



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Shad and River Herring Management Board

FROM: Caitlin Starks, FMP Coordinator

DATE: October 3, 2017

SUBJECT: Summary of Technical Committee review of shad SFMPs and recommendations to the Board for approval of SFMPs

Technical Committee Members:

Robert Adams (NY DEC), Mike Bailey (USFWS), Jacque Benway Roberts (CT DEEP), Brad Chase (Chair, MA DMF), Joe Cimino (VMRC)*, Ellen Cosby (PRFC), Mike Dionne (NH F&GD), Phil Edwards (RI DEM), Don Harrison (GA)*, Ruth Haas-Castro (NOAA/NMFS), Eric Hilton (VIMS)*, Chad Holbrook (SC)*, Reid Hyle (FL FWC), Wilson Laney (USFWS), Jeremy McCargo (NC WRC), Genine McClair (MD DNR), Brian Neilan (NJ DF&W), Jim Page (GA)*, Bill Post (SC)*, Ken Sprankle (USFWS), Josh Tryninewski (PA FBC), Holly White (NC DMF)

**Some TC members were only present on one of the two calls to review SFMP updates*

ASMFC Staff: Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Caitlin Starks, Jeff Kipp

The Shad and River Herring Technical Committee met via two conference calls to review the following sustainable fishery management plans (SFMPs) for American shad. On September 11, 2017 the TC reviewed the plan updates for North Carolina, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Connecticut and a limited bycatch allowance proposal from Virginia. On October 3, 2017, the TC reviewed plan updates from South Carolina and Georgia. Each plan was presented by the respective state's TC member. The presentations were to include the following information: structure of the plan, definition of sustainability, sustainability targets, timeframes for achieving targets, monitoring of the stocks to be conducted, and data to be used for evaluation.

1) Updated North Carolina SFMP

The presentation was given by Holly White. The plan is very similar to NC's previously approved SFMP for shad, with a few changes. The first change is that under the updated plan relative fishing mortality (relative F) will be calculated by dividing commercial landings by a hind cast 3-year average of a survey index instead of a centered 3-year average. The second change is that the 25th and 75th percentiles used for sustainability thresholds will remain set for the next 5-year management period. North Carolina requests having recreational and commercial fisheries in all coastal rivers and will use management measures outlined in the plan to maintain fishery sustainability.

The TC expressed concern with the fact that the plan does not include fishery independent monitoring of two coastal rivers (New and White Oak rivers), yet harvest is still allowed to occur in these systems.

The TC recommends that the board approve NC's SFMP, with the following revisions:

- *Include a table summarizing management measures*
- *Alter language in section 3.1 to imply that one or more of the listed potential management measures will be used when management triggers are reached*
- *Add language to show that there are not significant fisheries occurring in unmonitored rivers*

The TC discussed the need for the Board task to task the TC with developing a better protocol for managing river systems that allow harvest without river-specific sustainability parameters, and defining these systems beyond the language in Amendment 3. This seems to be a point of discussion for several states with unmonitored rivers where a fishery may still occur, and may need to be addressed in future plan updates.

The plan was revised and returned to ASMFC staff by September 19th.

2) Updated Potomac River Fisheries Commission SFMP

The presentation was given by Ellen Cosby. The updated SFMP is similar to the previously approved plan. PRFC requests a continued limited commercial by-catch allowance of American shad in the section of the Potomac River under PRFC jurisdiction. The benchmark goal identified in the 2007 Stock Assessment was approved as a restoration target and has been exceeded each year since 2011.

The TC suggested that the plan would need to provide more clarity on the sustainability triggers that would lead to management action, and what measures would be taken in the case that these triggers were reached. Suggestions included using the restoration target as a biomass threshold, where if biomass fell below the threshold for 3 consecutive years a management response would be triggered.

The TC recommends Board approval of this plan contingent on these additions. The plan was revised and returned to ASMFC staff by September 19th.

3) Updated Connecticut SFMP

The presentation was given by Jacque Benway Roberts. The Connecticut SFMP is only for the American shad fishery in the Connecticut River. The plan clearly defines the sustainability metrics and targets, management measures, monitoring program, and data to be used.

Similar to the other plans, the TC recommends that a table summarizing management measures be added to the plan. The TC also recommends language be added to better define what management responses will occur if a trigger is reached.

The plan was revised and returned to ASMFC staff by September 19th.

4) VA limited commercial bycatch proposal

The proposal was presented by Joe Cimino, Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC). The VMRC requests a limited bycatch allowance of American shad. The same conservation measures currently in place will be used for 2018-2022. The VMRC has capped the number of bycatch allowance permits at 30 to control harvest. Permittees must allow biological sampling of their catch to provide data to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS).

The TC recommends approval of the plan with the following addition:

- *Add language that indicates that permittees are monitored to ensure they are not targeting shad, and that measures will be taken to prevent permittees from abusing the permit.*

The proposal was revised and returned to ASMFC staff by September 19th.

5) South Carolina updated shad SFMP

The plan was presented by Chad Holbrook, SC Department of Natural Resources. South Carolina's SFMP includes open fisheries for the Pee Dee River Run and the Black, Santee-Cooper, Edisto, Combahee and Savannah Rivers; all other shad fisheries will remain closed. The plan presents sustainability benchmarks, season dates, bag limits and gear specifications for each river. The Black and Combahee Rivers CPUE data are confidential but the CPUE has remained above the benchmark in recent years, along with the other rivers in the plan. Several conservation measures are proposed for various rivers to reduce bycatch of both sturgeon species and shad exploitation. These include stricter commercial and recreational gear restrictions, procedural changes, shifted and/or shortened seasons, reduced bag limits, and license caps.

The TC recommends approval of the SC SFMP with the following changes:

- *Add bullets for future objectives and consideration:*
 - *Consider joint coordination with NC on the Great Pee Dee River similar to what is occurring on the Savannah River (GA)*
 - *Consider ways to develop current juvenile indices to perhaps be used in future updates to the plan.*
 - *Begin discussions with GA to develop consistent management measures for the Savannah River in the event that either state falls below the sustainability benchmark for 3 consecutive years.*
 - *For the next plan review, evaluate potential biological metrics derived from ongoing shad sampling for use as plan benchmarks*
- *Add a column to Table 1 with type of benchmark (fishery-dependent or independent)*

The plan was revised and returned to ASMFC staff by October 5th.

6) Georgia updated shad SFMP

The plan was presented to the TC by Don Harrison, GA Department of Natural Resources. The plan requests commercial and recreational fisheries on the Altamaha and Savannah Rivers, and a recreational fishery only on the Ogeechee River. CPUE benchmarks are in place for each river,

and if CPUE falls below a benchmark for 3 consecutive years, GA DNR will establish conservation measures to ensure fishery sustainability. The Satilla and St. Marys are technically open to recreational harvest of shad with the 8 fish bag limit for the state, but shad have not been observed in angler harvest during creel surveys from 2006-2014 on the Satilla, and there is no recreational survey on the St. Marys. Electrofishing surveys for sportfish indicate low abundance of shad on both rivers and thus a recreational fishery on these rivers is not thought to impact the stock.

The TC is concerned with these recreational fisheries, as they do not technically follow the sustainability metric and monitoring requirements of Amendment 3, and the TC feels it should apply the Amendment consistently to all rivers. The TC suggested that GA could specify that these fisheries are catch and release only, however, this would require a change in DNR rules and the state managers feel it is unnecessary as the change would provide no conservation benefit. The TC agreed to address this issue with the Board, but recommends this plan be approved considering the precedent set when other plans were approved regardless of presenting similar inconsistencies with Amendment 3.

The TC recommends approval of GA's SFMP with only the following additions:

- *Add a section for future objectives, including plans for evaluating the addition of biological metrics related to length and age data, and juvenile indices to the next plan update.*
- The GA SFMP was revised and returned to ASMFC staff by October 5th.

7) Other Discussions

Regarding the issue of inconsistency between SFMPs and Amendment 3 requirements, the TC discussed the need to develop language to address rivers where shad and river herring harvest is allowed to occur, but monitoring and sustainability measures are not in place. The TC recognized that as this was the first review of original shad SFMPs following Amendment 3 the opportunity should be taken to address uncertainties in Amendment 3 directives and to consider standardized improvements in the plans.

Commission staff also brought up concern about the current mismatch between SFMPs use of sustainability benchmarks that are not directly tied to the total mortality estimates from either species' benchmark stock assessments or the recent river herring stock assessment update. This disconnect between the stock assessment information and the SFMPs further highlights the need to revamp how SFMPs are evaluated and the standards against which they are reviewed by the TC.

The TC and ASMFC staff will prepare a memo for the Board on these issues, requesting that the TC be tasked with continuing to work on this issue, among other improvements to the management documents. These included incorporating new shad assessment information into Amendments and SFMPs, standardizing metrics, management actions and reporting, clarifying *de minimis* requirements relating to SFMPs, and clarifying data requirements for demonstrating sustainability.