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**Minutes of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**  
**Tautog Technical Committee Meeting**  
**October 8, 2002**  
**Baltimore, MD**

Attendees:

Heather Stirratt, ASMFC Plan Coordinator  
Lydia Munger, ASMFC Staff  
Paul Piavis, MD, Chairman  
Paul Caruso, MA, Vice Chairman  
Jeff Tinsman, DE  
Chad Boyce, VA  
Peter Himchak, NJ  
Alice Weber, NY  
Bob Ainsworth NMFS  
Naji Lazar, RI  
Tim Lynch, RI

1. Call to Order (Paul Piavis)

Introductions of all attendees were made around the table.

Heather Stirratt noted the presence of Lydia and mentioned her imminent departure from the Commission. She also noted the distribution of the new ASMFC Technical Committee Guidelines documents.

2. Review of Agenda (Paul Piavis)

The Chair asked for suggested changes to the agenda. Discussion of the conservation equivalency memo, and updated landings data were added under other business.

Peter asked about plans for an aging workshop for tautog. Heather said that money had been put aside for a workshop and that Geoff White would likely be setting it up. The primary purpose of the workshop would be to bring new staff members of state agencies up to speed on aging methods/protocols.

Naji asked how states were progressing with age sampling. A poll of table participants revealed that some states are on track for obtaining the 200 samples while others are not.

It was decided to deal with the issue of selecting a Vice-Chairman at this point in the agenda. Paul Caruso nominated Alice Weber for the position. Alice agreed to take the nomination. There was committee consensus to accept the nominee.

### 3. Review of State proposals

Paul Caruso recommended that a discussion of the needed reduction in the exploitation rate be undertaken before review of state proposals since there was at least one proposal, from CT, that was formulated based upon that rate. He mentioned that Dave Simpson had called him with questions about exploitation rates and that he had reviewed Dave's methods and that indeed a 25% reduction in exploitation (annual harvest) would meet the 29% reduction in F as mandated by Addendum III. Naji concurred. Consensus was to entertain proposals that yielded the 25% reduction in exploitation both at the table and Up to 1 week after the meeting. Heather requested that states e-mail her with any intent to submit additional proposals at the 25% reduction rate.

Heather asked if there were any other overriding assumptions that the committee would want to make regarding the review of state proposals. Several committee members suggested previously voiced concerns regarding the adequacy of wave data for closed period calculations, bag limit analysis based on MRFSS sample sizes, and stated that a regional management approach is potentially more effective than state by state proposals. See review of state proposals for any additional concerns.

Paul Caruso presented the Massachusetts proposals along with two additional proposals that addressed the 25% exploitation rate issue. All were derived directly from the tables, using the correction factor where appropriate. Consensus was that all met the 25% exploitation rate cut.

Tim Lynch introduced Rhode Islands proposal which was "status quo" management based upon the results of an instate VPA that showed RI fishing mortality rate is below the target rate. Naji presented the assessment results along with results of a corroborating Biomass Dynamic model and landings data. Naji also pointed out the results of prior RI tagging studies show the discreteness of the local stock.

Paul P. asked for the full report. Heather expressed that she would need a copy of the full report by October 25. Paul C. updated the committee on the historical perspectives of the committee with respect to unilateral stock assessments.

Bob Ainsworth had questions regarding the input data and whether the proposal was asking for credit for past management measures or the existing stock status.

Others raised issues about the sudden nature of the submission and the fact that other states chose not to avail themselves of the stock assessment option because of past controversies regarding it.

Heather asked the committee members if they felt that there was information lacking on which to base an opinion.

Chad asked if the question was the precision of the assessment, which appeared good, or the appropriateness of a state VPA.

Peter requested a table comparing the F's and the CV's.

The Chairman suggested we move on to other state proposals and return to RI's.

Connecticut's proposal was presented by Paul P. since CN sent no representative. All submitted proposals received consensus endorsement by the committee.

Alice presented NY's proposals. Paul C. mentioned that there was no use of the correction formula in Option 3 but that the value determined was very close to the corrected value anyway and less than the 25% exploitation reduction target. Alice said that she would revise the calculation accordingly. Consensus was to recommend NY's proposals.

Peter presented NJ's proposals. He said he would rework them slightly to take advantage of the 2 % less reduction allowed under the exploitation rate calculations.

Jeff Tinsman presented Delaware's management proposals. All were derived from the tables. Consensus was that all met the 25% exploitation rate reduction.

Paul P. presented Maryland's proposals and mentioned they would not likely change based on the 25% issue. The proposal received consensus for committee approval.

Chad Boyce presented Rob O'Reily who introduced the catch curve analysis of John Hoenig (VIMS) and John himself. According the Rob and John the catch curves revealed lower than Addendum target fishing mortality rates and little change in rates over the past few years.

Peter asked about the sample size for the base years. John answered that 1998 was 600, 1999 was 200, 2000 was 192, and 2001 was 270.

Paul P. asked about the source of the samples. Rob said they were primarily from the recreational fishery.

Paul P. asked about of the intent of VA. Rob answered that they intend to continue the catch curve analysis into the future, that the findings are less than the Coast-wide VPA F and asked for committee consensus regarding the catch curve findings.

Paul P. asked if they were looking for a consensus from the committee regarding an estimate of F.

Rob replied that the request was open ended - that they were not asking the committee to be convinced that they were at a particular F but below the target of 0.29.

General discussion ensued regarding the proposal. Peter asked about Wave 1 data. Rob answered that it was not included because none is available.

The Chairman asked the committee if catch curves should be accepted. Alice said that she was not aware that individual states were unhappy with the coast-wide VPA results until today, and was concerned with the last minute nature of the review of assessments.

Heather reviewed the allowance for adaptive management in the plan so the proposals for status quo may be ok.

Editors note – the Guidelines documents contain language regarding review of assessments but contains none regarding submission or review of unilateral state assessments.

Alice reiterated her lack of comfort with the process and thought that the unilateral assessment process should be formalized in future addenda.

Rob mentioned that he thought this is a Management Board issue and cannot be resolved by the Technical Committee. Peter said that he thought that we might want to state to the MB that the entire management strategy for tautog was flawed. Paul C. mentioned the conundrum of tautog management – coast-wide management of localized stocks.

Heather mentioned the MB decision to go forward with Addendum III and that there are two unique situations being presented here and that the committee would need to deal with them in some fashion as best they can and move on.

Paul P. thanked Heather for the update and felt that we had plenty of experience at the table to move on with the issues at hand. He also stated his concerns about the representativeness of the data and the fact that there is no fisheries independent data to corroborate Virginia's contention that stocks are stable. He had additional concerns about catch curve analysis.

Paul C. expressed similar concerns regarding the lack of fisheries independent data and potential biases in catch curve analyses, but noted that he is becoming disenfranchised by the misfit between coastal assessments and management of localized stocks. Also that we may be too restrictive with coast-wide management since you "reap what you sow" regarding local management, with little stock impact to neighboring states.

Naji suggested we state the technical merits or shortcomings of the assessments and options to address them.

There was no consensus for Virginia's proposal/assessment. See Heather's report for details.

The letter from North Carolina requesting withdrawal from the management unit was read and explained by Heather, She further requested input from the committee regarding any biological concerns regarding the request. Paul C. and Naji asked if de minimus would not apply if requested. Paul P. recalled that de minimus only applies to the

commercial fishery. Heather stated that they wouldn't necessarily need to sample the required 200 fish but would need to have FMP compatible regulations.

Chad does not see significant interest in tautog by NC recreational fishery in NC but felt they do fish on Virginia fish so there could be impacts to VA stocks.

Discussion on Rhode Island's proposal/assessment was renewed. Consensus was not reached by the committee. See Heather's report for the Minority and Majority opinions.

Heather asked if VA's request was to maintain status quo. Rob replied yes and would e-mail that request to Heather.

Peter presented the NJ commercial proposal, which is a realigning of the commercial closed seasons and limits. Paul C. mentioned he had reviewed the calculations and all appeared ok. The committee was comfortable with NJ's commercial season realignment.

There was no additional discussion regarding the letter to the Management Board regarding conservation equivalency.

Paul P. stated that recreational tautog landings through Wave 4 were up again over last year and 2000.

5. Recess for lunch

6. Joint meeting with advisors

Paul P. requested that the advisors introduce themselves, their state and affiliation. Present were:

Denise Wagner, commercial interest from DE ??  
Bob Rogene recreational fishery from MA  
Bill Lister commercial fishery from MA  
John Mittage ? from NY

Heather suggested that each states TC member present their proposal and that the advisors weight in on each.

First was Massachusetts – John asked for an explanation of F vs. exploitation. Paul C. Paul P., and John Hoenig all responded.

Bob Rogene mentioned that he preferred Option 5 in the MA proposals but that 10 fish at a larger size would be preferable.

John preferred Option 1 for CN

For NY - Option 1 was preferred by John but would like to see expanded options for closures into May and October.

There were no opinions from the advisors on NJ options.

Denise asked about the change in size in April for DE. Jeff replied that it was requested by industry to protect spawning fish. John asked about the difference between Option 1 and status quo.

There were no comments regarding Maryland's proposal.

Advisors asked several questions regarding Virginia's catch curve and why no indices of abundance. John asked about tagging studies. John Hoenig answered that they showed localized movements only and an inshore to offshore movement. Naji mentioned RI's high recovery rate.

John felt there should be additional funding for tagging studies to corroborate the localized nature of tautog's life history.

Naji presented RI's VPA results. John mention his thoughts that states should not be penalized for more stringent regulations so when a state can prove additional regulations are unneeded that should be ok.

The advisors were unanimously of the opinion that North Carolina should remain in the management unit for tautog.

The Chairman thanked all for coming and providing their input.