



New England Fishery Management Council

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Atlantic Herring: Council Discusses Amendment 8 ABC Control Rules; Passes on Picking “Preferred Alternative”

The New England Fishery Management Council yesterday discussed the list of potential acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rules outlined in Draft Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan. The document contains nine new control rule alternatives plus the standard “no action.” After considerable debate and a review of the varying impacts of each option, the Council declined to pick a “preferred alternative.” Instead, the Council intends to wait to hear the full range of public comments during future public hearings before indicating any preferences. ABC control rules define how catch or fishing mortality changes with stock size. They are used in setting annual catch limits.

Amendment 8 is divided into two major components:

- Alternatives to establish a long-term ABC control rule that “may explicitly account for herring’s role in the ecosystem and address the biological and ecological requirements of the stock”; and
- Alternatives to address potential localized depletion and user conflicts in the fishery.

The Council focused on the ABC control rule aspect of the amendment during this ongoing meeting in Gloucester, MA. The localized depletion/user conflict alternatives will be discussed in detail during the Council’s December 5-7 meeting in Newport, RI. The Council is expected to approve the package of Draft Amendment 8 proposals during the December meeting if all of the necessary analyses are completed. While it’s still too early to tell, the Council tentatively is planning to schedule hearings in the spring of 2018.

The Council used an interim control rule during the last two herring specification cycles, which covered the 2013-2018 fishing years. However, this control rule, which is the “no action” alternative in Amendment 8, was never intended to be a long-term strategy to set catch levels. It sets the ABC “at a value that has less than a 50% probability of exceeding the fishing mortality rate at maximum sustainable yield in year 3” of the specification cycle.

In order to explore alternatives, the Council



Atlantic herring. – Meghan Lapp photo



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initiated Amendment 8 to develop a new control rule that may better account for herring's important role as forage in the ecosystem. The localized depletion/user conflict components of the amendment were subsequently added at the request of many stakeholders. An overview is available at:

<http://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/NEFMC-Herring-Amendment-8-Alternatives.pdf>

As for the ABC control rule, the Council conducted an extensive Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to collect stakeholder input from the bottom up and assess the performance of different management approaches. The MSE also helped gauge the tradeoffs between the various alternatives spelling out the pros and cons of each proposal.

Here in Gloucester, the Council was presented with a broad overview of the impacts of each alternative relative to, among other things:

- Short-term impacts on the ABC;
- Impacts on the herring resource;
- Impacts on non-target (bycatch) species and essential fish habitat;
- Impacts on predator species and predator fisheries, including tuna and spiny dogfish;
- Impacts on protected species, including marine mammals and birds with the highest percentage of herring in their diets;
- Impacts on ecotourism; and
- Impacts on the herring fishery, including impacts on the lobster fishery, which relies on herring for bait.

Amendment 8 ABC Control Rule Alternatives

9 Control rule alternatives plus No Action:



15 Ways to evaluate impacts on the ecosystem:



2 Alternatives for control rule implementation:

1 Year
Set for 3 years
but ABC can vary

3 Year
Set for 3 years at
constant ABC

The Council clarified that future modifications to the Atlantic herring ABC control rule could be made through a framework adjustment or an amendment.

The Council will hold a Herring Advisory Panel meeting and a Herring Committee meeting in November to work on localized depletion/user conflict alternatives in advance of the December Council meeting.

Documents reviewed during this meeting are available at: <https://www.nefmc.org/library/september-2017-herring>

For more information, contact Atlantic Herring Plan Coordinator Deirdre Boelke at (978) 465-0492, ext. 105, dboelke@nefmc.org. The Council's herring page is at <https://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/herring>