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November 2015
Menhaden Management Update
Impacts to Maryland’s Commercial Fisheries

What will Maryland’s menhaden quota be in 2016?

In 2016 Maryland will have a quota of 5,674,595 pounds – the same as it was in 2015. ASMFC set the coastal quota for 2015 and 2016 at their May 2015 meeting. We do not anticipate that the ASMFC management board will take action to change quotas for 2016 even though the fishery is currently operating under the target fishing level.

Will there still be a bycatch allowance in 2016?

Once the fishery is closed, permitted pound netters will be able to land 6,000 pounds per vessel per day. Gill netters and other gears are restricted to 1,500 pounds per vessel per day. The 6,000 pound allowance applies only to pound nets because they are a stationary gear.

Pending review of comments from the Tidal and Sport Fisheries Advisory Commissions, Maryland will submit a request to the ASMFC Technical Committee (TC) to restore the 12,000 bycatch allowance, where two watermen fishing pound nets and each having bycatch permits can fish together from the same vessel and each bring in their 6,000 pound allotment. If the TC approves our request, it will go to the Management Board for consideration at the February 2016 meeting in Alexandria. If approved, it will be in place for the 2016 fishing season.

What will happen in 2017? Can the commercial fisheries expect any relief?

The ASMFC has not set a coastal quota for 2017! Because the fishery is currently operating below the fishing target, the Board may discuss increasing the coastal quota for 2017. Under the current coastal allocation, the state of Maryland does not benefit much from increases in quota because we receive only 1.37% of the coastal quota. The 10% increase which Maryland supported in 2015 amounted to just over 500,000 pounds for Maryland – an amount that our harvest records indicate can be caught in one week’s time. Even a substantial increase (likely more than science would support) would provide little relief. For example, if the Board elects to increase the 2017 quota 15% from the current quota (which would be a 25% increase over the 2013 and 2014 quotas) this would still result in a Maryland quota of less than 7 million pounds. It is not known at this point if the science supports a 15% increase for 2017. The table below shows how quota increases have impacted Maryland.

Year	Quota Change	Coastal Quota (pounds)	Maryland Quota (pounds)	Additional lbs for Maryland
2013	Baseline from Amendment 2	376,443,200	5,157,272	
2014	0%	376,443,200	5,157,272	
2015	10%	414,204,006	5,674,595	517,323
2016		414,204,006	5,674,595	517,323

If quota increases won’t help Maryland, what is the solution?

Amendment 3 is the solution. There are two ways to provide flexibility for Maryland commercial fishermen (pound netters, gill netters and other gear types): 1) change the coastal allocation (that is, Maryland gets to catch more than 1.37% of the quota), and/or 2) secure a provision that allows flexibility for small scale bait fisheries along the Atlantic Coast. This is what has been proposed as an option for Amendment 3 which is the only way to change allocation through the ASMFC process.

What happened at ASMFC in November, 2015?

1) Maryland opposed a motion made by Virginia to initiate an Addendum to implement the biological reference points from the 2015 benchmark assessment in 2017.

Maryland opposed this motion because it would simply formalize the management that we have now. The Board already has the ability to change the coastal TAC for 2017 WITHOUT an addendum – defeating this motion did not delay potential 2017 quota increases. The Board may choose to increase the coastal TAC in 2017 but unless that increase is quite large, it will not provide significant relief to Maryland because we only receive 1.37% of coastal share. Had this motion passed, it could have delayed Amendment 3 which is the best path forward to change allocation or provide flexibility for small scale bait fisheries. Therefore, this motion is counter to Maryland's commercial interests. This motion would also continue to ignore the ecosystem role of menhaden which is a significant scientific issue and of great importance to many of Maryland's constituents.

2) Maryland made a successful motion to initiate a PID in 2017 and includes ERPs and allocation with the CESS report to be implemented in 2018. This motion does not take away the possibility of a coastal quota increase in 2017. It does ensure that Amendment 3 goes forward in a timely manner, which can address allocation and therefore the quota Maryland receives. The first step in the Amendment process is the development of a Public Information Document (PID) which lays out an array of management options for public comment and provides all Maryland stakeholders a formal process for providing comment. Amendment 3 will result in new management for the 2018 fishing year. The CESS is the Committee on Economics and Social Science which is initiating a socio-economic study of the menhaden bait fisheries. Results will be available in 2017 and will inform the options for allocating the fishery. Amendment 3 will also provide options for Ecological Reference Points (ERP's) that ensure menhaden is managed as a forage fish.

How could Amendment 3 help Maryland fisheries?

Amendment 3 will address allocation, socio-economics and menhaden's ecological role. Maryland has been successful in putting forward an allocation option which creates a 'soft quota' for all small scale bait fisheries. Maryland has been working with the ASMFC and partner states to develop this option which will create a flexible fishery for pound netters, gill netters and other small capacity bait fleets coast wide. **If chosen**, this option could be on the ground in 2018. Amendment 3 will also incorporate socio economic data on the bait fisheries from the CESS report -addressing the concern we have heard from the Industry that management habitually fails to consider socio-economic data. Amendment 3 will also follow through on the ASMFC's commitment to manage menhaden with consideration of its role as forage.

So, what changes can we expect in the next 3 years?

2016: IF APPROVED by ASMFC, two permitted pound netters on a vessel will be able to land 12,000 lbs of bycatch. Note that this provision will not provide any relief to our coastal gillnetters.

2017: The Board will likely consider increasing the coastal quota in 2017. We do not know how much of an increase would be recommended by the scientists. Maryland will only get 1.37% of any coastal quota increase.

2018: This is the year that Amendment 3 could be implemented and new management could be on the ground. While no outcomes are guaranteed, there is an option to completely revise allocation and provide greater flexibility for Maryland's fisheries and for non purse seine (small scale) bait fleets up and down the coast. Important economic data from the CESS study on the small scale bait fisheries will help inform this decision. Menhaden will also be managed in a manner that accounts for their critical role as forage. We believe that this is the greatest opportunity to help Maryland's menhaden management.

What can Maryland's Commercial Industry do to help?

Engage in the upcoming socio-economic study and provide input throughout the process. Offer your thoughts on the allocation options to provide flexibility to small scale bait fisheries. We will keep the industry updated on times to provide input. A unified approach is essential. Call us or email us with questions; Lynn Fegley 410-260-8285

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