

New England shrimp won't be available at all this year

November 25 2018, by Patrick Whittle

A small amount of New England shrimp has been available to the public despite a fishing shutdown in recent years, but that will not be the case this winter.

The next few years of a shutdown of the New England shrimp industry will extend to a limited, research-based fishery that has helped provide a small amount of the shrimp to retailers in the past, interstate fishing regulators have said. The managers recently decided to extend a moratorium on Northern shrimp fishing until 2021.

In some previous years of the moratorium, New England's shrimp trawlers and trappers have been able to bring some of the popular winter seafood item to market via a program called the "research set aside." The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has ruled that the population of the shrimp, which is jeopardized by a warming ocean, is so low that even the research program isn't going to be implemented this time around.

Canadian fishermen harvest the same [species](#), but their product is difficult to find in the United States, rendering the shrimp essentially off the market for U.S. consumers.

The shutdown has been a pain for consumers and fishermen, said Joe Leask, a shrimper out of Portland who previously participated in the research fishery. Many fishermen harvest different species during different times of the year, and the loss of shrimp has hurt them

economically, he said.

"It's a shame to lose the infrastructure they've built up," said Leask. "There are a lot of [fishermen](#) who depend on each season."

The shrimp population has fallen as the Gulf of Maine has warmed, and the fishery was first shut down in 2013. Scientists have said the Gulf of Maine is warming faster than most of the world's oceans. The Atlantic States commission said in a statement earlier this month that "long-term trends in environmental conditions have not been favorable for" the shrimp.

Fishermen from Massachusetts, New Hampshire and especially Maine formerly harvested the shrimp. Maine declined to participate in the research fishery last winter.

The Atlantic States commission has said annual surveys will continue to be used to provide data about the status of the [shrimp](#) stock.

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