Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Atlantic Sturgeon Tagging Working Group Call Summary
June 18, 2015
2:00 p.m.

Members: Bill Post (SC), Will Smith (NC), Eric Schneider (RI), Mike Bednarski (MA), Laura Lee (NC), Ken Pollock (NC), Amanda Higgs (NY)

Staff: Katie Drew, Jeff Kipp, Max Appelman

Other participants: Kathy Hattala (NY), Bob Adams (NY)

Purpose: The Atlantic Sturgeon Tagging Working Group (TWG) met via conference call to discuss potential tagging models for the 2017 Atlantic sturgeon benchmark stock assessment, and data needs for those models.

Summary: Recent conversation among members indicated that the TWG was leaning towards a telemetry-based tagging model since it would be far more concise than conventional tag-based model. This was confirmed on the call, although the TWG will also continue to pursue the later to avoid any logistical issues that may arise with telemetry data down the road. Also, a conventional tag-based model may provide insight to fish longevity since telemetry tags are more or less temporary. This led to discussion of poor tag recapture reporting rates, even from onboard observers. Members continued that initial tagging is often reported to the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), however states often don't report recapture data and/or FWS does not record that information. **ACTION: Staff will contact FWS to acquire Atlantic sturgeon tag-recapture data, and identify which states have not reported recapture data and/or initial tagging data to the FWS database.** As a follow up, Staff will contact those states that did not report data to the FWS database, and request that tag data.

Members reviewed a list of available datasets, which staff compiled last year, to identify datasets to consider for use in a tagging model. Members suggested that there is a telemetry network of registered tags, and that may be a good place to find individuals in possession of tagging datasets. **ACTION: Staff will work with Will Smith, Joe Hightower and Dewayne Fox to identify those in possession of usable tagging datasets.** Once identified, as a follow up task, ASMFC staff will request permission from the individuals to use their data in the stock assessment. The Fishery-Independent Data Use Policy explicitly states the ASMFC's intentions, and should smooth over any hesitation to allowing the TWG to use their data.

Next members discussed potential tagging model types for the stock assessment. Members noted that a telemetry-based survivability index model had been previously developed, and would be a viable method for the stock assessment. The paper is currently pending publication. **ACTION: Staff will work with Will Smith to contact the authors and discuss possible application of that model for the benchmark stock assessment, and request permission to use the accompanying datasets.**

Once all the viable datasets have been identified and the TWG has all the necessary data for the proposed tagging model, the group will reconvene via conference call to continue discussion on model development and useful population parameters to estimate for the stock assessment.