



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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PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section Sets 2012 Fishing Season Specifications

Portsmouth, NH – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Northern Shrimp Section approved a total allowable catch (TAC) of 2,000 mt, with the season closing when landings are projected to reach 95% of the TAC (1,900 mt). The trawl season will start January 2, 2012 with three landing days a week (Monday, Thursday, Friday). Vessels may only land once a day. The trap season will start February 1, 2012 with a 1,000 pound landing limit per vessel per day. The Section will assess the pace of the fishery on January 18, 2012 to evaluate where total landings are relative to the TAC. If necessary, the Section may adjust the closing date or modify management options (e.g., trip limit, days out) to prevent an overage of TAC. These measures are consistent with the newly approved Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp.

“Given the favorable stock condition of the last two years, the Section set relatively long fishing seasons in an effort to accommodate industry’s demands for expanded fishing opportunities,” stated Section Chair Doug Grout from New Hampshire. “Unfortunately, substantial increases in both effort and participation resulted in early season closures and significant overages in both seasons – 28% and 48% overharvest in the 2010 and 2011 seasons, respectively. Consequently, the stock is now overfished and overfishing is occurring, requiring a shortened season and limited fishing opportunities in 2012.”

The results of the 2011 stock assessment update indicate the northern shrimp stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring. Current fishing mortality (F) is estimated at 0.68, above the F target, threshold and limit. Biomass is estimated at 6,500 mt, below the biomass threshold of 9,000 mt, and close to the biomass limit of 6,000 mt. Additionally, shrimp abundance in the western Gulf of Maine has declined steadily since 2006. The latest survey showed a much lower than normal abundance of large females and juveniles, with the remaining males and females being small for their age. These findings are based on the Collie-Sissenwine Analysis, which has been endorsed by three peer review panels as the preferred model to assess northern shrimp stock condition. The FMP specifies that if fishing mortality exceeds the limit level and biomass is less than the threshold level, the Section must act immediately to reduce fishing mortality.

In response to concerns from the public and Advisory Panel regarding the current stock assessment models, the Section recommended the Commission consider accelerating the timeline for the peer review benchmark stock assessment for northern shrimp from 2013 to 2012.

The northern shrimp fishery is jointly regulated by Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Northern Shrimp Section. The cooperative management program has been in place since 1972 and is currently managed under Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp. For more information, please contact Michael Waine, FMP Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or <mwaine@asmfc.org>.

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 diadromous species.