



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 29, 2006

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NE Fishery Council Sets Herring Fishing Limits in the Gulf of Maine

Peabody, MA The New England Fishery Management Council took action yesterday to reduce the amount of herring available to the fishery for 2007-2009 in a heavily fished inshore region off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts known as Area 1A. Based on an assessment of the Atlantic herring resource conducted this year and the available scientific information indicating that inshore Gulf of Maine stock component should be managed in a precautionary manner, a clear majority of Council members voted to allow fishermen to harvest about 110 million pounds or 50,000 metric tons of herring from Area 1A during each of the next three years. This was a reduction from the more than 132 million pounds, or 60,000 metric tons, that has been harvested from Area 1A over the last several years.

“The Council’s highest priority is maintaining a healthy herring resource that will continue to support a substantial fishery over the long-term, as well as an important forage base for other species in the Gulf of Maine ecosystem,” said Council Chairman John Pappalardo following the decision.

Included in the language of the action was an important caveat to review the most up-to-date scientific and catch information next year to ensure that the harvest levels will continue to be conservative enough to ensure that the inshore stock component will not be depleted. The harvest levels set for 2007-2009 are as follows:

Area 1A = 50,000 metric tons (mt), 5,000 from January - May
Area 1B = 10,000 mt
Area 2 = 30,000 mt
Area 3 = 55,000 mt
Total Optimum Yield = 145,000 mt

Central to the herring discussion were concerns that while the herring resource is fully rebuilt and not overfished, scientific models have suggested that total herring biomass may be overestimated and fishing mortality underestimated. In addition, abundance survey trends in the inshore Gulf of Maine are declining. Limited information hampered definitive scientific advice, but most parties agreed to a more conservative approach than the previous year, along with monitoring of the inshore area. Herring stocks in the Northeast were depleted by foreign fleets in the 1960s and 1970s to the point where there was a total collapse of the resource and the industry it supported.

Visit the Council’s website, www.nefmc.org, for materials relating to the Council decision on herring management.

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