



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Horseshoe Crab Biomedical Best Management Practices Work Group Meeting Summary

Webinar
April 4, 2023

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The Biomedical Best Management Practices Work Group (BMP WG) met on April 4th via webinar to continue addressing the Board task to review and update the Biomedical BMPs. Staff began the meeting by reviewing the work group ground rules and process for allowing the public to make comments during the meeting. The WG reviewed suggested edits to the draft BMP document it has developed over the last several months. The draft document includes a summary, a background section to provide context for the biomedical industry BMPs and purpose of the document, a description of the general flow of horseshoe crabs through the biomedical blood collection process, research recommendations, and a recommendations section geared toward management.

The WG did not complete its review of the draft document at this meeting, but did review the summary and background sections. The WG discussed adding data on the horseshoe crab population, and the relative numbers of crabs collected for biomedical use. There was disagreement among group members on the level of detail to provide on this topic, but ultimately a compromise was reached by agreeing to add a reference to the most recent stock assessment to provide population information, and a direct link to the stock assessment publications on the Commission's website. The group also agreed it would be helpful to note that this review of the BMPs is occurring due to the amount of time that has passed since the BMPs were originally developed, and not as a result of an issue with the BMPs. The group also wanted the background section to clarify that fishing practices within each state have generally dictated the collections methods that can be used for biomedical crabs.

There was also a discussion on the dual use of horseshoe crabs originating from the bait fishery for biomedical blood collection. The group decided the BMP document should mention this practice only occurs in some states. Because dual-use crabs are counted against the bait fishery

quota and have a mortality rate of 100%, the document should clarify that the BMPs are not relevant to dual-use horseshoe crabs.

One member of the public commented that he disagreed with comments suggesting that the BMP document should address how shorebirds are impacted by the biomedical collection of horseshoe crabs. He noted that the purpose of the BMPs is to reduce the mortality and injury of horseshoe crabs during the biomedical process, and that comments about broader impacts to other species are outside the scope of the document and should be disregarded.

Staff will provide edits to the document to address the concerns raised by the WG. The WG will meet again in April to continue reviewing the document and finalize it for the Board's consideration at its May 2023 meeting.