



New England Fishery Management Council

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To: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director
From: Steve Cadrin, Chairman, Scientific and Statistical Committee
Date: June 23, 2010

Subject: Acceptable Biological Catch of Atlantic Salmon

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) was asked to review the information provided by the NEFSC and develop recommendations for an ABC for Atlantic salmon and for other management reference points, MSY, MSST and OFL if possible.

On June 22, 2010 the SSC reviewed information and associated presentations developed by the NMFS and Council Staff:

1. U.S. Atlantic Salmon Stock Structure, Status, and Metrics Information Brief for New England Council to amend the Atlantic Salmon FMP in 2010 (J. Kocik, NEFSC)
2. Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Salmon, (NEFMC, 1987)

The current Fishery Management Plan prohibits possession of Atlantic salmon and any directed or incidental commercial fishery for Atlantic salmon in federal waters. The Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic salmon was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in June 2009. The other stock complexes in the US - Long Island Sound and Central New England and the trans-boundary Outer Bay of Fundy complex are also well below conservation limits.

A management reference point used by salmon managers, Conservation Spawning Escapement (CSE), is comparable to minimum stock size threshold (MSST) and under current natural mortality regimes. US salmon stock complexes are below the minimum stock size at which rebuilding to B_{MSY} will occur within 10 years. Since 1967, CSE has not been achieved for a stock complex and abundance estimates are less than 25% of these conservation reference points, even with extensive hatchery support.

Given the endangered status of Atlantic salmon, the SSC supports the full implementation of the ESA recovery plan. Atlantic salmon were listed as endangered primarily because of significant ongoing threats from poor marine survival and dams. Observed bycatch of salmon in New England fisheries appears to be a minimal component of mortality. For example from 1989 to 2009 bycatch of salmon was observed in only five of 12 years, totaling of 45 lb.

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) is a formal international agreement. National Standard 1 guidelines implementing the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act state that “*For internationally-assessed stocks, an ABC as defined in these guidelines is not required if they meet the international Exception.*”

The SSC concludes that:

- 1. The prohibition on possession and directed fishing for Atlantic salmon is consistent with conservation and management objectives;**
- 2. Annual catch limits and accountability measures are not appropriate for fishery resources managed according to international agreements.**
- 3. Therefore, no ABC recommendation is provided.**