

Coastal Commercial Fisheries Forum Summary

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Welcome & Introductions

Species Updates

Blue Crab: Changes to the blue crab regulations in Worcester County were discussed and a handout was available.

Menhaden Amendment 3 Update: Allocation issues will be addressed in Amendment 3. The small fleets (probably represent 5% of the fishery) would not be held to a quota every year but must report their catch. Amendment 3 could provide more flexibility for small-scale fleets. Many states have small fisheries and some have never reported their catch. The Board should approve Amendment 3 for public comment in August and public hearings should be scheduled for September. ASMFC will have one meeting per state and it will probably be in Annapolis but we can also come to Ocean City for a meeting.

Attendee's indicated:

- There is a small fleet in Worcester County that fishes for Atlantic Menhaden. Watermen need this fishery to fall back on if things don't go right in the other fisheries.
- Some watermen do not want quotas based on this year and last year because they have been targeting other species.
- Concern for large out of state boats was expressed.
- The argument of some states that they don't have data concerning landings is flimsy.
- Don't let big states walk all over us as we have been trampled on with horseshoe crabs and black sea bass.

Whelk: The Department is working on changes to whelk regulations to include a 3 3/8 inch girth and an escape vent. These regulations could be effective in June 2017. ASMFC does not manage this species and we can only suggest 6 inches to other states.

Attendee's indicated:

- People come from all over to harvest in our waters and keep whatever is in the pot.
- The Ocean City watermen are penalized for following rules.
- Some boats come up from Virginia to catch whelks and then go back.
- All states need uniform regulations and sizes.

Spiny Dogfish: All 6 relinquished spiny dogfish permits were distributed. The Department is reaching out to watermen who have not caught 15,000 pounds in the three previous

seasons by April 1st as they could lose their permit. The Department is working on a regulatory change for a one time harvest eligibility requirement.

Attendee's indicated:

- Asked the Department to work with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to have the federal trip limit increased to 7,000 pounds.

Jonah Crab Addendum II: Addendum II permits claw harvest coastwide. Specifically, the Addendum allows Jonah crab fishermen to detach and harvest claws at sea, with a required minimum claw length of 2.75" if the volume of claws landed is greater than five gallons. Claw landings less than five gallons do not have to meet the minimum claw length standard. Fishermen may also harvest whole crabs which meet the 4.75" minimum carapace width.

Addendum II also establishes a definition of bycatch in the Jonah crab fishery, whereby the total pounds of Jonah crabs caught as bycatch must weigh less than the total amount of the targeted species at all times during a fishing trip

Lobster Addendum XXV: This addendum aims to increase egg production. Reduction options range from 0 to 60%. Craig Weedon worked to activate an Area 5 subgroup of the Lobster Conservation Management Team to discuss the Addendum options. The Board will consider this issue in May.

If the Board lumps us in with New York and New Jersey, we can try to initiate an addendum to move the border line to separate us from northern states. We could try to move the Area 5 border but we will always be part of the Southern New England Stock Area. Every state has one vote and each state along the coast is a member of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). Southern states are not American Lobster Board members.

Attendee's indicated:

- More management will threaten our lobster fisheries in Ocean City.
- Concerns about warm water and shell rot up north.
- Area watermen don't experience these problems as they do up north and should not be lumped in with northern states.
- Watermen don't want to lose what they have.
- We want to manage our fishery differently than New York who might not mind a summer closure which would harm us.

Black Sea Bass: The commercial quota was recently increased.

Attendee's indicated:

- Expressed appreciation for the quick response to distributing the send round of permits.

- Encouraged the Department to finalize the quota so that the last permit issue can happen quickly.

Tilefish: Blueline tilefish quota for 2018 will be set at the next Council meeting. It will probably be a bit less than in the past few years. Pounds for golden tilefish will not change.

Attendee's indicated:

- Recreational effort and pressure on golden tilefish has increased over the years.

Topics from You:

Shoaling:

Attendee's indicated:

- Vessels are running aground again. A 100 foot yacht got stuck between buoys.
- A jetty was placed in front of Assateague after Hurricane Sandy which is directing sand into the Ocean City Inlet and Commercial Harbor. The Inlet requires dredging every 3 months or so.
- The Ocean City Inlet has been dredged to maintain Assateague Island. Sand is taken out and dumped two times a year onto Assateague Island.
- The Army Corps of Engineers will not remove the jetty without a study which is a good thing because we don't want to end up with something worse.
- Dredging is based on how much money is coming into the Inlet. Charter boats are not factored into the count.
- One problem is that material from the harbor can't just be put anywhere as it has to be tested for chemicals such as oil.
- Delegate Mary Beth Carozza, District Representative, Pat Schrawder, and Congressman Harris are working hard on this issue and their effort is appreciated. Thanks them we got navigation money to keep the Inlet open.
- We need the pressure kept up and money to make the Inlet deeper.
- We could possibly get scallopers back in the harbor if the inlet is fixed.
- Fishing and Boating Services has not talked to Governor Hogan about the issue but the Secretary Belton is aware of it.

New People in Ocean Fisheries – The Department has been asked to discuss ways for new people to participate in limited entry fisheries such as black sea bass, summer flounder, horseshoe crabs, and spiny dogfish. Some possible options were presented for a future conversation.

Attendee's indicated:

- Most of the watermen in attendance either earned their permit history or bought the history with the permit from previous owner. They aren't going to give away what they earned or purchased.

- Keep the family fishing.
- New watermen must purchase business or permits.
- Best thing that Maryland did was to make the permits valuable; hoping that will fund retirement.
- Next generation does not want to do this because they have to deal with federal observers who can keep a vessel at the dock, cameras, or tracking devices.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) – The three mile boundary was created in 1953 by Congress and can only be changed by them or the Supreme Court.

Attendee's indicated:

- It costs eight to 10 million dollars a day to enforce the EEZ zone.
- Recreational anglers can ride up to the Delaware Bay and catch stripers as the fish are closer to shore farther north. Area watermen can't do this.
- It is hard to catch striped bass permit quotas in state waters.
- The Executive Order is supposed to be periodically reviewed.
- We import 90% of our seafood.

Horseshoe Crabs – The Department does not anticipate getting female horseshoe crab harvest back in near future. The next stock assessment in 2018 may help in evaluating female harvest.

FYI

- The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission deadline to submit public comment on scup is March 31, 2017 at 5 pm.
http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file//58b744cfScupDraftAddendumXXIX_PublicComment_March2017.pdf
- The next Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Meeting is in May 9th-11th
- National Marine Fisheries Service is expected to publish Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan Amendment 5b on March 31st.