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Aug. 12, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Chris Batsavage, Special Assistant for Councils

SUBJECT: Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Meeting Summary-Aug. 6-8, 2019

Issue

Memo to inform the Marine Fisheries Commission of the issues discussed and actions taken by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Findings

- The memo highlights management actions of particular interest to the Marine Fisheries Commission.
- Additional information about the meeting can be found in the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meeting summary in the briefing material.

Action Needed

For informational purposes only, no action is needed at this time.

Overview

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) met on Aug. 6-8, 2019 in Arlington, VA. Highlights of the management actions taken by the Commission are discussed below.

Cobia

The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board and the entire Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Amendment 1 to the Cobia Fishery Management Plan. Amendment 1 establishes management measures for cobia from New York to Florida that transition the Fishery Management Plan from complementary management with the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils to sole management by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is now responsible for setting harvest quotas and sector allocations, defining stock status criteria, and monitoring and closing (if necessary) commercial harvest. The commercial size limit (33 inches fork length) and vessel limit (up to 6 fish per vessel) remain unchanged, but states can implement more restrictive measures to prevent the commercial quota from being reached too early in the year and to implement consistent regulations for the commercial and recreational fisheries. The

recreational harvest limit will be monitored using numbers of fish instead of pounds of fish due to the high uncertainty and annual variability in average fish weights. And finally, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will recommend to NOAA Fisheries that fishing in federal waters be regulated according to the state of landing. If a vessel has licenses for multiple states with open seasons, they must follow the most restrictive license's regulations. If a vessel has licenses for multiple states, only one of which has an open season, they may fish under the regulations of the open state. Regulations resulting from this recommendation would only apply in federal waters. Fishermen would still be required to follow state possession or landing limits in state waters.

Striped Bass

The Striped Bass Management Board approved Draft Addendum VI to the Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum provides a range of management alternatives designed to end overfishing* and reduce fishing mortality* to the target level in 2020. The Draft Addendum proposes management options for both commercial and recreational sectors in the ocean and in Chesapeake Bay in order to reduce total fishery removals by 18% relative to 2017 levels. These options include reduced commercial quotas, increased minimum size limits and slot limits for the recreational fishery in the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean, bag limit reductions for the Chesapeake Bay recreational fishery, and the mandatory use of circle hooks when fishing with bait to reduce release mortality in the recreational striped bass fishery. Public hearings will occur from late August through September and the deadline for submitting written comments is 5:00 PM on September 27, 2019. It is likely that a public hearing will be held in Manteo. The Board will consider final approval of the addendum at their October meeting, and management measures will be implemented in 2020.

American Eel

The American Eel Management Board approved glass eel aquaculture proposals for Maine and North Carolina. Maine's proposal was the same as the one approved by the Board last year, but North Carolina's proposal had different fishing seasons and fishing times compared to the last proposal. In 2019 the American Eel Farm in North Carolina harvested 13.82 pounds of glass eels and American Unagi in Maine harvested 130 pounds of glass eels. However, no glass eels harvested by the American Eel Farm survived due to a total mortality event in June. The Board raised concerns about North Carolina's proposal allowing harvest over two calendar years (Nov.-Mar.), enforcement of the proposal's provisions, and whether the lack of production of yellow eels and total loss of glass eels by the American Eel Farm was meeting the objectives of the American Eel Fishery Management Plan. Due to these concerns, the Board approved North Carolina's proposal for one year instead of two years

Black Sea Bass

The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board reviewed strategies for addressing black sea bass commercial state-by-state allocations for north of Cape Hatteras (black sea bass south of Cape Hatteras are managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council). The strategies include status quo commercial allocations, a dynamic approach that gradually shifts allocations over time based on a combination of historical resource utilization and current stock distribution information, trigger-based allocation approaches, and hybrid approaches that combine multiple options. In addition, the Board reviewed strategies proposed by the State of Connecticut to address their disproportionately low allocation of 1%. North

Carolina has 11% of the commercial black sea bass quota, and these state-specific allocations were implemented in 2003. The Board agreed to continue developing these proposed options and to consider implementing a management action when the Board meets with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in October.

Spiny Dogfish

The Spiny Dogfish Management Board approved Draft Addendum VI to the Spiny Dogfish Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes allowing commercial quota to be transferred between all regions and states. The fishery management plan allocates the coastwide commercial quota to the states of Maine-Connecticut as a regional allocation and to the states of New York- North Carolina as state-specific allocations. The fishery management plan currently allows quota transfers among the states in the southern region, but it does not allow for transfers between the northern and southern region. The current limitations for quota transfers could result in states running out of quota due to the inability to transfer quota from the northern region and because the 2019–2020 coastwide commercial quota was reduced by 46% due to declining biomass as indicated in the 2018 stock assessment update. Public hearings for the addendum will likely occur in September, and the Board will consider the addendum for final approval at their October meeting. It is likely that a public hearing will be held in Dare County.

Upcoming Meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will be Oct. 27-31, 2019 at Wentworth by the Sea in New Castle, NH.

***Definitions**

Stock – A group of fish of the same species in a given area. Unlike a fish population, a stock is defined as much by management concerns (jurisdictional boundaries or harvesting locations) as by biology.

Fishery Dependent – Data derived from the commercial and recreational fisheries and dealers; including catch, landings, and effort information.

Fishery Independent – Data derived from activities such as research and surveys that does not involve the commercial or recreational harvest of fish.

Terminal Year – The final year of estimates being used in an analysis.

Overfishing – Occurs when the rate that fish that are harvested or killed exceeds a specific threshold.

Spawning Stock Biomass – Total weight of mature females in the stock.

Recruitment – The number of fish that survive to the juvenile stage.

Fishing Mortality – Rate at which fish are removed from the population.