



New England Fishery Management Council

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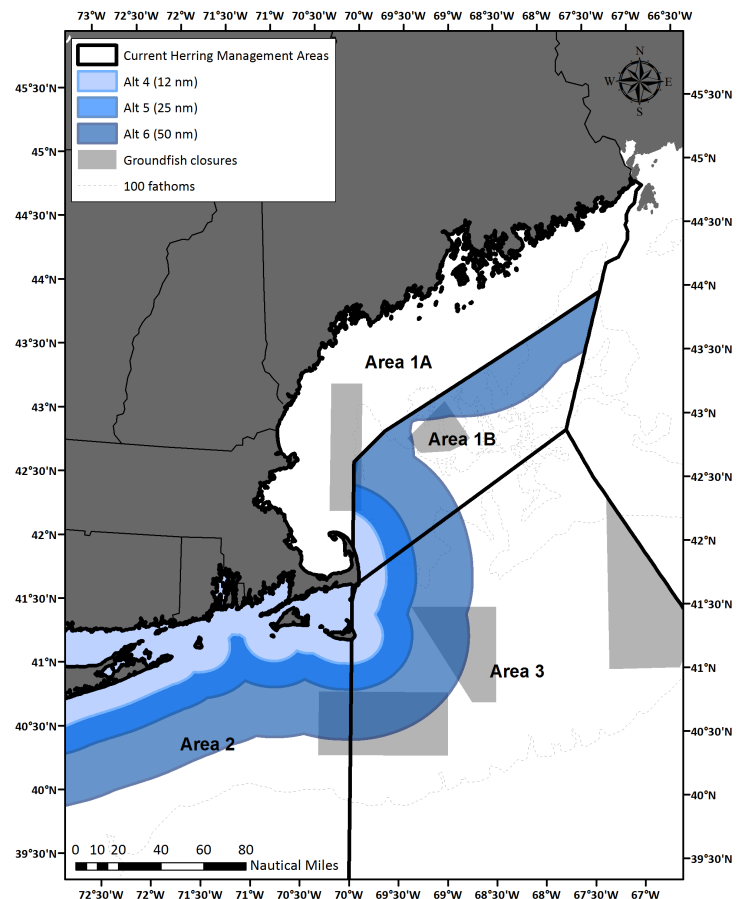
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Atlantic Herring: Council Votes to Send Amendment 8 Out to Public Hearing With No Preferred Alternatives

The New England Fishery Management Council today voted to send Draft Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan out to public hearing without selecting any “preferred” alternatives. Given the wide range of opinions expressed by many stakeholders about this action, the Council is expecting a large degree of public engagement during the hearings, which will be held in early 2018. The Council will make final decisions later in the year after considering all public comments.

The amendment is divided into two major components.

- **ABC Control Rule:** This portion of the amendment contains 10 alternatives – the standard “no action” plus nine new proposals – each to establish a long-term acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rule that “may explicitly account for herring’s role in the ecosystem and address the biological and ecological requirements of the stock.” ABC control rules are used to help set specifications and annual catch limits. The Council signed off on the ABC control rule alternatives at its September 26-28 meeting in Gloucester, MA without selecting a preferred one.
- **Potential Localized Depletion and User Conflicts:** On the first day of its December 5-7 meeting here in Newport, RI, the Council approved the list of alternatives to address potential localized depletion and user conflicts. The list includes nine primary alternatives and several spatial and seasonal sub-options designed to address the issue while minimizing biological and socioeconomic impacts.



Color coded above are Buffer Zone Alternatives 4, 5, and 6, which could be applied year-round or seasonally, where midwater trawl gear would be prohibited inside 12 nautical mile (nm), 25 nm, or 50 nm zones in Herring Management Areas 1B, 2, and 3 from Cape Cod to the North/South Carolina border. – NEMFC graphic

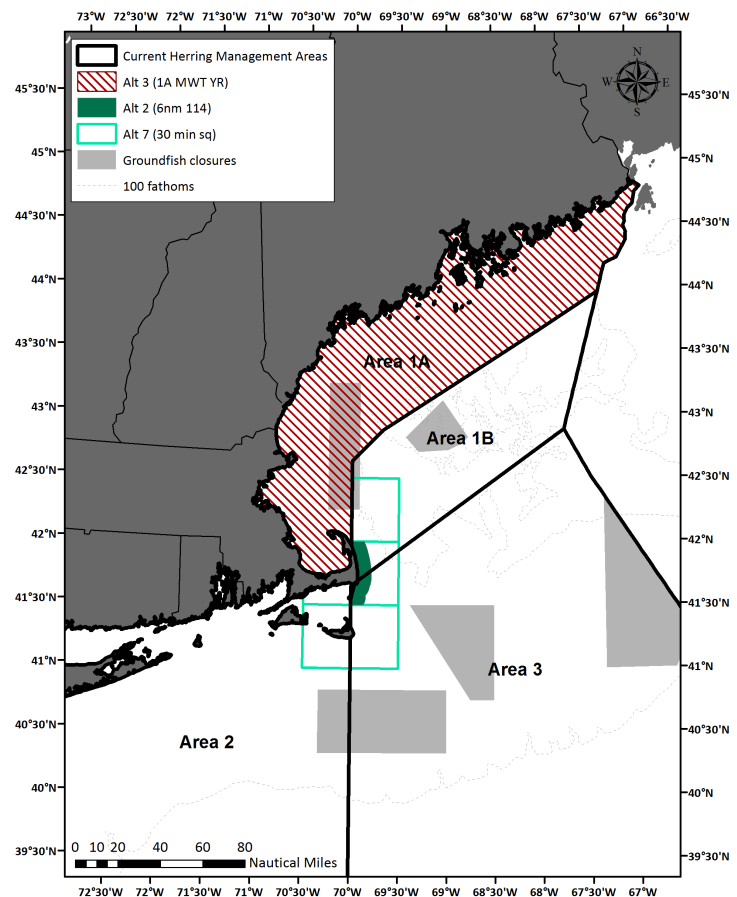


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Potential Localized Depletion and User Conflict Alternatives in Amendment 8

- **Alternative 1** – No action, meaning no new measures would be implemented.
- **Alternative 2** – A closure to *all vessels and gear types* fishing for Atlantic herring within 6 nautical miles (nm) from shore in Area 114 (solid green area off the back of Cape Cod on the map at right) with a two-year sunset clause and two seasonal sub-options:
 - A June 1-August 31 closure; and
 - A June 1-October 31 closure.
- **Alternative 3** – A year-round prohibition on using midwater trawl gear in Atlantic Herring Management Area 1A (red hatching in map);
- **Alternatives 4, 5, and 6** – Three “buffer zone” proposals that would prohibit midwater trawl gear inside of 12 nm, 25 nm, and 50 nm respectively with the following spatial and seasonal sub-options:
 - Areas 1B, 2, and 3 restricted;
 - Areas 1B and 3 restricted;
 - Year round;
 - June 1 through September 30.
- **Alternative 7** – A prohibition on midwater trawl gear within five different thirty minute squares – 99, 100, 114, 115, and 123 (green outlined blocks on map at right) with the following spatial and seasonal sub-options:
 - Areas 1B, 2, and 3 restricted;
 - Areas 1B and 3 restricted;
 - Year round;
 - June 1 through September 30.
- **Alternative 8** – Revert to the original boundary line between Area 1B and 3, meaning to the pre-Amendment 1 coordinates, but maintain the current Area 2/3 boundary (see map next page).

The Council is exploring concerns raised during the Amendment 8 scoping process “through examination of the best available science on localized depletion, the spatial nature of the fisheries, reported conflicts amongst users of the resources, and the concerns of the herring fishery and other stakeholders.”



Pictured above, localized depletion/user conflict
Alternative 3 (red hatching), Alternative 2 (solid
green), and Alternative 7 (green outlined blocks).

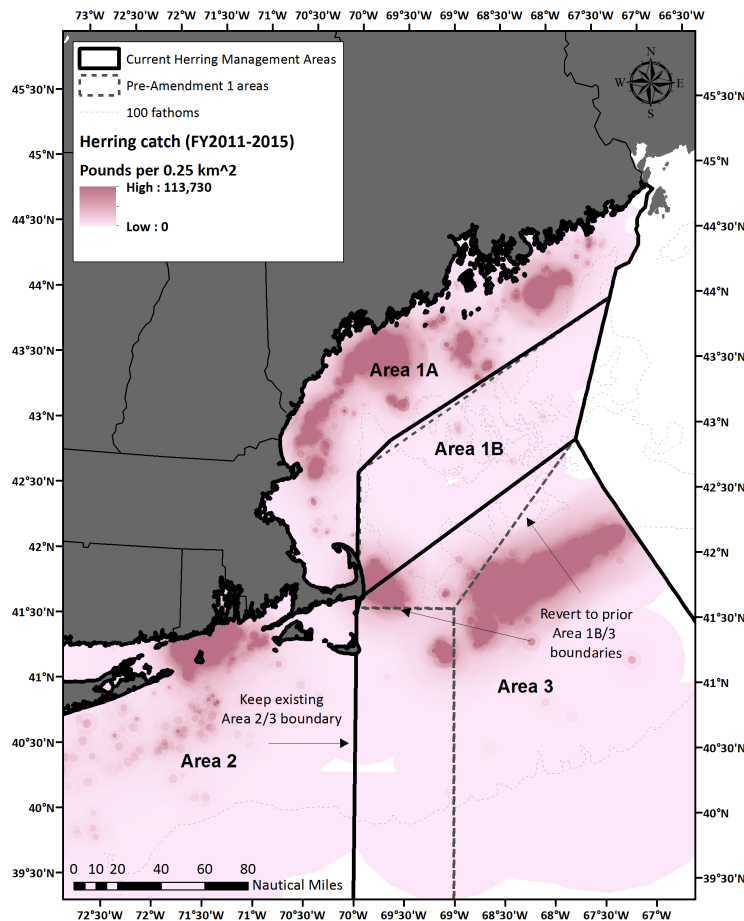
– NEFMC graphic

- **Alternative 9** – Remove the seasonal closure in Area 1B so that the area opens on January 1 instead of May 1, as is currently the case.



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The range of measures under consideration to address potential localized depletion and user conflicts in Amendment 8 includes: area closures; gear prohibition areas; modification to management area boundaries; and seasonal restrictions.



Localized depletion/user conflict Alternative 8: The solid black lines in the map above outline the current herring management area boundaries. Alternative 8 proposes to revert the Area 1B/3 boundary to pre-Amendment 1 coordinates but maintain the Area 2/3 boundary as it stands today. If approved, this alternative would substantially expand the size of Area 1B and commensurately reduce Area 3 to encompass less inshore water. Herring catches are shown in pink. The darker patches indicate areas with higher catches. – NEFMC graphic

Social, Economic, and Community Impacts Analyses

The Amendment 8 alternatives have substantially different social, economic, and community impacts. Many analyses have been conducted by the Atlantic Herring Plan Development and others, and more are underway.

The Council intends to present the public with a thorough overview of the likely costs and benefits of each alternative and sub-option in advance of the public hearings.

In short, the information will cover:

- Impacts to the Atlantic herring fishery;
- Impacts to the Atlantic mackerel fishery managed by the Mid-Atlantic Council;
- Impacts to the American lobster fishery, which relies heavily on herring as bait;
- Impacts to non-target or bycatch species such as haddock and river herring/shad;
- Impacts to predator species, including bluefin tuna, marine mammals, sea birds, and turtles;
- Impacts to essential fish habitat;
- Impacts to human communities, including social and economic benefits and consequences to the people directly and indirectly involved in the herring, mackerel, lobster, tuna, and groundfish fisheries;
- Impacts to the ecotourism industry, which offers opportunities for the public to go whale watching and sea bird viewing;
- Literature reviews to summarize past studies related to localized depletion and user conflicts and better define the extent of these issues.



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Atlantic Herring Research Set-Aside (RSA) Priorities

In a separate action on December 5, the Council adopted five 2019-2021 research priorities for the Atlantic Herring RSA Program. These – in no particular order of priority – cover the following scope:

- Portside sampling and bycatch avoidance projects primarily related to haddock and river herring/shad;
- Stock structure and spatial management projects – in particular, continued work on:
 - (a) distinguishing among sub-components of the herring resource – Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern New England – and identifying stocks of origin from mixed catches,
 - (b) identifying the relative size of stock components, movements, and mixing rates,
 - (c) ascertaining the degree of homing, and
 - (d) investigating potential effects of climate change;
- Research spawning dynamics, including projects related to life history, gear interactions, and spatial patterns, including studies to evaluate whether gear interactions disrupt spawning and negatively affect recruitment due to egg disposition and survival;
- Localized depletion studies to evaluate the influence of potential localized depletion of herring on predators; and
- Projects designed to evaluate discard rates and mortality of released fish in the purse seine fishery.

The Herring RSA Program was established in 2007 under Amendment 1 to the federal herring plan. Under the program, the Council sets aside 0% to 3% of the annual catch limit (ACL) from each management area to support research.

During the 2016-2018 specification-setting process, the Council elected to set aside the maximum level of 3% for RSA compensation. Next year, the Council again will need to specify the amount allocated to the RSA Program when it sets 2019-2021 specifications.

RSA compensation fishing is exempt from: (1) the Area 1A January-May seasonal closure and the Area 1B January-April seasonal closure; and (2) area closures that occur when an ACL has been reached.

- Information about the ABC control rule alternatives that the Council approved for public hearing during its September meeting is available at: <http://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/NEFMC-Atlantic-Herring-Amendment-8-Control-Rules.pdf>
- Herring-related materials used by the Council during the December 5-7 meeting in Newport, RI can be found at: <https://www.nefmc.org/library/herring-committee-december-2017>
- The Council's herring webpage is at <https://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/herring>
- For more information, contact Atlantic Herring Plan Coordinator Deirdre Boelke at (978) 465-0492, ext. 105, dboelke@nefmc.org.