

**Atlantic Herring Technical Committee
Conference Call
October 9, 2007**

Present: Chris Vonderweidt (ASMFC, Staff); Matt Cieri (Chair); Bill Overholtz; Steve Correia; Claire McBane

The Atlantic Herring Technical Committee (TC) convened via phone conference on October 9, 2007. This conference was initiated because the ASMFC and NMFS have different TAC specifications for Area 1A (ASMFC 50,000 mt; NMFS 45,000 mt) and Area 3 (ASMFC 55,000 mt; NMFS 60,000 mt) for the 2008 and 2009 fishing seasons. The Atlantic Herring Section (Section) tasked the TC to give TAC recommendations using updated stock assessment information that contains data through the spring of 2007. The following represents *consensus* from the phone conference.

The TC recommends that the ASMFC Section adopt TAC's that are consistent with the NMFS for the 2008 and 2009 Atlantic herring fishing season. Specifically, the TC recommends a TAC of 45,000 mt for Area 1A and 60,000 mt for Area 3. The following bullets outline the rationale for the TC recommendations.

Consistency in State and Federal waters is paramount

- There is no existing system that can monitor state only landings. If the ASMFC wishes to allow a state fishery of 5,000 mt after the federal TAC for Area 1A is harvested, a state reporting system will need to be set up. Such a system needs to require weekly reporting at a minimum to be effective.
- Most of the herring harvest are from those vessels with one or more federal herring permits and therefore must abide by the federal TAC closures. The majority of fishermen who will continue to fish will be fixed gear fishermen who have an exemption from TAC east of Cutler, for ASMFC but not federally, and a 500 mt set aside west of Cutler. Catch and/or harvest from state only mobile gear fishermen is not well monitored.

The best available science suggests a maximum harvest of 45,000 mt for Area 1A

- The updated stock assessment information does not present new information warranting a change in the scheduled decrease in 1A TAC fishing pressure in area 1A at this time.
- 45,000 mt appears to produce a fishing mortality rate that is more consistent with F MSY for the stock complex. A TAC of 50,000 mt may exceed the MSY for the inshore component.
- The current concentration of harvest in the inshore Gulf of Maine is of concern and may be excessive, as suggested by the SSC comments on the 2003 TRAC process.
- According to the risk assessment, setting the Area 1A TAC at 45,000 mt for 2008–2009 will provide a slightly improved chance of producing exploitation rates that are more consistent with Fmsy for the stock component, within a range of realistic stock mixing ratios.

- TC is especially concerned about the strong retrospective pattern identified in the May 2006 Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) for biomass and fishing mortality estimates. The retrospective pattern overestimates SSB (averaging + 14.5 percent/year, and ranging between 1–24 percent) and underestimates fishing mortality, complex wide. While the herring stock as a whole is currently above Bmsy, the retrospective pattern identified as management implications. It is likely that as more data are collected and analyzed, the health of the stock may not be as robust as the current assessment implies. The TC and PDT agree that this is a valid concern and recommends that both the Council and Section exercise caution when considering the Area 1A TAC.