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October 4, 2012
Marine Fisheries Advisory

MENHADEN PUBLIC HEARING: OCTOBER 16

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, in conjunction with the Division of Marine Fisheries, is holding a public hearing in Massachusetts on Draft Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden as follows (other hearings will take place along the eastern seaboard):

October 16; 5:30 PM
Joseph Bourne Public Library
19 Sandwich Road
Bourne, Massachusetts
Contact: David Pierce at 617.626.1532

The Draft Amendment presents a suite of options to manage and monitor the stock in both the short and long-term. These include options to end overfishing; change the biomass reference points to match the fishing mortality reference points; and establish a specification process to set and allocate total allowable catch (TAC), including procedures to close the fishery when a certain percentage of the TAC has been projected to be landed. It presents accountability measures to address quota transfers, rollovers, and overage payback, as well as options to allow for a specified amount of the TAC to be set aside for small scale fisheries and episodic events. To address monitoring and data collection needs, the Draft Amendment also presents options for timely quota monitoring and the collection of biological data through catch sampling.

The Draft Amendment responds to the findings of both the 2010 benchmark stock assessment and the 2012 stock assessment update that indicate the stock is experiencing overfishing but may or may not be overfished depending on the reference points chosen. The stock is not overfished based on the current reference points used in the most recent assessment. Given that the stock is experiencing overfishing, the Draft Amendment's immediate goals are to take steps to end overfishing and manage Atlantic menhaden not only as a fishery but as a critical ecosystem component. However, uncertainties in the 2012 stock assessment update make it difficult to quantify the level of reductions needed to meet those goals. Therefore, the Draft Amendment includes a range of harvest reductions from 0 – 50% from current harvest levels. The broad range of potential harvest reductions and allocation scenarios enables the Board and the public to consider management options beyond the historical allocations and traditional quota setting approaches to best manage this fishery. The Technical Committee plans to address the issues with the stock assessment in the next benchmark assessment, currently planned for 2015.

Written public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM (EST) on November 16, 2012** and should be forwarded to Mike Waine, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or mwaine@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Amendment 2). The Draft Amendment is available at the ASMFC website (www.asmfc.org) under *Breaking News* or by contacting the Commission at 703.842.0740. For more information, please contact Mike Waine. Final action on the Amendment is anticipated to occur in December.