

Fishery Management Plan (FMP) “Highlights” 2016/2017

American Eel

Stock Assessment

2012 – ASMFC benchmark American eel stock assessment. Coastwide the stock is depleted (most likely due to a combination of fishing pressure, habitat loss, mortality from passage at hydroelectric turbines), pollution, disease, and unexplained losses at sea. 2017 – Next stock assessment update.

Management

Glass eel and elver fisheries prohibited in MD, 9” minimum size limit, seasonal commercial closure from Sept. 1st – Dec. 31st, ½ x ½ inch mesh size for pots. There is a coastal commercial cap with 2 management triggers that would result in state-by-state quotas if triggered. Based on 2015 coastal landings, no management action required.

American Shad & Herring

Stock Assessment

2012 – ASMFC River Herring assessment: coastwide stock considered depleted (of the 52 stocks that had available data: 23 depleted relative to historic levels, 1 increase; 28 could not be determined). Next assessment update scheduled for 2017.

2007 – ASMFC American Shad assessment: coastwide stocks at all-time lows and there are varying abundance trends among the stocks. MD stock low but stable. Next assessment update scheduled for 2018. Data workshop for both species held in 2016.

Management

Fishing moratorium for both shad (1980 & 1981) and herring (2012) with a commercial 2 fish/day bycatch of dead American shad for personal use (no sale allowed in MD). Recreational catch and release allowed. No management changes.

Atlantic Croaker/Spot

Stock Assessment

2016 - ASMFC coastal stock assessment was completed and the peer review is in progress. Atlantic croaker are not experiencing overfishing and biomass is increasing. The assessment will be discussed at ASMFC winter meeting (Jan.30 – Feb. 2, 2017).

2014 - Maryland FMP review of Chesapeake Bay Croaker and Spot FMP concluded that the plan was appropriate and that the next review should follow the completion of the ASMFC coastal stock assessment.

Management

MD – No management measures required by ASMFC. Maryland commercial size limit is 9” and season is from March through December. Recreational size limit is 9” with 25 creel limit.

No management change anticipated.

Atlantic Menhaden

Stock Assessment

2014 – ASMFC benchmark stock assessment: coastal stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Coastal recruitment has been low since the 1980s. In MD, recruitment has been low since 1992.

Management

There is a coastal total allowable catch (TAC) and each jurisdiction receives a quota. In addition, the Chesapeake Bay has a harvest cap for the reduction fishery. MD watermen are required to obtain a bycatch permit. Once the quota is met, there is a bycatch limit. ASMFC Amendment 3 Public Information Document (PID) was released for public input through January 4, 2017. The PID outlines fishery issues and the use of ecological reference points. Comments will be reviewed at Feb. 2017 ASFMC meeting and draft amendment prepared (Mar.-Jul.) with a tentative approval date in Nov. 2017. The amendment may result in new reference points and new management measures.

Black Drum

Stock Assessment

2014/2015 - ASMFC coastal stock assessment completed. Black drum stock along the coast is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring but biomass is slowly decreasing. 2020 – Next stock assessment scheduled

Management

MD – closed commercial fishery in CB, limited Atlantic coast fishery, 1500 lb. annual limit; recreational fishery – 1fish/person/day with 16” size limit. No management changes anticipated.

Black Sea Bass

Stock Assessment

2012 – ASMFC stock assessment completed and the northern black sea bass stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The model uncertainties of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center’s 2012 stock assessment resulted in the rejection of biological reference points.

2016 - A new stock assessment was initiated. ASMFC and MAFMC are scheduled to consider the results of the 2016 stock assessment in 2017.

Management

Annual commercial quotas are allocated to states. Maryland’s commercial quota for 2016 was 298,289 pounds. The commercial fishery is managed through limited entry permit, 11” size limit and daily landing limit.

The coastal recreational quota is 2.82 million pounds for 2016 and 2017 but the state does not receive an individual recreational quota. The Maryland recreational size limit is 12.5” with a 15 fish creel limit.

No management change anticipated.

Blue Crab

Stock Assessment

2011 – Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC) completed a full stock assessment. In 2015, the exploitation fraction was below the target and the abundance of female crabs increased. Next stock assessment update is scheduled for 2017. The terms of reference for the assessment have been determined.

Management

In MD, catch limits and closed periods are implemented to maintain an allowable female harvest that is associated with the exploitation target. Co-management approach between MDNR and the crab harvesters. Continue conservative management measures and make adjustments to catch limits commensurate with abundance indices.

Coastal Bays Blue Crab

Stock Assessment

No specific stock assessment for blue crabs in the Coastal Bays. Relative abundance indices from fishery independent surveys indicate that relative abundance has varied over time without any trends.

Management

Daily catch limits, seasons, gear restrictions, size limits, limited entry are in place to control fishing effort. No management changes.

Bluefish

Stock Assessment

2015 - Coastal stock assessment completed: bluefish are not overfished.

Management

The 2016 commercial quota set for MD was 146,631 pounds. The fisheries are year round and the recreational fishery has an 8” minimum and daily limit of 10.

No management change anticipated.

Catfish

Stock Assessment

2013 - Maryland population assessment completed.

Management

No minimum size limits nor closed seasons for commercial or recreational species in tidal waters.

No management change anticipated.

Hard Clam

Stock Assessment

Hard clam densities in the coastal bays found to be stable or increased in 2015.

Recruitment has increased slightly.

Management

Since 2007, only hand-held harvesting devices are allowed in the Coastal Bays. This gear limitation has essentially eliminated commercial harvest. The recreational fishery is managed by a 1” transverse minimum size and limit of 250/person/day.

The FMP was reviewed in 2010 and the Maryland plan review team recommended a revision of the 2002 FMP.

No management change is anticipated.

Horseshoe Crabs

Stock Assessment

2013 – ASMFC coastal stock assessment update was completed but limited data made it difficult to assess the status of the stock. No overfishing, overfished or depleted definitions or reference points have been developed. Abundance trends vary regionally and appears stable in the mid-Atlantic region. Benchmark stock assessment scheduled for 2018.

Management

MD - Commercial quota system since 1998. ASMFC has adopted the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework and began implementation in 2013. The framework underwent a technical review in 2016. Based on the review, a new ASMFC addendum was initiated to propose changes to the ARM but has been put on hold until after the assessment. Harvest specifications for horseshoe crabs of Delaware origin were established for 2017 (includes a Delaware Bay male only quota for MD).

King Mackerel and Spanish Mackerel

Stock Assessment

2013 - Revised stock assessment conducted by the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review Process (SEDAR 28): Spanish mackerel Atlantic coast stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

2014 - Stock assessment (SEDAR 38) for king mackerel conducted: the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Management

Coastal annual catch limits apply to both mackerel species. Maryland management measures for Spanish mackerel are 14” minimum total length limit. The recreational fishery has a creel limit of 15. The commercial fishery has a 3,500 pound trip limit. Maryland has not developed regulations for king mackerel since they are rarely found in state waters.

No management change anticipated.

Oyster

Stock Assessment

No formal stock assessment for Chesapeake Bay but MDNR has started coordination with UMCES on conducting a stock assessment and developing biological reference points. Based on harvest reports and the DNR dredge survey data, the oyster population has improved over the past few years. The 2015 biomass index value (1.77) was the third highest of the 26-year time series.

Management

There are three concurrent approaches to managing oysters in the Chesapeake Bay: ecological restoration; a sustainable public fishery; and aquaculture. The goal for ecological restoration is to restore oysters to 10 tributaries by 2025 (5 each in Maryland and Virginia). To date, work is underway in 6 tributaries (3 in each jurisdiction). Harvest season, workday and workweek lengths, regional gear restrictions, a 3” cull size, and daily catch limits by gear type are enforced for the public fishery. Oyster aquaculture continues to expand. As of July 2016, there are 386 leases totaling 6,062 acres in use for growing shellfish. A major issue for oyster recovery is the continued degradation and loss of habitat, and the shortage of shell substrate. The OAC will be providing input on selecting the next 2 restoration sites in MD.

Red Drum

Stock Assessment

2015 (SEDAR 44) - Latest benchmark coastal stock assessment completed and under review. According to ASMFC, “there is a high probability that the stock is not subject to overfishing.” Based upon the 2009 assessment – “recovering/rebuilding”, still applies. By definition, that status indicates stable or increasing trends. There is no Chesapeake Bay stock assessment for this temporary visitor to our state waters.

Management

Red drum are managed by size limits and creel limits to comply with ASMFC requirements. In Maryland, recreational fishermen are allowed to take 1 fish per day between 18 and 27”. Commercial fishermen are allowed 5 fish per day with a slot limit of 18 to 25”. There are no closed seasons.

No management change anticipated.

Scup

Stock Assessment

2015 - Coast-wide assessment concluded that the scup stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. New biological reference points were defined.

Management

Maryland has the authority to manage scup as a species in need of conservation. The commercial fishery minimum size limit is 9” in both state and federal waters with quotas established for seasons. The recreational size limit is 8” in state waters and 9” in federal waters with a possession limit of 50.

No management change anticipated.

Striped Bass

Stock Assessment

2015 & 2016 – ASMFC completed stock assessment updates for both years (with data through 2015). Overfishing is not occurring and the stock is not overfished.

Management

ASMFC Addendum IV Addendum IV was developed and approved in 2014 to reduce the Atlantic coast fishing mortality (F) rate to a level at or below the target. In Maryland, harvest reductions include a 25% reduction in the Atlantic and Chesapeake Bay trophy fisheries from 2013 harvest and a 20.5% reduction in the summer/fall and winter fisheries from 2012 harvest levels. The commercial fishery is managed under a quota and the recreational fishery is managed using a harvest limit.

The ASMFC Striped Bass Technical Committee will continue to evaluate stock-specific reference points for the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay and Hudson River. The DNR Fish Ecosystem and Habitat Program is working to develop striped bass forage indicators using the data from striped bass health monitoring, relative abundance, natural mortality, fall diet studies and forage relative abundance.

Summer Flounder

Stock Assessment

2015- Benchmark stock assessment was updated: the stock is not overfished but overfishing is occurring. Fishing mortality (F) has been underestimated and spawning stock biomass (SSB) has been overestimated since 2011. In 2015, fishing mortality exceeded its threshold by 26% and the biomass was only 58% of the target.

Management

As a result of the updated stock assessment, the commercial quota decreased in 2016. The commercial fishery management is implemented by a catch share system. Both commercial and recreational hook & line fisheries have 16” minimum size limits. Commercial fisheries other than by hook & line have a 14” minimum size limit. No season closures applied in 2016. The recreational creel limit was 4 in 2016. ASMFC held

a public hearing to gather comments on January 3, 2017 to consider alternative management approaches (draft addendum XXVIII to the summer flounder FMP), including regional management to reach the 2017 recreational harvest limit (RHL). The hearings continue in January 2017 so the recreational fishery limits for 2017 have not yet been determined (ASMFC Task 1.1.83).

Tautog

Stock Assessment

2015 - ASMFC coastal stock assessment: tautog as a whole continue to be overfished and overfishing is still occurring. The Delmarva stock was considered to be overfished but overfishing is not occurring.

Management

Commercial and recreational fisheries are managed with a minimum size limit of 16” with creel limits. Creel limits of 2 or 4 apply to different seasons and a closed season applies.

No management change anticipated.

Weakfish and Spotted Seatrout

Stock Assessment – Weakfish

2015 - ASMFC stock assessment was accepted for management use in 2016. The coastal stock status is depleted. The status of depleted is used to indicate that factors other than fishing mortality contribute to the biomass decline. In 2014, the total mortality was under the threshold but above the target, making this the first time in 13 years that mortality was under the threshold. Spawning stock biomass remains very low. Natural mortality is high with no definitive causes determined.

Management – Weakfish

Maryland complies with the ASMFC requirements of 1 fish/day over 13” in the recreational fishery and 100 pound commercial trip bycatch limit with a minimum 12” length.

No management change anticipated.

Stock Assessment – Spotted Seatrout

No coastal stock assessment has been completed for spotted seatrout. Four states south of Maryland (NC, SC, GA and FL) have performed stock assessments with no consistent trends.

Management – Spotted Seatrout

Both Maryland commercial and recreational fisheries are managed with the same size limit of 14”. The recreational fishery has a creel limit of 4 and the commercial fishery has a trip limit of 150 pounds.

No management change anticipated.

White Perch

Stock Assessment

2009 - Maryland stock assessment concluded that biomass was sufficient and estimated fishing mortality was lower than necessary to maintain stock abundance. Overfishing is not occurring and the stock remains abundant.

Management

White perch in tidal waters are managed as a single stock by the state of Maryland. There is no size limit if caught by hook & line. There is no closed season or creel limit. The commercial fishery is managed by gear and area restrictions. An 8" size limit applies to the commercial fishery when caught by net.

No management change anticipated.

Yellow Perch

Stock Assessment

2015 - Stock assessment completed: overfishing is not occurring. Fishing mortality continues to be below the target level.

Management

The tidal Maryland yellow perch fishery is managed under the umbrella of a Total Allowable Catch (TAC), which is split 50:50 between the permitted commercial and the recreational fisheries. The TAC is calculated annually based on the stock assessment updates to achieve a target fishing mortality rate. There are three management areas with area quotas: Upper Bay, Chester River, and Patuxent River. The season is closed when the area quota is projected to be reached. In most years, the quota is either reached or the final harvest is slightly under the quota, but the quota was exceeded in 2016.

Commercial quotas are determined each year.