



## ***New England Fishery Management Council News Brief***

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Council Approves Measures to Protect River Herring and Shad**

**Newburyport, MA** In the heart of Cape Cod, MA where, in historic times river herring once supported a large commercial fishery, the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) approved measures that would protect these fish, as well as two species of shad, in federal waters from Maine south to the Mid-Atlantic region.

Meeting in Hyannis, MA yesterday, the NEFMC formally adopted recommendations that would add to other state and federal measures underway to address the poor condition of alewives and blueback herring, collectively referred to as river herring, and their cousins, American and hickory shad.

Because they are vulnerable to midwater and bottom trawl gears used in the Atlantic herring fishery, the proposals would establish catch “caps” or limits by area for the four species collectively during 2014 and 2015. Future caps would be set during the Council’s Atlantic herring fishery specifications-setting process.

If approved by NOAA Fisheries, acting on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce to finalize the Council’s recommendations, the Atlantic herring fishery operating outside of state waters and seaward to the U.S. 200 mile limit would be subject to the catch caps. The catch cap areas are proposed to close to the gear type (midwater or bottom trawl) when 95 percent of the cap for that gear type is projected to be reached in an area. The caps would not apply to smaller scale vessels that land less than 6,600 pounds per trip, and no caps are proposed for 2014-2015 in the Georges Bank area due to very low observed interaction with river herring and shad there.

For 2014 and 2015, the Gulf of Maine catch cap would apply to midwater trawl gear only and is proposed to be 86 metric tons, or about 189,000 pounds. A catch cap in a defined area off Cape Cod also would apply only to midwater trawl gear and is proposed to be 13 metric tons or 29,000 pounds. In the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic cap area, separate caps by gear type would be set; 124 metric tons or 272,000 pounds for midwater trawls and 89 metric tons or 198,000 pounds for bottom trawl vessels.

Shad and river herring were among the first fish to be exploited commercially by early settlers along the eastern seaboard because their oily flesh allowed them to be preserved without refrigeration. Over the years, their populations have declined due to overfishing in the late 1800s through the 1960s, habitat loss and other factors. Growing awareness has led to state-imposed moratoria, improved water quality, dam removal, fish passages, and other efforts to restore habitat, in addition to fishermen’s efforts at avoidance. However, calculations are not yet available to document improvements on these stocks.

The New England Council develops rules for both large and small-scale commercial and recreational fisheries that operate between three and 200 miles off the coastlines of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

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