



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
May 7, 2009

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
(202) 289-6400

ASMFC Approves River Herring Amendment *States Water Fisheries to be Closed by January 1, 2012 unless Sustainability is Demonstrated through State-specific Management Plans*

Alexandria, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has approved Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Shad and River Herring (River Herring Management). The Amendment prohibits state waters commercial and recreational fisheries beginning January 1, 2012, unless a state or jurisdiction develops and submits for approval a sustainable management plan by January 1, 2010. The Amendment defines a sustainable fishery as “a commercial and/or recreational fishery that will not diminish the potential future stock reproduction and recruitment.” Submitted plans must clearly demonstrate that the state’s or jurisdiction’s river herring fisheries meet this new definition of sustainability through the development of sustainability targets which must be achieved and maintained. The plans are subject to Technical Committee review and Board approval prior to the fishing year beginning January 1, 2012. Proposals to re-open closed fisheries can be submitted annually as part of the annual state compliance report.

The Board’s action on Amendment 2 was taken in response to widespread concern regarding the decline of river herring stocks. While many populations of blueback herring and alewife, collectively known as river herring, are in decline or remain depressed at stable levels, lack of fishery-dependent and independent data makes it difficult to ascertain the status of river herring stocks coastwide. Between 1985 and 2007, commercial landings of river herring decreased by 97 percent from 13.6 million pounds to 317,000 pounds. In response to declining stocks within their own waters, four states—Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and North Carolina—have closed their river herring fisheries.

Amendment 2 requires states to implement fisheries-dependent and independent monitoring programs. In recognition of limited state resources, the required monitoring will be identical to monitoring for American shad, a species closely related to river herring, so that monitoring can be conducted concurrently with current efforts. This monitoring will also assist the river herring stock assessment, which is expected to be completed in 2012. The Amendment also contains recommendations to member states and jurisdictions to conserve, restore, and protect critical river herring habitat.

-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

River herring stocks are a multi-jurisdictional resource occurring in rivers and coastal and ocean waters. While oversight of river herring management in state waters lies with the Commission, river herring can be encountered in ocean fisheries beyond the states' jurisdiction. Bycatch of river herring in small mesh fisheries continues to be a significant concern. Preliminary analyses indicate that, in some years, the total bycatch of river herring by the Atlantic herring fleet alone could be equal to the total landings from the entire in-river directed fishery on the East Coast. Based on the Board's request, the Commission will send a letter to the Secretary of Commerce supporting efforts underway by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils to effectively monitor bycatch of river herring in small mesh fisheries, and encouraging additional resources to support the cooperative efforts to better manage anadromous fisheries. Additionally, the Commission will request that the Secretary of Commerce take emergency action with regard to implementing the bycatch monitoring measures recently under discussion with New England Council.

The Plan will be available by mid-June and can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at (202) 289-6400. For more information, please contact Kate Taylor, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 or at ktaylor@asmfc.org.

###