

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
ATLANTIC STURGEON MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**February 10, 2005
Alexandria, Virginia**

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Lew Flagg, Chair, Maine DMR	Gene Kray, proxy for Rep. Shroder (PA)
John Nelson, New Hampshire F&G	Roy Miller, Delaware DFW
David Pierce, Massachusetts DMF	Pete Jensen, Maryland DNR
Bill Alder, Massachusetts Gov. Apte.	Bruno Vasta, Maryland Gov. Apte.
Eric Smith, Connecticut DMR	Jon Siemien, Washington DC F&W
Lance Stewart, Connecticut Gov. Apte.	A.C. Carpenter, Potomac River Fish. Comm.
Gordon Colvin, New York DEC	Jack Travelstead, Virginia MRC
Brian Culhane, proxy for Sen. Johnson (NY)	Kelly Place, proxy for Sen. Chichester (VA)
Pat Augustine, New York Gov. Apte.	Preston Pate, North Carolina DMF
Bruce Freeman, Chair, New Jersey DFG&W	Robert Boyles, South Carolina DNR
Ed Goldman, proxy for Asm. Smith (NJ)	Spud Woodward, Georgia DNR
Michael Kaufmann, Pennsylvania FBC	Tom Meyer, NMFS
	Jaime Geiger, USFWS

Ex-Officio Members

None

ASMFC Staff

Brad Spear
Julie Nygard
Bob Beal
Vince O'Shea

Guests

Bill Cole, USFWS	John Merriner, NMFS
Anne Lange, NMFS	Peter Eldridge, NMFS
Bill Hogarth, NMFS	Ralph Lopez, NMFS
Bill Archambault, USFWS	L. Scott Stewart, Dennison Shellfish Co.
Marta Nammack, NMFS	Roy Crabtree, NMFS
Steve Meyers, NMFS	

There may have been others in attendance who did not sign the attendance sheet.

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1) Move to accept the PRT report and recommendations as presented. (page 6)

Motion made by Mr. Augustine, second by Dr. Kray. Motion carries.

2) Move to approve Draft Addendum II for public review and comment. (pages 8, 9)

Motion made by Mr. Colvin, second by Mr. Pate. Motion carries.

**ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES
COMMISSION**

**ATLANTIC STURGEON MANAGEMENT
BOARD**

**Radisson Hotel, Old Towne
Alexandria, Virginia**

February 10, 2005

The Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Presidential Suite of the Radisson Hotel, Old Towne, Alexandria, Virginia, Thursday, February 10, 2005, and was called to order at 10:10 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Lewis Flagg.

BOARD CONSENT

CHAIRMAN LEWIS FLAGG: We need to get started with the Atlantic Sturgeon Board meeting so please take your seats and we'll proceed. This is the Atlantic Sturgeon Board.

You have before you an agenda which had been mailed out previously. I would ask at this time if there are any additions that we need to add to the agenda. Seeing none, then the agenda is approved as printed.

I would also note for the record that we do have a quorum of members here, and I've asked staff to pass around the sign-in sheet for your attendance.

You also received the proceedings from the November 10th, 2004, meeting in New Hampshire. Are there any errors or omissions in the minutes? Are there objections to accepting the minutes as printed? Seeing none, the minutes are accepted.

At this time we offer an opportunity for public comment. Are there any members of the public that would like to comment at this time? Seeing no hands, then we will proceed to the next agenda item, which is the plan review team reports. I'm going to ask Brad to briefly review those.

PLAN REVIEW TEAM REPORTS

MR. W. PETER JENSEN: Mr. Chairman, are there any action items involved with the plan review team?

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Yes, there are.

MR. BRADDOCK J. SPEAR: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. You were sent in a supplemental mailing, not on the briefing CD, the plan review team reports and the FMP reports for sturgeon. I'll quickly go over the contents of those reports.

The PRT recommended that all jurisdictions be found in compliance with Amendment 1 for the 2003 season. No enforcement cases were reported in 2003, no significant ones or none.

And if you take and look at the FMP review, if you look at Table 2 of the FMP review -- and that's on Page 11 -- I put together a summary of the bycatch that's reported in the state reports.

States were required to report bycatch that is reported to the state. As you will see from that table on Page 11, that for 2003 states reported 252 sturgeon as bycatch from fishery- dependent data and 844 from fishery independent.

And those are from state surveys that encounter sturgeon. Only a few of those that have asterisks are directed for sturgeon. And also of note, of those 844 sturgeon that were bycatch, most of them were from the Edisto River in South Carolina, which is one of the directed surveys.

However, these numbers should be looked at with care because there is no consistency for reporting. There is no consistency among the surveys. And as many people have noted, the reporting of bycatch is unreliable from the industry.

And a few of the recommendations from the plan review team: submit reports on time -- Maine was late this time around -- also, for states to continue or initiate tagging programs and feed this information into the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service tagging database.

And just to note, if board members are interested, there is a summary report of all the sturgeon tagging and results that have come to date back at the back table. The plan review team also asked states to expand programs to estimate bycatch. It has been identified, time again, as one of the impediments to recovery for Atlantic sturgeon.

And also, we asked states that do have some sort of survey that encounter sturgeon, that they take

samples and send them to the NMFS repository in South Carolina. Some work that has been done from tissue samples is the genetic analysis from Dr. Tim King, USGS. And that concludes the report.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Any questions of Brad concerning the PRT report? Yes, Bill Adler.

MR. WILLIAM A. ADLER: Did that include the compliance from each state report?

MR. SPEAR: Yes.

MR. ADLER: Just a question, on some of these states down there, they had requests for de minimis and it said "not applicable." I sort of thought we basically don't have any fishery anyway in most of these places, and I just wondered why.

I mean, Georgia's report and District of Columbia's report request for -- and it wasn't applicable -- and maybe you could just explain to me what that meant.

MR. SPEAR: You're talking about the individual state reports? I'm unsure why they chose that, I guess because there is no fishery. It's I guess redundant to request de minimis status, so it's a moot point.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Other questions of Brad? We need I think a motion to accept the report and recommendations from the PRT. Pat Augustine.

MR. PATRICK AUGUSTINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move we accept the report and the recommendations as presented by the PRT.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Do we have a second? Second by Gene Kray. Any comments on the motion? **Seeing none, all those in favor please signify by saying aye; opposed, same sign. The motion passes on a voice vote.**

Okay, the next item is the commercial aquaculture proposal in North Carolina. I know you have all received a proposal from North Carolina, and in your binder for Atlantic sturgeon you should also have a draft addendum which is to respond to that particular proposal. Brad, would you like to say anything further concerning this proposal?

COMMERCIAL AQUACULTURE PROPOSAL

MR. SPEAR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You were sent a copy of the draft addendum, again in

the supplemental mailing to the briefing CD. I have a quick presentation to go through that proposal and the draft addendum for commercial aquaculture.

The North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission received and eventually endorsed a commercial aquaculture proposal in its state. The company, LaPaz Group, had requested to possess and sell Atlantic sturgeon.

The North Carolina commissioner then drafted a letter and addressed it to the chairman requesting that this board initiate an addendum to Amendment 1 to provide exemptions to this company to allow commercial aquaculture.

The LaPaz Group also requested that the board take an expedited process to allow them to take advantage of sturgeon fry that are available. I spoke to the North Carolina commissioner, the board chair, and also staff at the commission, and we all agreed that it was possible to expedite the process by drafting an addendum for this meeting and allowing the board to review it and approve it with any changes so it can go out to public comment between this meeting and the next meeting scheduled for May.

The exemptions in the draft addendum are for Gray Aqua Farms and Acadian Sturgeon and Caviar Companies. These are both companies in Canada that raise Atlantic sturgeon from wild Atlantic sturgeon brood stock in Canada.

The exemption would allow for the importation of sturgeon fry into North Carolina. The requirements that they are held to are listed in ASMFC's "Terms, Limitations, Enforcement and Reporting Requirements" document.

This is a document that was drafted a few years back to guide companies or organizations that are considering developing an aquaculture facility or importing sturgeon into the United States. And there are also a number of other additional requirements concerning CITES and permits that are listed in the draft document.

The third exemption is for the LaPaz Group, the company in North Carolina specifically, to allow for the importation of the sturgeon fry to the company and also allow for the development of sturgeon and eventual sale.

And, again, they are held to the same requirements that are listed in the ASMFC document and the additional requirements that are in the draft

addendum. Specifically, the LaPaz proposal requests to import up to 5,000 Atlantic sturgeon fry for each of the next five years.

They've requested that they would be permitted to import the sturgeon from either the Gray Farms Company or the Acadian Company; because, based on availability of sturgeon fry at the time, one company may have them and one may not.

Their plan is to hold the sturgeon fry at a North Carolina State University facility. At this facility they will be looked after by one of the scientists there to monitor their health and also ensure that they are Atlantic sturgeon.

Then they plan to transfer the sturgeon to their closed recirculation facility in Lenoir, North Carolina. They plan to raise the sturgeon and produce them for food fish and caviar and plan to sell them to North Carolina and other states.

Again, the timeline, if the addendum is approved for public comment today, staff will redraft the document if there are any changes from the board, and it will be sent out for public comment, and then the vote the final vote would occur at the May meeting.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Okay, any questions of Brad concerning the addendum? Yes, Dr. Pierce.

DR. DAVID PIERCE: I wasn't at the previous Sturgeon Board meeting. I assume this issue was not discussed at that time. I didn't see it reflected in the minutes of the last meeting, so this is brand new.

This is kind of a surprise in that it's an expedited -- I think those were the words, an expedited addendum process. Are we breaking new ground with regard to this? My understanding is, and correct me if I'm wrong, that staff worked with the chair to respond to a state-specific request and that then led to development of an addendum for us to look at today.

So the board itself has not said, "prepare an addendum," we're getting an addendum to review. So, I find that interesting and is this consistent with ASMFC standard process? And if not, is it a problem?

That's my first question relative to the process. I'm not commenting one way or another regarding the merits of this particular suggestion, it's just the process itself.

I'm chair of the Tautog Committee, for example, and am I free to work with staff to address specific issues that relate to tautog and have an addendum prepared to bring forward to the board for consideration? This just seems a bit of a strange process, so if you would respond to that, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Yes, Bob Beal.

MR. ROBERT E. BEAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You're right, this is a unique way of developing an addendum, initiating an addendum, but in order to follow the timeline that the requester has asked us to try to accommodate them, we developed a document for board consideration here today.

If the board is uncomfortable with that timeline and that process, you don't necessarily have to approve the document today. That's why Brad has presented the fact that this is a unique way of doing business and we were just trying to speed things up.

I think the Sturgeon Plan requires addenda for any aquaculture operations, and on the whole scale of sturgeon management it's not an extremely significant change to exempt one other aquaculture program.

So, it's a combination of the magnitude of potential changes, which is, in the board chair and the commissioner and staff's opinion, relatively small, a combination of the relatively small impact and the timeline that the commission would need to take to accommodate the request by the aquaculture facility.

DR. PIERCE: Okay, thank you. I am a bit uncomfortable with the procedure, but I won't make a big deal out of it, any more than I've already made. Has this particular addendum, before reaching us, been reviewed with any of our scientific and technical advisors, any committee that we may have that would advise us regarding needed concern about the importation of non-indigenous Atlantic sturgeon fingerlings into any state? Is that consistent with any policy we have right now as an organization?

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Well, I think I can perhaps clarify some of this in that a number of years ago we did approve an addendum for the state of Florida, which is very much along similar lines as to the proposal that's now being presented by North Carolina, so it's not like this is the very first time that we've dealt with importations and commercial aquaculture issues associated with this plan, because Florida did bring forth a plan a number of years ago and we did approve a specific addendum.

Many of the items that are proposed in this addendum are very, very similar, and I think they're pretty much just like the addenda that was prepared for the Florida proposal, so it's, I believe, more of a follow up to a previous addenda that we've approved for another state.

DR. PIERCE: Okay, thank you. If I may, just a couple of other quick question. Has the plan review team gone over this?

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Brad.

MR. SPEAR: Yes, the plan review team has; the technical committee has not. The plan is to have them review the document and provide any input to the board at a later date.

DR. PIERCE: Okay, then, finally, I note on the last page of the draft it states that management strategies developed by the Atlantic Sturgeon Plan Review Team supplement those listed above to further reduce biological and ecological risk to native and wild sturgeon stocks, prohibitions on caviar tracking, et cetera, et cetera.

Because there currently exists no laboratory field test admissible for criminal investigations determining wild caviar from cultured caviar, the PRT cannot recommend that trading of caviar be permitted at this time.

Now I need a clarification. I thought in your presentation, Brad, that the principal in this proposal will be selling caviar? So that would be inconsistent with the advice we're getting from the PRT at this time; am I correct?

MR. SPEAR: You are correct; that is an inconsistency. That was stock language taken from the previous addendum. We can look at making sure that it's corrected.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Other questions of Brad? Yes, Gordon.

MR. GORDON C. COLVIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We had obviously an extensive discussion of what this process would be at the time we developed the current FMP amendment and the concurrent discussion of the handling and resolution of the issues in Florida with fairly detailed inclusion of what the process would be into the amendment and the initial addendum that made a provision for Florida.

I think the process is a little different in this case than the normal process of bringing forward an addendum, and I think it's being followed in this case sensitive to the time concerns. I'm not troubled by the process considering how the Sturgeon Plan deals with all this.

That said, I'm prepared to offer a motion to approve this Addendum II draft for public review and comment. I would also say, in doing so, that I would fully expect a complete review and report from our technical committee, our plan review team, our law enforcement liaison -- and do we still maintain a stocking committee -- and the stocking committee on all elements of this proposal and particularly how it compares to the recommendations and the specific requirements in the FMP.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Thank you, Gordon. A.C.

MR. A.C. CARPENTER: It notes here that they want to import 5,000 fry per year for five years. Is there any kind of accounting for those animals through the other information that goes with this? Do they have to report actually how many are imported and the status of them each year?

MR. SPEAR: It is the state's responsibility to track the number of sturgeon each year, and they're required to report that in the compliance report each year.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Yes, Pres.

MR. PRESTON PATE, JR.: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to second Gordon's motion and also explain that this proposal could have come before the board in November, but for a decision that I made that affected the sequence of approval that is necessary for this project.

My division has authority over this aquaculture facility even though it is in Lenoir, North Carolina, which is about as far away from Morehead City as you can get and still be in North Carolina, a somewhat unusual geographical arrangement for us.

But it is subject to approval through our aquaculture operations permit process. Given that it is subject to state control, I felt it prudent to have the project sponsor come before my commission and get that approval prior to bringing it to this board to avoid this board approving something that ultimately might be denied at the state level.

Our commission did endorse it, and we are poised now to issue the permit that will put into place the controls that are specified in the Sturgeon Management Plan for monitoring. I appreciate Gordon's motion and the comments that he has made and urge you to approve it.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Thank you, Pres. Pat Augustine.

MR. AUGUSTINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for that clarification, Pres. On the same point that A.C. Carpenter made, what happens after five years; it just drops dead; no more come in?

Will there be another request? Has there been any intention or any comments made to you, Pres, as to what their intention might be in terms of asking for additional fingerlings beyond that point, in view of the fact they don't spawn and so on until they're, what, 15 or 20 years old?

MR. PATE: Pat, there has not been any information provided to us on that point. I can only assume that if the project is successful, at the end of that five-year period they would request some form of an extension to the approvals.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Eric.

MR. ERIC SMITH: The dialogue between Brad and David Pierce left me a little confused on the issue of caviar, because I thought Brad said we'll have to fix that inconsistency, but in reality under the additional requirements, sale of caviar is recommended to be not allowed.

So, I don't think there is an inconsistency if I understand this document correctly, and I think the issue that David raised about the PRT recommendation versus what the company was proposing to do is addressed by the recommendation requirement that says you can't do that until such time as you can distinguish. So if that's correct, then in my view there is not a problem with that whole point and I support the motion.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Thanks. Yes, Pete.

MR. JENSEN: This is just a little refresher. If I recall, the source of the fry is the same as what we approved for Florida.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: I believe that's correct, yes. Other comments? Yes, Bruce.

MR. BRUCE FREEMAN: Just for clarification, as I understand, this addendum would apply to this operation in North Carolina as well as a supplier in Canada or two suppliers in Canada for a five-year period; and that if they wanted to go beyond that, it would require another addendum; or, if another company wanted to do the same in North Carolina, that would require an additional addendum; is that correct?

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Yes, I believe so. Yes, they would have to come back. Other comments? Okay, we do have a motion which is to approve Draft Addendum II for public review and comment, and obviously that includes the other details that Gordon mentioned which are in the record, which I understand is part of the motion. Is there any further comment or discussion on the motion? If none, would you take a moment to caucus and we'll take a vote. Roy.

MR. ROY MILLER: Could you repeat what Gordon's suggestions were.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Gordon.

MR. COLVIN: Specifically, that I would expect, prior to our final action, that there would have occurred a complete and detailed review of the proposal and its consistency with the provisions of our management plan by our technical committee, our plan review team, our law enforcement committee and our Sturgeon Stocking Committee.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Thank you, Gordon, for that. Okay, I think we've had time to caucus. **All those in favor, signify by raising your right hand; opposed; null votes; abstentions. Okay, the motion carries.**

Okay, the next item on the agenda is a report on the Atlantic Sturgeon Recovery Workshop, and I'm going to ask Brad to provide some update on that.

STURGEON RECOVERY WORKSHOP

MR. SPEAR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a workshop, kind of a follow on to a workshop that we had about a year and a half ago. The first workshop was a technical review of the status of Atlantic sturgeon and any trends that we could discern from the five years since the moratorium had been put in place.

This workshop was more of a look at what steps can

be taken -- or what issues there are with sturgeon recovery and what steps can be taken to address those issues. The workshop was held in Pautuxent Research Refuge in Maryland.

It was organized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and co-sponsored by the service, the NOAA Fisheries and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The objectives were to develop strategies to achieve Atlantic sturgeon restoration and again to identify obstacles to achieving restoration and work to overcome.

The first issue that we looked at was bycatch or incidental mortality. There was some frustration at the workshop with Amendment 1 and the sentiment that it doesn't do enough to address bycatch.

Some recommendations that came out of that discussion were to include sturgeon tissue sampling and pit tagging in the NMFS federal observer program.

Tom Meyer participated at the workshop and took this recommendation back to NOAA Fisheries, and we have an opportunity now to present a proposal to the fishery's observer program to list what information we'd like them to take down as they encounter sturgeon in their sampling.

I believe Tom said that if we had that information by March, they would consider collecting this information on sturgeon. Another recommendation was to use law enforcement possibly as a way to get at understanding bycatch, and a memo was handed out at the beginning of the meeting.

Several questions were developed as a result of the workshop and sent to the law enforcement committee through our coordinator, Mike Howard, and he collected the responses from the law enforcement representatives from the states and the federal government, and those are there for your consideration.

Another recommendation was to mandate data collection through an addendum, specifically bycatch data. Another one is to develop cooperative research with fishermen with regards to gear modification to avoid sturgeon bycatch or incidental mortality and also to develop a program to collect bycatch data.

And, also, there was recommendations to establish a bycatch subcommittee at the commission under the technical committee and to look at the recommendations presented and also just to take a

comprehensive look at all the available data on bycatch.

The next issue that was looked at was habitat. Some recommendations that came out of the discussions there were to better understand habitat for all life stages of sturgeon, where do these fish hang out at different periods in their life.

Another recommendation was to define the specific threats to habitat in river systems where there are known populations; and also develop a list of recommended actions that can be made to avoid or mitigate threats to the populations.

The third subject of discussion was restoration stocking. A couple of the recommendations was -- one was to revise the 1996 breeding and stocking protocol. This protocol was initially developed by the group Gordon was referencing, the Culture and Stocking Committee.

And, we had a meeting a couple weeks ago to begin revising that protocol. The chair of that committee is Dick St. Pierre of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and he is retiring at the end of the year. The plan is to have a finished revised protocol by the end of the year.

The intent of that document is to provide guidelines for entities that are planning to breed sturgeon with the intent of stocking them in a river system. It provides guidelines on how best to do that.

One of the recommendations during the restoration stocking discussion was to encourage research. The recommendations were directed at, again, entities that are planning on stocking to incorporate some sort of research element into the stocking, so that we can not only stock sturgeon for restoration purposes but also for research purposes.

A couple of the issues to address in the research would be issues with the fishery such as bycatch and also ecological concerns, research on imprinting and homing cues, and research on simulating natural environmental conditions in hatchery facilities as they are breeding the sturgeon.

There has been a couple other updates from the workshop that I've learned this week. Kelly Place attended the workshop, and I believe was the lone commercial fisherman representative at the workshop and has since gone back and put together a proposal. Kelly, would you like to say a word about that?

MR. KELLY PLACE: We're going to put together or we're putting together -- it's coming together -- a characterization of sturgeon bycatch in large-mesh gillnet fisheries, not only in the ocean and the bay, but in the tributaries, too.

As this study evolves -- and we're right now kind of counting on getting this Sea Grant application funding -- we'll be not only characterizing the bycatch, we'll be having several datasets that will be generated, captain's logs.

We have some observers from U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Albert Spells, I think Gary Sweigart, Dr. Christian Hagar, who is in the audience, and some others, to go along with the captain's logs.

We also will be conducting a fishery-independent survey in the second part of the study. Once certain size limits in the striped bass fishery in Virginia come into play, we'll be running various mesh sizes up the tributaries not only characterizing abundance -- and, by the way, we'll be collecting DNA samples, I hope, and we also plan, if the funding is available -- and Dr. Jack Music, by the way, has come on board and has suggested he can provide funding to reward fishermen to collect the genetically diverse brood stock for the restoration program, the rearing program that is going on in Maryland.

Hopefully, we won't be biting off more than we can chew, but at different stages temporally and spatially we'll be conducting this in the southern part of Virginia's ocean shoreline and then up into the bay.

And probably simultaneously, when we're up in the rivers, we'll also be in the northern part of Virginia shoreline collecting data on sturgeon that are migrating out at that time.

As we've collected various fishermen to participate in this, we've also been getting all sorts of anecdotal observations, which I found really surprising. A lot of you all might have seen those e-mails that went around earlier in the year where Albert Spells had captured a six-inch sturgeon in the James River, which was the first indication that they had had that there had been successful spawning in the James in quite some time.

One of these younger fishermen that we've recruited, who crab pots in the James and fishes in the James, when I told him how rare it was to see a young-of-the-year sturgeon he told me, "Well, Kelly, I catch as many as ten a day in my crab pots in the James."

We found that very interesting and we certainly need to confirm that. Interestingly, the place where he tends to crab is called "Sturgeon Point." I guess no one has really bothered to go there and assess what is at Sturgeon Point.

Anyway, long-story short, the project is evolving and we're still going through a third iteration on the proposal. I'll definitely keep you updated. If anyone has any suggestions of data that should be collected that we haven't already aimed to collect, we're more than happy to take any suggestions from anyone and work under anyone's auspices.

Hopefully, we'll get some help, if Maryland is able to send some of the trucks down, once we get suitable candidates for their rearing program in Maryland. Hopefully, we'll get some help from them in order to be able to transport genetically diverse brood stock to Maryland.

There is a lot more to it and any other questions anyone wants to ask me, I'll be more than happy to answer. Dr. Christian Hagar is in the audience, too, and he's one of the primary investigators on this as well, and he might have some good information for you if I can't answer your question. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Thanks, Kelly. Okay, any questions? Yes, Gordon.

MR. COLVIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, an observation. The reports in this discussion raises issues and concerns with respect to improving the documentation of discards in the fishery of Atlantic sturgeon in a variety of fisheries.

This is a recurring theme this week. There was an extensive concern expressed about the need to improve discard monitoring of American shad by the American Shad Plan Review Team. There was an extensive discussion of where we're going in terms of discard management with striped bass at the Striped Bass Board.

Discard issues with respect to summer flounder are entirely tangled up in the discussions that we've held and will continue to hold on Addendum XV. It seems as though there is a substantial need to move in a coordinated way to improve interstate monitoring of discards.

There are provisions made for discard monitoring through standardized observer programs through ACCSP that I do not believe have been sufficiently

organized and advanced.

There is, of course, in the northeast the Northeast Observer Program operated by the National Marine Fisheries Service, which could serve as a cornerstone for expanded and coordinated observer monitoring of discards if we were to work in a coordinated way to do that.

It is very obvious to me, when I look at all of these reports coming to each board separately, that it's about time we did that. I'm not quite sure what to suggest other than perhaps to -- I'm not sure it didn't come up in weakfish, too, now that I think about it -- perhaps at the Policy Board level or elsewhere to ask for some kind of review either through management and science or through the staff, working with management and science committee, and the ACCSP staff to identify some kind of a coordinated overarching series of recommendations on how we can proceed to improve observer coverage and discard monitoring.

We can't go at this one species at a time. We've got to do it in a broader way, and up until now I haven't seen us doing it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Thanks, Gordon. Other comments? Okay, seeing none, other business. Any other business? Seeing no hands, I would entertain a motion to adjourn. Pat.

MR. AUGUSTINE: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN FLAGG: Okay, we are adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 o'clock a.m., February 10, 2005.)

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