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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

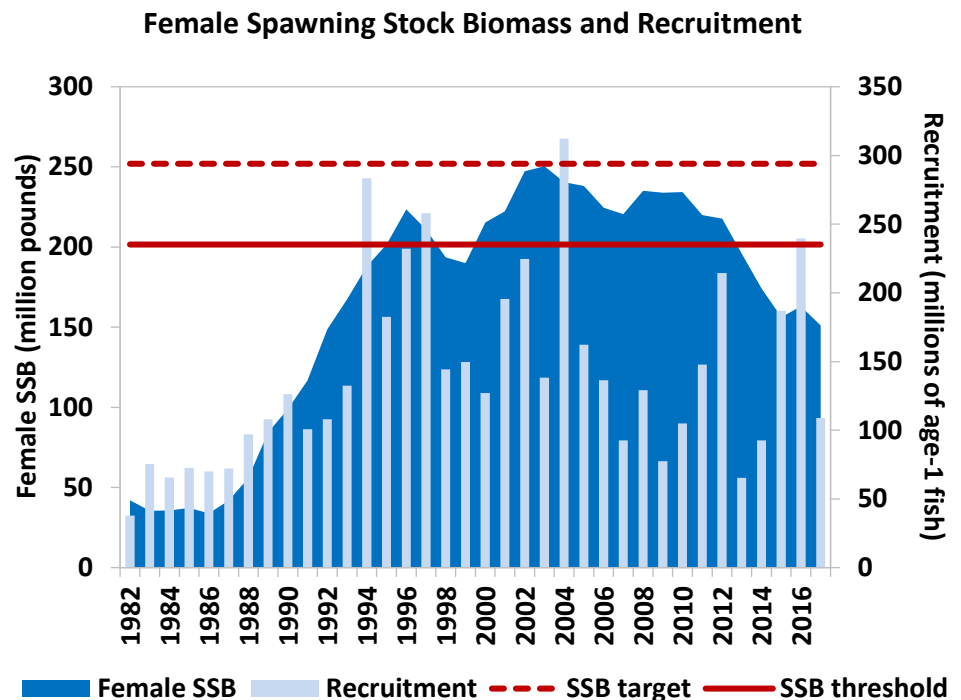
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 2019

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Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment Finds Resource Overfished and Overfishing Occurring *Board Initiates Addendum to Reduce Total Fishing Mortality*

Arlington, VA – The 2018 Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment indicates the resource is overfished and experiencing overfishing relative to the updated reference points defined in the assessment. Female spawning stock biomass (SSB) was estimated at 151 million pounds, below the SSB threshold of 202 million pounds. Despite recent declines in SSB, the assessment indicated the stock is still significantly above the SSB levels observed during the moratorium in the mid-1980s. Total fishing mortality (F) was estimated at 0.31, above the F threshold of 0.24. The benchmark assessment and its single-stock statistical catch-at-age model was endorsed by the Peer Review Panel and accepted by the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board (Board) for management use.

Based on these findings and the tripping of Amendment 6's reference point management triggers relating to F and SSB thresholds (e.g., F in 2017 is above the threshold level and SSB is below the threshold level), the Board initiated the development of a Draft Addendum to consider measures aimed to reduce F to the target level. The Technical Committee estimates it would require roughly a 17% reduction in total removals (commercial and recreational harvest, including dead



The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.

releases) to reduce F to the target in 2020 relative to 2017 levels. The Draft Addendum will explore a range of management options, including minimum size and slot size limits for the recreational fishery in the Chesapeake Bay and along the coast, as well as a coastwide circle hook requirement when fishing with bait. The Board also provided guidance on how to apply the necessary reductions to both the commercial and recreational sectors. The Draft Addendum will be presented to the Board for its consideration and approval for public comment in August. If approved, it will be released for public comment, with the Board considering its final approval in October for implementation in 2020. Additionally, the Board postponed a motion to initiate the development of an Amendment until its next meeting in August.

Atlantic striped bass experienced a period of strong recruitment (estimated as number of age-1 fish) from 1994-2004, followed by a period of lower recruitment from 2005-2011 (although not as low as the early 1980s, when the stock was considered collapsed). This period of low recruitment contributed to the decline in SSB in recent years. Recruitment was high in 2012, 2015, and 2016 (corresponding to strong 2011, 2014, and 2015 year classes), but recruitment estimates were below the long-term average in 2013, 2014, and 2017. Recruitment in 2017 was estimated at 108.8 million age-1 fish, below the time series average of 140.9 million fish.

A more detailed description of the stock assessment results is available on the Commission's website at <http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5cc9ba4eAtlStripedBassStockAssessmentOverview.pdf>. The 2018 Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment, Stock Assessment Summary and Peer Review Report can be obtained via the following links:

Full assessment report - <https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd1908/crd1908.pdf>
Summary Report - <https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd1901/crd1901.pdf>
Peer Review Report - <https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/saw66/saw-66-summary-report.pdf>

For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org.

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