

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

June 22, 2007 via conference call

Meeting Report

Participants

Vic Crecco (CT)	Mike Kaufmann (PA)	Brandon Muffley (NJ)
Peter Fricke (NMFS)	Wilson Laney (USFWS)	Rob O'Reilly (VA)
Charlton Godwin (NC)	Laura Lee (RI)	Alexei Sharov (MD)
Doug Grout (NH, Chair)	Nichola Meserve (ASMFC)	Vic Vecchio (NY, V. Chair)

Meeting Overview

The Technical Committee (TC) met by conference call to review a conservation equivalency proposal from Rhode Island for the commercial trap fishery, and to discuss a suggestion to ask the Management Board to send a letter requesting that Wave 1 sampling be placed as a priority for improving the MRFSS survey. The TC last met in March 2007 via conference call.

Results

- Rhode Island Proposal: conditionally approved. See below for more details.
- Wave 1 Letter: support for the request, but agreement that it should encompass all of the Commission's species and that the letter should come from the ISFMP Policy Board.

Rhode Island Conservation Equivalency Proposal

Rhode Island submitted a proposal in April 2007 to the Commission, which staff distributed to the TC for review. Rhode Island has two commercial fisheries for striped bass: a rod and reel fishery with a 34" size limit and 60% of the state's coastal commercial quota, and a floating fish trap fishery with a 28" size limit and 40% of the quota. The trap fishery requested RI DEM to consider alternative regulations, which resulted in the proposal to lower the size limit of the trap fishery to 26" by reducing the trap fishery quota to 93,788 pounds (from 97,450 pounds).

Laura Lee provided an overview of the methods. The conservation equivalency of the proposed alternative size limit was measured in terms of percent maximum spawning potential (%MSP). Rhode Island estimated that the current minimum size limit and target fishing mortality rate (0.30) resulted in a 27.9% MSP. Methods applying yield-per-recruit (YPR) and spawning stock biomass (SSB) per-recruit (SPR) were used to estimate that an F of 0.23 under the proposed 26" size limit would achieve a %MSP of 28.3, a level as conservative as the regulatory standard. Decreasing the harvest quota by 3.8% was predicted to generate the reduction in F necessary to maintain conservation equivalency under the 26" minimum size limit.

The TC agreed that the proposed measures were within the limits of Amendment 6 and that the methods were appropriate for a conservation equivalency analysis and had been correctly applied to the data. Alexei Sharov commented that he had used the data in the report to conduct the analysis and had generated the same result. However, he asked about the data sources for the mean weight and partial recruitment vectors as this was not well documented. Laura indicated that she used ALS data from 2001-2005 for the mean weight and NY and MA age-length keys

for estimating partial recruitment. Alexei asked that the development of the partial recruitment vectors in Table 2 be better explained in the methods section of the report, because the results of the analysis and the resulting quota reduction is very sensitive to partial recruitment. A better description of the data source would allow the TC to determine if the data used were representative of the fish in Rhode Island waters.

The TC also asked whether Rhode Island intended to implement the regulations this year or in 2008 if the Board approved the proposal. Laura indicated that the hope was for this year, which brought about the question of what the quota would be, given that the minimum size limit would be 28" for half the season and 26" for the other half. The TC agreed that it would prefer Rhode Island to use the lower quota based on the 26" size limit for the whole year. The TC agreed that the chair should include this point in his comments to the Board.

Overall, the TC agreed with the methods and results and **conditionally approved** the proposal with the understanding that: 1) Laura would revise the proposal to include the data sources for the partial recruitment analysis, and 2) this would indicate to TC members that the data used in the analysis were representative of the fishery. Laura agreed to send via email the revised proposal, with supporting data in an excel workbook, to the TC by July 6. Committee members were given until July 13 to retract their endorsement for the proposal if the revisions raised concern. If necessary, another conference call would be arranged.

Following the conference call, Laura did revise and re-submit the proposal to the TC members. No comments of concern were received from the TC. Therefore, when the proposal is presented to the Board at its next meeting on August 15, the chair will relay the Technical Committee's support.

Letter Regarding Recreational Survey Improvements

Following the National Research Council peer review of the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS), NMFS began development of a list of improvements to the survey, now being called the Recreational Fisheries Information Program (RFIP). Doug Grout indicated that he felt it important for the TC's assessment capabilities that the following be placed as high priority on that list: the expansion of MRFSS into Wave 1 (Jan./Feb.) in North Carolina and Virginia, and potentially other mid-Atlantic states, based on the development of a robust recreational fishery for striped bass off of North Carolina during that time period. He therefore proposed that the TC request that the Management Board send a letter to the Chairs of the Executive Steering Committee and Operations Committee put together by NMFS to develop improved recreational surveys, stating the importance of a temporal expansion of the MRFSS into Wave 1 to striped bass assessments and management. Before the conference call, Doug drafted a letter for the Board to use and provided this and the preliminary list of prioritized improvements to the TC. During the conference call, Doug asked the TC if they had any objections to the idea of requesting expansion of the survey into Wave 1, or to the draft letter itself.

Vic pointed out that the MRFSS survey misses a lot of fishing that occurs in freshwater areas for striped bass, and he suggested that the request be expanded to include prioritization for sampling in these areas. The TC agreed that it is important to get this information for stock assessments; however, it was also thought that the Commission was addressing this issue from a different direction by developing a separate survey with Atlantic Coastal Act funds.

Several of the TC members commented on the need for Wave 1 sampling for other species such as tautog, black sea bass, tilefish, bluefish, and scup that are along other parts of the coast during Wave 1. Given that many of the species managed through the Commission would benefit from Wave 1 sampling, the TC members questioned how the request could be expanded to include Wave 1 sampling along the whole coast. Doing so now, while the survey is slated for major improvement, might avoid needing to ask for further expansion later.

The TC agreed that if the request were to encompass the needs of several species for Wave 1 sampling, it would be more appropriate for the letter to the Executive Steering and Operations Committees to come from the ISFMP Policy Board. The TC considered two approaches to have the request reach the Policy Board at the August 2007 ASMFC Meeting Week, so that the resulting letter would be received before the prioritized list is scheduled for completion in early 2008. The first approach was to work through the Board Chair to have the request brought to the Management Board, but with the suggestion to ask the Policy Board to consider sending a letter focusing on all the Commission's species. The other approach involved working through the Management and Science Committee to request the Policy Board to send the letter. Doug determined that he would talk to the Chair of the Striped Bass Board, the Director of the ISFMP, and email the MSC members to determine the best method. Following the conference call, it was determined that the letter would go before the Management Board on August 15, and that the Board Chair would suggest that the letter be forwarded to the ISFMP Policy Board with a recommendation to request prioritization of Wave 1 sampling for multiple species.

Other Business

As there was no other business, the conference call was adjourned.