

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

**Striped Bass Technical Committee**

September 30, 2008

**Participants**

Michael Brown (ME)	Russ Allen (NJ)	Wilson Laney (FWS)
Cheri Patterson (NH)	Michael Kaufmann (PA)	Gary Shepherd (NMFS)
Gary Nelson (MA)	Desmond Kahn (DE, Chair)	Peter Fricke (NMFS)
Vic Crecco (CT)	Alexei Sharov (MD)	Nichola Meserve (ASMFC)
Carol Hoffman (NY)	Charlton Godwin (NC)	

**Overview**

The Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC) met via conference call to review two proposals from Maryland for alternative management and review analyses prepared in response to the Management Board's task on management objectives. The TC also discussed the status of the 2009 Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise and observations on the 2008 fishery.

**Maryland Proposals**

1) Proposal to manage Maryland's Chesapeake Bay spring trophy striped bass fishery by creel, size, and season limits

The Management Board previously approved essentially the same proposal for 2008 only. This proposal seeks to extend that proposal for 2009 and subsequent years until stock assessment determines that corrective action is required for the coastal migratory population. Part of the proposal is based on the 36,166 migrant fish harvest estimation for the 2008 fishery, which operated without a cap, but with 1 fish, 28" minimum, and April 19 to May 14 regulations.

The TC commented on the previous proposal approved for 2008, as well as Maryland's harvest estimation methodology. The comments on the proposal still stand, these including: that there is a potential for a slight increase in F without a quota if catchability or effort increase; that historically, the trophy season's F has been a small contribution to the total coastwide F; that stock assessment will monitor for any resulting increase in fishing mortality; that tagging data should be used to investigate the effect on Maryland migrant fish; that regulations and stock size (and also weather condition during the fishing season) are driving the harvest, not the quota; and that quota elimination is a policy decision about allocation for the Board to decide. To follow up on one of these points, *Alexei Sharov was tasked to investigate the proportion of tag recaptures in the spring trophy season.* Otherwise, the TC saw the proposal as reasonable given the estimated harvest during the 2008 fishery that operated without a quota.

The TC had also previously commented on Maryland's harvest estimation methodology for the fishery, and asked about progress in implementing its recommendations. Several of these recommendations pertained to the accuracy of state charterboat logbook data, which Maryland uses rather than MRFSS charterboat estimates. Alexei Sharov reported that: 1) Maryland has implemented a policy of only renewing licenses for charter boat captains if they have submitted logbooks from the previous year (including "did not fish" reports), which has reduced the amount of non-reporting; 2) Maryland requires charterboat captains to submit weekly reports

within two weeks, which makes for more accurate reporting than end of year reporting (although enforcement of the reporting deadline is problematic); 3) he intends to investigate the MRFSS data and code for why MRFSS and state logbooks produce different charterboat harvest estimates but has had difficulty obtaining the information from MRFSS; and 4) he is working with Rob Latour to update the Dorazio migration rate estimates, and will then be able to examine if 28" is still a valid threshold for defining a migrant fish. He also noted that the logbook estimate for wave 2 in 2008 is greater than the corresponding MRFSS estimate, while the logbook estimate for wave 3 (ending June 15) is lower than the corresponding MRFSS estimate. At least for 2008, the logbook harvest estimate is within the confidence intervals of the MRFSS estimate. The TC agreed that it would still like to know the reason for disparate charterboat harvest estimates between MRFSS and the logbooks. *Alexei Sharov was tasked with working with his department head to request of NMFS the MRFSS SAS code, and with reporting back to the TC on progress.*

## 2) Proposal for December season extension of Maryland's recreational striped bass fishery

Maryland's charterboat industry requested a proposal to extend the Chesapeake Bay recreational season through December 31, rather than ending December 15, due to a decrease in the number of trips in 2008. Maryland provided the expected increase in harvest during the additional 16 days. This was based on recent harvest in the six weeks prior to December 15 for shore and private boat anglers (data from MRFSS) or the two weeks prior for charter boats (data from logbooks). The expected increase in harvest, most of which would be from shore and private boat anglers, does not take into consideration weather or other seasonal influences on angler effort.

Because the harvest in this fishery is monitored and counts towards the Baywide quota, and F in the Bay is assessed, the TC had no technical objections to the proposal.

## **Board Task on Management Objectives**

### 1) Amendment 6 Objectives

Des Kahn was previously tasked with drafting a response on management performance with each objective. The TC reviewed and provided feedback.

Objective 3. Consider removing "producer areas" and listing specific area names. Note the flexibility permitted to states through conservation equivalency.

Objective 4. Fuel prices and economic downturn are affecting trips by both avid anglers (trips down about 10%) and general anglers (trips down as much as 100%). Peter Fricke will relay the question to the CESS. Recommend that the Board task the CESS with a response if desired.

Objective 5. An important consideration given that striped bass is fully restored. Working on regional otolith collections for regional age length keys. Can't evaluate fully with the information on hand. Could note that there is redundancy in having both a tag based assessment and age-based assessment, which require different data, although TC spoke in favor of having both models. Alexei suggested a coastwide survey rather than individual state surveys with different gears.

Objective 6. Gary Nelson suggested that Amendment 6 also implemented reference points for long-term management.

Objective 7. Vic Crecco wanted to inform the Board that if the age 13+ population size does drop, there is little management can do about it because fishery removals are already managed very stringently.

## 2) Management Objective Analysis A

Gary Shepherd was previously tasked with estimating the proportion of the population age 15+ at various F rates given the current selectivity pattern and several alternative selectivity patterns.

Vic Crecco commented that the analysis could be made more complex by including different Ms at age in the analysis somehow. He advised that the Board be informed about the assumptions included in the analysis. Des Kahn suggested the analysis could also be performed with sex specific selectivity.

Mike Kauffman suggested that the Board survey recreational anglers for what they want in a fishery to help them define management objectives. Peter Fricke responded that studies on this topic have placed anglers into two categories: the avid angler (about 10-25% of the population, but makes 75% of trips) that is looking for the experience, the challenge, bragging rights, and a trophy fish; and the regular angler (85-90% of the population, but makes 15% of trips) that is looking for a meat fish, something to take home and cook, and the size isn't as important. He suggested that the CESS could look into this issue more.

Wilson Laney asked if anyone had thought more on there being a biological reason for having a certain age structure for maintaining recruitment. Some studies have shown that as female age and size increases, quantity and quality of eggs increases. Two papers were noted: one by Dave Secor, and another by Ed Houde and Ed Rutherford. Des Kahn indicated that he would look at those papers prior to the Board meeting.

## 3) Management Objective Analysis B

Gary Nelson was previously tasked with using Jensen's method of calculating the F at which trophy catches are maximized given an estimate of natural mortality and slot limit values.

Gary Nelson noted that the analysis could also be done with slot limits (with another equation in the paper), but he wanted direction from the Board before doing undue work. Des Kahn said he would make the point to the Board that age at entry differs for males and females.

## 4) Possible Analysis - Proportional Stock Density

Des Kahn suggested the TC consider a proportional stock density analysis for striped bass. The technique was useful for weakfish. There is good striped bass survey data or landings length frequency data that could be used. The TC is to review the analysis done for weakfish, although an analysis for striped bass is not likely until further down the road.

Given these analyses, the alternative reference points to Fmsy that the TC is presenting to the Board concerns the age structure of trophy fish. Having an objective based on this will clearly require a trade-off with maximizing yield. Other objectives such as producing a more equitable distribution of harvest among sectors, and minimizing PCB contaminants in food fish were also

mentioned. Otherwise, the TC requests more specific direction before it considers analyses for management objectives again.

### **Other Business**

Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise: Wilson Laney asked where we stood with collecting TC and Tagging Subcommittee comment on the possibility of losing the 2009 cruise. Nichola Meserve said she had received several comments and would forward them all to the TC. Due to the importance of the annual cruise, the TC decided that a letter should be sent to the Board requesting that funds be found to make it happen, using one of the four possible vessels. *Wilson Laney will work with Des Kahn to draft a letter.*

2008 Fishery Performance: Gary Nelson mentioned that the Massachusetts fisheries for 2008 were way down, and asked if other states were seeing similar trends. Similar trends were reported for Maine and New Hampshire, while trends for New York and New Jersey were reported as average. The very wet summer up north was noted, which may have driven fish off shore. Recruitment indices for 2008 are down in Maryland, average in New Jersey, and unavailable elsewhere. The TC will continue to monitor these trends.