



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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October 2013

To: Atlantic Herring Section
From: Atlantic Herring Technical Committee
RE: Follow-up to the Section's Consideration of Georges Bank/ Nantucket Shoals Offshore Spawning Study

Introduction

In October 2012, the Technical Committee (TC) presented a report to the Atlantic Herring Section on the potential issues and considerations in the Georges Bank/ Nantucket Shoals offshore spawning area. The report highlighted three issues: 1) goals, objectives, and potential fishing effort relocation; 2) implementation of a 3-year study to define effective offshore management measures; and 3) identification of potential long-term funding for inshore and offshore sampling programs.

In response, the Section asked the TC to expand on the report with 1) specific budget needs for resources, such as personnel and transport; 2) alternative sampling measures to address the challenge of transporting fresh offshore samples; and 3) possible management options for offshore spawning areas.

The TC discussed these three issues via conference call on July 22. The TC had concerns that spawning in Georges Bank/ Nantucket Shoals can be very different from inshore events and may require a distinct set of management measures from the current state-water management program. Currently, states' spawning research is used to inform management of inshore spawning areas. In order to advise management measures in federal waters, it is necessary to study offshore spawning events by sampling and analyzing sea herring during the 3-month reproductive season. A significant challenge to offshore sampling is that the analysis, gonadosomatic indexing (GSI), requires fresh samples that have never been frozen; however, it can take days to transport the fish from federal waters to laboratories for analysis. Existing sampling methods used for inshore spawning analysis would not apply to offshore sampling. Therefore, states will require a new sampling protocol for collecting fresh specimens from the Georges Bank/ Nantucket Shoals area for GSI.

#1 State Budgets for Spawning Studies

In its October 2012 report, the TC advised the Atlantic Herring Section that a dedicated funding source be identified for the existing inshore sampling and a 3-year study to determine if a distinct offshore spawning structure exists. The TC has compiled the following state budget estimates for the collection and analysis of spawning samples. Table 1 lists each state's estimated costs for personnel to gather, process, and analyze samples; design an offshore sampling protocol; supplies; transport of fresh samples; and overhead.



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Estimated State Budgets

Instructions for TC members: In the table below, please estimate the costs for resources your state requires for its current inshore sampling, as well as any additional costs for sampling in the offshore spawning areas for one spawning season. Please consider the following expenses:

- Personnel (for gathering, process, and analyzing samples)
- Design of a new protocol for offshore sampling
- Supplies
- Transport
- Overhead

Table 1. Estimated state budgets needs to fund inshore and offshore spawning studies.

State	Number of New Staff	Current Costs for Inshore Sampling	Additional Costs for Offshore Sampling	TOTAL
ME	1 FTE 1 part-time (seasonal)	\$40,000-50,000	\$50,000-65,000	\$90,000-115,000
NH*		\$0	\$0	\$0
MA		\$4,452	\$5,102	\$9,554
			TOTAL	\$90,000 - \$124,554

* New Hampshire does not conduct sampling and analysis, but Maine and Massachusetts' sampling programs includes fish from NH waters, and those costs are included in the budgets.

#2 and #3 - Alternative sampling measures and possible management options for offshore spawning areas

At this time, the TC cannot address the Section's request for alternative sampling measures and offshore spawning management options because funding is needed to design a new offshore sampling protocol, and a study of offshore spawning events must be conducted to inform management measures.

Additional Comments Regarding the Georges Bank/ Nantucket Shoals Spawning Study

- TC members would like managers to clearly state their goals and objectives for the study and implementation of management measures.
- A TC member questioned the use of state funding for offshore spawning research in federal waters. Priority should be placed on portside sampling.
- The Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act funding is typically used by states to fund ongoing programs, and should not be considered as additional funding for a new study on Georges Bank/ Nantucket Shoals spawning.