

**Atlantic Croaker Advisory Panel
Raleigh, NC
September 29, 2004**

Meeting Summary

Participants

AP Members

1. Norman Bradford, NC
2. Tom Powers, VA
3. Andy Dehel, DE
4. Gene Doebley, NJ
5. Bill Windley, MD
6. Jeff Reichle, NJ

TC Representative

John Foster

Staff

Nancy Wallace

Summary

The Atlantic Croaker Advisory Panel (AP) met for the first time on September 29, 2004 in Raleigh, NC. The participants introduced themselves and gave a summary of their fishing history and their interest in Atlantic croaker. Nancy Wallace, FMP coordinator gave a presentation on the overview of the ASMFC structure and process as well as the roles and responsibilities of an AP member.

The next order of business was to elect a Chair and Vice Chair. Bill Windley from Maryland was elected Chair and Gene Doebley from New Jersey was elected Vice-Chair.

John Foster gave a presentation of the new stock assessment for Atlantic croaker which was recently peer reviewed and approved for use in management decisions. John described the fishery dependent and independent data that was used in the assessment as well as all the data inputs and outputs from the model. This stock assessment is only for the mid-Atlantic region (North Carolina and north). There is currently not enough data to assess the South Atlantic region (Florida through South Carolina). The mid-Atlantic region shows that the Spawning Stock Biomass is well above the recommended target and thresholds and the Fishing Mortality is well below the recommended target and thresholds. This means that in the mid-Atlantic region Atlantic croaker is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

The Advisory Panel then went through the Draft Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Croaker Fishery Management Plan. The suggested a number of changes and additions to the Draft PID. Some of the issues they raised are listed below:

- Should the management plan attempt to maintain a high level of croaker abundance, above the targets? Should management be proactive and more conservative when instituting regulations?
- Should there be triggers to measure stock status? If these triggers are set should management restrictions be put in place, even if we have not exceeded the targets or thresholds?
- The original 1987 Atlantic croaker FMP stated as one of its goals to institute Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs). It should be mentioned in this PID that many states have implemented the use of BRDs and they have been successful in reducing the amount of croaker bycatch.
- The 1987 FMP promoted the development of BRDs for trawl fisheries, should that be expanded in this amendment to other types of fisheries as well?
- The PID does not mention anything about the issue of bycatch of croaker in the Shrimp industry. Should this be added to the PID?
- What habitat studies have been done? How will we incorporate the habitat issues into the PID and the amendment? We need more research on pollution effects and loss of habitat and how they affect croaker. There is also a need for a habitat characterization study for Atlantic croaker.
- Commercial and Recreational management regulations should be linked. For example, if a quota is instituted in the commercial fishery, should a bag limit be implemented in the recreational fishery.
- Should we implement a multiyear management plan or a single year management plan for Atlantic croaker
- Concern over the lack of data for the southern region. Should croaker be managed as two separate stocks?
- The AP would like the TC to give a clear statement on whether croaker should be managed as two separate stocks. What data do we need to determine the stock status for the southern region?
- If the Atlantic croaker becomes overfished what management measures will be put in place for recovery?