

**Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel
Portland, Maine
June 5, 2000
11:00am – 3:00 pm**

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance:

Amy Schick
Vito J. Calomo
David Goethel
John Norton
Ray Walsh
Maggie Raymond
Marshall Alexander
Roger Libby
Harold Mears
Genaro Balzano
Kevin Lakeman
Sean Hayes

Motions:

Move to nominate John Norton as the Advisory Panel Representative to the Plan Development Team
Made by David Goethel; seconded by Vito Calomo; motion passes.

Move to recommend to the Section that specific options for an overfishing definition should be included in the Public Information Document.
Made by Peter Kendell; seconded by David Goethel; motion passes.

Move to recommend to the Section that socio-economic issues be included in the Public Information Document.
Made by David Goethel; seconded by Peter Kendell; motion passes.

Summary:

This meeting summary is based on individuals comments during the meeting. Each statement does not represent the consensus of the Advisory Panel unless so noted.

Review of the 1999-2000 fishing season

The 1999-2000 fishing season did not match the predictions of the fall 1999 stock assessment and hearing. Some boats saw the best season in the last 15 years, with high quality product, and decent price. As the season progressed, the price dropped. The price should have been 25-50% higher based on the quality of the shrimp, but the processing infrastructure was gone. All year classes showed up in the landings, despite the prediction for missing year classes. The shrimp kept filling in day after day.

There were no landings downeast because the fishery doesn't start up until April and the season ended in March. Massachusetts also has a spring fishery in April and May that didn't happen this past season. Few boats geared up to go fishing for shrimp based on the estimates of the season.

The Advisors felt that the predictions of the Technical Committee based on computer models did not mesh with actual experience on the water. The biomass determination of the DeLury model is suspect; 2500 mt were caught in 51 days out of the 5000 mt predicted biomass.

There was concern raised over the inclusion of an overfishing definition in Amendment 1. Some advisors felt that more confidence in the models is necessary before they could support an amendment. In addition, an overfishing definition should not be tied to an overfishing definition.

At the Maine DMR northern shrimp research agenda meeting, an oceanographer said that temperature recordings outside Jeffrey's were too high to accommodate shrimp; environmental conditions should be included in modeling exercises.

The advisors feel that the last two surveys have been influenced by water temperatures. The new FMP is pushing for greater precision in management based on new and old models, however the industry feels the model outputs and predictions do not match well with the fishermen's experiences on the water.

Last season did a lot to destroy the fishery. Prices will continue to stay low in the upcoming season because the infrastructure is no longer there.

In New Hampshire, the shrimp had totally dropped their eggs before the season started, while the Maine fishery saw the egg drop continue along the coast, then watch another batch of eggers come in and drop. The fishermen felt the steady stream of eggged up shrimp to be a sign of a healthy stock.

As for financial impacts, one advisor saw better prices, volume and quality in 1999-2000 than previous seasons, and felt he could have done even better with more than 51 days. April was a dead month because boats could not fish for anything. A shrimp season in April would allow some boats to get on the water with the groundfish closures. Other advisors felt that the season was a disaster – too few days, low prices, and only a handful of boats went fishing.

The quality of shrimp was beautiful but the processors couldn't handle the volume. The prices started ok at the beginning of the season, but fell once the market was saturated. It was a buyers market. The medium sized boats in Maine lost a lot of money because there was no May fishery and the price was bad for high quality shrimp.

Fuel prices were 2-3 times higher in 1999-2000 than the previous season, which makes the cost of doing business higher.

The short season had an economic impact on the boats that usually fish a longer season, or rely on the April/May fishery. A better way of determining the economic impact of a short season is needed. Shrimp in April and May saves some of the groundfishermen.

A condensed season costs more money on the processing front – labor, startup costs. The April/May market is now blocked at about 30 cents a pound for 55 count shrimp because the infrastructure and market is gone. It will take years to rebuild the market.

The Section considered the Advisors plan for 5 minutes last year. Management didn't give and take when setting the season last year. The PDT and TC are politicking with the newspapers, and scientists have clout. Advocacy on the side of science isn't appropriate. The scientists are questioning management rather than providing information to the managers. The scientists should provide a range of options and the risk associated with those options. The Section should designate a spokesperson for shrimp with bounds on the information that goes out.

The data on shrimp – fall 1999 survey data and stock assessment, in particular – should be made available to the public in a timely manner. The stock assessment should be in the hand of the advisors for a couple of days before a meeting is scheduled. The advisors need planning time. The industry and processors have suffered because the information is not available. There is no assurance that real time information will be available for the new amendment. Data is power and industry has limited access to data.

Industry is interested in sponsoring their own survey. Industry would like to control at least half of the research money for industry research. There is a concern about funding for science and real time management.

The AP nominated John Norton to represent the Advisors on the Plan Development Team.

Public Information Document

Limited entry should not be considered.

The northern shrimp fishery should remain a KISS fishery – keep it simple stupid; don't over-regulate. The science is less accurate now, now more.

The PDT was congratulated on the PID document. It was felt that all ideas were included and the document should move ahead. There was an interest in the constraints on the overfishing definition and the involvement of NMFS. The plan should remain on a local/state level and not with the New England Council or NMFS.

There is a concern about the overfishing definition. The alternatives for an overfishing definition should be included in the first round of public hearings. The definition needs to consider the lifespan of the species and the environmental influences. A wrong definition could be detrimental to the fishery.

There was support for being proactive with the amendment and overfishing definition, but additional data and methods may be necessary. If this is the case, then the process should slow down. Industry should be involved in developing the overfishing definition.

It was felt that there is not enough money now to collect data (fall survey data) and therefore concern was raised about the cost of real time data and the predictive capabilities that are currently available. It is felt that the DeLury cannot support more precise and accurate management, and the data is not doing a good job currently. One person felt that management was more precise prior to 1996, before the DeLury model was used, and therefore does not support the DeLury approach to management.

Others felt that last year was an anomaly. For the last 15 years the scientists have done a good job of predicting what the season would look like, and there still is an interest in working with the scientific community. However the information is not being filtered down to industry.

Fishing power in the Gulf of Maine was discussed. The fishing power has increased, but there has also been a loss of boats. The boats are getting more efficient every year. The lobster boats are bringing in more and more horsepower. There is a potential for increasing power. People can jump in on any good day, but this has not happened. There are boats available and no limited entry.

One person felt that there is political pressure from the lobster fishery to protect the bottom.

The social and economic impacts are missing from the PID.

Table is a better format for presenting pros and cons.

There is concern over the short time frame for developing and approving the amendment. The schedule should be slowed down and not rushed.

The PID allows for an unintended consequence of creating winners and losers to shrimp access.