



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 Approves Amendment 1 to the Northern Shrimp Plan

Alexandria, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp. The first plan revision in nearly 20 years, the Amendment establishes biological reference points and provides new tools for management of the northern shrimp fishery. The Amendment was undertaken for several reasons: to capitalize on new information on northern shrimp life history and population dynamics; provide managers with greater flexibility in managing the resource; and update the management plan to comply with the mandates of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (1993).

The Northern Shrimp Section approved Amendment 1 in January 2004. The Amendment establishes formal biological reference points. They include a fishing mortality target of 0.22 and limit of 0.6, and a biomass threshold of 19.8 million pounds and limit of 13.2 million pounds. These reference points provide benchmarks for Section consideration when establishing management regulations. When either limit is exceeded, the Section must take action to initiate stock rebuilding. The Amendment also provides a broader suite of management options to allow for greater flexibility in regulating the fishery. Adjustment of the northern shrimp fishing season occurs at the Section's annual specification setting meeting each fall. All other changes to the current management program must be developed and approved through the Commission's addendum process. Member states of the Section are required to implement the Amendment no later than July 1, 2004.

Based on the 2003 northern shrimp stock assessment, fishing mortality is below the target and overfishing is not occurring. However, because biomass is below the threshold, the stock is defined as overfished. Exploitable biomass generally declined from approximately 49 million pounds in 1987 to a time series low of 12.4 million pounds in 2000. Since then the biomass estimate has risen to nearly 17 million pounds in 2003, as a result of the appearance of the moderate 1999 year class and the strong 2001 year class. This estimate is still below the time-series average of 28.2 million pounds, and well below the average of the relatively stable 1985-1994 period of 37.9 million pounds. The estimate of spawning stock biomass for 2004 is also well below the time-series mean.

Copies of Amendment 1 can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmf.org or by contacting the Commission office at (202) 289-6400. For more information, please contact Braddock Spear, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-400 ext. 310, or bspear@asmfc.org.

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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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