



MID-ATLANTIC

FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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Council Votes to Continue Collaborative Efforts on River Herring and Shad

GALLOWAY, NJ – Based on a comprehensive review of existing and planned conservation and management efforts, last week the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council determined that management of river herring and shad (RH/S) through a Council fishery management plan (FMP) is not warranted. However, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to participating with partners in the conservation and management of RH/S, noting that it will continue to protect RH/S stocks by proactively using the tools provided in the recently-approved Ecosystem Approaches to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Guidance Document. The Council will also continue to use catch caps to incentivize harvesters to reduce river herring and shad bycatch.

The four species under consideration included two species of river herrings (blueback herring and alewife) and two species of shads (American shad and hickory shad). These stocks are currently [managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission \(ASMFC\)](#).

In the late 2000s concerns were brought to the Council that bycatch in high-volume fisheries such as Atlantic mackerel may be negatively impacting RH/S populations. These concerns led the Council to implement a limit on the catch of RH/S in the Atlantic mackerel fishery. The Council has also worked to improve data by increasing vessel and dealer reporting requirements and collaborating with NOAA Fisheries on an amendment to increase observer coverage in the Atlantic mackerel fishery. The New England Fishery Management Council has taken similar steps to address RH/S catch in the Atlantic herring fishery.

The Council has also worked to address RH/S conservation through participation on an interdisciplinary River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG). The TEWG has provided and compiled information used by NOAA Fisheries and the ASMFC in the development and execution of a proactive conservation plan focused on river herring. The TEWG has funded [several important projects](#) to enhance our understanding of RH/S bycatch and the species' overall population health.

Prior to the meeting the Council received a large number of public comments on the issue, all of which supported the development of a Council FMP for RH/S. The Council considered these comments thoroughly but ultimately determined that the management of RH/S under a Council FMP is not appropriate at this time.

The Council's decision not to add these stocks to the fishery management plan for Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish was largely based on the fact that RH/S are already managed by the ASMFC and that the catch caps set by the Council have kept incidental catch very low compared to historic levels. There is no evidence that RH/S are targeted in Federal fisheries, and the Council concluded that an FMP would not substantially improve the condition of RH/S stocks.

Additional background information and documents about river herring and shad can be found at <http://www.mafmc.org/rhs/>.