



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Northern Shrimp Technical Committee Meeting Summary

Conference Call and Webinar
May 18, 2015

Technical Committee Members: Kelly Whitmore (Chair, MA), Maggie Hunter (MA), Robert Eckert (NH), Anne Richards (NMFS)

ASMFC Staff: Max Appelman, Mike Waine, Katie Drew

Public: None

The Northern Shrimp Technical Committee (NSTC) met via webinar and conference call to discuss the results of the 2015 winter test tows, to discuss progress with the 2015 stock status update and assessment model development, and how to set specifications under Amendment 3 without an approved stock assessment model for management use.

Results and discussion of the 2015 winter test tows

The Northern Shrimp Section approved a limited winter sampling program during 2015 to mitigate the lack of samples usually collected from commercial catches, and to continue the time series of biological data collected during the season in which the commercial fishery historically operates.

TC members reviewed the 2015 winter sampling draft report. Members discussed approaches for weighting the trawl samples for estimating hatch timing statistics, and agreed to compare weights based on spatial patterns in landings seen historically versus weights based on catches associated with each sample. There was general consensus that the peaks in the length-frequency plots from the winter samples were representative of the 2013 and 2010-2012 year classes, respectively. There was an unusually high proportion of small shrimp relative to large shrimp, and an unusually high proportion of egg-bearing females from the presumed 2013 year class; these females were generally less than 22 mm in carapace length. Since abundance of the 2010 year class is very low, the TC is concerned about prospects of fishing on the poor 2011 and 2012 year classes. No unusual results were reported from the trap sample analysis. Updates to the 2015 winter sampling draft report will include several figures supporting the presence of a slightly stronger 2013 year class, and how relative size-sex-stage frequencies from the 2015 winter samples compare to samples from recent fishing seasons (2010 - 2012). The egg hatch timing and duration time series will be updated to include winter 2015 data, and a discussion section will be added to the report. The report is scheduled to be completed and available for review by the Section before their June 12th meeting.

Progress with the stock assessment model, and how to set specifications under Amendment 3 without an approved stock assessment model for management use.

The current stock assessment model did not pass peer review at the 58th Stock Assessment Workshop, and therefore is not considered appropriate for management use at this time. In light of this, the Northern Shrimp Section is currently scoping how specifications should be set under Amendment 3 for future fishing seasons in lieu of an approved stock assessment model.

Maine Sea Grant is currently funding a study to evaluate performance of the northern shrimp length-structured model (LSM) developed for the 2014 Northern Shrimp Benchmark Assessment, as suggested by the 58th SAW/SARC review panel. Additionally, funding was provided by the NOAA Fisheries and the Environment (FATE) program to continue development of methods to incorporate environmental effects, and other variables, into the LSM.

The TC has previously discussed viable methods for how to set specifications for future fishing seasons in the absence of an approved stock assessment model, including the Traffic Light Approach used in the 2014 Stock Status Report and other methods that incorporate best available science approaches. The Plan Development Team (PDT) will begin drafting language (to be presented to the Section in June) acknowledging that the TC has discussed various methods for updating the status of the stock without an approved stock assessment model. This is in anticipation of the Section's decision to task the PDT to develop Draft Amendment 3 for public comment which will include options for how to set specifications for future fishing seasons in the absence of an approved stock assessment model.