

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1444 Eye St., N.W., Suite 600

Washington, D.C. 2005

(202) 289-6400 phone

(202) 289-6051 fax

www.asmfc.org

Shad and River Herring Technical Committee

CONFERENCE CALL

October 10, 2007

Participants:

Robert Sadzinski, Chair (MD)
Mike Stangl (DE)
Michael Brown (ME)
Don Harrison (GA)
Phil Edwards (RI)
Mike Hendricks (PA)
Bill Post (SC)

Cheri Patterson (NH)
Russ Allen (NJ)
Sara Winslow (NC)
Kathy Hattala (NY)
Ruth Haas-Castro (NMFS)
Jacqueline Benway (CT)
Larry Miller (USFWS)

Reid Hyle (FL)
John Olney (VIMS)
Brian Watkins (VIMS)
Phil Brady (MA)
Wilson Laney (USFWS)
Erika Robbins (ASMFC)

The Shad and River Herring Technical Committee met via conference call on Tuesday, October 9, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. The purpose of the call was to finalize recommendations to the Shad and River Herring Management Board prior to the Annual Meeting. Draft memos to the Management Board were prepared in advance to facilitate the TC's discussion.

Recommendations from the 2007 American Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment

The Technical Committee worked off a memo that was developed by ASMFC staff prior to the call. The document contained the recommendations from the *2007 American Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment*, which were grouped according to the means by which they could be implemented (i.e., can be implemented through an addendum; can be implemented through an amendment; can be tasked to the TC or SASC; and requires state implantation or funded research). The TC thought that using the term *adaptive management* to describe a means of implementation was confusing. The term was replaced by *addendum* to better inform the Management Board on how the items listed under the heading could be implemented.

The TC altered the order and content of the recommendations. The following recommendation was split into two (each sentence became its own recommendation): "Identify all fisheries where bycatch occurs, then quantify the amount and disposition of bycatch. In fisheries where bycatch is allowed, quantify the discards." These two new recommendations were moved from the category "tasked to the Technical Committee or Stock Assessment Subcommittee" to the "addendum" category.

The TC added an additional recommendation to the “amendment” group. Although not explicitly stated in the 2007 assessment, the TC felt that a recommendation to adopt the restoration goals and benchmarks of the assessment was implied through the nature of the report. The TC added a recommendation to: “Incorporate the benchmarks and restoration goals of the *2007 American Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment* into the Shad and River Herring Fishery Management Plan.”

The TC agreed that ranking the recommendations during the conference call was not practical, although grouping them was possible. Instead, the TC chose to rank the recommendations individually and then pool the results to create the TC rankings. Bob Sadzinski facilitated the ranking process by sending everyone an identical spreadsheet of the recommendations. The TC sent their rankings to Erika Robbins, who then pooled the results and created the final rankings. In general, the TC agreed upon the items that should receive the highest priority. The recommendations were reordered in the memo to reflect their assigned priority.

Virginia Bycatch Allowance Proposal

For the previous two years, the Commonwealth of Virginia has requested that the Management Board allow them to institute a bycatch allowance for American shad in their rivers, which is a relaxation of their current regulations. For the previous two years, the Management Board has approved Virginia’s request.

The TC reviewed Virginia’s 2008 proposal for a bycatch allowance. The 2008 request would be a continuing allowance, not like the 2006 and 2007 requests, which were annual. The TC had extensive discussions on this topic and whether or not to recommend that the Management Board approve this request.

In the 2007 stock assessment, the TC recommended reducing bycatch. The TC was concerned that by recommending this proposal for approval they would be contradicting their previous recommendation. Adding the most recent data (2006-2007) from the York River changes the direction of the trend in the 2007 stock assessment—catch rates on the York River are decreasing, not increasing.

Virginia MRC and VIMS data indicate that gill net bycatch is small, but this data comes only from fishermen allowed to harvest American shad bycatch. John Olney did not see a reason to recommend against this proposal as the fishermen did not appear to be targeting American shad; the fishermen only wanted to utilize their discards. There also does not appear to be an increase in effort between 2006 and 2007. No fishermen reported American shad harvested from the spawning grounds. This might be because anchored gill nets are not optimal for fishing in those areas. Since the first proposal was approved, the amount of American shad harvested by the permitted fishermen is very small.

The TC debated items that they might request from the Commonwealth of Virginia if they were to recommend that the proposal be approved: (1) report of discards; (2) request approval of the bycatch allowance annually; (3) no harvest of bycatch from the spawning grounds; (4) no harvest of bycatch from the James River; (5) quantify tribal harvest of American shad; and (6) limit the number of broodstock taken.

Technical Committee members were concerned that there were already too many sources of mortality on this stock: undocumented bycatch, broodstock collection and harvest by native tribes. The stock is not under moratorium. The TC also feels that recovery is at risk on the James River. There was concern that the bycatch harvest might be large enough to negatively affect this stock, but the TC was not in agreement about this.

An additional concern of the TC was that if this request were approved as Virginia submitted it, it would be difficult to rescind the bycatch allowance if it were determined at a later date that this allowed harvest was negatively affecting the status of the Virginia stocks.

The final TC recommendation to the Board is:

The TC discussed the recently completed American shad stock assessment and reviewed new monitoring data (2006-2007) not included in the 2007 assessment. The three major rivers in Virginia have either stable and low or decreasing abundance of American shad. In addition, each system exceeded the mortality threshold established by the SASC report (Z_{30}).

VMRC's proposal is a multi-stock proposal and was reviewed by the TC regarding its effect on recovery of each stock. The TC acknowledged that the total reported bycatch has been low in the last two years.

The Technical Committee recommends to the Management Board that the Virginia proposal to allow harvesters to retain a limited bycatch of American shad be approved for the *2008 fishing season only* but the TC requests the following from VMRC:

- An annual request to ASFMC to allow permitted bycatch harvest
- An annual ASMFC Technical Committee review
- Close the bycatch fishery on the spawning grounds
- Close the James River bycatch fishery
- Quantify discards by gill and pound nets
- Work with tribal governments to quantify harvest in the York River

Time Requirements for a River Herring Assessment

A memo outlining the stock assessment process and time requirements specific to river herring was prepared prior to the TC conference call. The memo noted that the scope of the assessment would likely determine the amount of time required for an assessment. Members of the TC advocated a comprehensive assessment because by the time this assessment is completed, it will have been 20 years since the previous river herring assessment.

The TC thought that the assessment should list the known river herring runs along the coast and whether or not data is available for them. This could be an update of ASMFC's 1985 table of

river herring presence and absence, Roger Rulifson's 1994 paper, or ASFMC's habitat source document.

A conservative estimate of the amount of time that may be required to complete an assessment of river herring stocks is:

1. Pre-assessment meeting or conference call – 3 months
2. Pre-assessment Technical Committee meeting – 6 months
3. Data Workshop preparation – 21 months
4. Data Workshop – 3 months
5. Assessment Workshop preparation – 18 months
6. Assessment Workshop – 2 months
7. Post-Assessment Workshop follow-up – 12 months
8. Technical Committee review of stock assessment report – 2 months
9. Preparation for peer review – 3 months

Recommendation for the American Shad Recreational Monitoring Requirement

The Management Board asked that the TC advise them as to whether or not they should reinstate the requirement to monitor recreational fisheries. The TC decided that the Management Board should reinstate the requirement as these data are necessary for an assessment of American shad stocks.

The TC noted that catch in the recreational fishery is related to stock abundance and that recreational monitoring surveys could be translated into an index of adult abundance. For this and other reasons, the recreational fisheries should be monitored annually.

Members of the TC suggested that the TC offer to provide the Management Board with recommendations on improving recreational monitoring. This and the discussion of an amendment or addendum will be taken up at a future meeting.