



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Northern Shrimp Technical Committee Meeting Summary

Conference Call and Webinar
April 6, 2016

Technical Committee Members: Kelly Whitmore (Chair, MA), Maggie Hunter (ME), Robert Eckert (NH), Anne Richards (NMFS)

ASMFC Staff: Max Appelman, Katie Drew

Public: Yong Chen (UME)

The next benchmark assessment for northern shrimp is currently on the SAW/SARC schedule for 2017 (2nd half). The Assessment and Science Committee (ASC) is meeting April 11-12 in part to review and approve the assessment schedule for 2017. Accordingly, the Northern Shrimp Technical Committee (TC) met via conference call to discuss the appropriateness of the current benchmark assessment timeline and provide a recommendation to the ASC prior to their review. The primary concerns discussed included readiness of the assessment model(s), and potential impacts to the terminal years of the assessment due to ongoing gear changes on the summer survey vessel, *R/V Gloria Michelle*, and the fishery moratorium in 2014-2016.

In response to the research recommendations identified by the SARC during the last assessment review (2014), Yong Chen, a professor at University of Maine, his postdoc research associate, Jie Cao, and Anne Richards, further developed a new length-structured assessment model for use in the next benchmark assessment. Chen briefed the TC on the status of the model, and on the submission of several peer-reviewed manuscripts evaluating the performance and utility of the model. The model incorporates changes in length at sex-change and environmental effects on recruitment, among other parameters. Also, Yong, Jie, Anne and James Thorson (SWFSC) developed a geostatistical modeling approach to estimate a model-based abundance index. Yong and his colleagues simultaneously evaluated the utility of both models using northern shrimp data and found that the size-structured model greatly improved estimates of fishing mortality, spawning biomass, and recruitment, and the model-based abundance index lead to less retrospective bias compared to the design-based index. Additionally, it was discussed that the model-based index may have the ability to smooth out potential biases introduced by gear changes made on the *Gloria Michelle*. The completed development of these assessment modeling improvements is critical to the 2017 benchmark assessment, and appears to be on schedule. Therefore, **the TC's recommendation to the ASC is to maintain the current timeline for a northern shrimp benchmark assessment in 2017.**

Next, the TC briefly reviewed the outcomes of the industry meetings held by Maine DMR in late March, and the resulting suggestion that development of Amendment 3 will resume in the near future. Discussion at the meetings were centered on the struggles that the northern shrimp industry has endured during the moratorium. However, an overarching theme was that Maine shrimpers and managers seek to approve and implement Amendment 3 prior to the 2016 annual specifications meeting, typically held in November. As a result, the Section is expected to meet in May to discuss next steps with the amendment.

Lastly, the TC discussed the Cooperative Winter Sampling Report timeline. Sampling is scheduled to end this month. The TC will meet in May via conference call and webinar to review preliminary results and develop the report.