

Red Drum Stock Enhancement Subcommittee

May 25, 2007
Charleston, South Carolina

Meeting Report

Members Present

Chris Young (FL FWCC)
Doug Haymans (GA DNR)

Mike Denson (SC DNR)

Other Participants

Spud Woodward (GA DNR)
Gabe Gaddis (GA DNR)
Tanya Darden (SC DNR)

Ray Rhodes (College of Charleston)
Nichola Meserve (ASMFC)

Meeting Overview

The Red Drum Stock Enhancement Subcommittee met on May 25, in Charleston, South Carolina for its first meeting. The objectives of the meeting were discussing an economic benefit-cost study on South Carolina's stocking program, reviewing state status on stock enhancement, and determining next steps for the production of the stock enhancement guidelines document.

South Carolina Red Drum Stocking Economic Study

Ray Rhodes presented an economic evaluation of South Carolina's red drum stocking program, which he and the other authors plan to publish. To evaluate the economic benefit of red drum stocking, FY04 fishing license holders and non-license holders were mailed a questionnaire according to a random sampling design. The survey estimated willingness to donate using a tax credit deduction scenario. Each survey provided a specific amount of money and asked if the participant would be willing to donate that amount on a yearly basis for the stocking program. The surveys as a whole used a number of different amounts. The questionnaire also asked how sure the participant was that they would donate this amount on a scale of 1-10. Any survey with an answer below seven was not included in the analysis, making the result a conservative estimate. Raw response rates ranged between 40% and 52%. Among the 1,772 usable returned surveys, the average willingness to donate was \$6.65/year. Extrapolation resulted in a total willingness to donate of \$735,230 annually. This compared to a FY05 stocking program cost of \$372,000 in annual operating costs (which is about 0.13 per stocked fish) and \$588,000 in fixed costs. This was suggested as a number higher than the actual amount because multiuse of facilities was not considered. These resulting estimates were incorporated into an economic benefit-cost analysis protocol, where net present value was estimated and willingness to donate was applied over either five- or ten-year periods, with either a 5% or 10% discounting rate. In all scenarios, the net was a positive number between \$200 and \$1100, using explicit stocking costs (no opportunity costs included). Ray's presentation is available to the Subcommittee member on the shared website: <ftp://tautog.accsp.org>, and other interested parties can contact Nichola at nmeserve@asmfc.org for the presentation.

The Subcommittee discussed the positive results of the study and asked Ray any questions they had. Spud questioned how the study could be altered to include the building of a production

facility such that, for a state like Georgia that doesn't have a facility or money for one, a benefit-cost study could be produced. Such a study could provide a means to determine if Georgia anglers are willing to donate money to begin a stocking program, as there is no guarantee that Georgia will always be able to use the South Carolina facilities. (For example, if the Peach State Red's Initiative has positive results and anglers want to continue stocking but at a larger scale, South Carolina might be unable to provide the requested level of support.) It was also asked what dollar amount people are actually likely to donate given the estimated willingness to donate amount. Ray guessed half of the average willingness to donate amount. The Subcommittee also questioned what type of results (from a stocking program) anglers need to see to continue donating the initial amount. It seems that some people are satisfied to know that fish have been stocked or to think that the fish they caught was stocked, while others might need to know that X% of the fish caught by anglers that year were stocked.

Overview of State Stocking Program Status

The Subcommittee held a conference call in March and determined that the best way to start the Subcommittee off on its task to develop stocking guidelines was to review what was currently going on in the southeastern states with red drum stocking. Spud developed an outline for status reports for the Subcommittee members to use when preparing reports. Florida and South Carolina have extensive stocking programs and Chris and Mike prepared thorough reports and presentations. Chris also shared Florida's draft genetic policy, which is expected to be ratified soon, and Mike shared a draft guidelines documents for the use of propagated animals in fisheries management in South Carolina. Georgia has only begun stocking in the last year, using the facilities at South Carolina for holding brood fish. Thus, Doug gave a presentation only of Georgia's very recent and planned activities, relying on South Carolina's report to cover the rearing aspects of the state's program. North Carolina has yet to commence any rearing or stocking of red drum, so no report or presentation was provided. Both the written reports from Florida and South Carolina, and the PowerPoint presentation from Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina are available to the Subcommittee member on the shared website: <ftp://tautog.accsp.org>, and other interested parties can contact Nichola at nmeserve@asmfc.org for the reports or presentations. Some common themes among the presentations were using Blankenship and Leber's (1995) "Responsible Approach" to stocking, defining objectives, starting with a baseline of data, tagging all fish, using pilot projects, involving stakeholders, developing cooperative partnerships, checking fish health, managing for genetic concerns, studying optimal release conditions, assessing program costs, and monitoring success.

Determine Next Steps for the Subcommittee

The Subcommittee briefly discussed its objective, emphasizing the need for guidelines so that when other states consider red drum stocking, a document will already exist. The Subcommittee determined that each member should read *Guidelines for Stocking Cultured Atlantic Sturgeon for Supplementation or Reintroduction* (ASMFC 2006) to determine the amount of detail that the Commission is looking for in a guidelines document. Through a conference call or email, the Subcommittee will then produce a report outline. Support was expressed for a review by the Gulf States when a draft report is produced.

Seeing as there was no other business, the meeting was adjourned.