



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Shad & River Herring Technical Committee Call Summary

November 20, 2018

Technical Committee Members in Attendance: Ken Sprankle (Chair, USFWS), Mike Brown (ME), Mike Dionne (NH), Brad Chase (MA), Patrick McGee (RI), Jacque Benway Roberts (CT), Robert Adams (Vice Chair, NY), Brian Neilan (NJ), Josh Tryninewski (PA), Johnny Moore (DE), Rob Bourdon (MD), Ellen Cosby (PRFC), Eric Hilton (VA), Holly White (NC), Jeremy McCargo (NC), Bill Post (SC), Jim Page (GA), Ruth Hass-Castro (NOAA), Wilson Laney (USFWS)

ASMFC Staff: Caitlin Starks, Jeff Kipp

The Shad and River Herring Technical Committee (TC) met via conference call to review the Massachusetts Sustainable Fishery Management Plan (SFMP) update for shad in the Merrimack River, discuss progress and next steps on the October 2017 Board task regarding improvements to Amendments 2 and 3, and receive an update on the ongoing American shad benchmark stock assessment.

MA Sustainable Fishery Management Plan Update

Brad Chase presented the updated shad SFMP for the Merrimack River to the TC. The SFMP proposes maintaining recreational shad catch and harvest in the Merrimack River and Connecticut River with no change to the current regulations, and includes updated passage-based sustainability targets for both the Connecticut and the Merrimack Rivers. The 25th percentile benchmarks have increased for both rivers, and increasing fish lift counts for 2012-2017 are well above the benchmarks. Mortality (Z) thresholds will also be presented in the 2018 SFMP, but because the available time series is short, they will serve as a warning threshold until additional data can be collected. The SFMP notes that fish lift effectiveness is affected by water temperature, discharge, spill operations and other operational actions; future plan updates will aim to standardize lift count data by these factors.

The TC discussed the time series used to set the sustainability benchmarks. Bill Post noted that for the SC SFMP, the TC recommended using the most recent 10 years to set sustainability targets, whereas the MA plan uses the full time series. The TC agreed that the data used for setting targets may vary by river system based on factors like data quality and management goals, but there should be a discussion of the criteria used to determine the appropriate time series to ensure the TC is evaluating SFMPs in a consistent way. This discussion can occur as part of the TC task to clarify SFMP requirements for content and metrics.

Overall, the TC did not have any concerns with the MA SFMP update, and recommended Board approval. The TC also supported improving the SFMP in the future by modeling fish lift operation and effectiveness to standardize count data.

TC task regarding improvements to Amendments 2 and 3

As part of the October 2017 Board task, the TC has been working to identify areas where harvest regulations or monitoring are inconsistent with the requirements of Amendments 2 and 3. Following the last TC call in September, staff and the TC created a database for documenting information on river herring and shad harvest, management and monitoring for all river systems. The database was reviewed on the call to identify missing information and provide guidance on completing the table. The TC recommended several changes to the table to better capture the pertinent information; staff will make those changes and distribute an updated version. The group decided that a subset of the TC would form a working group to address this particular aspect of the task by completing the data tables, identifying areas of inconsistency with the Amendments, and proposing recommendations for resolving those issues. Staff, Ken Sprankle, Bobby Adams, Brad Chase, Brian Neilan, Mike Brown, Holly White and Jeremy McCargo will participate in this working group.

Shad Assessment Update

Jeff Kipp updated the TC that the Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) met November 5-8 for the assessment methods workshop. During the workshop the group identified several data sets that have not been made available to the assessment, in particular un-digitized data. A new hard deadline of January 1, 2019 has been set for data submission; following this date no new data may be added to the assessment. TC members were requested to review the data inventory and resolve any discrepancies for their state or jurisdiction. ACCSP staff will also be reaching out to states for commercial landings data validation. Lastly, Ken Sprankle indicated there are still outstanding responses from TC members on hydropower and barrier information. Ken will reach out individually to TC members for information to add to the assessment report.