

Meeting Summary
American Lobster Technical Committee
August 7-8, 2000
Boothbay Harbor, Maine

Participants: Carl LoBue, Carl Wilson, Clare McBane, Bob Glenn, Kevin Kelley, Bill Andrews, Amy Schick, Bruce Estrella, Joe Idoine, Tom Angell, Vic Crecco.

*Peer Review was discussed – It was surprising that no clarification comments were received from Connecticut. Maine's response was primarily a discussion, not questions. It was explained that the Peer Review Report is not open ended, when it's done its done, with no appeals.

Operating procedures

Several operating procedures were discussed in relation how it effected the TC.

A discussion of the Plan Review Team (PRT) ensued. In the past it has been largely a subset or sub-committee of the Technical Committee (TC). A general discussion of the PRT's charges, the PRT report, and how the TC fits into that process (with potential overlapping responsibilities) ensued. Amy Schick agreed that the TC would likely review the PRT report before it is finalized.

*Operating Procedures – it was agreed that any subcommittee could be requested to report at TC to keep tabs on what's going on.

*Subcommittees- the full Technical shall deliberate and vote upon committee membership under the Technical Committee, but the TC Chair, in consultation with the Board Chair, with have final say on committee membership, if committee membership is different then what was proposed then an explanation should be brought forward.

*Meeting location- ASMFC will look into an inexpensive central meeting location to reduce costs and travel time.

*Extra care should be given to making sure that correspondence and communication from TC Chair should be representing the group, not the opinions of the individuals.

Report to the Board

The main focus of the TC meeting was to edit and finalize the draft report to the management board that was sent to the committee last week. Many editorial changes were made to the text and there were several substantial changes made to the document. The changes will be incorporated into the document by Carl Wilson and e-mailed to the committee in time for approval and or minor edits. When finalized the report will be sent to the whole committee.

Major changes from the draft.

- 1) The first was the addition of three figures generated by Joe. The three figures show the relationship between management areas, stock assessment areas, and statistical areas. The addition of these figures will make it easier for managers and fishermen to see how proposed management measures will effect different regions given the discrepancies among the borders of the three different kinds of areas. A table with the proportions of each management area within each stock area will also be included.
- 2) The second change was the result of a discussion of about the V-notching input rates in the model and the observed proportion of egg bearing V-notched lobsters form the 1999 Maine sea-sampling program. Carl Wilson presented some of the 1999 sea sample data, which showed an observed proportion of V-notched lobsters in different zones during different months. The state wide average number of egg bearing females with V-notches on them at the time of capture ranged from 78.9% to 60.9% with the highest percentages observed in May and November. Discussion about what the appropriate rate of v-notching should be in the model parameters for the GOM since a rate of 50% was currently being used in the baseline calculation for Maine state waters and a rate of 35% was being used for the entire GOM stock area. Joe explained that the input value for the model more accurately represents the V-notching rate per quarter (3 months) not per the 3-quarter period that females carry eggs in the model. Thus to translate between observed proportions of V-notched eggers and model input a table will be created and put into the TC report to be used to

convert observed values to input parameters. The committee did not feel comfortable evaluating LCMT proposals that may include provisions to increase the rate of V-notching because it is not a mandatory program and it was not considered enforceable.

- 3) The third change was the addition of several assumptions in the first section
- 4) The addition of some model runs to show the effects of decreasing fishing mortality rate on yield and EPR
- 5) Inclusion of some yield estimates in addition to the text paragraph on yield
- 6) Many editorial and content changes were made to the second section.
- 7) The discussion was loosely outlined and will be composed by Carl Wilson

The TC member from CT pointed out that he was still very uncomfortable with using the EPR values as the sole indicator of the magnitude of overfishing and thus the basis for management. A minority of others expressed some concern but felt that there was nothing that could be done in the short term because of the language of the FMP and the lack of alternative targets and thresholds. Vic was asked by the chair to write down the reasons behind his concern for inclusion in the report. There was much discussion about how to present Vic's comments and some felt they were inappropriate to include in the report. It was ultimately agreed that the comments would be included as part of the official meeting summary.

Comments from Vic Crecco on why he does not endorse the EPR model.

- 1) *“The assumptions on which the model is based are flawed or otherwise violated – i.e. the assumption that growth, molt frequencies, and recruitment remain constant has been violated – The GOM could not reach 800,000 mt at $F=0$.*
- 2) *The predicted % virgin Egg Per Recruit estimated are too low because of the above model violations.*
- 3) *The Stock Assessment sub-committee during their previous deliberations spent 95% of the time on F estimates or stock trends but only about 5% on establishing F thresholds via EPR. No effort was made to examine other approaches such as biomass dynamic models (ASPIC) or delay difference models such as those methods introduced by John Schante thru the late 70s and 1980s*
- 4) *The evidence supporting a 50% reduction in current fishing mortality for the GOM is solely based on the EPR model, which, in my view, should be debunked.*

At this time the state of Connecticut will not support the further use of the current Egg-Per-Recruit model to determine whether or not the GOM, GBK, and SCCLIS are overfished. We would strongly encourage further work on alternative approaches to determine F and SSB thresholds”

Election of Vice Chair

No body was willing to accept the position of vice chair of the TC. Of particular concern was the four-year obligation.

Sub-committee report

The add-hoc database sub-committee submitted a report. This sub-committee will take the next step in exploring how other agencies have set up database systems once the ASMFC agrees to commit the resources for the database.

**Report of ASMFC Database Sub-Committee to Lobster Technical Committee
August 7, 2000**

Recommendations on developing an American lobster stock assessment database:

- 1) The database should be in a centralized location, preferably in ORACLE,
- 2) It should be considered as a MASTER database,
- 3) Its storage capacity should be sufficient for all sources of ASMFC-related lobster data,

- 4) It should have periodic backup and maintenance by dedicated personnel,
- 5) There should be appropriate level(s) of access to the data by critical personnel (both of which need to be defined)
- 6) Accessibility can be by Microsoft Access, EXCEL, SAS, or any SQL approach.

ASMFC must take lead role in “ownership” of the database management responsibility and be main tenants of the oracle files . Because of the depth of the task at hand, ASMFC’s role should include planning and assigning staff or programming consultant needs, coordinating and mandating input of scheduled data requirements from states and NMFS.

A database management programming consultant (likely ORACLE) is recommended to draft a design and write software including reporting metafiles.

The lobster database should be viewed as a small, assessment-specific and immediately required effort. It should not be viewed as a competitor/redundant element to the ACCSP system and associated database upon which the commission is also working. The Technical Committee considers the development of the American lobster stock assessment database as a critical and required pre-cursor to the next coast wide stock assessment.

Formation of Sub-committees

*The TC discussed the formation and nominations for membership of several sub-committees. The Chair of the TC will bring these suggestions forward to commission staff and the ASMFC Lobster Management Board.

*The database sub committee was suggested to include Bruce Estrella, Joe Idoine, Kurt Gottschall, and someone from Maine (Kevin Kelly has volunteered).

Objective: Establish the framework for the ASMFC lobster database.

*Effort Control sub-committee

Objective: Explore the relationship between ‘effort’ and fishing mortality.

Suggested membership: Carl Wilson, Bob Glen, with some help from Joe Idoine

*Socio Economic Group

Objective: Develop a socio-economic component to the TC report describing the social and economic consequences of alternative lobster management measures.

Suggested membership: Dave McCarran, Bob Wilson, Dick Allen, Jim Achison, and Eric Thunberg

It was pointed out that this group might want to reach out to the lobster advisory panel if it has any questions pertaining to lobstering in different regions.

*Model Development sub-committee

Main objective: Explore alternative modeling techniques

Sub-objective: Develop a biomass dynamic model for lobsters, (there may be other sub objectives involving other models)

Suggested membership: Vic Crecco, Mark Gibson, Larry Jacobson, and Yung Chen (U Maine/Maine DMR)

It was pointed out that there would likely be sub groups of this committee, as not all members will be needed for the different sub-objectives.

Research Priorities

Everyone on the TC is to prioritize the list of research priorities sent out by Amy. Mark each one with a rank of low medium or high priority and indicate in the long or short term. Some may get marked with a No priority. Sent the list to Bill Andrews. Bill will combine the lists, removing redundant recommendations, and combine our results to rank the priorities.