available by March via the Commission’s website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400.

The Board also approved sending forward for public comment Draft Addendum III. This Addendum addresses an inconsistency in bycatch reduction device requirements between the Commission’s FMP and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Shrimp Amendment 6. A press release announcing the document’s availability and schedule for public hearings will be distributed over the next few weeks.

For more information, please contact Nichola Meserve, Weakfish Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or nmeserve@asmfc.org. PR07-03

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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