

Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting Summary

The Advisory Panel met on October 21, 2010 in Portland, Maine. The two main agenda items were (1) reviewing the previous fishing season and current assessment; and (2) discussion recommendations for shrimp management in the future. Below is a summary of that meeting.

Attendees

4 Advisory Panel Members

Vincent Balzano, Chair

Gary Libby

Andrew E. Lang

Peter Kendall

2 Section Members

George Lapointe

Dennis Damon

9 Other Public

Newbold Varian III

Joe Nickersw

Marshall Alexander

Angelo Ciocca

Spencer Fuller

Lessie White

Magge Raymond

Judy Harris

Steve Robbins

Staff

Toni Kerns, ASMFC staff

Maggie Hunter, TC Chair

Lessie White, ME DMR

2010 Fishing Season and Stock Assessment

Approximately 5,617 mt of shrimp were reported landed during the 2009-2010 fishing season. The 2010 season was characterized by very high catch rates and improved market conditions. 2010 landings were comprised mostly of assumed 5-year-old female shrimp from the moderate 2005 year class. The number of fishing vessels and trawl trips declined to 172 and 2,893 in 2009 (preliminary) and rose to 230 and 5,263 during 2010 (preliminary). Of the 230 vessels that have reported shrimp landings in 2010, 98 were trapping, and trappers accounted for about 19% of the 2010 landings.

Current landings, vessels, and trips are calculated from vessel trip reports (federal and Maine VTRs). In the 2009 assessment, 2008 landings went up by just 3% from the 2008 assessment, because Maine improved report compliance enforcement during 2008. 2009 landings went up 9% when recalculated in 2010, which may indicate some backsliding in the timeliness of Maine reporting. Fishing mortality rates (F), as calculated by CSA, rose to 0.26 in the 2008 fishery, dropped to 0.09 in 2009, and rose again to 0.31 in 2010.

The CSA biomass estimate has since declined to 14,400 for the 2011 season. The technical committee notes that there is a high degree of uncertainty around terminal year estimates, however. Exceptionally high survey indices from the 2006 summer survey, which had fewer tows than usual, continue to add a source of uncertainty.

In 2011, the female population will be comprised of the weak assumed 2006 year class (5-year-old females), and the moderate 2007 year class. The 2010 summer survey index for shrimp >22mm carapace (4.8 kg/tow) is at a median value, but below the time series average. However, the assumed 2008 and 2009 year classes appear to be of above-average abundance.

At the time of the AP meeting the TC had not completed its recommendation. The TC chair presented a range of the recommendations that the TC was considering from 2,969 to 4,196 mt.

Comments on 2010 Fishing

Panel members and the audience commented that the fishing year was good for all the states. The quality of the product was excellent. The group commented that there were concerns with the emergency closure in early May. Some members felt it was premature because there are very few landings in May and the additional landing would not have had a large impact on the stock. One of the reasons for the closure was the concern of the volume of small shrimp in the landings. But if you look at the statics there is a greater volume of small shrimp in the January/February landings. Historically there are so few shrimp taken in May but it does support a small group of fishermen and allow the processor and market to keep going. Shutting down and then opening kills the market and processors. The group is also concerned that the processor will have to change business practices if early closures continue.

Recommendations for the 2010-2011 Fishing Season

The AP recommends to the Section that the upcoming fishing season start December 1, 2010 and close May 31, 2011, with all days open for fishing.

Other recommendations from the AP:

Recommend that the section clarify the Fishing Mortality section of the FMP.

AP discussed that changes in gear should be used as incentives not requirements. There should be options for types of gear changes to use. There is no interest in mesh size changes.

Controlled Entry was discussed and the AP recommends that the section should initiate an addendum to modify the FMP to use controlled entry.

The AP would like the Section to again write a letter to the NEFMC to show its support for an exemption to allow shrimp dragging in the western Gulf of Maine closed area. The Council recommended this exemption in the past, but it was not allowed by NMFS. Shrimp has been shown to be a 'low-impact' fishery.