



# **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

*Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 3, 2017

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### **Stock Assessment Update Indicates River Herring Remain Depleted on a Coastwide Basis Though Improvements Have Occurred in Several River Systems**

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Shad and River Herring Management Board reviewed the results of the 2017 River Herring Assessment Update, which indicates river herring remain depleted and at near historic lows on a coastwide basis. The “depleted” determination was used instead of “overfished” and “overfishing” because many factors, not just directed and incidental fishing, are contributing to the low abundance of river herring.

Alewife and blueback herring (collectively referred to as river herring) are anadromous species, spending the majority of their life at sea and returning to their natal streams to spawn. While at sea, mixing is believed to occur among multiple river-specific stocks and the incidental catch of river herring in non-targeted ocean fisheries is known to include both immature and mature fish.

The stock assessment update applied the same approaches used in the previous benchmark stock assessment with the incorporation of additional years of data (2011-2015). Of the 54 river herring stocks for which data were available, 16 experienced increasing abundance trends, 2 experienced decreasing abundance trends, 8 experienced stable abundance, 10 experienced no discernible trends in abundance due to high variability, and 18 did not have enough data to assess recent abundance trends (see Table 1, next page).

While status on a coastwide basis remains unchanged, there are some positive signs of improvement for some river systems, with increasing abundance trends for a number of rivers in the Mid-Atlantic throughout New England region. While abundance in these river systems are still at low levels, dam removals and improvements to fish passage have had a positive impact on run returns. Since the completion of the 2012 assessment, NOAA Fisheries in partnership with the Commission have worked to provide state and local agencies with restoration project funding, leading to dam removals and fish passage improvement projects.

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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 diadromous species.

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River herring are managed through Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Shad and River Herring, with the goal of conserving and protecting river herring along the coast. The Amendment prohibited state waters commercial and recreational fisheries beginning January 1, 2012, unless a state or jurisdiction had a Sustainable Fishery Management Plan (SFMP) approved by the Board. SFMPs must clearly demonstrate that the state’s or jurisdiction’s river herring fisheries meet sustainability targets which must be achieved and maintained. Amendment 2 also required states to implement fisheries-dependent and independent monitoring programs, and contains recommendations to member states and jurisdictions to conserve, restore, and protect critical river herring habitat. As of June 1, 2017, the Shad and River Herring Management Board approved sustainable fishery management plans for Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, and South Carolina. Upon receiving the results of the Stock Assessment Update, the Board did not take any management action at this time.

For a more detailed overview of the River Herring Stock Assessment Update go here – <https://tinyurl.com/y93wx7by>. The Overview is intended to aid media and interested stakeholders in better understanding the Commission’s stock assessment results and process. The River Herring Stock Assessment Update will be available on the Commission website, [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org), on the Shad and River Herring webpage under stock assessment reports. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

State	River	Benchmark Trends (2001-2010)	Updated Recent Trends (2006-2015)
NE U.S. Continental Shelf (NMFS Bottom Trawl)^		NA	Increasing <sup>A,B</sup>
ME	Androscoggin	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	Increasing <sup>A</sup>
	Kennebec	Unknown <sup>RH</sup>	Increasing <sup>RH</sup>
	Sebasticook	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	Increasing <sup>RH</sup>
	Damariscotta	Stable <sup>A</sup>	Increasing <sup>A</sup>
	Union	Stable <sup>A</sup>	No Trend <sup>A</sup>
NH	Cocheco	Stable <sup>A,B</sup>	Increasing <sup>A,B</sup>
	Exeter	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	Stable <sup>RH</sup>
	Lamprey	Increasing <sup>A</sup>	Increasing <sup>RH</sup>
	Oyster	Stable <sup>B</sup>	Decreasing <sup>RH</sup>
	Taylor	Decreasing <sup>B</sup>	No Returns <sup>RH</sup>
	Winnicut	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>
MA	Mattapoissett	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	Increasing <sup>A</sup>
	Monument	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	Increasing <sup>A,B</sup>
	Nemasket	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	Increasing <sup>A</sup>
	Parker	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	Stable <sup>A</sup>
	Stony Brook	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	Unknown <sup>A</sup>
RI	Buckeye	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	Increasing <sup>A</sup>
	Gilbert	Decreasing <sup>A</sup>	Stable <sup>A</sup>
	Nonquit	Decreasing <sup>A</sup>	Decrease <sup>A</sup>
CT	Bride Brook	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	Increasing <sup>A</sup>
	Connecticut	Decreasing <sup>B</sup>	Stable <sup>B</sup>
	Farmington	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>
	Mianus	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	No Trend <sup>A</sup> , Increasing <sup>B</sup>
	Mill Brook	Unknown <sup>A</sup>	No Trend <sup>A</sup>
	Naugatuck	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>
Shetucket	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	No Trend <sup>A</sup> , Stable <sup>B</sup>	
NY	Hudson	Stable <sup>A,B</sup>	Increasing <sup>RH</sup>
NJ, DE, PA	Delaware	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	No Trend <sup>A,B</sup>
MD, DE	Nanticoke	Decreasing <sup>A,B</sup>	Stable <sup>A</sup> , No Trend <sup>B</sup>
VA, MD, DC	Potomac	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	Stable <sup>A</sup> , Unknown <sup>B</sup>
VA	James	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>
	Rappahannock	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	No Trend <sup>A</sup> , Increasing <sup>B</sup>
	York	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>
NC	Alligator	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>
	Chowan	Stable <sup>A,B</sup>	No Trend <sup>A</sup> , Stable <sup>B</sup>
	Scuppernong	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>	Unknown <sup>A,B</sup>
SC	Santee-Cooper	Increasing <sup>B</sup>	No Trend <sup>B</sup>
FL	St. Johns River	NA	Unknown <sup>B</sup>

Table 1. Abundance trends of select alewife and blueback herring stocks along the Atlantic coast from the 2012 benchmark assessment and the 2017 assessment update. ^NE shelf trends are from the spring, coastwide survey data which encounters river herring more frequently than the fall survey. A = Alewife only; B= Blueback herring only; A,B = Alewife and blueback herring by species; RH = alewife and blueback herring combined