

BACKGROUND

In November 2011, the Commission voted, through Addendum V, to grow the menhaden population to approximately four times its current size. Over 90,000 public stakeholders, hundreds of fishing and other stakeholder groups, and 32 Members of Congress voiced their concern about the state of menhaden and asked the Commission to implement strong management measures, to begin the recovery of menhaden as soon as possible.

These constituents are counting on the Commission to heed their call and to present the public with strong management and conservation measures in Draft Amendment 2 this summer, measures that will put the commitments of Addendum V on the water where they'll make a difference.

MANAGEMENT MEASURES, INCLUDING AN ENFORCEABLE ANNUAL QUOTA, MUST BE SENT TO THE PUBLIC

In order to meet the goal of restoring the menhaden population, Amendment 2 must establish coast-wide management based upon an enforced annual catch quota without delay. In pursuit of this goal, Amendment 2 needs to include effective policies, with monitoring and accountability, that close the fishery when the limit is reached.

The pursuit of management measures is independent of the debate about what the specific catch limit should be. Catch must be reduced substantially from where it has been in order to achieve the goals the Commission adopted in November through Addendum V: management to a target of 30% Maximum Spawning Potential ($F_{30\%MSP}$) – a substantial increase in spawning biomass.

The draft Amendment should clearly state that it is the Commission's goal to manage the fishery to the new target. Managing a fishery to the more conservative target is typical in modern fisheries and in line with NOAA and ASMFC guidance.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MANAGEMENT MEASURES SHOULD NOT BE DELAYED BECAUSE OF QUESTIONS RAISED DURING THE UPDATE ASSESSMENT.

When deciding the magnitude of reduction necessary, Amendment 2 should rely on the peer reviewed benchmark stock assessment. This is clearly the best available science for management of this stock at this time. The benchmark assessment shows that the stock is hovering at historically low abundance making it more important that the Commission manages the fishery to the new reference target as soon as possible.

Amendment 2 must also include a wide range of alternatives for setting an appropriate quota. These include catch amounts from the work of the Stock

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Assessment Sub-Committee (projections) and methods that are widely used in fisheries with limited information, for example, approaches based on catch history. Examples of fisheries where stock assessment reliability concerns or other limited information problems have been addressed through catch limits based on catch history, include Atlantic herring, Atlantic mackerel, Butterfish, and many stocks in the Gulf and Southeast

When a new peer reviewed, benchmark assessment is completed; the catch limit for menhaden can be revised through a specification process.

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