



New England Fishery Management Council

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Atlantic Herring: 2019-2021 Research Set-Aside Award Supports Bycatch Avoidance in Midwater Trawl Fishery

The Atlantic Herring Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program will continue to support an important project focused on maintaining and expanding bycatch avoidance strategies in the Atlantic herring midwater trawl fishery both at sea and through shoreside sampling. The project is a partnership between industry, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST), and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF).

The New England Fishery Management Council sets research priorities for the Herring RSA Program, while NOAA Fisheries manages the RSA competition and the program itself. This particular project, which was [announced today](#) by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, is consistent with the research priorities identified by the Council for the [2019-2021 RSA award cycle](#).

“We’re pleased that researchers and the fishing industry are able to utilize the Herring RSA Program to maintain this important bycatch avoidance project,” said Council Chairman Dr. John Quinn.

“Everyone involved in the project has been committed to making it work from the start,” he said. “It leads to better monitoring and it really helps the fleet avoid bycatch of river herring so that vessels can be better equipped to harvest the available quota for Atlantic herring.”

The project was launched in 2010 and has been supported by the Herring RSA Program since 2014. It includes increased portside sampling of midwater trawl landings and the nearly real-time at-sea reporting of the presence of river herring and shad on fishing grounds.

SMAST and DMF disseminate the reported information fleet-wide. This allows fishermen to make on-the-water decisions that help them avoid river herring and shad, which are subject to catch caps in both the Atlantic herring and Atlantic mackerel fisheries that, if exceeded, lead to fishery closures.



Atlantic herring. – Meghan Lapp photo



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The New England Council established the RSA program in 2007 under Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan. Under the program, the Council sets aside **0% to 3%** of the annual catch limit from each herring management area to support identified research priorities.

Recent catch limits for Atlantic herring have been greatly reduced due to lower biomass and very poor recruitment into the fishery. These developments were revealed in a new [stock assessment](#).

In response, the New England Council asked NOAA Fisheries to implement an in-season adjustment to lower 2018 catch limits. The Council then asked the agency to take another action to set [2019 catch limits](#). The 3% research set-aside allocation was maintained, although the resulting allocations are small given the low catch limits. The Council is considering a 3% set-aside for fishing years 2020 and 2021 as well and discussed these specifications at its [April 2019 meeting](#). The Council is expected to take final action on a complete 2019-2021 package at its June meeting.

Haddock Next?

Depending on the level of research set-aside and the amount of RSA compensation fishing over the next three years, this current RSA project may be expanded to explore bycatch avoidance strategies for haddock. Herring midwater trawlers are subject to haddock catch caps in addition to river herring and shad caps.

Much More RSA Information is Available on the [NEFSC Website](#). Learn More About the River Herring Bycatch Avoidance Program [HERE](#).

2019-2021 Atlantic Herring Research Set-Aside Program Award

Project Title	Organization	Principal Investigators	Set-Aside Award*
Maintaining and Expanding Bycatch Avoidance Strategies in the Atlantic Herring Midwater Trawl Fishery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST); Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMAST - David Bethoney DMF - Bradley Schondelmeier and William S. Hoffman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area 1A: 131 metric tons (mt) Area 1B: 19 mt Area 2: 125.64 mt Area 3: 176.28 mt 2019 Research Cost: \$34,271

* Values are for the 2019 fishing year only. Future fishery specification actions will determine the 2020 and 2021 set-aside awards. RSA awards are issued in pounds, not dollars. Proceeds generated from the sale of herring RSA poundage are used to fund research and compensate participating vessels. No federal dollars are used, making this a true industry-funded program.

For more information about this herring RSA project or the program in general, contact: Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326, email ryan.silva@noaa.gov; or Cheryl Corbett at (508) 495-2070, email cheryl.corbett@noaa.gov.