



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Atlantic Herring: Council Approves Framework 6 Containing 2019-2021 Specifications and Revised Overfishing Definition

The New England Fishery Management Council has approved Framework Adjustment 6 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which contains 2019-2021 specifications for the fishery and a new overfishing definition for herring that is more consistent with the 2018 benchmark stock assessment.

The Council took [several steps](#) during its April meeting that helped guide the development of Framework 6. Here at its June meeting in So. Portland, ME, the Council made three additional decisions to complete the package:

- Overfishing Limit (OFL) and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC):**  
 The Council voted to set OFL and ABC based on the ABC control rule that’s proposed in [Amendment 8](#) to the Atlantic Herring FMP while using the original projections made by its Scientific and Statistical Committee. This was referred to as “Alternative 2 Original” in the draft framework.
- Management Uncertainty Buffer:**  
 The buffer is the difference between ABC and the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) and is factored into specifications to help ensure that the ABC is not exceeded primarily due to Canadian catch in the New Brunswick weir fishery. Management uncertainty previously was set at 6,200 metric tons (mt). This time, the Council supported using a 10-year average of Canadian catches, which resulted in an uncertainty buffer of 4,560 mt.

### 2019-2021 Atlantic Herring Specifications (in Metric Tons)

Specification	2019	2020	2021
Overfishing Limit (OFL)	30,668	41,830	69,064
Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)	21,266	16,131	16,131
Management Uncertainty	6,200	4,560	4,560
Optimum Yield / Annual Catch Limit (OY/ACL)	15,065*	11,571*	11,571*
Domestic Annual Harvest	15,065	11,571	11,571
Border Transfer	0	100	100
Domestic Annual Processing	15,065	11,471	11,471
U.S. At-Sea Processing	0	0	0
Area 1A Sub-ACL (28.9%)	4,354	3,344	3,344
Area 1B Sub-ACL (4.3%)	647	498	498
Area 2 Sub-ACL (27.8%)	4,188	3,217	3,217
Area 3 Sub-ACL (39%)	5,876	4,513	4,513
Fixed Gear Set-Aside	39	30	30
Research Set-Aside as % of Sub-ACLs	3%	3%	3%

\* If the New Brunswick weir fishery catch through October 1 is less than the associated “trigger,” then 1,000 mt of the management uncertainty buffer will be added to the Area 1A sub-ACL.



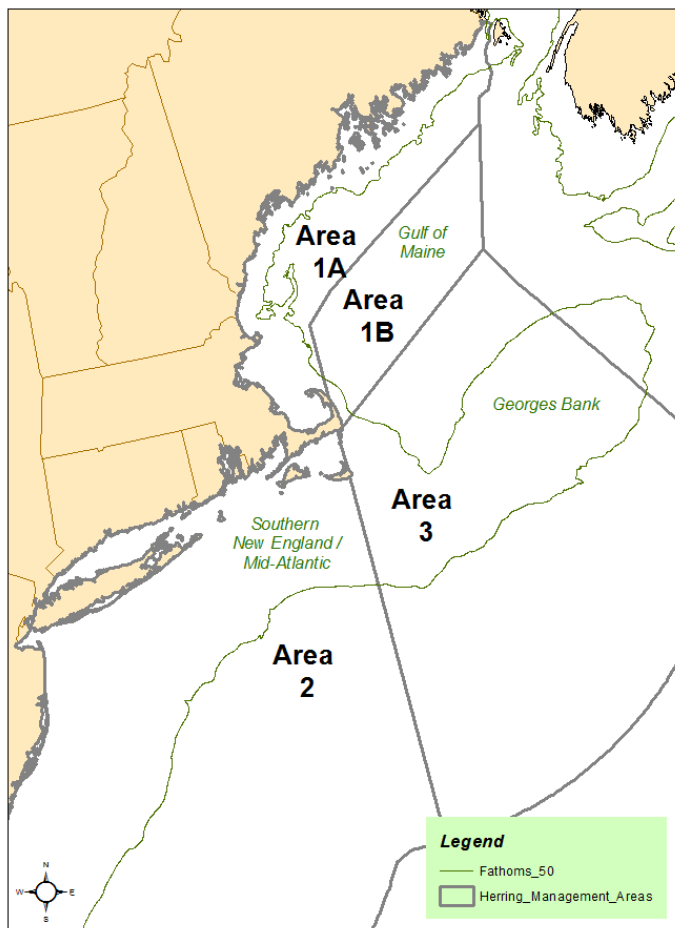
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If the New Brunswick weir catch through October 1 is less than the 4,000-mt trigger in 2019 or the 2,942-mt trigger in 2020 and 2021, then 1,000 mt will be subtracted from the buffer and added to Area 1A.

- **Border Transfer:** This specification applies to fish caught in Area 1A by U.S. fishermen that is transferred to Canada via a Canadian carrier. The fish must be used for human consumption. Until 2019, the border transfer allocation was set at 4,000 mt annually. In 2019, however, it was zero. For 2020 and 2021, the Council voted to set it at 100 mt. The specification has not been utilized in recent years.

Once the Council made these decisions, the specific management area sub-ACLs could be determined because catch limits all flow down from the ABC. The Council kept the same spatial percentage splits for the available quota: Area 1A – 28.9%; Area 1B – 4.3%; Area 2 – 27.8%; and Area 3 – 39%. The resulting catch limits are show in the table on page 1. The Council also kept the same Area 1 seasonal splits:

- Area 1A January through May – 0%
- Area 1A June through December – 100%
- Area 1B January through April – 0%
- Area 1B May through December – 100%



Atlantic Herring Management Areas 1A, 1B, 2, and 3. – NEFMC graphic

## Important Factors to Remember

- The Council approved Framework 6 for submission to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS/NOAA Fisheries). The agency still needs to review and approve the framework before implementing it.
- The target implementation date is January 1, 2020, the start of the new fishing year for Atlantic herring.
- 2019 specifications already are in place through a NMFS [in-season adjustment](#). These catch limits have been folded into Framework 6.
- The framework contains catch limits for both the 2020 and 2021 fishing years. However, the 2021 specifications likely will be revisited following a new stock assessment that is scheduled to take place in 2020.
- Although provisions are in place to allow for the carryover of unharvested catch from one year to the next by up to 10% of an area's sub-ACL, the Council voted to "temporarily prohibit carryovers" for 2020 and 2021 given the current condition of the resource, which is resulting in the low quotas.

A copy of the summary report from the 2018 stock assessment for Atlantic herring is available [HERE](#)



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## NEW REFERENCE POINTS

The Council approved the following updated overfishing definition as part of Framework Adjustment 6 to the Atlantic Herring FMP.

- *The stock will be considered **overfished** if stock biomass is less than 1/2 the stock biomass associated with the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) level or a proxy (e.g.,  $SSB_{MSY}$  or  $SSB_{MSY\ proxy}$ ).  $SSB$  is spawning stock biomass.*
- *The stock will be considered **subject to overfishing** if the estimated fishing mortality rate exceeds the fishing mortality rate associated with the MSY level or a proxy (e.g.,  $F_{MSY}$  or  $F_{MSY\ proxy}$ ).*

The Council maintained the current 2019 river herring and shad catch caps for 2020 and 2021 in Framework 6. Here are the allocations.

River Herring/Shad Catch Caps	Allocation in Metric Tons
Midwater Trawl Gulf of Maine	76.7 mt
Midwater Trawl Cape Cod	32.4 mt
Midwater Trawl Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic	129.6 mt
Bottom Trawl Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic	122.3 mt

The Council also discussed two other herring-related issues: (1) the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process it used to develop the Amendment 8 control rule; and (2) a discussion document on Atlantic herring spawning on Georges Bank.

1. The Council is conducting a debriefing on the MSE process to identify perceptions, pros and cons, and lessons learned to help inform the Council about the potential use of MSE in other applications and whether or not it should be used again for herring. The debriefing will focus on collecting input from Council members and MSE participants, as well as summarizing how the process worked in other areas.
2. The Council has issued a contract to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) to review the literature and summarize previous discussions and data related to herring spawning activity on Georges Bank. A report will be presented to the Council in September. GMRI's Dr. Graham Sherwood is leading this effort. Anyone with related information should contact him at (207) 228-1644, [gsherwood@gmri.org](mailto:gsherwood@gmri.org).



Atlantic herring. – School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) photo

**Questions?** Contact Deirdre Boelke, the Council's Atlantic herring plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 105, email [dboelke@nefmc.org](mailto:dboelke@nefmc.org).

- All herring documents and the presentation used during this meeting are available at [Council meets June 11-13, 2019 in So. Portland, ME.](#)