



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

January 30, 2012

To: Atlantic Menhaden Management Board
From: Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Panel
RE: Advisory Panel Report to the Board on the Draft Public Information Document

The Advisory Panel met via conference call on January 26, 2012 to make recommendation to the Board on the Draft Public Information Document for Amendment 2 the ISFMP for Atlantic Menhaden. Panel members in attendance represented the conservation community, commercial harvesters (for bait and reduction), bait dealers, and recreational fishermen. The following is a summary of the meeting.

Attendees

Advisory Panel Members

Bill Windley (MD), Chair
Ron Lukens (VA)
Jimmy Kellum (VA)
Jeff Kaelin (NJ)
Ed Cherry (NJ)
Don Swanson (NH)

Jennie Bichrest (ME)
Ken Hinman (VA)
Melissa Dearborn (NY)
Tom Ogle
ASMFC Staff
Mike Waine

Public

Charlie Hutchinson
Frank Harney
Alison Fairbrother

Draft Public Information Document

Issue 1: Achieving the Target

Some members suggested that information about the timeframe for achieving the threshold is missing, and was not well defined by the Board.

Other members thought Addendum V clearly stated that the threshold would be achieved immediately to end overfishing.

Some AP members requested a detailed description of the status of other ASMFC species, and the way they are being managed. More specifically, they are interested in which species are managed at the threshold F, and which species are managed at the target F.

PDT drafted text to address AP recommendations

- Currently the terminal year estimate of fishing mortality exceeds the threshold level, resulting in overfishing. The Atlantic Menhaden FMP states that if overfishing is occurring the Board will take steps to reduce F to the target level. Therefore, through Amendment 2, the Board will take actions to end overfishing immediately. However, because the reductions in F are more substantial to achieve the F target, the Board is considering a one, three, and five year schedule to reduce F to the target level.

- *If tasked, the PDT can perform an analysis of species currently managed by the Commission to provide information regarding stock status relative to biological reference points. However, there was not enough time to complete this task before the February Board Meeting.*

Issue 2: Catch reporting

Some members requested more information regarding the reduction fishery and the use of Captain's Daily Fishing Reports with open port sampling. The addition of this text would help the public understand what the current reporting is in the reduction fishery.

It was also suggested that more information be included on the bait fishery reporting. Most specifically, the AP requested information on the frequency and method of reporting in each state within the management unit.

PDT drafted text to address AP recommendations

The following text was updated from addendum II and is suggested as an appendix.

- *Purse-Seine Reduction Fishery*
 - Landings - Daily vessel unloads (in thousands of standard fish) are emailed daily to the NMFS Beaufort Laboratory.

 - Age Compositions – An NMFS port agent samples purse-seine catches at dockside in Reedville, VA, throughout the fishing season (May through December). Specimen ages are determined (via scales) at NMFS Beaufort.

 - Removals by Area - Areal removals of Atlantic menhaden by the purse-seine reduction fleet are estimated using the Captains Daily Fishing Reports (CDFRs). CDFRs are deck logbooks maintained by Virginia reduction purse-seine vessels. Fleet compliance is 100% (about 10 vessels in 2011). Vessel captains complete CDFRs and itemize number of daily purse-seine sets. Among other things, data recorded for each set include time and location of set, distance from shore, and the 'at-sea' estimated catch (in thousands of 'standard' fish).

CDFRs from the Reedville menhaden fleet are used to estimate 'in-season' removals from Chesapeake Bay ("the Chesapeake Bay Cap"). Total removals by area are calculated at the end of the fishing season. 'At sea' catches from the CDFRs are summed by vessel, and compared to total vessel unloads from company catch records. Individual 'at sea' sets are then multiplied by an adjustment factor (company records / 'at sea'

estimates). Adjusted catches by set are converted to metric tons, and accumulated by fishing area. Catch totals are reported by ocean fishing areas (NJ, DE, and MD in the EEZ, VA and NC), while catches inside and outside Chesapeake Bay are delineated by the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Purse-Seine Bait Fishery

- Landings - Landings of Atlantic menhaden for bait by purse-seine gear occur mostly in Virginia and New Jersey. In recent years only minor purse-seine landings for bait have occurred in Rhode Island or Massachusetts. However, on a few occasions in recent summers, 'run boats' have delivered menhaden for bait to New England ports from purse-seine sets made off the New Jersey coast.

Since 1998, bait purse-seine vessels in VA (about 4-5 vessels), also called 'snapper rigs', maintain CDFR forms (and as per 2001 Addendum I requirements)(also see Smith. 2011. Mar. Fish. Rev. 73:1-12). CDFRs are accumulated onboard during the fishing season (usually May – November). A NMFS port agent collects the CDFRs for the entire fishing season in late November. CDFR data are scanned at NMFS Beaufort. Estimates of total catch by Virginia bait vessels are available in January.

Landings of Atlantic menhaden by purse seine for bait in New Jersey are compiled by the NJDFW. All purse-seine bait fishermen are permitted and required by regulation to submit monthly harvest reports on forms supplied by NJDFW. The information on the monthly harvest reports include landings each day and the area of State waters from which the fish were harvested. Harvest reports are summarized monthly and seasonally to document landings from pre-defined areas of the State's marine waters and port of landings.

- Age Compositions - A NMFS port agent samples purse-seine catches for bait at dockside in Northern Neck, VA, area throughout the fishing season; the same agent also samples menhaden from pound nets in Northern Neck, VA, mostly during spring.

- Removals by Area - Purse-seine vessels fishing for bait are generally smaller (< 100 ft long) than the reduction vessels, hence, bait vessels range shorter distance from their home ports than the reduction vessels. Menhaden for bait catches by purse seine in the Virginia portion of Chesapeake Bay are concentrated near Smith Point (62%) and adjacent fishing areas near the mouth of the Rappahannock River (18%) and Pocomoke Sound (17%) (Smith. 2011. Mar. Fish. Rev. 73:1-12). Menhaden for bait catches by purse seine in New Jersey are probably concentrated in northern New Jersey and around Cape May.

Atlantic Menhaden for Bait Landings by Other Gears

- A majority of Atlantic menhaden for bait landings by gear other than purse seines comes from the pound net fisheries of Virginia, Maryland, and the Potomac River. Pound net landings are acquired by various state fisheries agencies, then reported to the NMFS General Canvass Survey. Pound net landings of Atlantic menhaden are generally available in spring after the year in which the landings were made.

- North Carolina accounts for significant bait fishery landings from a variety of gears. Minor quantities of Atlantic menhaden for bait are landed in other East coast states by miscellaneous gears such as gill nets and trawl.
- Menhaden for bait landings by gears other than purse seine are annually compiled from compliance reports and presented to the Technical Committee.

Issue 3: Recreational Fishery Management Tools

The AP recommended also discussing the timeline for the assessment update and amendment at the beginning of the document (at the end of Issue 1).

The AP recommended clarifying the intent of reporting in the recreational fishery. Adding that reporting under recreational fishery will only apply to fish that are immediately caught and not menhaden that were purchased for bait.

The AP also requested adding a gear restriction option to the list of recreational fishery management tools.

PDT drafted text to address AP recommendations

- Insert assessment timeline under issue 1.
- Add option 6 Gear Restrictions
Under this option gear modifications are used to restrict the amount of catch (e.g., mesh size, net size).

Issue 4: Commercial Fishery Management Tools

The AP recommended providing better information on each state's landings to understand the potential of a state specific quota management system.

Some members suggested that an overage or underage text be added to the quota option.

PDT drafted text to address AP recommendations

- Add overage and or underage as e.) under option 6.

Summary of Stock Status

The AP recommended adding text that specifies there is not a well defined stock recruitment relationship, and that lower landing levels do not necessarily increase spawning stock biomass. However, there is a possibility that the stock may be able to take greater advantage of favorable environmental conditions if a larger percentage of spawning adults remain in the population.