



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Tautog Technical Committee Meeting Summary

TC Meeting Week
March 27, 2015
Hanover, MD

Attendees

Jason McNamee (RI, Chair)
Joe Cimino (VA)
Sandra Dumais (NY)
Greg Wojcik (CT)
Mike Bednarski (MA)
Jeff Brust (NJ)

Craig Weedon (MD)
Alexi Sharov (MD)
Linda Barry (NJ)
Katie Drew (ASMFC)
Kirby Rootes-Murdy (ASMFC)

Meeting Summary

During the ASMFC Winter Meeting in February 2015, the Board tasked the Technical Committee (TC) with calculating a set of reference points for all the regional options using consistent methods. The Board tabled the decision to select a regional stock unit definition, so the TC will produce a whitepaper to revisit the regional breakdowns. The purpose of this meeting is to review the work that has been put into the whitepaper and additional data analysis (i.e. reference points and MRIP data).

Commissioners from Connecticut were concerned with the placement of CT in a regional breakdown. In response, Connecticut put forth a biological argument for why the state should be grouped with New York, but not with New Jersey. The TC noted a fishery aspect to this dilemma: states within the same region should have the same measures, which will present challenges given the current state-by-state approach. While a biological distinction between tautog caught in Long Island Sound have observed differences (between the North and South shore sampling), the Board hasn't truly entertained looking at a regional split along this line due to management challenges.

The issue raised by the Rhode Island Commissioners during the Board meeting was the inconsistency in how the regional breakdown/designation was done; specifically, inconsistent methods were used to develop reference points across regions. In particular, the Commissioners took issue with the assessment offering them different F statuses within a region, as this would likely prompt the need for a change from the current management measures in place. The rationale for different methods was presented in the stock assessment report and explained in the whitepaper.

The Peer Review Panel recommended in their report that the next benchmark assessment should be done within the next 3 years or so, with an assessment update in one-to-two years. This recommendation was due to perception that there should be better data for the fishery independent sampling within the few years, and partly because the weak biological data used to support the regions.

Greg Wojcik of CT DEEP presented his analysis of MRIP data, which was completed at the CT Commissioner's request following the acceptance of the stock assessment and peer review report for management use. The MRIP analysis included data for Rhode Island through New Jersey from 2004- 2014: trip and catch tables, waves and modes (all combined), distance from shore, and fishing areas. Greg concludes there is very little fishing that occurs west of point Judith, and on the CT side, fishermen do not cross the border to fish. Less than 1% of the RI harvest from 2004-2013 is suspected from LIS, less than 2% of CT harvest likely comes from outside LIS. In summary, the TC agrees the RI/CT border is the appropriate boundary for the northern regional line. Greg's work at the minimum supports the need to move from the coastwide definition. Based on the MRIP analysis, the highly regarded alternative three-region split (MA-RI, CT-NY-NJ, and DelMarVa) was ranked highest of the options presented in the stock assessment, followed by the assessment-preferred three-region. The TC pointed out a biological issue: there is more data on the northern states both in time series and larger fish.

Wordsmithing Session

The TC reviewed the draft whitepaper and made the following comments.

- In reviewing the biological section, the fishery performance was the primary reason selecting the three-region as opposed to two-region model.
- The TC will revise the whitepaper to separate/distinguish the peer review comments and the TC comments and highlighting what the TC has addressed. This will clarify where the TC has responded with updated analysis. Note the specific information the peer review panel discounted on the biological information in assessing the regions.
- The TC agreed to address Greg's MRIP analysis section write up (any edits or issues) later through email.
- Replace the Table 4 with two tables.

Next Steps

- Get revised version of the memo out to the group on Monday March 30th.
- Schedule the call for the end of the week of April 6th
- Final draft of the memo ready following the TC call, and ahead of meeting week materials due date (April 20)