

Bureau of Fisheries
Division of Fish Production Services
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January 2, 2007

Eugene Kray, Chairman
Shad and River Herring Management Board
325 Staghorn Way
West Chester, PA 19380

Re: Action items from the annual meeting of the Shad and River Herring Technical Committee

Dear Chairman Kray:

The Shad and River Herring Technical Committee met on December 4, 2006 at the Hotel Providence in Providence, R.I. At our meeting, the TC considered several charges from the Management Board. Listed below are the charges and the response from the TC.

- From the Management Board meeting on October 23, 2006: *Ask the Technical Committee to develop a recommendation on how to standardize reporting for the American shad ocean bycatch.*

The technical committee recommends that states adopt ACCSP level trip reporting standards and report such in the annual compliance report. Under Section 4.1 of Amendment 1, states can “permit the landing of this shad bycatch, provided that American shad do not constitute more than 5% of the total landings (in pounds) per trip” and that “States permitting the landing of American shad ocean bycatch must annually document that the 5% trip limit is not exceeded...” In order to do so, total harvest and harvest of American shad must be reported on a per trip basis.

- From the Management Board meeting on October 23, 2006: *Ask the Technical Committee to comment on the value of the creel survey. Also ask if it would be possible to perform a less resource intensive survey and describe what that survey would look like. Is it possible that the current creel surveys could be linked to past surveys or creel surveys for other species?*

Members of the technical committee have been providing input on an ASMFC effort to develop a template for riverine creel surveys which can be used to aid states in designing surveys to meet ASMFC requirements and stock assessment data needs. This template may be ready for distribution sometime in 2007. The technical committee recommends that the Management Board postpone the requirement for recreational creel surveys until after the stock assessment has been completed and a template for creel surveys has been developed. The TC also recommends that states coordinate creel surveys to produce a coast-wide, concurrent assessment of recreational fishing for American shad.

- The 2006 Virginia by-catch proposal - In the Management Board meeting on November 2, 2005, the Board passed a motion “to approve the modified Virginia proposal that includes a ten fish per vessel per day by-catch in the river systems, for the staked and anchored gill net fishery, for 2006 only.” During the meeting, members of the Board asked that the Technical Committee review the revised, and previously approved, by-catch proposal. Chairman Carpenter asked that ASMFC staff commit to a TC review by the February, 2006 Board meeting. The TC met on February 17, 2006, via conference call. At the subsequent February 22, 2006 Board meeting, TC Chair Hendricks reported that the TC felt it was not helpful to review the proposal for 2006, since it had already been approved for 2006, and that it was premature to review the proposal for 2007. Hendricks committed the TC to a review of the 2007 proposal, based on data collected in the 2006 fishery. On September 27, 2006, VMRC requested approval of a limited by-catch allowance for 2007. On November 15, 2006, VMRC submitted a revised request for a limited by-catch allowance along with an analysis of data collected by VMRC pertaining to the 2006 fishery. An independent analysis of the 2006 by-catch fishery was subsequently provided by VIMS. Below are the recommendations and observations of the TC after review and discussion of these documents.

The 2007 Virginia by-catch proposal - After considerable discussion, the technical committee approved Option A in the 2007 by-catch proposal submitted by the VMRC. Option A maintains the by-catch fishery as it was in 2006 (with fishermen calling into the VMRC weekly and limited to anchored and stake gill nets with a harvest cap). With the stock assessment coming out in 2007, the technical committee recommends not to expand the fishery (by allowing new gear and additional permits in 2007 – VMRC Option B) until the stock assessment has been approved by the Board. The TC also agreed that there was evidence of increased effort using anchored gill nets to capture shad—doubling the number of trips in 2006 compared to previous years (2003-2005). The TC also recommended that by-catch discards in 2007 be reported to VMRC. This will provide improved characterization of the total by-catch by anchored and stake gill nets.

Technical committee members made the following observations during our discussions. In some cases, not all TC members were in agreement with each point.

- Bycatch harvest of shad was very low in 2006, based on either the VMRC or VIMS estimate, even if serious under-reporting occurred.
- The VIMS estimate of by-catch (2.4 shad per trip) was two times that of VMRC (1.1 shad per trip).
- The American shad fishery in Chesapeake Bay is under moratorium. There is concern that permitting landing of by-catch will lead to additional effort targeted at American shad.
- In their report, VMRC acknowledged that some drift net fishers switched to anchor nets to be permitted to land American shad.
- VIMS noted that some fishers in the York River appeared to increase the numbers of trips in 2006. It was unclear if this increase was directly related to the by-catch allowance.

January 2, 2007

Page 3

- VIMS noted that the 2006 spawning run of American shad throughout the Chesapeake Bay was weak compared to previous years and that additional effort may be expended for shad in 2007, if the run is stronger.
- The hatchery-based restoration effort above Boshers' Dam on the James River may be negatively impacted by permitting landing of by-catch. VIMS noted that some hatchery fish were taken in the 2006 by-catch.
- There is a need for data on by-catch fisheries (harvest and discards) coast wide.
- The VIMS report noted that pound net by-catch discards may be high in the Chesapeake Bay; much higher than other gears. There is a need for better data in this area as well.

Other business:

Benjamin Walther of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution gave an excellent presentation on the use of otolith microchemistry to determine origin of yearling American shad, collected in 2005, in mixed stock locations in the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy. As a baseline, he used 2004 cohort YOY American shad from 20 rivers. Because microchemistry signatures can vary from year to year, the 2004 cohort should be the focus of any future stock origin study. His work provides a unique opportunity to evaluate the origin of adult American shad in the one remaining mixed stock fishery: the Delaware Bay. A Delaware Bay stock origin study should be conducted in 2008 (when age-4 fish are recruiting) or in 2009 (when age-5 fish are present in the fishery). Such a study, conducted with 100 otolith pairs, could be done for approximately \$100K, excluding otolith collection. The TC strongly recommends that ASMFC secure funding for such a study.

Sincerely yours,

Michael L. Hendricks, Chair
Shad and River Herring Technical Committee

Cc: Management Board
Erika Robbins, FMP coordinator
Technical Committee members