



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

October 10, 2017

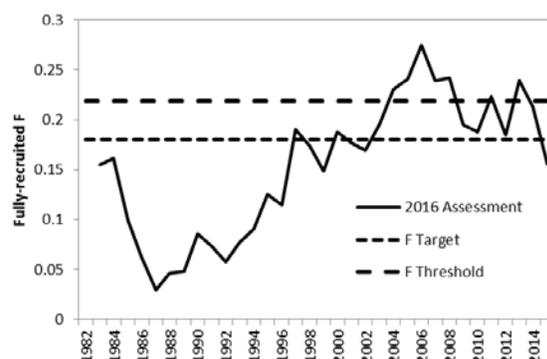
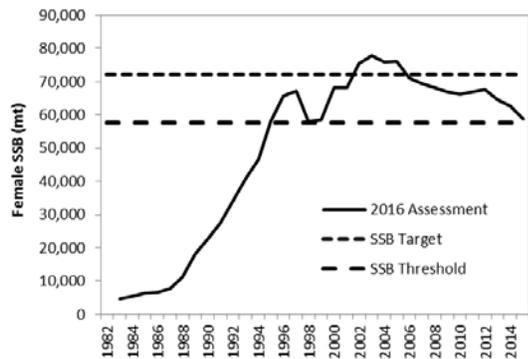
To: Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

From: Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee

RE: Request for Board guidance regarding Atlantic striped bass FMP goals and objectives

Term of Reference #5 for the Atlantic striped bass benchmark stock assessment is “Update or redefine biological reference points (BRPs; point estimates or proxies for B_{MSY} , SSB_{MSY} , F_{MSY} , MSY). Define stock status based on BRPs by stock component where possible.” As the Technical Committee (TC) and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) continue their work on the assessment, they request guidance from the Board on the management goals and objectives for this species to facilitate development of biological reference points (BRPs) that best meet those objectives.

The current spawning stock biomass (SSB) threshold for Atlantic striped bass is the estimate of SSB in 1995, and the current SSB target is 125% of that value. The stock is declared overfished when SSB drops below the threshold. The current fishing mortality (F) target and threshold are the F rates that will maintain the population at the SSB target and threshold, respectively, over the long term. Overfishing occurs when F exceeds the F threshold.



The current management plan objectives for Atlantic striped bass were laid out in Amendment 6 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 2003 and have not been revisited since then. Some Board members have voiced concerns that the current reference points are too conservative for various biological, ecological or socioeconomic reasons, and are restricting fishing unnecessarily. This raises questions about what the objectives and acceptable risk levels of the Atlantic striped bass FMP are and whether they have changed since Amendment 6 was

implemented. There is a trade-off between preserving SSB and allowing fishing, and determining the best balance between these two parameters is a management-level decision.

Therefore, the TC and SAS requests that the Board provide guidance on the preferred balance between SSB and F, the relative importance of maximizing yield vs. maximizing catch rates or the availability of trophy-size fish, and the acceptable level of risk when it comes to preventing stock collapse. If the Board is able to provide guidance to the SAS by the May Board Meeting, prior to the Assessment Workshop in July 2018, the SAS will be better able to calculate BRPs that reflect the objectives of the FMP. These reference points would be available for management as soon as the assessment and peer review process is complete.

The TC and SAS recognize that this is not a simple request. The Board has the flexibility to develop the necessary guidance however it sees fit, however the TC and SAS recommend the Board consider one or both of the following approaches:

1. A process similar to the Ecosystem Management Objectives Workshop that was convened to develop management objectives for Atlantic menhaden, either through a formal workshop or through meetings of a subcommittee of the Board.
2. A survey for Board members developed by the TC and SAS with specific questions regarding the direction of management and the preferred balance between SSB and F. The Board would review the results of the survey at its February meeting and develop guidance based on those results and Board discussion.

Alternatively, the TC could conduct a full management strategy evaluation (MSE) of potential reference points which would allow the Board to quantitatively evaluate the trade-offs and risk levels associated with different reference points. However, a MSE could not be completed in 2018 and would occur after the assessment is complete and peer reviewed (or the peer review would have to be delayed).

The TC and SAS will provide technical background, as necessary, to facilitate Board discussion throughout this process.

Atlantic Striped Bass

Activity level: High

Committee Overlap Score: Medium (TC/SAS/TSC overlaps with BERP, Atlantic menhaden, American eel, horseshoe crab, shad/river herring)

Committee Task List

- TC – June 15th: Annual compliance reports due
- TC/SASC/TSC – All Year: benchmark stock assessment
 - Jan/Feb 2018: Modeling Workshop I
 - May 2018: Updated data submission for Assessment through 2017
 - July 2018: Modeling Workshop II
 - Sept. 2018: Final SASC call/webinar to approve stock status determination
 - 1st week of Oct. 2018: All Draft Report components due to staff
 - 2nd week of Nov. 2018: Assessment Report due to external peer-review panel
 - 1st week of Dec 2018: Peer review

TC Members: Nicole Lengyel (RI, TC Chair), Kevin Sullivan (NH, Vice Chair), Alex Aspinwall (VA), Alexei Sharov (MD), Carol Hoffman (NY), Charlton Godwin (NC), Edward Hale (DE), Ellen Cosby (PRFC), Gail Wippelhauser (ME), Gary Nelson (MA), Heather Corbett (NJ), Jeremy McCargo (NC), Kurt Gottschall (CT), Luke Lyon (DC), Michael Kaufmann (PA), Peter Schuhmann (UNCW), Winnie Ryan, Gary Shepherd (NMFS), Steve Minkinen (USFWS), Wilson Laney (USFWS), Katie Drew (ASMFC), Max Appelman (ASMFC)

SAS Members: Edward Hale (DE, Chair), Gary Nelson (MA, Vice Chair), Alexei Sharov (MD), Hank Liao (ODU), Justin Davis (CT), Michael Celestino (NJ), John Sweka (USFWS), Gary Shepherd (NMFS), Katie Drew (ASMFC), Max Appelman (ASMFC)

Tagging Subcommittee (TSC) Members: Stuart Welsh (WVU, Chair), Heather Corbett (NJ, Vice Chair), Angela Giuliano (MD), Beth Versak (MD), Chris Bonzak (VIMS), Edward Hale (DE), Gary Nelson (MA), Ian Park (DE), Jessica Best (NY), Carol Hoffman (NY), Gary Shepherd (NMFS), Josh Newhard (USFWS), Wilson Laney (USFWS), Katie Drew (ASMFC), Max Appelman (ASMFC)