

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR TAUTOG

ADDENDUM II



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Addendum II to the Fishery Management Plan for Tautog

INTRODUCTION

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) adopted the Fishery Management Plan for Tautog in March 1996. The FMP requires a minimum possession size to increase the spawning stock biomass and yield to the fishery. It also includes fishing mortality targets intended to initially rebuild the stocks and to prevent overfishing.

Addendum I to the FMP was approved by the Tautog Management Board on May 19, 1997. This Addendum was in response to the Board's concern about the states' ability to meet the FMP's compliance schedule because of continuing problems with data deficiencies. Specifically, several states expressed concerns that the plan does not allow adequate time for states to determine state-specific fishing mortality rates. Further, the original FMP contained a compliance schedule that required the states the northern range of the species to implement management measures prior to states at the southern extent of the species range. Some of the members of the Management Board were concerned that the compliance dates should be consistent for states throughout the range of the species.

Addendum I required all states to implement management measures to reach the $F=0.24$ fishing mortality target and a 14" size limit by April 1, 1998. Additionally it included the requirement that all states implement management measures to achieve the fishing mortality target of 0.15 by April 1, 2000. Also, the Addendum included *de minimis* requirements and corrected several typographical errors in the original FMP.

Many of the issues addressed in this Addendum are the result of the limited data that is currently available to assess the status of the tautog stock. Therefore, the Management Board and the Technical Committee will work together to develop a list of monitoring requirements that balances the need for additional data with the fiscal concerns of the state management agencies.

The Management Board requested that Addendum II be developed to address: (1) adjusting the compliance schedule and (2) developing a list of issues to be considered in a subsequent addendum or amendment.

1. Adjustment of the Compliance Schedule

A. Statement of the Problem

The implementation schedule included in Addendum I has been a problem given the life history of tautog and the relatively short duration that the current regulations have been implemented. According to Addendum I the states were required to implement management measures to meet the $F=0.24$ requirement by April 1, 1998. Therefore, as of September 1999, these regulations have only been implemented for about 17 months.

Addendum I also requires that the states submit proposals to meet the $F=0.15$ target by October 1, 1999. The Technical Committee is developing a stock assessment to evaluate the effects of the current regulations and determine the extent of reductions that will need to be made by the states to meet the $F=0.15$ target. During the development of the assessment the Technical Committee has often noted that the effects of the current regulations may not be reflected in the assessment.

The assessment will use the data that has been collected through 1998. Therefore, only nine months (April – December 1998) of data reflecting the new management regime will be included in the assessment. Given the fact that the assessment will supply limited advice on the effects of the current regulations, the Management Board approved delaying the implementation of the $F=0.15$ target for two years, until April 1, 2002.

B. Change to the Compliance Schedule

The Tautog Management Board approved the adjustment of the compliance schedule to allow the states more time to collect data to better understand the effects of the current management program. The Management Board adjusted the compliance schedule to require the states to implement management measures to meet the $F=0.15$ by April 1, 2002. All states will be required to maintain the interim fishing mortality rate of $F=0.24$ until regulations are implemented to meet the $F=0.15$ target.

Please note that the Management Board may shorten the time frame for implementing the $F=0.15$ target in this addendum. States could be required to implement the target prior to April 1, 2002 if additional analysis is completed to better assess the impacts of the current management programs prior to that date. Also, the implementation time frame may be shortened if there are indications that the stock is still being severely overfished and/or biomass is decreasing substantially.

The Board established the following schedule for plan submission and review to meet the implementation requirements:

- **Summer and Fall 1999:** The Tautog Technical Committee will complete the coastwide stock assessment.
- **Fall 1999:** The Assessment will be reviewed through the NEFSC SAW/SARC process.
- **April 15, 2000:** States submit verification of continuation of approved plans
- **May 1, 2000:** Plan Review Team will review state compliance reports.
- **May 2000 ASMFC Meeting Week:** Management Board will review state compliance reports.
- **April 15, 2001:** States submit verification of continuation of approved plans
- **May 1, 2001:** Plan Review Team will review state compliance.

- **May 2001 ASMFC Meeting Week:** Management Board will review state compliance.
- **Summer 2001:** The Tautog Technical Committee will update the coastwide stock assessment.
- **October 1, 2001:** States Submit proposals to meet $F=0.15$ target.
- **By October 15, 2001:** Technical Committee review of state proposals.
- **2001 ASMFC Annual Meeting:** Management Board review and approval of the state proposals.
- **April 1, 2002: States Implement Regulations to Meet $F=0.15$ Target.**
- **April 15, 2002:** States submit verification of implementation of approved plans.
- **May 1, 2002:** Plan Review Team will review state compliance.
- **May 2002 ASMFC Meeting Week:** Management Board will review state compliance.

2. Issues to be Addressed in a Subsequent Addendum or Amendment.

During the last year, the Management Board and the Technical Committee have found that the Fishery Management Plan for Tautog provides the states limited flexibility in developing management programs. This limited flexibility makes it difficult for the states to implement management programs that meet both the goals of the plan and the needs of the fishing public.

The Management Board has developed the following list of issues that need to be considered for possible inclusion in the next addendum or amendment.

- **Fully recruited fishing mortality rate target:** The Plan requires that all state management programs meet very specific fully-recruited fishing mortality rates. The Plan includes bag limit and seasonal closure tables that the states must use to develop commercial and recreational management programs. Many of the states have implemented management programs that cannot be evaluated using the tables in the Plan. All of the management programs that have been implemented by the states appear to reduce fishing mortality, however, the magnitude of these reductions is often difficult to quantify. The Management Board has tasked the Technical Committee with developing alternative targets for the Plan that will allow the states to quantify the reductions in exploitation associated with a variety of management approaches.

The following is a list of the alternative targets that could be included in the next addendum or amendment. The alternative targets are intended to increase the flexibility to the states while still achieving the goals of the plan.

- Biomass mortality targets
- Relative exploitation targets

- Index-based targets (based on trawl survey indices)

- **Clarification of the fishing mortality targets in the FMP:** The FMP requires that state management programs meet the interim fishing mortality target ($F=0.24$) and the final mortality target ($F=0.15$) within specified timeframes. The problem is that the plan does not supply the specifics of which portion of the state programs must meet the target. For example, if a state had sufficient data to conduct a state-specific stock assessment that indicated that the overall management program achieved the mortality target in the plan, is this state in compliance with the plan? Or, does this state need to prove that individual management programs for the commercial, recreational, and party/charter industries meet the mortality target in the Plan?

This section of the plan needs to be redrafted to specify if each sector (recreational, commercial, and party/charter) must meet the target or if an overall state program must meet the mortality targets. The Technical Committee will examine the impacts of different scenarios for meeting the fishing mortality targets. The Management Board will determine which of these options should be included in the next addendum or amendment.

- **Monitoring requirements in the FMP:** During the development of the 1999 stock assessment, the Technical Committee has expressed concern that the quantity of data has not increased with the implementation of the plan. One of the objectives of the plan was to collect better data to more accurately assess the status of the stock.

In order to collect more complete data on all fisheries the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is including the monitoring program of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) in all new FMPs or amendments. The Management Board encourages all state fishery management agencies to pursue full implementation of the ACCSP. Until such a time that the ACCSP is fully implemented, the Management Board is encouraging states to initiate implementation of certain modules of the program to meet all ACCSP standards. The commercial, recreational, and biological monitoring programs are detailed below.

Catch and Landings Information

Commercial Catch and Effort Data Collection Programs

The ACCSP commercial data collection program will be a mandatory, trip-based system with all fishermen and dealers required to report a minimum set of standard data elements (refer to the ACCSP Program Design document for details). Submission of commercial fishermen and dealer reports will be required by the 10th of each month.

Any marine fishery products landed in any state must be reported by a dealer or a marine resource harvester acting as a dealer in that state. Any marine resource harvester or aquaculturist who sells, consigns, transfers, or barter marine fishery products to anyone other than a dealer would themselves be acting as a dealer and would therefore be

responsible for reporting as a dealer.

Recreational Catch and Effort Data Collection Programs

The ACCSP recreational data collection program for private/rental and shore modes of fishing will be conducted through a combination telephone and intercept survey. Recreational effort data will be collected through a telephone survey with random sampling of households until such time as a more comprehensive universal sampling frame is established. Recreational catch data will be collected through an access-site intercept survey. A minimum set of standard data elements will be collected in both the telephone and intercept surveys (refer to the ACCSP Program Design document for details). The ACCSP will implement research and evaluation studies to expand sampling and improve the estimates of recreational catch and effort.

For-Hire Catch/Effort Data Collection Programs

The ACCSP is conducting an evaluation study to determine the best method(s) of data collection for for-hire fisheries. A minimum set of standard data elements will be collected in all for-hire catch/effort surveys (refer to the ACCSP Program Design document for details).

Biological Information

The ACCSP will require the collection of baseline biological data on commercial, for-hire, and recreational fisheries. Biological data for commercial fisheries will be collected through port sampling programs and at-sea observers. Biological data for recreational fisheries will be collected in conjunction with the access-intercept survey. Biological data for for-hire fisheries will be collected through existing surveys and at-sea observer programs. A minimum set of standard data elements will be collected in all biological sampling programs (refer to the ACCSP Program Design document for details). Priorities and target sampling levels will be determined by the ACCSP Biological Review Panel, in coordination with the Discard/Release Prioritization Committee.

- **Address mode splits within commercial and recreational fisheries:** During the last year, many of the states have expressed interest in developing management programs that have specific regulations for individual modes of the fishery. The current plan targets and limited data availability restrict the ability of the states to quantify the reductions in fishing mortality associated with differential bag limits for specific modes of the recreational fishery. For example, states have expressed interest in establishing specific bag and seasonal limits for the party/charter boat industry, however, given the limited data that is available the Management Board has not been able to approve these management programs.

The Management Board and the Technical Committee will review the current data and targets in the plan to develop scenarios that will increase the flexibility for state management agencies. Increased flexibility for the states can only be implemented if the approach still

assures that the targets will not be exceeded.