

Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring FMP

Atlantic Herring ABC Control Rule

SUMMARY OF SCOPING PROCESS



New England
Fishery Management Council

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Background (November 2014)

Council Motion: That for herring priorities, the Council prioritize an amendment to consider control rules for the Atlantic herring fishery that account for herring's role as forage in the ecosystem. The Council should also task the EBFM PDT and Committee with developing ecological guidance for the herring PDT on managing forage fish within an ecosystem context by the June 2015 NEFMC Council meeting, and participating in the development of an appropriate control rule and reference points within an EBFM context for the herring fishery during this amendment.

Background: Need for Action

- Amendment 8 is needed to establish a long-term control rule for specifying acceptable biological catch (ABC, ABC CR) for the Atlantic herring fishery.
- The current ABC CR for Atlantic herring is considered an “interim” ABC CR, i.e., a placeholder until a long-term ABC CR can be established.
- The SSC has emphasized the need for the Council to consider tradeoffs associated with long-term management approaches for Atlantic herring given its role in the ecosystem.



Scoping: What action is the Council considering?

- A range of ABC CR alternatives for Atlantic herring, including those that explicitly account for herring's role in the ecosystem
- Alternatives that consider ecological guidance from the Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) Plan Development Team



What is an ABC Control Rule?

- Specifies the approach for setting ABC below the overfishing limit (OFL) as a function of scientific uncertainty
- Provides the Council's SSC with guidance to develop ABC recommendations for the Atlantic herring fishery

$$OFL - \text{scientific uncertainty} = ABC$$



What is an ABC Control Rule?

- Rule for setting annual catch levels based on uncertainty related to the most recent stock assessment and the Council's risk tolerance
- Can specify different target fishing levels based on current stock condition and other factors
- Can specify different biomass targets/thresholds to account for ecological factors (ex., forage)



Amendment 8 Scoping

- NOI published February 26, 2015
- Scoping period February 26 – April 30, 2015
- Four Scoping Meetings
 1. March 6, 2015 – Rockland ME (~50 audience)
 2. March 26, 2015 – Danvers MA (~30 audience)
 3. April 6, 2015 – Webinar (~10 online)
 4. April 20, 2015 – Mystic CT (~10 audience)

**Written statements were submitted at scoping meetings.*



Amendment 8 Scoping Questions

- *What alternatives for ABC control rules should the Council consider for Atlantic herring in Amendment 8?*
- *How should the Council account for the role of Atlantic herring in the ecosystem when it develops the ABC control rule?*
- *What specific issues are most important when evaluating the tradeoffs associated with managing the Atlantic herring fishery in an ecosystem context?*



Amendment 8 Scoping Comments

177 Written Scoping Comments Received

- **39** – Associations, groups, businesses, etc.
- **67** – Individual letters
- **71** – “Form” letters, most from individuals
- Some individual letters are signed on behalf of multiple individuals (ex., Pew – 12,381 signatures).
- Several additional written comments were received after the April 30, 2015 deadline.



Organizations/Associations

- Ipswich River Watershed, Red Lily Pond Project, Parker Clean River Water, Great Egg Harbor Watershed, Mystic River Watershed, CT Save the Sound, RI Save the Bay, Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed, Town of Nantucket, Nantucket Land Council
- Northeast Charterboat Captains, ME Charterboat Captains, Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat
- Recreational Fishing Alliance, CCA of NH, Trout Unlimited
- Gotham Whale, Bar Harbor Whale Watch
- RI Audubon, NH Audubon, Delaware River Shad Fishermen's
- Pew Charitable Trusts, Safina Center, Global Awareness, Wild Oceans
- American Bluefin Tuna, CHOIR
- EarthJustice, Herring Alliance, CLF
- Massachusetts's Lobstermen's, RI Saltwater Anglers
- Cape Cod Fishermen's Alliance, ME Coast Fishermen's,

Amendment 8 Scoping Comments

- Individual comments from recreational/tuna/groundfish fishermen and other interested members of the public
- Majority of comments received from stakeholders not directly involved in the prosecution of the Atlantic herring fishery
- Herring industry scoping comments:
 - Seafreeze, Ltd.
 - Ad Hoc Pelagics (Gehan)
 - Lund's Fisheries (Kaelin)
 - Several individuals at scoping meetings



Amendment 8 Scoping Comments

Many of the Amendment 8 scoping comments:

- Support consideration of a full range of alternatives for the Atlantic herring ABC CR
- Support moving forward with EBFM and managing Atlantic herring in an ecosystem context
- Emphasize food web dynamics and the need to consider the importance of Atlantic herring as forage – tuna, cod, haddock, other groundfish species, whales, striped bass, bluefish

Amendment 8 Scoping Comments

Some of the more detailed Amendment 8 scoping comments:

- Suggest specific goals/objectives for Amendment 8
- Identify tradeoffs that should be prioritized/evaluated when developing Atlantic herring ABC CR alternatives
- Suggest specific ABC CRs to consider for Atlantic herring in Amendment 8
- Include scientific articles/papers to support/supplement scoping comments

Scoping Comments – Issues Raised

- Importance of forage needs for predators and marine mammals in the region
- Decline of other important forage species in the region (ex., menhaden, river herring, mackerel)
- Seasonal availability (time/space) of Atlantic herring for predator needs
- Importance of maintaining a wide size/age distribution of Atlantic herring



Scoping Comments – Herring Industry

- ABC CR should be based on meeting clear management objectives, i.e., long-term sustainable yield
- Consideration must be given to how forage and predation are accounted for in the Atlantic herring stock assessment
- No scientific correlation between Atlantic herring abundance and predator abundance in the region
- Many other environmental factors affect the seasonal and spatial availability of forage



Scoping Comments – Tradeoffs

Many tradeoffs identified – Lobster fishery bait, bait for recreational fisheries, export markets for food, forage needs for important commercial predators, forage needs for marine mammals and sea birds

- *Ecological tradeoffs to evaluate* – prey availability for valued predators
- *Socio-economic tradeoffs to evaluate* – industries for herring, lobster, tuna, whales, recreational, other



Scoping Comments – Tradeoffs

Some specific tradeoffs mentioned:

- Forage should come first. (*recreational*)
- The need for bait in the lobster and other fisheries should not be preferred over needs of predators. (*commercial groundfish*)
- Control rule should allow the fishery to satisfy the commercial domestic markets, but forage should take priority over fish for lower-value export markets. (*commercial tuna*)



Scoping Comments – ABC CRs

- Lenfest Forage Fish Task Force
- Pacific Council CR for Coastal Pelagic Species
- Other CRs used for forage species
- ABC CRs that explicitly account for forage needs of predators under a variety of fishing and environmental conditions
- Traditional risk-based ABC CRs under the current MSY framework
- Data-poor control rules



Scoping Comments – ABC CRs

ABC CRs that include one or more (or all) of the following:

- Biomass target above B_{MSY}
- Minimum biomass cutoff threshold, at which point fishing is reduced to zero (or near)
- Biomass-dependent catch/F rate that declines with declining stock biomass
- *Several specific suggestions provided in scoping comments*



Amendment 8 – Next Steps

- ***Herring PDT*** – conduct more thorough analysis of Amendment 8 scoping comments to inform development of Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Affected Environment and analyses)
- ***Herring Committee/Council*** – discuss next steps and process/timeline for developing:
 - *Amendment 8 Goals and Objectives*
 - *Management Alternatives Under Consideration*



Amendment 8 Timeline

Approve Am8 Scoping Document	Jan 2015
NOI published; Amendment 8 Scoping Period	Feb. 26 – April 30
Review EBFM PDT Report, review scoping comments, discuss Am8 goals/objectives	June 2015
Identify range of alternatives for Amendment 8 DEIS	December 2015 *January 2016*

Amendment 8 Timeline

Review Draft Am8/DEIS and select <i>Preferred Alternative</i>	April 2016 *June 2016*
Am8 DEIS Comment Period	June-July 2016 *Sept-Oct 2016*
Review public comment, select final Am8 measures	September 2016 *Nov 2016*
Amendment 8 Final Submission	Late 2016 *Early 2017*

June 2 Herring/EBFM Committee

- Review Amendment 8 scoping comments
- Review/discuss EBFM PDT Report and related SSC input (see May 20, 2015 SSC Report)
- Discuss further development of Amendment 8 goals/objectives and management alternatives – develop Joint Committee recommendations for June Council Meeting
 - *Amendment 8 timeline*
 - *Considerations/risks associated with short-term vs. long-term approaches*