

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel

Conference Call Summary

January 30, 2009

Present: C. Vonderweidt (ASMFC), David Ellenton (MA, AP Chair), Jenny Bichrest (ME), David Turner (ME), Alton West (ME), Peter Moore (MA), Greg Didomenico (NJ), Mary Beth Tooley (ME)

Observers: Jeff Kaelin (ME)

The Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel (AP) convened via phone conference on January 30, 2009 to give recommendations to the Atlantic Herring Section (Section) for Draft Addendum I to Amendment 2 to the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Sea Herring. The AP discussed each issue as follows.

1. Bimonthly or Seasonal Quotas in Area 1A

The AP unanimously supports Option A, status quo. The AP unanimously opposes any quota options that use fixed percentages because they remove flexibility which could allow management to adapt to changes in the fishery. Fishermen aim to sell their catch when market value is the highest and locking a certain percent of the catch into a quota period does not allow them to adjust to markets. Meeting participants prefer to fish based on markets rather than quotas.

The AP also wanted to point out that the existing system can be effectively used to distribute TAC into quota periods by taking 7 days out of the Fishery when a certain weight has been harvested.

As a fall back position if the Status Quo does not prevail option H would be preferred. This is the option developed by the AP at their December meeting.

2.1 Payback for Quota Overages

There was discussion about quota payback strategies by making adjustments from year to year. However it was understood that this is not possible under the existing TAC specification process. They unanimously agree that the best strategy is to prevent overages which can be accomplished best with a combination of good monitoring, including daily reporting and Option C, which proposes to close the fishery when 95% of the quota is projected to be harvested. This option has the potential as an effective tool to prevent overages but should not leave quota unharvested. This option should be altered to allow the fishery to reopen if it closes early and there is a significant amount of the quota left for the period. The AP does not support Option C if it leaves quota

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unharvested. Option C will work best with longer quota periods, rather than monthly or bi-monthly.

2.2 Rollover of Quota Underages

The AP unanimously support Option C, which allocates underages to the remaining periods equally because it is the most fair and equitable of all the options.

ISSUE 3: Yearly Determination of Landing or Fishing Days

The AP unanimously supports Option C, whereby the adjacent States must agree on the start date, number of days out etc. If they cannot agree then the matter will go before the entire section

ISSUE 4: 'Days Out' Restrictions

The AP unanimously support Option C, which restricts vessels to one landing per calendar day. One member commented that the unusually large catch rates in 2008 were a result of carrier vessels landing twice in the same calendar day. These carriers would land immediately when the landing day opened up and then immediately return to sea to bring back more herring within the same calendar day.

In addition to all members preferring Option C, there was consensus for a combination of Option C and Option B (no landing herring caught on a day out), The members discussed a combination of Option C and Option D (24 hours of fishing per landing event), but eventually agreed on Options B and C.

ISSUE 5: Timely Reporting of State Landings

The AP unanimously support Option B or D which require weekly reporting. Weekly reporting is not too much to ask of fishermen especially when it is necessary to properly manage the fishery.

They agree that negative reporting is necessary but think that it is overly burdensome to ask fishermen to report every week they do not catch herring. The AP would ask that the requirements for negative reports would be to report once when they do not plan on landing, and no further negative reports would be necessary until the next landing. If a fisherman or vessel is not going to land herring for a month, they should only have to fill out one negative report until they began landing again.

The AP also wondered what would happen to states that could not implement weekly reporting requirements and if they would be found out of compliance.

Other comments

The AP wanted the Section to be aware that the 2007-2009 Area 1A TAC reduction could not be justified scientifically. They believe that the stocks are very healthy and look forward to the stock assessment results in June / July 2009. These, earlier than anticipated assessment results, could result in 3 year specifications being set later this year.

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