



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Atlantic Herring Technical Committee Meeting Summary

*Monday, July 27, 2015
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Conference call*

Technical Committee Members: Renee Zobel (Chair), Matt Cieri, Madeleine Hall-Arber, Micah Dean, John Lake, Lori Steele

Staff: Ashton Harp, Toni Kerns

Summary:

The Atlantic Herring Technical Committee (TC) met via conference call to discuss the content of an upcoming Section presentation at the ASMFC Summer Meeting and to review the Trimester 2 catch to date.

The presentation discussion focused on the proposed management options for spawning area efficacy, which is an extension of the TC analysis that was undertaken at the request of the Section for Draft Amendment 3. One issue with four sub-components was discussed, which included: 1) spawning area closure monitoring system, 2) spawning area boundaries, 3) default closure dates, 4) spawning closure period.

The TC reviewed the following options that were presented to the Section in May:

- **Issue 1.1: Spawning area closure monitoring system**
 - *Option A: Status quo:* Maintain the current spawning closure protocol of GSI-based triggers and fixed default closure dates.
 - *Option B:* GSI-based spawning closure forecast system
- **Issue 1.2: Spawning area boundaries**
 - *Option A: Status quo:* Maintain current boundaries for the 3 spawning areas
 - *Option B:* Update spawning areas: Combine WM and MA-NH spawning areas
- **Issue 1.3: Default closure dates**
 - *Option A: Status quo*
 - *Option B-D:* Median trigger dates
- **Issue 1.4: Spawning area closure period**
 - *Option A: Status quo:* Default closure of four weeks, with the possibility of a two week extension
 - *Option B:* Extend closure period to six weeks

The TC members felt the Section should be reminded that the options (under each sub-issue) should be viewed independently of the other sub-issues. For example, if the Section agrees upon the status quo for Issue 1.1 it does not mean status quo would need to be chosen for all other sub-issues.

The breadth of data in the TC analysis was identified as a strong point that should be highlighted in the presentation. When the closure rules were first established in the early 1990s, limited data were available to derive the critical parameters of the GSI-based spawning closure system (i.e., size categories; GSI triggers; default dates; closure duration). The TC was able to utilize the additional decade's worth of GSI sampling data when evaluating the parameters of the spawning closure. The outcome of the in-depth analysis is reflected in the alternative options under Issues 1.1-1.4.

The TC noted that the Section is trying to answer a two-fold question: is the goal to protect spawning fish or the act of spawning itself? Or more specifically, is the goal of the Section to protect spawning fish by prohibiting landing of all Atlantic herring or to prevent fishing operations that might disrupt spawning activities in a large geographic area? Ultimately the group felt it is a question for the Section to answer, but the TC would like to supply supplemental material to aid in the decision-making process and feel as though they have (i.e. spawning area efficacy options were developed).

To better answer the two-fold question the group wanted to know why the Section made the initial move to a zero tolerance spawning provision. It was noted that the language was implemented in Amendment 2 (March 2006). **ACTION: Renee Zobel with the help of Matt Cieri, Micah Dean and Ashton Harp will speak with managers and review past documents for the zero tolerance spawning provision rationale by the end of the week.** In general the group felt a timeline of management actions + rationale would be a useful document to develop in the initial stages of a new amendment process.

Ultimately, the TC believes the Section needs to determine their level of risk and identify what they are trying to guard against when they are implementing management measures to either protect spawning fish or the act of spawning itself.

The second agenda item was a review of Atlantic herring catch in Trimester 2 (June 1 – September 30). The most recent catch report from NMFS was released on July 24, Renee highlighted that cumulative catch is 6,062 MT (which represents 20% of the quota). This is on par with Atlantic herring projections for Trimester 2. **ACTION: Renee will share an updated analysis of projected catch with catch to date.**