

# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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*Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration well in progress, by the year 2015*

December 5, 2008

Lori Steele  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill #2  
Newburyport, Massachusetts 01950  
Re: Herring Amendment 4 Catch Monitoring Program

Dear Lori,

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) supports the development of a comprehensive catch monitoring program for the Atlantic herring fishery. Accurate catch monitoring will improve the interstate management of Atlantic herring as well as increase the understanding of the bycatch impacts on other Commission-managed species. The Commission's efforts to rebuild the river herring stocks are dependent on statistically valid characterization of bycatch in the Atlantic herring and other fisheries.

Attached please find the Commission's suggested goals, objectives, and details for a catch monitoring program specific to the Atlantic herring fishery.

Sincerely,



Robert Beal

cc: ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section

# **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**

## **Atlantic Herring Catch Monitoring Program Recommendations**

### **Goal:**

- Develop a cost effective, comprehensive, timely, and efficient catch monitoring program for the Atlantic herring fishery.

### **Objectives:**

- Implement an accurate and efficient Atlantic herring catch monitoring program to support the management of area quotas in a timely manner.
- Implement a bycatch monitoring program to develop a spatially and temporally valid estimate of species (including Atlantic herring) retained and discarded in the Atlantic herring fishery.

### **“Real-Time” Quota Monitoring:**

- The IVR system provides the basic infrastructure necessary to achieve near real-time quota monitoring.
- Fishermen should be required to complete an IVR report after every trip including zero and negative reports. A system should be developed to allow fishermen to notify the NMFS and the states of extended periods when a vessel will not be fishing.
- Reporting on a more timely basis will allow for improved accounting of landings by area to refine effort control programs.
- The Commission is considering subdividing the annual area quotas which would require timely catch reporting necessary to prevent overages.
- The VMS system may also be efficiently used as a catch reporting tool.

### **Bycatch Monitoring:**

- The Amendment 4 bycatch monitoring program should focus on estimating catch of small-bodied pelagic fish species such as river herring, haddock, and silver hake. Co-occurring small-bodied pelagic species frequently inhabit the water column where fishermen set on Atlantic herring. A statistically valid monitoring program for these species will likely be able to characterize the catch of the many other species that are encountered in the Atlantic herring fishery.
- Sampling programs should achieve a minimum 30% coefficient of variation for these small-bodied species.
- Identifying where the incidental catch occurs and in what amount is critical information to have when establishing annual catch limits (ACLs) for other species and considering measures that will reduce bycatch.

- Bycatch monitoring should consist of a combination of sea-sampling, portside monitoring, and possibly electronic monitoring.
- While electronic monitoring has possible drawbacks, it may be an efficient method to estimate the number of trawls that are released prior to being pumped onto the fishing or transport vessel.
- As funds become available, the level of sea-sampling should be increased to fully cover the gear types, range, and seasonality of this fishery.
- Portside sampling is a cost effective method to estimate bycatch of small-bodied pelagic species in the Atlantic herring fishery.
- A program that pairs sea sampling and portside sampling should be developed to compare the bycatch estimates of the two methods.

### **Funding**

- The top priority for research set aside projects should be catch monitoring.
- Existing portside sampling surveys are cost effective and should be a priority for future funding.
- Available at-sea observer trips should focus on bycatch of small-bodied pelagic species such as river herring, haddock, and silver hake.
- Funding short-term, high-coverage projects may be an effective way to characterize bycatch and allow a reduced level of coverage in the future.
- When possible, expand on existing observer programs.