

# Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan

## Amendment ## or Framework Adjustment ##

Including an Environmental Assessment,  
Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, and  
Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation



**DRAFT Discussion Document**

**Council**

**April 2, 2026**

Prepared by the

New England Fishery Management Council

In consultation with the

National Marine Fisheries Service,

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission



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**AMENDMENT XX or FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT XX TO THE ATLANTIC HERRING  
FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Proposed Action:** Propose a XX.

**Responsible Agencies:** New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill #2  
Newburyport, MA 01950

National Marine Fisheries Service  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Washington, D.C. 20235

**For Further Information:** Dr. Cate O’Keefe, Executive Director  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill #2  
Newburyport, Massachusetts 01950  
Phone: (978) 465-0492

**Abstract:** The New England Fishery Management Council, in consultation with NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service, has prepared Amendment XX or Framework Adjustment XX to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan, which includes an Environmental Assessment. The proposed action focuses on XX. The document describes the affected environment and valued ecosystem components and analyzes the impacts of the alternatives on both. It addresses the requirements of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, and other applicable laws.

# 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## 2.2 FIGURES

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## 2.3 MAPS

[insert table of maps]

## 2.4 ACRONYMS

[insert list of acronyms]

## 3.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

### 3.1 BACKGROUND

[To be completed.]

### 3.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

This action is intended to help meet the goals and objectives of the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan. The purpose of this action is to set specifications for Atlantic herring for fishing years 2027-2031, to modify other management measures (i.e., specifications process and carryover), and to enhance river herring (alewife and blueback herring) and shad (American shad and hickory shad) avoidance and other catch reduction measures to better support ongoing coastwide restoration efforts for those species (Table 1).

**Table 1. Need and purpose for this action.**

| Need   | Purpose  |
|--|--|
| To reduce and streamline regulations.  | Modify the specification process.  |
| To prevent overfishing and promote the full utilization of optimum yield (OY).   | Specify OFL and ABC and set specifications for the 2027-2031 fishing years.  |
| To provide for flexibility to not allow carryover of unharvested catch (e.g., based on stock status).  | Modify carryover provisions.   |
| To enhance river herring (alewife and blueback herring) and shad (American shad and hickory shad) avoidance and other catch reduction measures to better support ongoing coastwide restoration efforts for those species.* | Modify river herring and shad management measures (e.g., establish time/area closures and/or reconsider catch caps). |

\*May need to update FMP goals/objectives.

## 4.0 ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION

The Council considered the alternatives in this section. It did not consider any others because these provide a reasonable range of alternatives to address the purpose and need for action described in Section 3.2.

[To be completed.]

### 4.1 ACTION 1 – ATLANTIC HERRING SPECIFICATIONS PROCESS

#### 4.1.1 Alternative 1 - No Action

##### REGULATIONS SUMMARY

*Note: Pending changes through Omnibus Management Flexibility Amendment ([Amendment 11 to the Atlantic Herring FMP](#)), which would allow for specifications to be set for up to five years at a time.*

| Regulations  | Reference                             |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <p>§ 648.200 Specifications.</p> <p>(a) The Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team (PDT) shall meet at least every 3 years, but no later than July of the year before new specifications are implemented, with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Atlantic Herring Technical Committee (TC) to develop and recommend the following specifications for a period of 3 years for consideration by the New England Fishery Management Council's Atlantic Herring Oversight Committee: Overfishing Limit (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Annual Catch Limit (ACL), Optimum yield (OY), domestic annual harvest (DAH), domestic annual processing (DAP), U.S. at-sea processing (USAP), border transfer (BT), the sub-ACL for each management area, including seasonal periods as specified at <a href="#">§ 648.201(d)</a> and modifications to sub-ACLs as specified at <a href="#">§ 648.201(f)</a>, the amount to be set aside for the RSA (from 0 to 3 percent of the sub-ACL from any management area), and river herring and shad catch caps, as specified in <a href="#">§ 648.201(a)(4)</a>. Recommended specifications shall be presented to the New England Fishery Management Council.</p> <p>(1) The PDT shall meet with the Commission's TC to review the status of the stock and the fishery and prepare a Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report at least every 3 years. The Herring PDT will meet at least once during interim years to review the status of the stock relative to the overfishing definition if information is available to do so. When conducting a 3-year review and preparing a SAFE Report, the PDT/TC will recommend to the Council/Commission any necessary adjustments to the specifications for the upcoming 3 years.</p> | <p><a href="#">50 CFR 648.200</a></p> |

(2) If the Council determines, based on information provided by the PDT/TC or other stock-related information, that the specifications should be adjusted during the 3-year time period, it can do so through the same process outlined in this section during one or both of the interim years.

(b) ***Guidelines.*** As the basis for its recommendations under [paragraph \(a\)](#) of this section, the PDT shall review available data pertaining to: Commercial and recreational catch data; current estimates of fishing mortality; discards; stock status; recent estimates of recruitment; virtual population analysis results and other estimates of stock size; sea sampling and trawl survey data or, if sea sampling data are unavailable, length frequency information from trawl surveys; impact of other fisheries on herring mortality; and any other relevant information. The specifications recommended pursuant to [paragraph \(a\)](#) of this section must be consistent with the following:

(1) OFL must be equal to catch resulting from applying the maximum fishing mortality threshold to a current or projected estimate of stock size. When the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, this is the fishing rate supporting maximum sustainable yield (*e.g.*, FMSY or proxy). Catch that exceeds this amount would result in overfishing. The stock is considered overfished if stock biomass is less than 1/2 the stock biomass associated with the MSY level or its proxy (*e.g.*, SSB<sub>MSY</sub> or proxy). The stock is considered subject to overfishing if the fishing mortality rate exceeds the fishing mortality rate associated with the MSY level or its proxy (*e.g.*, F<sub>MSY</sub> or proxy).

(2) ABC must be less than the OFL. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) shall recommend ABC to the Council by applying the ABC control rule and considering scientific uncertainty. Scientific uncertainty, including, but not limited to, uncertainty around stock size estimates, variability around estimates of recruitment, and consideration of ecosystem issues, shall be considered when setting ABC.

(3) ACL must be equal to or less than the ABC. Management uncertainty, which includes, but is not limited to, expected catch of herring in the New Brunswick weir fishery and the uncertainty around discard estimates of herring caught in Federal and state waters, shall be considered when setting the ACL. Catch in excess of the ACL shall trigger accountability measures (AMs), as described in [§ 648.201\(a\)](#).

(4) OY may not exceed OFL (*i.e.*, MSY) and must take into account the need to prevent overfishing while allowing the fishery to achieve OY on a continuing basis. OY is prescribed on the basis of MSY, as

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>reduced by social, economic, and ecological factors. OY may equal DAH.</p> <p>(5) DAH is comprised of DAP and BT.</p> <p>(6) River herring and shad catch caps may be allocated to the herring fishery by the following: Species, as defined in <a href="#">§ 648.2</a>, either separately or combined; area as specified in <a href="#">paragraph (f)(7)</a> of this section; vessel permit; gear type; or any combination of these.</p> <p>(c) The Atlantic Herring Oversight Committee shall review the recommendations of the PDT and shall consult with the Commission's Herring Board. Based on these recommendations and any public comment received, the Herring Oversight Committee shall recommend to the Council appropriate specifications for a 3-year period. The Council shall review these recommendations and, after considering public comment, shall recommend appropriate 3-year specifications to NMFS. NMFS shall review the recommendations, consider any comments received from the Commission, and publish notification in the Federal Register proposing 3-year specifications. If the proposed specifications differ from those recommended by the Council, the reasons for any differences shall be clearly stated and the revised specifications must satisfy the criteria set forth in <a href="#">paragraph (b)</a> of this section.</p> <p>(d) NMFS shall make a final determination concerning the specifications for Atlantic herring. Notification of the final specifications and responses to public comments shall be published in the Federal Register. If the final specification amounts differ from those recommended by the Council, the reason(s) for the difference(s) must be clearly stated and the revised specifications must be consistent with the criteria set forth in <a href="#">paragraph (b)</a> of this section. The previous year's specifications shall remain effective until they are revised through the specification process.</p> |  |
|---|--|

Under the no action alternative, the process for setting Atlantic herring specifications would remain unchanged.

**Overview**

Specifications for the Atlantic herring fishery are annual amounts specified for the fishing year (January – December), and are typically updated every two years. Some of the specifications values such as the overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, and annual catch limit are updated during each cycle based on new fishery data, stock assessment results, and other information sources. Other specifications have remained static in value for a number of years, such as border transfer, the fixed gear set-aside, and river herring and shad catch caps. Table 2 defines each herring fishery specification, including how frequently the values and/or methods are updated. Specifications that have remained set to 0 for a number of years are highlighted in green.

**Definitions of Specifications currently set to 0** (Adapted from [Herring Framework 8](#))

**Border Transfer:** The Border Transfer (BT) specification is U.S.-caught herring transshipped to Canada via Canadian carrier vessels and used for human consumption. This specification is not a set-aside; rather, it is a maximum weight of Atlantic herring caught by U.S. vessels from Area 1A that can be transshipped to Canadian vessels for human consumption. GARFO tracks BT utilization through a separate dealer code. Note that setting border transfer at a value above 0 does not require that such transfers occur, but it provides the possibility for transfer, as opposed to, for example, selling the herring for bait.

**US At-Sea Processing:** The Atlantic Herring FMP states that “part of DAP may be allocated for at-sea processing by domestic vessels that exceed the vessel size limits” (Herring FMP, Section 3.6.6). This allocation will be called the ‘U.S. at-sea processing’ (USAP) allocation. The term ‘at-sea processing’ refers to processing activities that occur in the Exclusive Economic Zone outside state waters. When determining this specification, the Council will consider the availability of other processing capacity, development of the fishery, status of the resource, and opportunities for vessels to enter the herring fishery.” The USAP specification serves as a cap for USAP activities, it is not a separate allocation but a limit within the domestic catch limit to be used for this purpose.

During the 2007-2009 fishing years, the Council maintained a USAP specification of 20,000 mt (Areas 2/3 only) based on information received about a new at-sea processing vessel that intended to utilize a substantial amount of the USAP specification. At that time, landings from Areas 2 and 3 – where USAP is authorized – were considerably lower than allocated sub-ACLs for each of the past several years. Moreover, the specification of 20,000 mt for USAP did not restrict either the operation or the expansion of the shoreside processing facilities during the 2007-2009 fishing years. However, this operation never materialized, and none of the USAP specification was used during the 2007-2009 fishing years. The Council has set USAP at zero in each specifications cycle since 2010.

**Research Set-Aside:** The Research Set-Aside (RSA) program is a competitive grants process administered by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. Proposals are requested for research, and incoming proposals are reviewed and ranked by a technical body. With competitive grants awarded through this process, different entities will apply. In the past, the Council has allocated either 0% or 3% of the sub-ACL for each management area for the RSA program. The regulations allow a set-aside of up to 3% in any or all herring management areas. The RSA program has not been active in recent years, and the set-aside has been set to 0% since 2023.

**Table 2. Atlantic herring specifications.**

| Herring Fishery Specification               |                 | Description  |
|---|-----------------|--|
| Overfishing Limit (OFL)                     |                 | Updated every specifications action using ABC control rule   |
| Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)           |                 | Updated every specifications action using ABC control rule   |
| Optimum Yield (OY)/Annual Catch Limit (ACL) |                 | Updated every specifications action; ABC - management uncertainty  |
| Management Area sub-ACLs                    | Area 1A (28.9%) | Percentages have remained static; values updated every specifications action based on ACL  |
|   | Area 1B (4.3%)  |  |
|   | Area 2 (27.8%)  |  |
|   | Area 3 (39%)    |  |
| Management Uncertainty buffer               |                 | Calculated as most recent 10-year average catch from the Canadian/ New Brunswick weir fishery  |
| Domestic annual harvest (DAH)               |                 | Equivalent to or less than ACL/OY; value updated every specifications action   |
| Domestic annual processing (DAP)            |                 | DAP = DAH – border transfer specification; value updated every specifications action   |
| Border Transfer (BT)                        |                 | US-caught herring shipped to BT was set to 4,000 mt from start of herring FMP through 2018; revised to 0 mt for 2019 using an in-season adjustment. Has been set to 0 mt since 2019  |
| US at-sea processing (USAP)                 |                 | Has been set to 0 mt since 2010  |
| Fixed gear set-aside                        |                 | Allocated for fixed gear fisheries in Area 1A; Set to 30 mt since 2020   |
| Research set-aside (RSA)                    |                 | Grant process administered by NEFSC. Value is set as a percentage of the sub-ACL for any or all herring management areas, up to 3%. Has historically been either 0% or 3%; no herring RSA program in recent years, set to 0% since 2023. |
| River herring and shad (RH/S) catch caps    |                 | Values set based on the reference period (2008-2014); current values have not changed since 2016.  |

#### 4.1.2 Alternative 2 – Update the Specifications Process

- Remove certain outdated specifications items
- Revise to make the process regulations less prescriptive

## 4.2 ACTION 2 – ATLANTIC HERRING SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2027-2031

### 4.2.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action is the specifications from the [2025-2027 specifications action](#) (Table 3 and Table 4).

**Table 3- Summary of Atlantic herring fishery specifications (mt).**

|   | 2026   | 2027   |
|---|--------|--------|
| Overfishing Limit (OFL)                       | 23,491 | 31,075 |
| Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)             | 13,165 | 13,165 |
| Management Uncertainty*                       | 4,031  | 4,031  |
| Optimum Yield (OY) / Annual Catch Limit (ACL) | 9,134  | 9,134  |
| Domestic Annual Harvest (DAH)                 | 9,134  | 9,134  |
| Border Transfer (BT)                          | 0      | 0      |
| Domestic Annual Processing (DAP)              | 9,134  | 9,134  |
| US At-Sea Processing (USAP)                   | 0      | 0      |
| Area 1A sub-ACL (28.9%)                       | 2,640  | 2,640  |
| Area 1B sub-ACL (4.3%)                        | 393    | 393    |
| Area 2 sub-ACL (27.8%)                        | 2,539  | 2,539  |
| Area 3 sub-ACL (39%)                          | 3,562  | 3,562  |
| Fixed Gear Set-Aside                          | 30     | 30     |
| Research Set-Aside (RSA) as % of sub-ACL      | 0%     | 0%     |

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

**Table 4. Summary of river herring and shad (RH/S) catch caps (mt).**

| Catch Cap  | 2026  | 2027  |
|--|-------|-------|
| Midwater Trawl Gulf of Maine                         | 76.7  | 76.7  |
| Midwater Trawl Cape Cod                              | 32.4  | 32.4  |
| Midwater Trawl Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic | 129.6 | 129.6 |
| Bottom Trawl Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic   | 122.3 | 122.3 |

### 4.2.2 Alternative 2 – Updated Specifications

- Based on 2026 management track stock assessment and recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)
- Evaluation of management uncertainty, including Canadian catch
- Identify status quo specifications
- Summarize in a table to compare combinations of the options, as appropriate

## 4.3 ACTION 3 – CARRYOVER OF UNHARVESTED CATCH

### 4.3.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

#### REGULATIONS SUMMARY

| Regulations  | Reference                                |
|--|--|
| <p>(g) <i>Carryover.</i></p> <p>(1) Subject to the conditions described in this <a href="#">paragraph (g)</a>, unharvested catch in a herring management area in a fishing year (up to 10 percent of that area's sub-ACL) shall be carried over and added to the sub-ACL for that herring management area for the fishing year following the year when total catch is determined. For example, NMFS will determine total catch from Year 1 during Year 2, and will add carryover to the applicable sub-ACL(s) in Year 3. All such carryover shall be based on the herring management area's initial sub-ACL allocation for Year 1, not the sub-ACL for Year 1 as increased by carryover or decreased by an overage deduction, as specified in <a href="#">paragraph (a)(3)</a> of this section. All herring caught from a herring management area shall count against that area's sub-ACL, as increased by carryover. For example, if 100 mt of herring is added as carryover from Year 1 to a 5,000 mt sub-ACL in Year 3, catch in that management area would be tracked against a total sub-ACL of 5,100 mt. NMFS shall add sub-ACL carryover only if catch does not exceed the Year 1 ACL, specified consistent with <a href="#">§ 648.200(b)(3)</a>. The ACL, consistent with <a href="#">§ 648.200(b)(3)</a>, shall not be increased by carryover specified in this <a href="#">paragraph (g)</a>.</p> <p>(2) No unharvested catch will be carried over and added to any management area sub-ACL for the 2025 and 2026 fishing years.</p> | <p><a href="#">50 CFR 648.201(g)</a></p> |

### 4.3.2 Alternative 2 – Modify Carryover Provisions

- Allow for flexibility to not allow carryover of unharvested catch
- Limit or suspend carryover of unharvested catch when the Atlantic herring stock is overfished or in a rebuilding plan

## 4.4 ACTION 4 – RIVER HERRING AND SHAD MANAGEMENT MEASURES

### 4.4.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

Under this alternative, river herring and shad management measures, including river herring and shad catch caps, catch cap areas, and avoidance areas, would remain unchanged. These measures would remain in place unless changed in a future action.

**REGULATIONS SUMMARY**

| Regulations   | Reference   |
|---|---|
| <p>(4) <b>River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas</b> —</p> <p>(i) <b>January-February River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas.</b> The January-February River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas include four sub-areas. Each sub-area includes the waters bounded by the coordinates below, connected in the order listed by straight lines unless otherwise noted.</p> <p>(ii) <b>March-April River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas.</b> The March-April River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas include five sub-areas. Each sub-area includes the waters bounded by the coordinates below, connected in the order listed by straight lines unless otherwise noted.</p> <p>(iii) <b>May-June River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas.</b> The May-June River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas include two sub-areas. Each sub-area includes the waters bounded by the coordinates below, connected in the order listed by straight lines unless otherwise noted.</p> <p>(iv) <b>July-August River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas.</b> The July-August River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas include two sub-areas. Each sub-area includes the waters bounded by the coordinates below, connected in the order listed by straight lines unless otherwise noted.</p> <p>(v) <b>September-October River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas.</b> The September-October River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas include two sub-areas. Each sub-area includes the waters bounded by the coordinates below, connected in the order listed by straight lines unless otherwise noted.</p> <p>(vi) <b>November-December River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas.</b> The November-December River Herring Monitoring/Avoidance Areas include two sub-areas. Each sub-area includes the waters bounded by the coordinates below, connected in the order listed by straight lines unless otherwise noted.</p> | <p><a href="#">50 CFR 648.200(f)(4)</a></p> <p>See CFR for sub-areas and coordinates.</p> |
| <p>(7) <b>River herring and shad catch cap areas</b> —</p> <p>(i) <b>Gulf of Maine Catch Cap Area.</b> The Gulf of Maine Catch Cap Area is composed of the portions of Greater Atlantic Region Statistical Areas #464, #465, #467, #511, #512, #513, #514, and #515 in U.S. waters. The Gulf of Maine Catch Cap Area is bounded on the west by the coastline of the United States, bounded on the east by the U.S.-Canada Maritime Boundary, and bounded on the south by the following coordinates connected by straight lines in the order listed:</p> <p>(ii) <b>Cape Cod Catch Cap Area.</b> The Cape Cod Catch Cap Area is composed of Greater Atlantic Region Statistical Area #521, and is defined by the following points connected in the order listed by straight lines unless otherwise noted:</p> <p>(iii) <b>Georges Bank Catch Cap Area.</b> The Georges Bank Catch Cap Area is composed of the portions of Greater Atlantic Region Statistical Areas #522, #525, #526, #541, #542, #543, #561, #562, and #640 in U.S. waters, and is defined by the following points, connected in the order listed by straight lines unless otherwise noted:</p>   | <p><a href="#">50 CFR 648.200(f)(7)</a></p> <p>See CFR for each area’s coordinates.</p>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(iv) <b>Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Catch Cap Area.</b> The coordinates of this area are the same as Management Area 2 (South Coastal Area), as specified in <a href="#">paragraph (f)(2)</a> of this section.</p>  |   |
| <p>(8) <b>River herring and shad catch cap closure areas—</b></p> <p>(i) <b>Gulf of Maine Catch Cap Closure Area.</b> The coordinates of this area are the same as the Gulf of Maine Catch Cap Area, as specified in <a href="#">paragraph (f)(7)(i)</a> of this section.</p> <p>(ii) <b>Cape Cod Catch Cap Closure Area.</b> The coordinates of this area are the same as the Cape Cod Catch Cap Area, as specified in <a href="#">paragraph (f)(7)(ii)</a> of this section.</p> <p>(iii) <b>Georges Bank Catch Cap Closure Area.</b> The coordinates of this area are the same as the Georges Bank Catch Cap Area, as specified in <a href="#">paragraph (f)(7)(iii)</a> of this section.</p> <p>(iv) <b>Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Catch Cap Closure Area.</b> The Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Catch Cap Closure Area is composed of the portions of Greater Atlantic Region Statistical Areas #537, #538, #539, #611, #612, #613, #614, #615, #616, #621, #622, #623, #625, #626, #627, #631, #632, #635, and #636 in US waters, and is defined by the following coordinates, connected by straight lines in the order listed unless otherwise noted:</p> | <p><a href="#">50 CFR 648.200(f)(8)</a></p> |
| <p>(4) <b>River herring and shad catch cap.</b></p> <p>(i) The catch from all trips that land more than 6,600 lb (3 mt) of herring shall apply to the river herring and shad catch cap in the herring fishery. Caps by gear and by area shall be established through the specifications process described in <a href="#">§ 648.201</a>.</p> <p>(ii) Beginning on the date that NMFS projects that river herring and shad catch will reach 95 percent of a catch cap for specified gear applicable to an area specified in <a href="#">§ 648.200(f)(7)</a> for the remainder of the fishing year, vessels may not attempt or do any of the following: Fish for, possess, transfer, receive, land, or sell more than 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) of Atlantic herring per trip using the applicable gear in the applicable catch cap closure area, specified in <a href="#">§ 648.200(f)(8)</a>, and from landing herring more than once per calendar day, except as provided in <a href="#">paragraphs (b)</a> and <a href="#">(c)</a> of this section. NMFS shall implement these restrictions in accordance with the APA.</p>  | <p><a href="#">50 CFR 648.201(a)(4)</a></p> |

#### 4.4.2 Alternative 2 – Modify Catch Caps and/or Catch Cap Areas

- Revise the reference period for the catch caps
- Scale the catch caps to changes in the Atlantic herring biomass
- Use biologically based approaches for catch caps developed by ASFMC during the River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment as a starting point

#### **4.4.3 Alternative 3 – Establish Time/Area Closures within Atlantic Herring Management Areas 2 and 3**

- Where aggregations of river herring and shad overlap with the directed Atlantic herring fishery
- PDT develops species distribution models

#### **4.4.4 Alternative 4 – Remove River Herring/Shad Avoidance Areas**

- Have not used these areas for management

### **4.5 CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED ALTERNATIVES**

[To be completed as needed.]

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## **5.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

[To be completed.]

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Affected Environment is described in this action based on valued ecosystem components (VECs), including target species, non-target species, predator species, physical environment and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), protected resources, and human communities. VECs represent the resources, areas and human communities that may be affected by the alternatives under consideration in this amendment. VECs are the focus since they are the “place” where the impacts of management actions occur.

### **5.2 TARGET SPECIES**

### **5.3 NON-TARGET SPECIES**

### **5.4 PROTECTED SPECIES**

### **5.5 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT**

### **5.6 HUMAN COMMUNITIES**

## 6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVES

The impacts of the alternatives under consideration are evaluated herein relative to the valued ecosystem components (VECs) described in the Affected Environment (Section 5.0) and to each other.

[To be completed.]

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This action evaluates the potential impacts using the criteria in Table 5.

**Table 5. General definitions for impacts and qualifiers relative to resource condition (i.e., baseline).**

| VEC   | Resource Condition  | Impact of Action   |  |   |
|---|---|--|--|---|
|   |   | Positive (+)   | Negative (-)   | No Impact (0)   |
| Target and Non-target Species                           | Overfished status defined by the MSA  | Alternatives that would maintain or are projected to result in a stock status above an overfished condition* | Alternatives that would maintain or are projected to result in a stock status below an overfished condition*     | Alternatives that do not impact stock / populations   |
| ESA-listed Protected Species (endangered or threatened) | Populations at risk of extinction (endangered) or endangerment (threatened)                             | Alternatives that contain specific measures to ensure no interactions with protected species (e.g., no take) | Alternatives that result in interactions/take of listed resources, including actions that reduce interactions    | Alternatives that do not impact ESA listed species  |
| MMPA Protected Species (not also ESA listed)            | Stock health may vary but populations remain impacted   | Alternatives that will maintain takes below PBR and approaching the Zero Mortality Rate Goal                 | Alternatives that result in interactions with/take of marine mammal species that could result in takes above PBR | Alternatives that do not impact MMPA Protected Species  |
| Physical Environment / Habitat / EFH                    | Many habitats degraded from historical effort (see condition of the resources table for details)        | Alternatives that improve the quality or quantity of habitat   | Alternatives that degrade the quality, quantity or increase disturbance of habitat                               | Alternatives that do not impact habitat quality   |
| Human Communities (Social and Economic)                 | Highly variable but generally stable in recent years (see condition of the resources table for details) | Alternatives that increase revenue and social well-being of fishermen and/or communities                     | Alternatives that decrease revenue and social well-being of fishermen and/or communities                         | Alternatives that do not impact revenue and social well-being of fishermen and/or communities |

| <b>Impact Qualifiers</b>   |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| A range of impact qualifiers is used to indicate any existing uncertainty  | Negligible   | To such a small degree to be indistinguishable from no impact           |
|  | Slight (sl) as in slight positive or slight negative | To a lesser degree / minor  |
|  | Moderately (M) positive or negative                  | To an average degree (i.e., more than “slight”, but not “high”)         |
|  | High (H), as in high positive or high negative       | To a substantial degree (not significant unless stated)                 |
|  | Significant (in the case of an EIS)                  | Affecting the resource condition to a great degree, see 40 CFR 1508.27. |
|  | Likely   | Some degree of uncertainty associated with the impact                   |
| *Actions that will substantially increase or decrease stock size, but do not change a stock status may have different impacts depending on the particular action and stock. Meaningful differences between alternatives may be illustrated by using another resource attribute aside from the MSA status, but this must be justified within the impact analysis. |  |   |

## 6.2 IMPACTS ON TARGET SPECIES

## 6.3 IMPACTS ON NON-TARGET SPECIES

## 6.4 IMPACTS ON PROTECTED SPECIES

## 6.5 IMPACTS ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT

## 6.6 IMPACTS ON HUMAN COMMUNITIES

## 6.7 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ANALYSIS

## 7.0 APPLICABLE LAWS/EXECUTIVE ORDERS

[To be completed.]

### 7.1 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

#### 7.1.1 Opportunity for Public Comment

This action was developed from [add dates], and there were XX public meetings related to this action (Table 6). Opportunities for public comment occurred at Advisory Panel (AP), Committee, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and Council meetings. There were more limited opportunities to comment at Plan Development Team (PDT) and ASMFC’s Technical Committee (TC) meetings. Meeting discussion documents and summaries are available at [www.nefmc.org](http://www.nefmc.org).

**Table 6. Public meetings related to this action, subject to change.**

| Date          | Meeting Type                                   | Location               |
|---------------|--|------------------------|
| 12/15/2025    | PDT  | Webinar                |
| 01/29/2026    | Council  | Webinar                |
| 03/02/2026    | PDT  | Webinar                |
| 03/23/2026    | AP   | Webinar                |
| 04/16/2026    | Council  | Portland, ME + Webinar |
| TBD           | PDT  | Webinar                |
| TBD           | AP   | TBD                    |
| TBD           | Committee                                      | TBD                    |
| TBD           | PDT  | Webinar                |
| TBD           | Joint AP/Committee                             | TBD                    |
| 06/23-25/2026 | Council  | Mystic, CT + Webinar   |
| 06/29-30/2026 | Peer Review: Atlantic Herring Stock Assessment | Woods Hole, MA         |
| TBD           | PDT/TC   | Webinar                |
| TBD           | SSC: OFLs/ABCs for Atlantic Herring            | Location TBD + Webinar |
| TBD           | PDT/TC   | Webinar                |
| TBD           | Sub-Panel SSC: River Herring/Shad              | TBD                    |
| TBD           | PDT  | Webinar                |
| TBD           | AP   | TBD                    |
| TBD           | Committee                                      | TBD                    |
| 9/15-17-2026  | Council (final action)                         | Plymouth, MA + Webinar |

## **8.0 GLOSSARY**

[To be completed.]

## **9.0 REFERENCES**

[To be completed.]

## **10.0 INDEX**

[To be completed.]

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