



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **COUNCIL VOTES TO PROTECT HERRING INSHORE**

**At the urging of the CHOIR Coalition, the New England Fishery Management Council voted 12-2 to reduce the 2007 inshore herring catch**

Heeding the advice of fishermen and the CHOIR Coalition, the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) demonstrated a proactive approach to managing the region's important herring resource. The Council voted to reduce the amount of Atlantic herring that could be harvested from the inshore Gulf of Maine. Prior to yesterday's decision, the Council had indicated that it would permit 60,000 metric tons of the resource to be removed from the management Area known as 1A. Such a substantial projected harvest alarmed a variety of stakeholders throughout New England who called upon the Council to take a more precautionary approach when setting the inshore catch limit.

The CHOIR Coalition, the Coalition for the Atlantic Herring Fishery's Orderly, Informed and Responsible Long Term Development, along with other concerned fishermen and coastal residents, encouraged the Council to adopt a 45,000 metric ton harvest limit. After much debate, a compromise alternative of 50,000 metric tons was offered and subsequently adopted.

Fishermen from Maine and Massachusetts were pleased that the Council took a more conservation oriented approach to handling the herring situation inshore. For months, lobster, groundfish, and tuna fishermen have been concerned with the status of the Atlantic herring fishery.

"As a lobsterman, I rely on herring to be plentiful inshore in order to meet my bait needs," said Mark Leach of Chatham, Massachusetts. "I am glad that the Council is going to try to protect the herring inshore and prevent the stock from collapsing and forcing me to go elsewhere for bait."

Rich Burgess, a lifelong fisherman from Gloucester, was also pleased by the outcome of the vote. “I rely on healthy fish populations inshore to make my livelihood. In order to have healthy fish stocks inshore, we need to have an abundance of forage for the larger predators to eat. Herring is a main forage species for almost all of the fish I target. It’s very important that the Council protects herring stocks.”

Tuna fishermen in the Gulf of Maine have been consistent in their demand for the protection of inshore herring stocks. “Yesterday’s vote was a definite step in the right direction,” said Steve Weiner of the East Coast Tuna Association. “I am encouraged that the Council and the state of Maine want to make more responsible decisions and move towards a more sustainable harvest of herring.”

“When there isn’t enough herring inshore, the tuna go elsewhere,” added Dave Linney, a fisherman out of York Harbor, Maine. “The Council is doing the right thing by lowering the amount of herring that can be taken out of the inshore area. Management needs to air on the side of conservation to prevent the stock from collapsing. We need to leave enough herring in the water to reproduce and meet future forage and bait needs.”

CHOIR Coalition Chairman, Peter Baker, attended yesterday’s meeting and offered the following comment: “The Council should be commended for taking a precautionary approach in setting the inshore harvest level at 50,000 metric tons. An abundance of herring in Area 1A is crucial for the recovery of the valuable groundfish and tuna fisheries. Today’s vote also indicates the Council’s will to listen to the concerns put forth by a variety of fishermen and adopt measures that are best for the health of the entire inshore ecosystem.”

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