

MENHADEN (from page 1)

Rich Hittinger made the arrangements for the meeting, the purpose of which was to discuss the new Menhaden Draft Amendment 3 coming up for public hearing in October and for an ASMFC vote in November.

Amendment 3 deals with Ecological Reference Points, reallocation of quota among the states and changes in coastwide quota for next year. These are key issues associated with menhaden all along the east coast and will affect the amount of menhaden available for forage for striped bass, bluefish, whales, and birds in Rhode Island waters for many years to come.

It has only been since 2012 that there has been any restriction



Osprey with two menhaden in its talons

based in Texas, takes nearly 85% of the menhaden on the entire east coast and lands them in Virginia. As a result of these restrictions, we are finally seeing the return of menhaden in larger numbers to Rhode Island waters and to waters to the north.

But as always, Omega Protein is now pushing for a greater catch limit.

This is so important that we need to get the recreational fishing community to become involved in the public process. You need to send your comments in writing and plan to be at the hearing. (See information at the end of this article.)

THE AMENDMENT : THE FUTURE OF MENHADEN

As stated above, there are three important parts to Amendment 3 as follows:

Reference Points

This is the first opportunity to set fishing quotas using Ecological Reference Points (ERPs) for any fish managed in the US. Simply put, this is the first time that fisheries managers are recognizing that menhaden is valuable as forage for other fish, marine mammals, birds, etc.



Up until now fisheries managers have only been able to use a “**single species model**” to manage menhaden and other important fisheries. This allows “Maximum Sustainable Yield” (MSY) meaning the maximum amount of fish that can be taken by fishing and still allow the species to maintain a steady population.

The ASMFC has decided that ERPs are the way to manage menhaden fishing and they have started the scientific process of developing ERPs, but they will not be ready for several more years. While Amendment 3 allows for “Interim ERPs” to be implemented immediately and used for 2018, there does not seem to be strong support for this now among the state commissioners because the model isn’t completely ready.

“For the past 10 years we have been hearing that Ecosystem-Based Management is the the future,” said Steve Medeiros during the meeting. “If that will some day be how all fish are managed, why wouldn’t we want to take this first step with menhaden? Why wait?”

The RISAA Board has indicated that we strongly support “Interim” ERPs as a key step to moving fisheries management forward.

Quota Allocation

The current allocation of menhaden among the Atlantic states is far from reasonable in its distribution. Virginia, because they have the only reduction fishery on the coast, is allocated 85% of the total menhaden quota for the entire Atlantic coast.

New Jersey get 11% because of their large commercial bait fishery, and the remaining 4% is divided up among all of

the remaining states from Maine to Florida.

Rhode Island gets 0.02% which is a miniscule amount in comparison to other states.

“If just one commercial boat fished for menhaden for one day and landed his catch at Galilee, it could wipe out the entire quota of Rhode Island for the year,” said Rich Hittinger during the meeting.

(to page 9)



Every angler appreciates the thrill of striped bass or bluefish attacking a school of pogies (menhaden)!