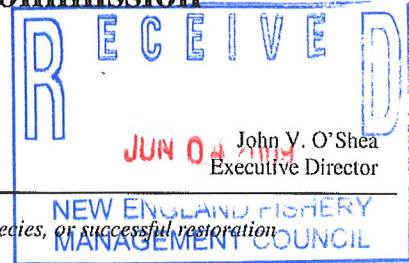


Correspondence
Re: River Herring

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1444 Eye Street, N.W., Sixth Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 289-6400
(202) 289-6051 (fax)
www.asmfc.org



George D. Lapointe (ME), Chair
Robert H. Boyles, Jr. (SC), Vice-Chair

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

May 27, 2009

The Honorable Gary Locke
U.S. Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary,

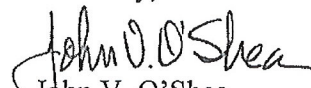
The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) requests emergency action to implement monitoring measures to determine bycatch of blueback herring and alewife (river herring) in small mesh fisheries. We also request your support of efforts by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) to address river herring bycatch. Additional financial resources are needed to support meetings between the Councils and ASMFC and technical analysis of bycatch data.

The ASMFC is concerned with the coastwide depletion of river herring stocks; with few exceptions, most rivers have experienced significant declines. Nearly 500,000 blueback herring were passed annually at the fish lift on the Connecticut River prior to 1986... last year 84 fish were observed. Since 1985, commercial landings have decreased by 97 percent. In response to this precipitous decline, four of our states have implemented complete moratoria on river herring harvest. Most recently, the ASMFC has required states to close their fisheries unless they can prove they are sustainable.

The bycatch of river herring in federal fisheries has become a significant concern, as it may be having considerable impact on stock status. Preliminary analyses indicate, in some years, the total bycatch of river herring by the Atlantic herring fleet alone could be equal to the total landings from the entire in-river directed fishery on the East Coast. Increased at-sea sampling would have an immediate benefit of identifying the magnitude and location of high bycatch events.

We urgently need monitoring and management programs to minimize the impacts of bycatch on river herring. Thank you in advance for giving our request your direct attention.

Sincerely,


John V. O'Shea

cc: Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA
Dr. James W. Balsinger, NMFS
Paul Diodati, Chair, Shad and River Herring Management Board
Shad and River Herring Management Board

CONNECTICUT, DELAWARE, FLORIDA, GEORGIA, MAINE, MARYLAND, MASSACHUSETTS, NEW HAMPSHIRE,
NEW JERSEY, NEW YORK, NORTH CAROLINA, PENNSYLVANIA, RHODE ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA, VIRGINIA

rec'd 6/4-6/5/09 - Ch. Pity

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New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116
John Pappalardo, *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

May 11, 2009

Captain Vince O'Shea, Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1444 Eye Street, N.W., Sixth Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Vince:

Thank you for your April 14, 2009 letter requesting that the New England Fishery Management Council consider the bycatch of river herring in all small mesh fisheries. As you are aware, the Council is currently developing Amendment 4 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and has identified the bycatch of river herring as an important issue to consider in the amendment. In addition, National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act (MSRA) requires the Council to minimize bycatch/bycatch mortality to the extent practicable in all FMPs.

Aside from establishing annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) consistent with the provisions of the MSRA, the top priority in Amendment 4 is to develop a comprehensive catch monitoring program for the Atlantic herring fishery. The catch monitoring program will enhance information collection and improve our ability to accurately identify and quantify landings and bycatch of all species in the Atlantic herring fishery. The Council has focused special attention on the bycatch of river herring throughout the development of the catch monitoring alternatives in Amendment 4 and will continue to do so. If alternatives for a catch monitoring program can be completed in a timely manner, the Council intends to consider specific management measures to minimize river herring bycatch to the extent possible in Amendment 4.

The Council intends to continue to address river herring bycatch in Amendment 4 and other management actions for small mesh fisheries in the Northeast Region as better information becomes available. We look forward to working with the Commission to promote the rebuilding and long-term sustainable management of the river herring resource. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Paul Howard
Executive Director

cc: Council members

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

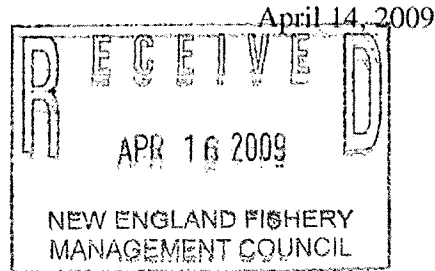
1444 Eye Street, N.W., Sixth Floor
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John V. O'Shea
Executive Director

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

Captain Paul Howard, Executive Director
New England Fishery Management Council
The Tannery – Mill 2
50 Water Street
Newburyport, Massachusetts 01950



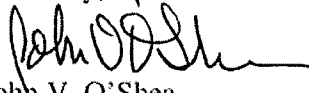
Dear Captain ~~Howard~~, *Paul*

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Shad and River Herring Management Board (Board) requests that the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) consider the bycatch of river herring (alewife and blueback herring) in all small mesh fisheries. The Board recognizes and appreciates the Council for its efforts, through the development of Amendment 4, to monitor and address bycatch in the Atlantic herring fishery, and requests that similar action be taken for other small mesh fisheries under the jurisdiction of the Council.

The Board is concerned that many populations of river herring are in decline, or remain at depressed but stable levels, along the Atlantic coast. Given the river herring's diadromous life cycle, it is susceptible to varied threats throughout different life stages. These threats include bycatch, predation by other species, direct harvest, habitat degradation, and barriers to upstream and downstream migration. The Board is working to address all these threats, as possible, within their authority or through coordinated efforts with the appropriate agencies. Of particular concern is the bycatch of river herring in the small mesh fleets occurring in federal waters.

The Board and the Shad and River Herring Technical Committee want to work with the Council and staff in analyzing the available data and developing monitoring programs and management options to minimize the impacts of small mesh fisheries on river herring. We look forward to working cooperatively with the Council to address this difficult and important issue.

Sincerely,


John V. O'Shea

cc: Paul Diodati, Chair, Shad and River Herring Management Board
Shad and River Herring Management Board

cc: Cornelia, LS, CBA (4/20)

Other Management Options

- Consideration should be given to other management options including bycatch limits by gear type and/or fishery.
- Increase observer coverage in all small mesh fisheries
- Mandatory reporting of bycatch and discards.
- Gear restrictions to reduce bycatch.

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, when possible, should be expanded.
- Funding short-term, high-coverage projects may be an effective way to gain a better understanding

