

Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Panel

Meeting Summary

July 28, 2005

Baltimore, MD

Advisory Panel Participants

Ed Cherry

Richard Daiger

Ken Hinman

Lyell Jett

Brian Tarbox

Richard J. Weisberg

Donald Smith

William Windley (Chair)

Additional Participants

Alexei Sharov (Technical Committee Vice-Chair)

Joseph Smith (Technical Committee)

Nancy Wallace (ASMFC Staff)

Guests

Niels Moore, Menhaden Resource Council

Charlie Hutchinson, MSSA

Clint Waters, MSSA

Buffy Baumann, Greenpeace

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Panel (AP) met on July 28, 2004 in Baltimore, MD.

Joseph Smith, from the National Marine Fisheries Service Beaufort Lab, gave an update to the AP on the 2004 commercial fisheries landings and the 2005 landings so far this year. In 2004, the total landings for reduction were 184,450mt. 67% of the catch in numbers were age 2 fish. Through the month of June in 2005, 31,422 mt of Atlantic menhaden were landed by the reduction fishery. This number was down 24% from 2004, but up 10% from the previous five-year average. In early July of 2005, the fishing was still very good in Chesapeake Bay. By mid July, there was considerable fishing on good concentrations of fish at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay and off the ocean beaches of Virginia, south to Sandbridge, VA. There has been some fishing in the ocean off of barrier islands of the Eastern Shore of VA. There has been no fishing off of DE or NJ by the VA reduction boats in 2005 so far. There have been fish reports from other areas along the coast. In the last week of May, there were reports of adult menhaden in fish traps at Gloucester, MA. In early to mid-June, there were good signs of menhaden in Delaware Bay; recently, large schools close to the beach in north Jersey. The Mass. Bait company is fishing in New England this spring instead of North Jersey. They had very good catches through June. In Early July there were reports of adult menhaden in fish trips in southern Maine. In late July there were reports of lots of adult menhaden in Casco Bay area, Maine.

Alexei Sharov updated the AP on the most recent Technical Committee (TC) meeting in June of 2005. At this meeting the TC reiterated that the prioritized research needs for Atlantic menhaden are:

- A. Determine menhaden abundance in Chesapeake Bay
- B. Determine estimates of removal of menhaden by predators
- C. Exchange of menhaden between bay and coastal systems
- D. Larval Studies (determining recruitment to the Bay)

Alexei Sharov also presented a description of the LIDAR study that was reviewed by the TC. The TC has determined that the proposed LIDAR study was appropriate for a pilot study to determine if LIDAR and hydroacoustic sensing equipment can be used to assess menhaden populations. The TC agreed that the study should be funded and completed in 2005 if possible. The TC also reviewed the 2004 landings and indices. They calculated the triggers approved in Addendum 1 and recommended that a stock assessment not be conducted this year. The next full stock assessment is scheduled for 2006.

Nancy Wallace gave a presentation on Addendum II to Amendment 1 of the Atlantic Menhaden FMP. She presented the background information as well as the options that are included in the Addendum.

AP Discussion:

Some members of the AP who could not be in attendance, sent comments on Addendum II prior to the meeting. These comments were distributed and discussed at the meeting.

Issue 1 in Addendum II: Should there be a cap on the menhaden harvest?

- There was no consensus by members of the AP on the issue of capping the Atlantic menhaden harvest, however, there was a majority in favor of a cap at some level.
- Some members spoke in opposition to a cap on the menhaden harvest because there is no scientific reason to institute such a cap.
- The point that a cap would create a hardship for the Industry was made but most felt that as it is essentially a near status quo measure, no hardships would be created. The point was made that the Industry has continued to maintain that they were meeting all their needs at current harvest levels, therefore, a cap would have no negative impact
- Another concern raised with instituting a cap was that if there was area management and a quota was introduced, areas in New England could be closed before the menhaden even reached their waters. It was also mentioned that purse seines are very efficient, and don't take a lot of bycatch, therefore they should not be restricted. This situation would not occur if any cap implemented was restricted to the Chesapeake Bay.

- Some supported a cap at the five-year average while the research is being done. They felt this was a precautionary action without affecting the industry because the catch would be capped at current levels. They felt this cap should be in place for 5 years.
- Two AP members not in attendance, but who submitted written comments favored a cap at the average over the last 10 years on the reduction fishing vessels within the Chesapeake Bay for at least 3 years. They also felt a minimum mesh size of 1 7/8 inches coast wide would be appropriate to facilitate an increase of 3 year old fish coastwide.
- Some members of the AP who were in favor of the cap, supported a cap in Chesapeake Bay and coastwide, so effort would not be redirected.
- Some members were in favor of the cap on all gears, so effort would not be redirected into other gears.

Issue 2: Menhaden Research

All members present at the AP meeting were in support of the research agenda described in Addendum II. They would like the research agenda expanded to explore menhaden's ecological functions including its role as forage for predators and as a filter feeder. Members of the AP also raised the concern that they hope after all of this research has been completed there is qualitative data that managers will be able to use to make decisions.