

Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting Summary

The Shrimp Advisory Panel met at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, Maine, on October 27, 2005. The Panel met to discuss the 2005 assessment and make recommendations for the 2005-2006 fishing season. The following is a summary of that meeting with recommendations to the Northern Shrimp Section.

Participants

AP Members

John Seiders
Terry Alexander, Chair
Peter Kendall
Brad Spear, Staff

Terry Stockwell
Gary Libby
Roger Libby
Maggie Raymond
Sherm Hoyt
John Norton

Others

George Lapointe, Section Chair
Margaret Hunter, Technical Committee Chair

Marshall Alexander
Vincent Balzano
Mark Bichrest

2005 Northern Shrimp Stock Assessment

The Advisory Panel did not receive the full assessment report until the day of the meeting. Maggie Hunter explained that setback in issuing the report was because the summer shrimp survey ran later than in years passed. She reported that biomass has grown in recent years. The abundance of shrimp greater than 22mm appears to be at its highest level since the summer survey started in 1985. Strong 2004 and 2003 year classes may lead to further rebuilding of the stock and high abundance in the near future. However, the lack of the 2002 year class is still a concern making the 2001 year class the only significant source of egg production for 2006.

The Technical Committee's recommendation to the Section was to aim for a fishing mortality (F) of 0.20 and landings no more than 2,500 metric tons. The estimated F for the 2004-2005 season is 0.19 and reported landings are so far 2,145 metric tons. The Committee expects a couple hundred more metric tons to be reported by the end of the year. It recommends for this upcoming season that the Section again shoot for an $F = 0.2$ and landings of no more than 5,200 metric tons.

It was noted that since 1987, the industry has landed over 5,000 metric tons only four times. Attendees at the meeting believed that there is no possibility that the industry will land close to 5,000 metric tons in part because the shrimp fleet is much smaller than in the past. Attendees also pointed out that there is less area for shrimpers to fish which will make it difficult to harvest close to 5,000 metric tons.

2004-2005 Fishing Season

Panel members were glad to see there are lots of shrimp in the water. But nobody is really excited about the upcoming season because it appears the sale of shrimp will be constrained by a small market. The ex-vessel value of shrimp is not expected to increase much over last year,

which hovered around \$0.50 per pound. The group stressed the need to build back the markets. It felt this might be done in part by extending the season to encourage new markets to develop and assuring a long season the following season (2006-2007).

Therefore, the Advisory Panel recommends a setting the season for the next two years at 140 days per season. For the upcoming season, it recommends starting December 12, 2005, and closing April 30, 2006, with fishing allowed 7 days per week. If the Section is not willing to set the season for two years, the Panel recommends a 180-day season starting December 12, 2005, with fishing allowed 7 days per week.

Amendment 13 Habitat Closure

The passage of Amendment 13 established a closed area/season to protect habitat. The closed area is a prime location (Jeffreys Basin) for shrimp fishing. Maggie Raymond got a recommendation to exempt shrimp fishing in the area through the NEFMC, but it was rejected by NMFS. AP attendees request that the Section send a letter to NEFMC to support the exemption that would allow shrimp fishing in Jeffreys.