

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

TECHNICAL ADDENDUM #1a

to

Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for

Atlantic Sea Herring



Final Approval: October 18, 2001

Prepared by: Atlantic Herring Plan Review Team

Technical Addendum #1a for the Purpose of: A Revision to the Eastern Maine Atlantic Herring Spawning Closure Boundary

Background

The Atlantic Herring Section of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Addendum I to Amendment 1 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Sea Herring on July 12, 2000. Addendum I revised regulations in Amendment 1 designed to protect aggregations of spawning Atlantic herring. The major revisions included a new delineation of the spawning areas, implementation and duration of spawning closures, and the elimination of the tolerance provision (the Section subsequently approved implementation of the tolerance provision again, provided the State of Maine submits a report on the effectiveness of enforcement and catch characteristics).

Although the changes made through Addendum I appeared to work well in addressing most of the issues and unintended conflicts that arose during the implementation of Amendment 1, there was one clear failure. Technical Addendum #1a is focused solely on the change in the delineation of the Eastern Maine spawning boundary contained in Addendum I and the subsequent problems that arose.

Statement of the Problem

Based on existing evidence it appears that the Eastern Maine spawning area failed to adequately protect spawning aggregations of Atlantic herring in 2000. The delineation of the Eastern Maine spawning area currently includes an angle that brings the boundary sharply northwest, effectively excluding the eastern tip of Inner Schoodic Ridge from the spawning closure. Data collected from Vessel Trip Reports (VTR), port sampling and observations by Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) personnel, indicated that the current Eastern Maine spawning closure is insufficient and the angle that occurs approximately at 44° 07 N and 67° 53 W should be eliminated. It is apparent that more effective protection of spawning aggregations of Atlantic herring will be achieved if the entire area of Inner Schoodic Ridge is included in future spawning closures.

Evidence

A problem with the Eastern Maine spawning area boundary first became evident during the designated spawning closure between August 15 and September 11, 2000. During that time, fishing activity occurred on the eastern tip of Inner Schoodic Ridge, which is located in the angle of the existing boundary. Members of the general public, individuals involved in the herring industry and DMR personnel all noted a significant take of spawning herring from this area just outside the spawning closure. Some of these observations contributed to a petition circulated by a non-government organization on behalf of industry members demanding an increase in spawning protection for Atlantic herring. Furthermore, many individuals contacted DMR to express their concern regarding the lack of sufficient protection for spawning herring on Inner Schoodic Ridge.

In support of these observations, examination of data collected from VTRs indicated that 366 metric tons of herring were harvested from the eastern tip of Inner Schoodic Ridge.

Four samples were collected from this catch, representing 200 individual fish. The samples were processed at the DMR lab and indicated that 75% of the fish were in advanced stages of spawning maturity. This was obviously well in excess of the acceptable harvest level (20%) of mature herring in an area intended to protect spawning aggregations.

Solution

A problem with the current delineation of the Eastern Maine spawning area clearly exists. Observations, commercial catch reports and sampling evidence suggested that unacceptable levels of mature herring were harvested from the eastern tip of Inner Schoodic Ridge in 2000. The legal harvest of spawning aggregations in this area contradicts the intention of spawning closures under Amendment 1. In order to eliminate this inconsistency, the Eastern Maine spawning area boundary should be extended to include the eastern tip of Inner Schoodic Ridge. This would be accomplished by straightening the existing boundary to follow from the pre-defined 44° 04' N/ 67° 49' W line to the US/Canadian border at 44° 25' N/ 67° 03' W (see chart on next page).

The new Eastern Maine spawning closure area shall be delineated as:

All waters bounded by the following coordinates:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Maine coast | 68° 20' W |
| 43° 48' N | 68° 20' W |
| 44° 25' N | 67° 03' W |
| North along the US/Canada border | |

These coordinates shall replace those listed for the Eastern Maine spawning closure area in *Section 4.2.1.1* of Addendum I.

