

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Bluefish Management Board

February 8, 2012
8:30 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.
Alexandria, VA

Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary.

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*J. Travelstead*) 8:30 a.m.
2. Board Consent 8:30 a.m.
 - Approval of Agenda
 - Approval of Proceedings from February 2010
3. Public Comment 8:35 a.m.
4. Draft Addendum I for Final Approval **Final Action** 8:40 a.m.
 - Review Options (*M. Waine*)
 - Public Comment Summary (*M. Waine*)
 - Consider final approval of Addendum I
5. Elect Vice-Chair **Action** 9:10 a.m.
6. Other Business/Adjourn 9:15 a.m.

The meeting will be held at the Crown Plaza, 901 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; 703-683-6000

MEETING OVERVIEW

Bluefish Management Board Meeting
Wednesday, February 8, 2012
8:30 – 9:15 a.m.
Alexandria, VA

Chair: Jack Travelstead (VA)	Technical Committee Chair: Rich Wong (DE)	Law Enforcement Committee Representative: Brannock/Meyer
Vice Chair: AC Carpenter	Advisory Panel Chair: Vacant	Previous Board Meeting: February 4, 2010
Voting Members: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NMFS, USFWS (17 votes)		

2. Board Consent

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Proceedings from February 4, 2010

3. Public Comment – At the beginning of the meeting public comment will be taken on items not on the agenda. Individuals that wish to speak at this time must sign-in at the beginning of the meeting. For agenda items that have already gone out for public hearing and/or have had a public comment period that has closed, the Board Chair may determine that additional public comment will not provide additional information. In this circumstance the Chair will not allow additional public comment on an issue. For agenda items that the public has not had a chance to provide input, the Board Chair may allow limited opportunity for comment. The Board Chair has the discretion to limit the number of speakers and/or the length of each comment.

4. Draft Addendum I for Final Approval (8:40 – 9:10 a.m.) Final Action
Background <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft Addendum I proposes a coastwide sampling program to improve the quantity and quality of ageing information used in future bluefish stock assessments (Briefing CD). It was approved for public comment at the August Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting.• No public comments were received on Draft Addendum I.
Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of options by M. Waine.
Board actions for consideration at this meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select management options and implementation dates.• Approve final document

5. Elect Vice-Chair (9:10 a.m.) Action
Board actions for consideration at this meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nominations will be taken for Vice-Chair of the Bluefish Management Board.

6. Other Business/Adjourn

DRAFT

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**DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
BLUEFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel Old Town
Alexandria, Virginia
February 4, 2010**

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the Bluefish Management Board.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

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1. **Approval of agenda by consent** (Page 1).
2. **Approval of proceedings of August 5, 2009 by consent** (Page 1).
3. **Move to elect Jack Travelstead as Bluefish Board Chairman and A.C. Carpenter as Vice-Chair** (Page 8). Motion by Bill Adler; second by Tom Fote. Motion carries (Page 8).
4. **Adjourn by consent** (Page 9).

ATTENDANCE**Board Members**

Terry Stockwell, ME proxy for G. Lapointe (AA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Doug Grout, NH (AA)	Tom O'Connell, MD DNR (AA)
Paul Diodati, MA (AA)	Bill Goldsborough, MD (GA)
William Adler, MA (GA)	Russell Dize, MD, proxy for Sen. Colburn (LA)
Ben Martens, MA, proxy for Rep. Peake (LA)	Kyle Schick, VA, proxy for C. Davenport (GA)
Bob Ballou, RI (AA)	Jack Travelstead, VA, proxy for S. Bowman (AA)
Lance Stewart, CT (GA)	Louis Daniel, NC (AA)
Rep. Craig Miner, CT (LA)	Bill Cole, NC (GA)
James Gilmore, NY (AA)	Robert Boyles, SC (LA)
Brian Culhane, NY, proxy for Sen. Johnson (LA)	Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Tom Fote, NJ (GA)	John Duren, GA (GA)
Tom McCloy, NJ, proxy for David Chanda (AA)	Pat Geer, GA, proxy for Rep. Lane (LA)
Gil Ewing, NJ, proxy for Asm. Albano (LA)	Jessica McCawley, FL (AA)
Craig Shirey, DE, proxy for Patrick Emory (AA)	Bob Ross, NMFS
Bernie Pankowski, DE, proxy for Sen. Venables (LA)	

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Ex-Officio Members**Staff**

Vince O'Shea
Robert Beal

Kate Taylor
Nichola Meserve

Guests

A.C. Carpenter, PRFC
Paul Caruso, MA DMF

David Perkins, USFWS

The Bluefish Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Presidential Ballroom of the Crowne Plaza Hotel Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia, February 4, 2010, and was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Patrick Augustine.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIRMAN PATRICK AUGUSTINE: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome you all to the ASMFC Bluefish Management Board Meeting. We have got some action items to take care of. We're going to do it as quickly as we can.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

If you look at your agenda, are there any changes, additions or corrections? Seeing none, the agenda is approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

I hope you've taken a chance to look at the proceedings of the August 5, 2009, meeting, which seems like a long time ago. Is there any objection to approving those proceedings? Seeing none, they're approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Is there any public comment or anyone who is brave enough to stand up here and attack our agenda or offer up some comments that will bring some controversial issue to the board? Seeing none, we will pass on that.

REPORT OF PROPOSED COAST-WIDE MONITORING PROGRAM

Item 4, Proposed Coast-wide Monitoring Program; this, as you all know if you took time to review your CD, is very, very important. Paul Caruso and the group have taken an awful lot of time to develop this proposal and recommendations. Be sure you know what you're voting on with this, but also be sure you understand what the technical committee is recommending we have to do or must do to move on with this process. Without any further ado, Paul, would you please lead us through this.

MR. PAUL CARUSO: As most of you are aware, this is an item that has been floating

around for a couple of years; really since the last benchmark assessment. However, you folks don't meet that often, and we've gone through a couple of iterations of a similar presentation to you folks. I think two or three years ago we had similar recommendation.

At that time the board kind of took a pass on it. The hope was that some states would initiate voluntary sampling and we could move on in the process of gathering information for this animal, but that hasn't happened so we're kind of bringing it up before you again. Basically the discussion evolves around the age sampling of bluefish.

As you are aware, bluefish is a pretty important species to most of us. It is second in harvest in the recreational fishery and third in catch. Even in the commercial fishery, if you look at the coast-wide distributed finfish, it is fourth in the level of landings. It is a pretty important key species on our coast. I like to call it the forgotten stepchild of the recreational fishery.

The one with the stripes wearing the pajamas gets all the attention. This one, we're all happy it's there until it bites off our lures and then we wish it would go away. The status of the stock is in great shape according to the last assessment and the last couple of updates. The stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. As I said, the last peer-reviewed stock assessment was in 2005. The assessment finding was that the assessment was good enough to use for management at that time; however, there were some issues that needed to be addressed.

The statement of the problem; basically the assessment suffers from a lack of age data. The age sampling is pretty skinny, as I like to call it. The people who reviewed the assessment as well as the people putting the assessment together, myself included, knew that we were stretching the age data that we had kind of to the maximum to get through the assessment process.

The findings basically are that there is unquantifiable scientific uncertainty associated with the assessment due to the scarcity of the age-length data in the assessment model. This is a copy of our typical age-length key. This is just the bottom half where the problems lie, and this is actually one of the better keys.

We use two keys in the assessment annually. There is a spring and a fall key. I believe this is

a fall key from '06, which is one of the better ones. It has a sample size of 184 fish, which isn't too, too bad. However, as you can see from the graphic, most of the age sampling is clustered in the zeros, ones and twos. The zeros are off the chart here.

When you get to age three and four, we're down to one fish, so you can imagine what this might do to the model. We basically have to interpolate things between the lines here. If you look across at the 26-inch mark, there is one fish at 26 inches in age three, which means if we have a couple of thousand fish in that bin, they're all age three by default.

If we have a gap in the key like between 27 and 28 inches are missing; so essentially if we have fish in that midsize range, we have to flip a coin and decide what age class they're going into. It is not a good thing for an age-based model to run on. It introduces a lot of uncertainty and a lot of variance in the model outputs.

The basic issues are that the sample size is small and it may not be representative of the coast-wide stock, and we will get into that in the next slide. The sampling of the stock is really just an ad hoc thing. There is no coordination. Some states do it out of their own goodness of their heart; other states don't do it. Some of it is being read; others being archived.

The current age information basically that we use in the assessment is Virginia. They're collecting about a hundred to 200 fish annually. Old Dominion and Cynthia Jones' group is aging them I believe for nothing. This is what has been driving the last assessment. We had ten years of data where just a very small sample size is one state and aged out of the goodness of someone's heart.

There has been a little bit of issue with the aging techniques. They haven't been reviewed. I think the technical committee and the assessment people have been pretty comfortable with the otolith aging that has been coming out of ODU. There is some work done at NMFS in the past that showed that scale samples are usable up to a certain age.

Generally about age five to seven you can read scales pretty well, but nobody is even aging scales at the moment. Up on the board are the recent key sizes. You can see '05 to '08 the

sample sizes are very small. They had 121 samples in '05 in the spring. In '08 we had 108 in the fall. Those are just really not acceptable levels of sample sizes to give us a key that we can rely on.

Some of the potential solutions would be to start a voluntary or mandatory state-by-state sampling program. The voluntary doesn't seem to be working too well. We would like to get a coast-wide base sample – and this is a minimum – of about 560 animals a year and 280 per half year. We can at least get a half decent key with that if the distribution is pretty good.

We would like to get a sample that's based on some type of allocation scheme. One of the ones we have been promoting would be based on a state's harvest of catch for a year. We would like to set up a procedure for annually reviewing the sample inventory so that we know going forward here that if we have data gaps in one particular year, there is the potential to make up that gap in the following year by directing the sampling a little bit more in that direction.

The longer-term needs obviously involve things like money, an important thing. We only have this one aging entity, ODU, that is doing the otolith aging. The Center is not currently aging any of their collections. To move forward here, we would like to explore finding a couple of other entities out there that could do the aging and, of course, procuring some kind of short- and long-term funding for that work.

I don't doubt whatsoever that the next stock assessment that is scheduled, the benchmark assessment, that we will essentially have nothing if we don't plan to get these samples at least collected and then eventually aged. It is important that we at least get the collections going as soon as possible because even if we get the money, if we have no collections, it is not going to do us any good.

We might want to talk about a workshop eventually to get some consensus on the aging, but I think at least for now we're comfortable with what is being done. This is a slide of what states are collecting what. Briefly, Massachusetts is collecting only about 50 a year. About half of that sample comes from the recreational catch and about half from the commercial. This is kind of an ad hoc sampling program we have been doing.

Connecticut has a collection of scales, but I believe it's a historical collection from their trawl surveys. They don't currently, to my knowledge, sample the recreational or commercial catch. Maryland is sampling about a hundred per year; all from the commercial fishery, and it's otoliths from the large fish and scales from the smaller fish.

Virginia collects about a hundred per year of otoliths, which is a hundred percent commercial sample. North Carolina right now has the largest collection, about 400 per year. About 90 percent of that is from the commercial fishery. They're currently not aging their collection. The technical committee thought about a couple of ways to distribute the sample size over states.

On the board right now is an example of a weighting scheme based on a ten-year average of harvest from both fisheries. As you can see just briefly rolling down through the states that some states would basically collect nothing or very small sample size while other states would collect a fairly large sample size. It doesn't seem to make much sense to have a state collect two or three fish a year.

We looked at another sampling scheme that would realign the sampling to the states that capture more than 5 percent of the harvest in the fisheries combined. That would relieve the burden from Maine in collecting two fish and New Hampshire from collecting three fish – it doesn't seem to make much sense – and just reallocate that to the states that have active fisheries.

What you have on the board is pretty representative of what the minimum sample size should look like from those states that would be left over. If you look at the change that would have to happen here, it is pretty simple. Massachusetts would probably switch to collecting otoliths. We would have to sample another couple dozen fish; not a big deal.

Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey would have to start sampling, as well as east Florida. Several of the states that are now collecting, basically their burden would go away if they so choose. The other solutions that need to be dealt with again is this annual inventory process. Our suggestion would be to make it part of the annual compliance report process, and the PRT and staff could review that inventory

annually, identify the gaps in sampling and ask states to put some effort into those holes, so to speak.

The aging entities and annual costs, obviously that is the biggest nut to crack. The technical committee and staff could potentially work together on either finding grant funding for the short term and/or long term or finding other ways to fund the aging work that will need to be done. Locating that potential funding I think would be part of the work and the other part would be to try to work up some funding requests for proposals, so to speak, and getting that out there.

Like I said, probably the least important thing right now would be to kind of come to a little bit better consensus on the structures and the methods of aging, but I think if we look at the past we have a pretty good comfort with the scales and the otoliths even in a mixed collection as long as we can work it all out in some kind of coordinated fashion. That is basically it. I would be glad to answer any questions that anyone has.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Thank you for that report, Paul. Mr. Adler.

MR. WILLIAM A. ADLER: Paul, what type of money are you looking for that you would need via a grant or whatever?

MR. CARUSO: Well, I don't really know off the top of my head, Bill, and I think until we start to explore throughout the funding process, I don't really know if we would get a good handle. ODU would probably bid on – you know, we'd tell them approximately 800 samples, 600 samples a year, and they would give us a price for it. Off the top of my head, it is probably something in the 20 or \$30,000 range.

MR. JAMES GILMORE: Paul, great presentation. By the way, bluefish has always been my favorite because it was my master's thesis, so don't belittle it too much. I think it is probably the most important species on the east coast. Anyway, I just see a question about the 126 that New York – whatever that number the distribution is – you mentioned the short and long term, so is that 126 is an annual number for X amount of time?

I didn't quite understand the difference between short and long term because short term we're thinking about – I mean, if our recreational license persists, a good way to use some of that money, since it is such a big recreational fishery, to maybe get the samples and also to – you know, I know some places near us have aging capability. We might be able to get the money but I really get a better sense of short versus long term.

MR. CARUSO: Jim, that number is the annual total sample size, so it would be divided in half each year. That's a minimum. If you got 120 one year and you got 180 the next year, that is kind of a ballpark, but that number would pretty stay the same. It is what we feel would be the number of animals you would need based on a reasonable distribution to get a key filled out. It is like tautog; it takes a thousand fish to make a good key.

DR. LOUIS DANIEL: Some of the concerns that were raised about the aging, we do have a lot of concerns in North Carolina about how we're aging these fish and whether or not we're actually getting a good job. There is a lot of inconsistency. Right now we are collecting probably between five and eight hundred a year, but we just don't have confidence in the actual results of the aging, because they are very difficult to do.

I think the first thing that I think is critical is that these aging techniques are corroborated before we go out and do a whole lot. I've always wondered if the North Carolina samples, because a lot of our samples come in the winter, if they might not be representative of the coast-wide stock to some degree.

One really cool thing we are seeing are those missing lengths, those four to seven pound fish; that if you remember some of the old bluefish stuff, they had that saddle-shaped distribution where you saw a lot of small fish and a lot of big fish, but you didn't see those middle-of-the-road fish. We're starting to see those five, six or seven pound fish now pretty commonly, which is kind of interesting, neat. Bluefish are tough to age; and if somebody thinks they've got it figured out, we're unaware of that at this point, so I think that's a critical first step.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Thank you. Paul, do you have any comment about that as to which

group you've worked with that in the technical committee's opinion would be one we might likely look for to do the aging process, to come up with a protocol that would be appropriate that would address the concerns that Dr. Daniel raised?

MR. CARUSO: Yes, I think we're pretty aware that it is a difficult structure to age. Like I said, I think we have some comfort with what ODU has been doing, but I guess it's hard to replicate I guess has been the issue. It would not hurt to spend a little time and money I think up front to nail that process down.

I would hesitate to not collect anything for the next few years until that happens because we'll be in a real hole if we do. I agree, there is work that needs to be done. The National Marine Fisheries Service, like I said, they did scales and they're pretty happy with it so I think there is a way to put it all together.

DR. DANIEL: I agree a hundred percent that we need to continue to collect the samples. I just think that there – I mean, not to get into too deep of a debate, but there are a lot of folks that don't trust the scaled ages and don't think they can be replicated. If you sit down and come up with age three on a scale and then I look at it and come up with age one, that's a real problem. It's kind of like the old days with weakfish when we looked at scales and otoliths.

It's hard to match those two up and say, well, we'll use scales for one part of the age structure and use otoliths for the other, it just compounds the discrepancies that you may have between scales and otoliths. I think there needs to be a consistent approach. I know ODU has looked at the burning, I think is one thing they've done that they think is a good way to go.

We can't replicate what they're doing so that is a real problem. Until we can sit down and have some level of agreement between readers, it is going to be tough to defend an age-based assessment. That's my concern is that I think we'll be able to come in and shoot holes all through an age-based assessment right now with the discrepancies in the age data. That's my biggest concern.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Point well taken, Dr. Daniel, and so noted. Mr. Diodati.

MR. PAUL DIODATI: I guess I'm surprised that this is such a modest request. I don't think that this is a very vast request on the part of the technical committee. I think the sample size is extremely small. I think the amount of work that goes into this is minor compared to some of the things that we do.

Although I'm not aware of the difficulty it is to age, it sounds like some kind of aging workshop or conference would be valuable before we go too far here. Given how important bluefish is to the recreational fisheries in particular along the entire coast, I would think, especially with new license sales coming on board, as I think Jim Gilmore indicated, I think money should not be a problem to do this over the next – beginning in about two years' time or even over the next year.

This is very, very, very modest. I'm not sure what action, if any, we need to do here. I don't think getting these sample sizes is the difficult thing at all. In fact, I'm surprised we're providing such a small sample size of our own. Sixty or fifty fish is about a half hour's work, if that. I think we need a workshop, and that might cost money. I think if the technical committee can put together some kind of proposal with a budget to it, then maybe we can be ready to take some kind of action to help them.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Thank you. If you noted on the report that the technical committee submitted, they do have a list of recommended actions for consideration. Your points are well taken, Paul. Mr. Shirey.

MR. CRAIG SHIREY: It sounds like you'd be interested in getting whatever samples you could, and I noticed on your tables that all the ones you're currently getting are from either commercial or recreational fisheries. Is there any interest or any problem with providing fisheries-independent samples?

MR. CARUSO: I think at this time we'd take pretty much anything we can get.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Thank you. Any further comments from the board? Well, there are a list of recommendations that the technical committee has submitted to us, and Mr. Diodati opened the door for some consideration and/or direction to be given to the technical committee. If you'd review that, if you have the sheet in front of you, we can go through them one by one

or if someone has a recommendation that they'd like to make and have the rest of the board review it, we can do that. If I see a lot of nods of heads around the table, we'll just take the list as submitted. Any comments from the board? Can we assume, then, that the list of recommended actions, one through five, the board is going to agree with by consensus? Mr. Diodati.

MR. DIODATI: Well, what I don't see and I might be missing it, Paul, is a recommendation to conduct an aging workshop; and based on Dr. Daniel's comments it seems like that would be a worthwhile first step.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Paul, would you respond to that, please.

MR. CARUSO: I think, Paul, that would be a worthwhile first step. I guess again I would just not hesitate to start sampling on top of that. I don't know if you, as a group, want to make it a voluntary thing again or a mandatory requirement as part of a compliance criterion. I think that is the key right now, and the workshop we can start working on it right away. We can put a budget together and we can get the right people together. I think that would be a great thing to do and soon. That's about it.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Do you want to respond to that, Paul, or did he satisfy your question?

MR. DIODATI: Well, what about timing. Obviously, we're collecting samples right now, but I would think that if a workshop could be scheduled for early in 2011 that is not going to be problematic. This isn't something – I mean, bluefish work has been ongoing for decades. What I would recommend is that a workshop be planned primarily to review the aging techniques and come to consensus coastwide on the appropriate aging techniques and also to confirm the sampling needs and other science needs and then come back to this board.

I think by then many of the states here will be on line with their recreational fishing license programs. I think at least speaking for Massachusetts, we are going to have a new source of revenue that we're going to dedicate towards programs like this one, and I think we can make this a very high priority. It does not sound like a big ticket item.

I'm sure there will be other states around the table that feel the same way, so my guess is if we could delay a little bit funding is not going to be the problem. What we will need, though, is the precise ask of what the job is.

MR. A.C. CARPENTER: I'm a little bit confused because when we went through this presentation, apparently Virginia was the only one that was used in the assessment. We have a request for about 580 or 560 or whatever the number was, but there was a table there where actual samples being collected and it added up to far more than that. You have 400, 500, 600, 1,000, 1050, so what is the problem with what we've already got going here?

MR. CARUSO: The Connecticut sample is historical; it's not an annual sample, so you can kind of take that number right off the sum. The problem with it – and Louis mentioned a little bit about the distribution. He has some comfort that the North Carolina samples may represent the coast. I think the basic issue in the assessment has been proving that.

We would like to see samples that are more evenly distributed along the coast so we can have some comfort that the key does represent the fishery as a whole. Right now as you look at it pretty quickly, the sampling is being clustered in the south. So even though I do believe Louis has a reasonable point and I think people have some comfort with what he is saying, I think the people that review these assessments have a little less comfort and would like to see sampling spread along the coast. I hope that answers your question.

MR. CARPENTER: My other has to do with this being an annual survey. Is there that much variation in the length and age growth each year that this has to be something that has to be done on an annual basis? You know, a length-age key I thought would be fairly reliable over a longer period of time than an annual basis.

MR. CARUSO: You would think so; however, when you do get to the peer review process people are pretty adamant about annual keys, and the reason is the proportions at age at length shift around from year to year quite a bit, and they can shift around quite a bit. We have used splicing in the past from other years to fill in holes, and it does work at least as a temporary stopgap measure, but technically you should have a fresh

key every year to account for those year class differences in strength and account for the shifting around in proportion to the age at length.

DR. DANIEL: Don't misunderstand my point. I think the fact that we do have these winter samples is good. I mean, certainly, I agree with Paul that the more broad representation that we can have is wonderful. We do have a good program in place at least in North Carolina, and so I agree with Paul Diodati's comments.

I think at some point getting together to where we can get good replication of these aging structures is a critical first step, and we'll certainly be willing to participate in that. If we can just get an agreed upon standard, we'll be glad to do some of the aging ourselves. It won't just be ODU. We're not aging them because we don't have confidence in what we're producing. Once we get that confidence, I think we'll feel comfortable aging some of these samples as well to take some of the burden off of Virginia.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Good, thank you for that commitment. Mr. Adler.

MR. ADLER: Paul, on the timing of these things, when are you due to do another assessment on this? That's the first question. Is 2011 for a workshop too late and is that going to be enough time?

MR. CARUSO: My understanding, Bill, is that there is no schedule for a benchmark assessment because the stock is in good shape. I hope it is at least five years out. The second question, though, I think we could pull it off in 2011 and that would be fine. I think we could pull it off earlier in the year, even.

MR. THOMAS McCLOY: I think there is no great secret about New Jersey's financial woes. The other states have similar problems, but maybe just not as bad. I would have to agree with Mr. Diodati that the amount of samples needed to be collected is relatively modest. Even though we're not anticipating a big windfall of money coming to New Jersey for a recreational saltwater license, we should be able to handle something like this. From my own personal perspective, I would prefer to do it on a voluntary basis, make sure it gets reported into the compliance reports; and then if we're not living up to our obligation, then take further action along those lines.

MR. ROY MILLER: There has been discussion about an aging workshop. It seems to me the purpose of an aging workshop would be to bring the representative jurisdictions up to speed on the latest aging technology, and yet among the recommended actions Item 4 it would appear that consideration should be given to hiring a contractor to do the aging. Now, my question is which is it? Are we going to train the agency representatives to do this consistent aging or are going to hire a contractor to do the aging. I don't think you need both. That's just what I wanted to point. Thanks.

MR. CARUSO: Well, it's a good question. It could go either way. I think when we were saying contractor, it could be states. The reality I think – and Louis pointed to it best – is they're difficult to age. They require a lot of prep work. There are a lot of otoliths. You have to grind them down. Most states are not equipped to deal with that.

The trick I think would be to find a couple of entities along the coast that could specialize in it; and instead of each state spending a lot of time and resources to set up an aging center of their own to age a difficult structure, that essentially we could pool our common resources here and pay either a state or a private entity or university to age these things so that everybody doesn't have to get in the bluefish aging business, which just compounds the issues with reading even to a greater degree.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Thank you. Mr. Miller, would you prefer to follow up with that and make a recommendation?

MR. MILLER: If I may, it just occurred to me that obtaining the aging samples, as Paul alluded to, should be a fairly easy operation in the course of fisheries-independent sampling or fisheries-dependent sampling programs that are already ongoing and perhaps otoliths or scales could be collected relatively inexpensively. I think this board needs to decide on how to proceed with processing these samples once they're collected. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Thank you. Should we follow up with that point? I think we're on track to coming up with a solution that may be the most cost effective. Any comments from the board as to Mr. Miller's recommendation and/or suggestion? Dr. Daniel

noted that they have the capability of doing sampling there and aging. Are there any other states? Mr. Simpson.

MR. DAVID SIMPSON: We could certainly help out with this. I don't know how many you need. Craig mentioned you need I think 50 samples from us. We could probably do a couple hundred ages using otolith sectioning; is that what you do, Paul?

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Paul, would you describe briefly what this would incur for those states who maybe are not too familiar with it – on the other hand, we have Mr. Simpson who is – what your protocol would be to meet our requirement.

MR. CARUSO: I guess David is just asking about the preparation of the samples. Yes, they're just a cross-section, and I believe there is a burning technique that ODU is using. They basically cook them and read them that way. It is fairly simple, but as you know it is having the equipment I think and the expertise that is the important part.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Follow up, Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: At least in terms of sectioning, we do that with other species; and contingent on checking with ODU and what is involved with the other processing, I think at this point we could do a couple hundred if that helps. Just how many are you after altogether, 500 or so?

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: About 600. Okay, we have a commitment from Mr. Simpson. How would the board like to proceed beyond this point? Mr. Carpenter.

MR. CARPENTER: It is beginning to sound like there is willingness on a number of states to share doing the work; so to Roy's question – and I think Roy had a very good one – are we going to have the states do it or are we going to have a contractor do it, it is beginning to sound to me like the states are willing to do their own aging work. I guess that brings us back to the question of the aging workshop where everybody can at least get on the same page to start this process.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Excellent point, Mr. Carpenter. Bob, would we be laying out money for this, would we be doing the

organizing or would we ask the states to participate in those costs that might be generated by virtue of bringing the group together?

MR. ROBERT E. BEAL: It sounds like the cost – if a workshop is going to be planned in 2011, obviously there is going to be some cost associated with getting those folks together, and that usually falls under the commission budget. I guess it depends on how things shake out in that workshop. Are we going to centralize the aging of these samples, each state picks up a piece of the load and then there is no additional cost?

Essentially states are utilizing their resources within the state, putting more pressure on their aging folks within the state to get these things done. The other idea to possibly save some money is conducting this during a technical committee meeting week or some other meeting that may be going on and bringing in the technical guys won't be real expensive.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Okay, it sounds like we have a plan coming together. Mr. Diodati.

MR. DIODATI: Well, while we were talking earlier, I e-mailed Dr. Armstrong, who works for me and is Paul's supervisor, asking him to work with Paul and put together a proposal for a workshop, to try to coordinate that and get me the cost of it, so maybe we can report back in a few weeks on who the right participants for that might be and where we can hold something like that. I thought that might be helpful.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Okay, is that agreeable with the board. I see a bunch of heads saying yes. Thank you, Paul. Mr. Ross.

MR. BOB ROSS: Just some clarification; you indicated that the states that are sampling now – this funding estimate; is there a backlog of samples that have not been aged that will tie into this process?

MR. CARUSO: In North Carolina they have quite a few backed up. I believe the Center has scale samples as well. I didn't hear anything from Gary Shepherd in the last few days, but if scales prove out to be a useful structure, they have a backlog down there. I know I have a small collection in Massachusetts. I'm sure we could do some back aging to catch up.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Thank you; did you have some funding available somewhere where you donate or support this effort? I thought I would ask on the record. We need help.

MR. ROSS: I can check with our Center.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Thank you, Mr. Ross; we were waiting to get that on the record. Any further comments from the board? It looks like we have an action plan. Is everyone satisfied with where we're going and the plan that we have now established? I think we have pretty well covered it all.

Okay, now we're to the very exciting part. We have election of a chair and vice-chair; and we have two of our stalwart board members, Mr. Travelstead and Mr. Carpenter both are anxious to replace me and get me out of here. We could either have a motion and have joint chairmen or we could have a chairman and a vice-chairman. Is there a preference by Mr. Travelstead or Mr. Carpenter as to who would like to be considered as chairman this time around?

MR. CARPENTER: I've followed Jack and cleaned up his mess a lot of times so why don't you let Jack be the chair and I'll be the vice-chair.

ELECTION OF BLUEFISH BOARD CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Okay, I guess we have a commitment from two of them; **so if I have a single motion to elect and cast one vote for Mr. Travelstead as the new chair of the Bluefish Management Board and one vote for Mr. Carpenter as vice-chair, I would look forward to that.** I see that from Mr. Adler.

MR. ADLER: So moved.

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Mr. Fote seconds that. **Okay, thank you, and congratulations, gentlemen.** Paul, you have been very help with us in representing the technical committee. I thank you for having given me the opportunity to participate in this activity. Mr. Fote.

MR. THOMAS FOTE: I just realized that Jack Travelstead now has the responsibility of the two

most important recreational fisheries, bluefish and striped bass, along the east coast.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIRMAN AUGUSTINE: Is there any further business to come before the board? If not, is there any objection to an adjournment? Seeing none, we're adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 o'clock a.m., February 4, 2010.)

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

DRAFT ADDENDUM I TO AMENDMENT 1 TO THE BLUEFISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Biological Monitoring Program



Draft Document for Public Comment

ASMFC Vision Statement:

Healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015.

August 2011

Draft Addendum for Public Comment

PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS AND PROPOSED TIMELINE

This draft addendum presents the background on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) management of bluefish, the addendum process and timeline, and a statement of the problem. This document also provides for public consideration and comment on the options presented. The public are encouraged to submit comments regarding this document at any time during the addendum process. **Comments will be accepted until 5:00 pm (EST) on September 30, 2011.** Regardless of when they were sent, comments received after that time will not be included in the official record. Comments may be submitted by mail, email, or fax, as well as at public hearings.

If you would like to submit comment in writing, please use the contact information below.

Mail:

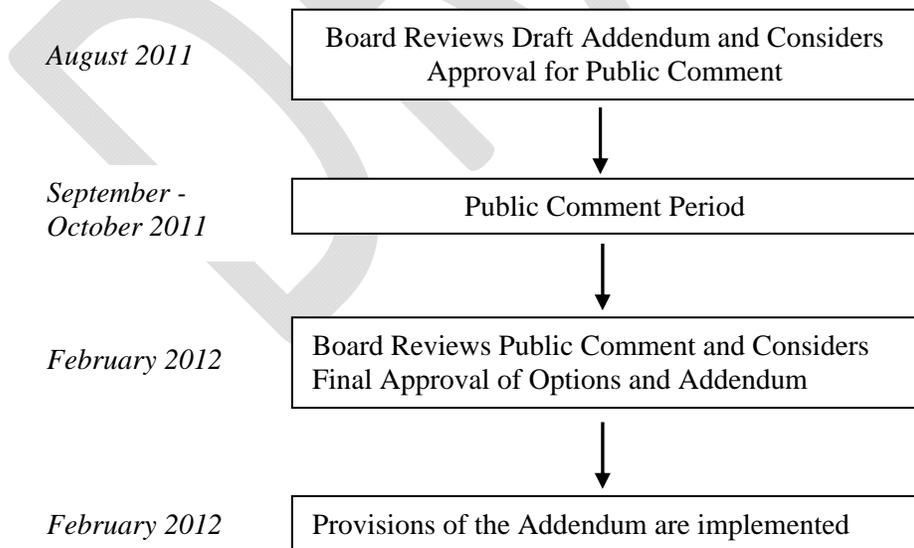
Michael Waine
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Email: mwaine@asmfc.org (Subject line: Bluefish Addendum I)
Fax: (703)842-0742

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Mike Waine at 703-842-0740

ASMFC's Addendum Process and Timeline

The development of Addendum I to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for bluefish will follow the general process outlined in the figure below. Tentative dates are included to illustrate the timeline of the addendum process.



Draft Addendum for Public Comment

1.0 Introduction

The Bluefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) was adopted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) in October 1989. It is a joint management plan and is the first FMP developed jointly by an interstate commission and a regional fishery management council. Bluefish is currently managed under Amendment 1 to the FMP, approved in October 1998. Management authority in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ, 3-200 miles from shore) lies with NOAA Fisheries, while the states have management authority for inshore waters (0 – 3 miles from shore). As defined by Amendment 1, the management unit is bluefish in U.S. waters of the western Atlantic Ocean.

In 2005, the Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) approved the use of an age-structured assessment program (ASAP) for bluefish, replacing the previously used surplus production model. The bluefish stock successfully rebuilt under the management program in Amendment 1, but the Council and Commission are exploring ways to address uncertainties involved in the stock assessment. More specifically, the most recent benchmark assessment revealed gaps in age length keys used in the ASAP model, and therefore, the assessment results should be used with caution (NEFSC 2005). This draft addendum proposes to address the biological sampling protocols for bluefish relative to data needs for the stock assessment.

2.0 Management Program

2.1 Statement of the Problem

A large part of the uncertainty in the stock assessment came from the age data used in the model (NEFSC 2005). The assessment used scale ages for the early part of the time series (1982 – 1997) and otolith ages for the later part (1998 – 2004). The SARC was concerned about discrepancies between scale and otolith ages and the general difficulties of ageing bluefish. The assessment was further hampered by gaps in the age-length keys resulting from a lack of samples for certain age and size classes (e.g., Figure 1); these gaps were filled by pooling samples across years, which increased uncertainty. Age samples were also geographically limited, coming only from Virginia and North Carolina. The panel recommended that ageing practices be standardized and sampling expanded to overcome these deficiencies in the assessment.

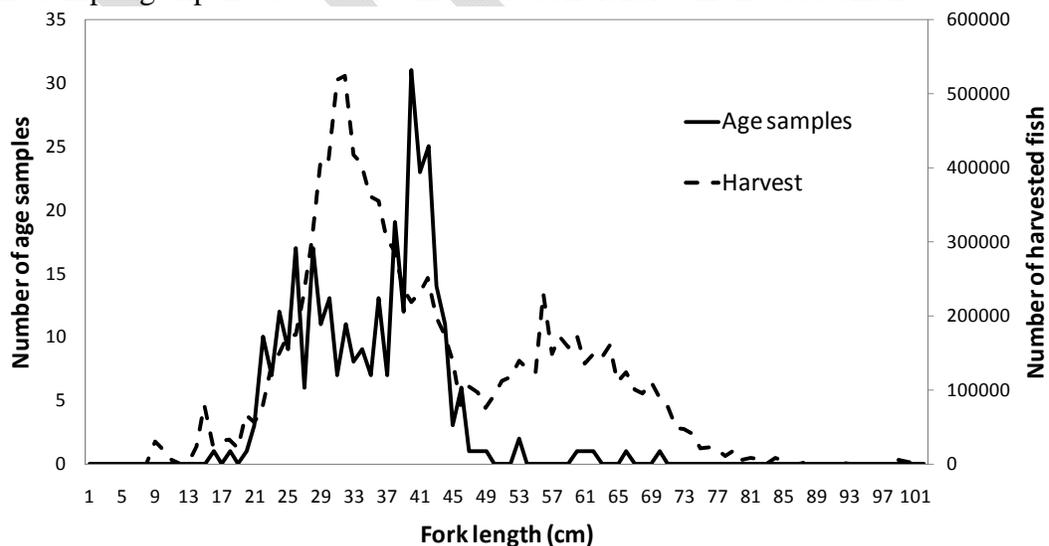


Figure 1. Length frequencies of bluefish harvest and age samples for 2004.

Draft Addendum for Public Comment

In response to the SARC recommendations for the bluefish stock assessment, the 2011 ASMFC's Action Plan included *Task 2.4.4* to work with states on developing a cooperative program to collect otoliths to improve age data for assessments of several species including bluefish. Additionally, under this task, a bluefish ageing workshop was conducted in May 2011 to assess the need for bluefish biological monitoring and ensure that optimal and consistent sampling methods be established coast wide (ASMFC 2011). The recommendations from the SARC, and the bluefish ageing workshop, are the premise for the development of draft Addendum I to review the biological sampling protocols.

2.1.2 Background

The most recent stock assessment of bluefish used age data from two states: North Carolina for the early part of the time series (1982 – 1997) and Virginia for the later part of the time series (1998 – 2004) (NEFSC 2005). Virginia accounted for approximately 4% of the total coastwide harvest of bluefish from 1998 – 2008 and yet supplied all of the age data for those years in the assessment.

Additionally, the age-length keys used in the assessment had gaps due to a lack of samples in certain size classes. Fishery dependent length sampling of bluefish shows a bimodal pattern, with few samples in the 50-60cm size range, and the age samples used to develop age-length keys do not adequately cover the entire size range of the fisheries (e.g., Figure 1). These gaps had to be filled by pooling data across years.

The 2005 peer review of the stock assessment highlighted both of these issues as sources of uncertainty. In 2010, the Bluefish Technical Committee (TC) recommended that a coastwide sampling program be developed to expand the geographical range of sampling and to fill in gaps in the age-length key. The TC identified the states that had accounted for more than 5% of the total bluefish harvest (commercial and recreational) from 1998 – 2008 (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina) and recommended that they be responsible for providing a number of samples based on their contribution to the total landings.

Bluefish ageing workshop participants revisited this issue, and recommended that a pilot program be developed to determine the optimum sample size for a coastwide age-length key and test the feasibility of state-level sampling combined with regional level ageing. Sampling allocation was reduced and simplified so that each of the key states plus Virginia would be responsible for providing 100 bluefish ages per year (50 from the spring and 50 from the fall). The importance of sampling from as wide a range of sizes as possible was stressed.

Not all states have resources to age bluefish, but member states with ageing capabilities could cooperate to process and age the samples collected. This pilot study would also allow the states to determine the cost and feasibility of sharing ageing responsibilities, as well as explore options for funding mechanisms.

Draft Addendum for Public Comment

2.1.3 Biological Monitoring Program

The following options present possible changes to biological sampling protocols for bluefish.

Option 1. Status quo. Biological sampling protocols are not explicit in the bluefish FMP and are not part of state compliance.

Option 2. The states that account for more than 5% of total coastwide bluefish harvest (recreational and commercial combined) for the 1998 – 2008 period are required to collect a minimum of 100 bluefish ages (50 from January through June, 50 from July through December). These states are: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina. Virginia must continue its current sampling regime for bluefish and provide that same minimum 100 samples as the other states.

Every effort should be made to cover the full range of bluefish sizes with these samples. States are encouraged to process and age their own otolith samples, but may send their whole otolith to another state with ageing capacity.

At the end of the first year of the sampling program, the TC will review the effectiveness of the sampling design and evaluate the optimal geographic range and sample size for bluefish age data. The TC may also recommend sampling in specific size bins to fully account for the length frequency observed in bluefish landings data. If changes are necessary to the sampling program, as recommended by the TC, then sampling protocols may be modified through Board action.

3.0 Compliance

States must implement Addendum V to the following schedule:

Month day, 20XX: States must implement Addendum I. States may begin implementing management programs prior to this deadline if approved by the Bluefish Management Board.

References

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). 2011. Bluefish Ageing Workshop Final Report. 30 pp.

Northeast Fisheries Science Center. 2005. 41st Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop (41st SAW): 41st SAW Assessment Report. Northeast Fisheries Science Center Reference Document 05-14.