

Atlantic Herring Research Set-Aside 2016-2018 Responsible Fishing Agreement

The 2016-2018 Atlantic herring Research Set-Asides (RSA) from Area 1A and Area 3 were awarded to SMAST/MADMF in order to provide support for portside sampling and the river herring bycatch avoidance program with the Atlantic herring midwater trawl vessels. In addition, the program will incorporate and evaluate the use of a pelagic species distribution model in order to provide a more beneficial, predictive product to industry partners.

This document serves as a guide for industry participants and fishery stakeholders, and to inform the interested public. The Responsible Fishing Agreement aims to maintain accountability and ensure responsible fishing practices are used while fishing under the RSA program and the associated NOAA Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP). SMAST will administer the RSA with the following criteria for the allocation of RSA quota.

Requirements for Allocation of RSA Quota:

Three percent of Area 1A and Area 3 annual catch limits (909 metric tons and 1227 metric tons, respectively) have been allocated to SMAST to distribute amongst eligible vessels. A transparent process, based on fishery participants' comments, will be used when distributing RSA quota.

In order for vessels to be eligible to receive RSA allocation, they must:

1. Be an active participant in good standing with the River Herring Bycatch Avoidance Program for at least 1 calendar year. Vessels in good standing:
 - a. Provide MADMF access to vessel's BTConnect fleet-management account
 - b. Maintain an 85% completion rate of all TOW REPORTS, including 100% of observed TOWS
 - c. Maintain a 95% completion rate of all TRIP REPORTS
 - d. Notify MADMF immediately if experiencing issues with BTVessel laptop
2. Maintain offload sites in Massachusetts that offer safe access to all catch being offloaded
3. Employ responsible fishing practices while harvesting RSA quota. Vessels that fish responsibly:
 - a. Are fully permitted and endorsed for herring fishing,
 - b. Have NOAA RSA Exempted Fishing Permit and state Letters of Authorization onboard,
 - c. Notify SMAST/MADMF of intent to harvest RSA quota prior to departing on a trip,
 - d. Operate within the bounds of all federal and state regulations,
 - e. Fulfill all reporting requirements on RSA trips, including but not limited to:
 - a. Observer call-in 48 hours in advance, notifying of intent to conduct RSA trip
 - b. All Trip Declarations, Catch Reports and Pre-Landing Notifications as outlined below:

Required Reporting During an RSA Trip (BOATRACS)	Regular Herring Reports	RSA Trip Herring Reports*	RH Bycatch Avoidance Program Reports
<u>Trip Declaration</u> (prior to leaving port)	Macro 17 Steps 3 and 4 = "Yes"	Macro 49 (Project Code 15086)	Notify MADMF of intended RSA Harvest
<u>Daily Catch Reports</u> (by 9am following day)	Macro 45	Macro 45 (Herr) and/or 47 (Mack)	BTVessel TOW REPORTS**
<u>Pre-Landing Notification</u> (upon leaving fishing grounds)	Macro 46	Macro 50 (Project Code 15086)	BTVessel TRIP REPORTS (sent ASAP)

*See RSA reporting guide for additional RSA macro codes (port, species, IVR codes, etc.)

**During periods of increased River Herring interactions, immediate TOW REPORTS may be required.

- f. Do not have unreasonable discards (high-grading, slippage for reasons other than safety/mechanical failure/dogfish, etc.),
- g. Avoid destructive interactions with other fisheries or user-groups (if fixed-gear is impacted record location and gear markings to help assist with gear recovery),
- h. Avoid towing in HIGH river herring bycatch cells identified by the bycatch avoidance program,
- i. Avoid fishing activities which jeopardize and reflect poorly on the RSA program and other participating vessels,
- j. Recognize dates whereby RSA quota must be harvested, compensated for, or returned to SMAST as outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement,
- k. Agree not to fish for RSA quota in the Gulf of Maine Cod Protection Closures established in Framework Adjustment 53 to the Northeast Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan (see below)

Violations of any of these requirements will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and could result in forfeiture of some or all RSA quota for current or future years, depending on the discretion of SMAST and MADMF.

The ability to harvest fish under the RSA is a privilege and the program will not be jeopardized by potentially irresponsible fishing practices. If used responsibly the RSA can be a source of increased funding for portside sampling and the River Herring Bycatch Avoidance Program and enable further cooperative research with the herring fishery.

Signed,



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Vessel Representative

