

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Advisors: Vito Calomo, John Norton, David Goethel, Peter Kendall, Craig Pendleton, David Fyrberg

Technical Committee members: Dan Schick, Mike Armstrong, Joe Idoine

ASMFC staff: Amy Schick

PRESENTATION BY DAN SCHICK ON 1999 STOCK ASSESSMENT:

Catch – catch was down in 1999 to 1816 mt, which is the lowest since the early 1980s. The catch was affected by days available, shrimp coming inshore later than usual, saved groundfishing days, small size/bad price, and slime plugging up the nets. The average weight of the catch was much lower than expected, resulting in more shrimp in numbers being harvested. The catch was dominated by the 1996 year class. Females still carried eggs into March, and fecundity was low.

Effort – trips were down by about half and CPUE down slightly from last year

Fall survey – the 1998 fall survey was up slightly from 1997.

Summer survey - >22 mm weight per tow is slightly greater than last year; age-1.5 number per tow is about even with last year, at a low level; number per tow is down from last year and lowest on record; weight per tow is slightly lower than last year; mean number per tow by sex shows the last reasonable year classes in 1992-1993, with recent year classes of 1995, 97, and 98 smallest on record, and an average 1996 year class. The average size in the shrimp this year will be bigger than last year because the 1996 year class has grown up into good harvestable size.

Fishing mortality and exploitable biomass – fishing mortality was fairly constant from 0.2-0.4 until about 1995, then increased to 0.9 in 1997, and has since declined to about 0.5 in 1999. Biomass is the lowest on record at 5,000 tons. The trend has declined steadily since 1996, and fluctuated between 1985 and 1996 around about 12,000 tons. The trends in fishing mortality and biomass of the DeLury and surplus production models track similarly for 1999.

Spring sea surface temperature – track the strong year classes of 1987, 1992 and 1993 well with low spring water temperatures. 1996 had slightly colder than normal temperatures and produced the average 1996 year class. However the average temperature for 1994, 1995, 1997, and 1998 were warmer than average, contributing to the poor year classes in those years.

PREVIEW OF THE 2000 SEASON – MARKET, EFFORT, CPUE

Effort – depends on weather, will be bigger shrimp, equal or less effort, depends on season constructed and vessel class, only could get 3-days per week, people have been using (not saving) groundfish days, this is the only option for the little boats

Last season, processors couldn't keep processing crews and therefore couldn't buy shrimp from the boats. Big holes don't work and lots of little holes don't work. Short season in one block will result in a race for the

resource. Serious safety factor when forced to fish days. One day off would work, but two day (weekends off) does not work. Stay away from crafting a season that will draw effort into the fishery.

CPUE – does the TC think it will change in 2000 season from the 1999 season.

Slime last year was a significant impact in last year's fishery. We don't know if it's going to be a factor in 2000 or not – it's like the weather, hard to predict.

Market conditions – brokers looking for pre-orders, which is a good sign; expect it to be strong since last year was so weak; smaller shrimp not really worth catching, cook-and-peel is not going to be bright with the large Newfoundland and Canadian markets; whole frozen for Asia is about the same as last year; green headless tail market hard to tell right now; disease problem in Ecuador cleaned out ponds, but causes early production of other ponds which competes with our product. Could do ok on 40 count or less.

Nothing on horizon this year that would cause an influx of effort due to high prices. The one exception may be for New Year's.

Don't have a good choice. Economically there are tough roads ahead, but morally it's difficult knowing that even with a closed season the stock will likely not rebound for 3-4 years.

Also must consider 20-day block closure in March, April or May for groundfishing.

Forced to work in bad weather in order to make paycheck with only a limited number of days. Does a shorter season create more effort? For example 120 days vs. 90 days. Hours of daylight are much different from winter and spring.

Push again for call-in season – it's a pain, but people could choose their days and not be forced to fish in bad weather.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECTION:

Motion that season start Jan 17- March 15 and April 1- May 13 taking only Sunday's off (87 days) for mobile and fixed gear. Traps should be removed or trap doors open and bait bags removed.

Motion made by Vito Calomo, seconded by Craig Pendleton. Approved unanimously.

That would give the following days per month:

January – 12; February – 25; March – 13; April – 25; May – 12

Can we take a couple of weekend days to move up earlier in the month of January?

Motion to amend to begin Jan. 12 – March 15 and April 3 – May 20 with Sundays off (97 days).

Motion made by Peter Kendall

That would give the following days per month:

January – 16; February – 25; March – 13; April – 25; May - 18

6 day weeks; larger shrimp will cause more effort next year from TC perspective, resulting in a higher catch than last year. Lobster boats will not get into shrimping because they are doing so well with lobsters. Potential for an increase in effort in January and February.

The advisors bottom line is that 87-90 days is the breaking point for markets, finances, and sustaining the infrastructure of the shrimping industry.

The advisors should send a letter to the managers that this is where industry is standing. Talk with your Commissioners before the meeting next week. Stand behind the Committee and stay unified.

The 600-line issue needs another push. Could be done in annual adjustment, but needs to be pushed more for an experimental fishery.

Motion to send a letter to apply to the NEFMC for an experimental shrimp fishery east of the 600 line in the annual adjustment, beginning May 13, 2000.

Motion by David Goethel, seconded by Vito Calomo. Motion carries unanimously.

Shouldn't allow shakers on the boats to sort out the larger shrimp – it's happening.

Motion to prohibit shrimp sorting devices for the purpose of excluding small shrimp from the catch on shrimp vessels.

Motion by Craig Pendleton, seconded by Vito Calomo. Motion tabled.

Is count per pound still in the regulations? Need to better define what is meant – Amy will do some investigation.