



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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Measures to Promote Accountability in the Atlantic Herring Fishery Approved by the New England Fishery Management Council

Mystic, CT While meeting today in Mystic, CT, the New England Fishery Management Council weighed the practical concerns of fishing vessel operations with resource conservation needs as it approved measures that would further regulate the Atlantic herring fleet operating off the coasts of New England and Mid-Atlantic region.

The proposals, to be added to the more comprehensive Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan, include additional weighing requirements to more accurately document the herring catch and any species taken as bycatch, and measures to address net slippage. The Herring Plan defines net slippage as catch that is discarded prior to being observed, sorted, sampled, and/or brought on board the fishing vessel.

If the Council's proposals receive final approval by NOAA Fisheries, the new regulations would call for weighing and reporting procedures to better ensure accurate and verified catch weights. As a disincentive for vessels in the directed herring fishery to slip catch, a 15 nautical mile "move along" measure (to relocate to another area) was adopted. The move-along rule would apply to slippage due to safety issues, mechanical failures, and encounters with dogfish schools. An additional requirement for trip termination would apply to other slippage events.

Both sets of rules were supported by the Council to improve catch monitoring, enhance accountability, and reduce bycatch in the fishery. Atlantic herring is not overfished, but as a forage species, it is an important component in the marine ecosystem in the Northeast.

The New England Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional organizations established by federal legislation in 1976, is charged with conserving and managing fishery resources from three to 200 miles off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

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