



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 Bluefish Board Approves Coastwide Sampling Program to Improve Data used in Stock Assessment

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Bluefish Management Board approved Addendum I to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Bluefish. The Addendum establishes a coastwide sampling program to improve the quantity and quality of information available for use in future bluefish stock assessments. The approved sampling program is in direct response to the recommendations of both the Commission’s Bluefish Technical Committee and the peer review panel from the latest bluefish benchmark assessment.

The last peer-reviewed stock assessment, conducted in 2005, supported the finding that the bluefish stock was rebuilt and not experiencing overfishing. However, the peer review panel expressed concern regarding the level of uncertainty in the assessment, particularly with regards to bluefish ageing data. It noted discrepancies in ageing protocols (e.g. the use of scales versus otoliths), gaps in the age-length keys from a lack of samples, and samples being geographically limited to Virginia and North Carolina. Age information is an important component of stock assessments because it is the basis for determining growth rates, the lifespan of a species, and size-at-age to evaluate stock structure. The panel recommended that ageing practices be standardized and sampling expanded to overcome these deficiencies in the assessment.

In May 2011, the Commission’s Bluefish Technical Committee conducted a workshop to review current bluefish ageing data, establish consistent ageing techniques, and explore opportunities to make aging efforts more cost-effective. A primary workshop recommendation was the establishment of a coastwide sampling program for bluefish. This recommendation was the basis for Addendum I.

The Addendum will be available on the Commission’s website (www.asmfc.org) under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at 703.842.0740. For more information, please contact Michael Waine, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mwaine@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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