



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmfc.org

ASMFC Habitat Committee Fall 2016 Meeting Summary

October 20-21, 2016

Gulf of Maine Research Institute

350 Commercial Street

Portland, ME 04101

Committee Participants: Russ Babb (NJ), Michelle Bachman (NEFMC), Lou Chiarella (NMFS-NE), Jessica Coakley (MAFMC), Oliver Cox (ME), Ginny Fay (NMFS-SE), Penny Howell (CT), Jimmy Johnson (NC), Jake Kritzer (EDF, chair), Wilson Laney (USFWS-SE), Dawn McReynolds (NY), January Murray (GA, vice chair), Jay Odell (TNC), Cheri Patterson (NH), Mark Rousseau (MA), Denise Sanger (SC), Eric Schneider (RI), Kent Smith (FL), Marek Topolski (MD)

Staff: Lisa Havel, Toni Kerns

Other Participants: Riley Young Morse (GMRI), Lisa Kerr (GMRI), Graham Sherwood (GMRI)

Participants via Phone and Webinar: Ben Lorson (PA), Tony Watkinson (VA), Pace Wilber (NMFS-SE)

Presentation on the Local Habitat (presentation available)

Oliver Cox is the new representative from Maine on the Habitat Committee, and he presented on some of the current habitat projects supported by the Maine Department of Natural Resources. A lot of time and energy is dedicated towards fish passage, and they have a lot going on with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. There is a lot of endangered species work related to Atlantic salmon. The Penobscot River Restoration project is an example of many stakeholders coming together to restore the watershed. Habitat access has been greatly improved for all native sea-run species on the mainstem, while maintaining hydro energy production. Fishways, pools and weirs, and pond outlets on the tributaries are also improving conditions for diadromous species.

ACFHP Update

Lisa Havel gave the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) update. They received presentations from Graham Sherwood (GMRI) and Jeff Barnum (Conservation Law Foundation) on local research and restoration projects. Lisa gave an update on NFHP, Coastal FHP, and Whitewater to Bluewater, focusing on USFWS reporting, the upcoming NFHP Board Meeting and FHP Workshop, as well as the status of the NFHP Act and 2017 Multi-State Conservation Grant. She also gave an update on the status of the Science and Data Committee. The Committee's chair changed jobs in July, so Marek Topolski has stepped in as interim chair. ACFHP and ASMFC are currently working with the Merrimack River Watershed Council to complete the Southeast Mapping Project, funded by NOAA, and Lisa is working to increase participation on the committee as well. The Committee also agreed on the FY2017 project recommendations for USFWS-NFHAP funding. Two projects are dam removals to improve fish passage (ME and NH), and one is an oyster reef restoration project to stabilize shoreline and promote marsh accretion (NC). The second day of the meeting was dedicated to providing updates on the progress of the Conservation Strategic Plan and set the

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

objectives and strategies for the On the Ground Conservation section. The next Conservation Strategic Plan will cover 2017-2021.

Presentation on GMRI's SST Data Viewer (presentation available)

Riley Morse presented to the group on the GMRI's project to provide access to and visualization of satellite data for fisheries managers in the Northeast shelf large marine ecosystem. Their tool allows users to view spatially averaged sea surface temperature data to determine whether a location at a given time is hot or cold compared to the 30 year average. The tool produces outlook advisories, anomaly maps, and graphical capabilities. Next steps include: launch the preliminary tool with the stakeholder group, and get feedback; as well as incorporate more relevant datasets, such as climate projections, biological, fisheries landings, and physical data such as chlorophyll, salinity, precipitation, and bottom temperature.

2016 Work Plan Review

The HC walked through the ASMFC Action Plan for 2016 to review the status of each task. Some highlights are below.

Letter to BOEM on Seismic Testing

The Committee wrote and approved a draft letter to BOEM regarding seismic testing, based on letters from the Councils. This letter will be presented to the Policy Board at the Annual Meeting, and if approved will be sent to BOEM.

Climate Change Document

The Committee identified ongoing practices in each state's coastal regulatory planning that addresses climate change impacts. These practices were compiled into a report and will be presented to the Policy Board at the Annual Meeting. Next steps will be to identify gaps and make recommendations.

Habitat Hotline

The Habitat Hotline theme is the water column as fish habitat. Articles are due to Lisa by early November.

Sciaenid Habitat Source Document

After hiring Dr. Alison Deary to complete the Sciaenid Habitat Source Document, the Habitat Committee is able to present a finalized draft to the Policy Board at the Annual Meeting for approval. The authorship and suggested citation will be updated and added to the document.

Habitat Management Series

Marek thinks that the aquaculture document will be ready by the end of 2016, and can be presented to the Policy Board at the winter meeting. This document will heavily reference the SAFMC's aquaculture document and will be relevant to the entire east coast.

Discussion Regarding Habitat in Stock Assessment Models

Dr. Katie Drew provided a webinar to seed the discussion on the difficulty and ability to incorporate habitat into stock assessment models. Dr. Drew provided background information on stock assessments and how they work. She also covered incorporating habitat data into assessments:

what stock assessment scientists do now and what they may be able to do in the future. A typical stock assessment consists of a population survey followed by the fishery and then another survey to estimate total population size. Mortality and birth rates are also considered, and long term datasets are necessary to quantify good estimates of recruitment, abundance, and fishing mortality. Habitat affects recruitment, survival, movement/migration, and more. Environmental factors like temperature, salinity, etc. are used to standardize indices in the model now, and in the future the hope is that we can predict future recruitment and productivity of the stock under different habitat conditions. In the future we might also better predict survival rates based on habitat conditions, and quantify benefits of habitat restoration to populations. The preference for modeling is not necessarily that simpler is better, but the minimal amount of complexity is preferred. American lobster is a good example of how habitat is incorporated into modeling efforts. Alternative models such as those for bluefin tuna are allowing for flexibility to incorporate habitat where it might be more difficult to include in a standard model. This is especially true for species we don't understand well (e.g. black sea bass). The USFWS historically produced Habitat Suitability Index models that combine multiple metrics into a single index of habitat suitability. There may be some benefit to that approach here as well.

2017 Work Plan Discussion

The Habitat Committee set the 2017 Work Plan. Some highlights are below.

Species Habitat Factsheets

When NOAA's EFH habitats are finalized (around May or June), Wilson will review the sturgeon factsheets and add any necessary updates. Northern shrimp and menhaden might also need updating.

Habitat Hotline

The Committee agreed on the 2017 topic for the Hotline – submerged aquatic vegetation. Ideas for articles were discussed and will be finalized in January/February. Michelle Bachman will take the lead.

Artificial Reef Committee

We added a task related to co-sponsoring the Artificial Reef Symposium at AFS 2017 in Tampa, as Lisa will serve on the steering committee.

Habitat Management Series

The Habitat Committee will review and update the 1997 SAV Policy for ISFMP review and acceptance. 2017 is the 20 year anniversary of the original document. A subcommittee was formed to move this forward.

Ecosystem Health

The Habitat Committee added a task to communicate with the ASC and other relevant entities to better link habitat and stock productivity for managed species.

Climate Change Document

Taking the document compiled in 2016 regarding coastal regulatory planning, the Committee will identify gaps among states and make recommendations to increase resiliency to climate change.

Other Business

There was also a discussion on requesting a ‘heads up’ from federal partners on projects of interest in case we want to comment. A subcommittee was created to move this forward.

New members: Oliver Cox (ME), Denise Sanger (SC), and Mike Malpezzi (MD – Artificial Reefs Committee)

Action Items (from full notes)

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Action Item: Lisa will share the list of current SDC members with the Habitat Committee so they can identify participants that might round out the group.

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Action Item: Lisa will work with Toni and rearrange and add authors to the Sciaenid Habitat Source Document. Jay will be first author and all others will be alphabetical. Lisa will also add a preferred citation.

Action item: Lisa will send a reminder in the spring to make sure everyone’s fact sheets are up to date.

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Action Item: Lisa will work with Toni to try and secure Tom O’Connell and Phil Colaruso as Habitat Committee representatives.

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Action Item: Lisa will work with Marek, Kent, Eric, Russ, and Dawn to move the Aquaculture document forward. She will try to find the notes from Port Jefferson to refresh everyone’s memory on the original scope.

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Action Item: Lisa will work with Tina to see if she can present to us at the spring or fall meeting next year on our social media presence and outreach, and how to better reach out to our audience.

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Action Item: Wilson will update the Atlantic sturgeon habitat factsheet once NMFS puts out a Final Rule in May/June. This will include a link to NOAA.

Action Item: Cheri will update the Northern shrimp habitat factsheet.

Action Item: Ben will update (the first section of) the menhaden habitat fact sheet.

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Action item: Lisa will circulate the 2017 HH list to HC for review, and will put together a conference call or January or February to move this issue forward.

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Action Item: Lisa will set up a conference call in November or December with Wilson, Mark, Jay, Eric, January, Dawn, Jimmy, and Kent to decide on next steps for the SAV Policy Document Update. First we should decide whether we want to make changes to the Policy Implications and present it

to the Policy Board in February. Do the recommendations make sense? What do we want to change?

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Action Item: Jessica will send Lisa examples of letters that the MAFMC has written.

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Action item: Lisa will work with Lou, Jessica, Michelle, and Pace to move forward with identifying themes on which ASMFC should be commenting. She will also compile all policies and recommendations from the habitat management series documents in one document.

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Action item: The Habitat Committee should connect with their TC counterpart to look over the American Shad Habitat Plans. If they do not know who to contact, please ask Lisa.

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Action Item: Lisa will work with Oliver, Cheri, Jay, and Kate on updating the Atlantic menhaden plan.

Action item: We will discuss estuarine mitigation banks at the spring meeting. We can invite someone from the Army Corps of Engineers to discuss it with us. Mark, Kent, and Pace will move this topic forward for the meeting.

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Action Item: Lisa will write a letter of appreciation to GMRI for allowing us to use their facility.