Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Tautog Technical Committee / Stock Assessment Subcommittee
Meeting Summary
May 20, 2016

Technical Committee / Stock-Assessment Subcommittee: Jason McNamee, Jeff Brust, Mike Bednarski, Sandy Dumais, Joe Cimino, Greg Wojcik, Katie May Laumann, Alexei Sharov

University of Connecticut Guest Speakers: Jacob Kasper, Eric Shultz

Staff: Ashton Harp, Katie Drew

In preparation for the regional assessments for Long Island Sound (LIS) and New York/ New Jersey (excluding LIS), the Tautog Technical Committee (TC) and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) held a joint webinar to review and discuss preliminary analyses for each region in advance of the report submission due in June. The TC/SAS also reviewed key dates for the 2016 stock assessment update.

1. **Review and feedback on the Long Island Sound stock assessment**

Age-length key (ALK)

- Includes data from 1984-2015; the data is primarily from Connecticut and New York LIS. Though data from the Rhode Island trawl survey was used to supplement areas where data were missing.
    - In regard to data availability, the assessment does not include 2013-2015 Connecticut LIS trawl survey data, including age data.
- *Data gaps:* For certain length classes in the overall length frequency, no age samples are available. In each case, the data was pooled across multiple years to fill ALK gaps.
    - **TC Request:**
        - Identify the number and areas that were filled with imputed data per year in the ALK with the TC/SAS. G. Wojcik will provide this information.
        - In the report, highlight which size or age groups are not well represented in the ALK
- *Plus group:* In the benchmark assessment, the 'plus group' includes fish that are 12 years old or older (12+). The LIS assessment group noted that upon further analysis they felt an 18+ group might be more appropriate
    - **TC Feedback**: Overall the starting age of the plus group should not matter as far as consistency with the other regions. If there is significant catch at age for older

- grouped age classes then it would be appropriate to expand the age structure in the model. As voiced, 10% of individuals are in the 12+ group, whereas only 1% of the population would be contained in the 18+ age group. Although 10% is not an insignificant number, a plus group between 12 and 18 (maybe 15) might work better. Given the short timeframe, separating the age classes could take up a lot of time for not a lot of benefit. Additionally, the other regions will implement management based on F advice from a 12+ group; consistent management advice would be a benefit to staying with the 12+ group.
- **TC Consensus**: The TC would like to explore expanding the age-classes to 15+ or 18+ in the next benchmark stock assessment, as this was also a recommendation from the last peer review panel as well. The LIS 'plus group' should remain at 12+ for the LIS assessment since all other regions are at 12+ but if time permits, a sensitivity analysis with an older plus group should be conducted.

Length-weight relationships

- A length-weight relationship was developed using LISTS data; the results differ from what was published in the benchmark (figure 2.7).
    - **TC Feedback:** The TC acknowledged the discrepancy. The data in question was not used as part of the assessment, rather it was used in the process to delineate regional breaks. The TC will look in to the discrepancy when working on the stock assessment update in fall 2016. A. Sharov will share a white paper on growth analysis which was conducted by the MD representative on the TC.
    - **TC Consensus:** Proceed using the newly developed length weight data sets/ regression analysis based on the LISTS data.

Indices Effective Sample Size

- The LIS assessment group requested feedback on the best way to calculate appropriate values
    - **TC Feedback:** It is a weighting factor and is largely a judgment call. The maximum effective sample size should be between 100-200. The benchmark assessment used number of tows for indices and number of sampled trips from MRIP (scaled to a max of 100), then used the adjusted ESS calculated by ASAP which is based on the Francis 2011 method.

Length Distributions

- Connecticut Volunteer Angler Survey (VAS)
    - The logbook instructs anglers to "round down to the nearest half inch". As a result, .5 inch are underrepresented, so the counts from each half inch bin were split 50/50, half of the fish in the bin were moved to the inch above, the other half to the inch below to make the distribution bins at whole inch increments.

        - **TC Feedback:** Agreed this was the best method to proceed given the logbook instructions.
        - **TC Request:** J. Kasper will send a comparative analysis of the CT VAS data versus the other data sets of length frequencies (e.g. MRIP, NY head boat) via email for the TC to review
- Discards
    - Minimum size regulations were implemented in CT (1987) and New York (1991); prior to each year there are no discard lengths available.
    - **TC Feedback:**
        - The LIS assessment group indicated that they were simply excluding discard information from the early part of the dataset as they did not know how to proceed. The TC suggested a priority of tasks to address this issue:
            - Run a sensitivity analysis to see how the years prior to discard data affect the final results by doing one run with a start year of 1984 and another with a start year of 1987.
            - The TC doesn't want to choose whether to start the data at 1984 or 1987 (first year of discard info for CT) at this time.
            - For strategies on how to include discard data for the early years (1984 – 1987), the primary alternative is to take the B2 length frequency from the earliest available years and apply them retrospectively (suggestion of taking the average of 1987 – 1989 to apply retrospectively).
            - As a secondary alternative (if time allows), apply the same distribution as your catch to the discards as a sensitivity run.
            - A reminder that B2 numbers will need to be converted into weight for those years because ASAP fits to weight. Could assume the average weight of 1987-88 and retrospectively apply.

ASAP

Run times of the model are unusually long. J. Kasper will send the preliminary ASAP file to K. Drew to double-check for set-up errors and ways to improve efficiency.

2. **Review and feedback on the New York / New Jersey (excluding LIS) stock assessment**

Initial attempts to subtract the NY LIS catch-at-length data from the original benchmark assessment CAL resulted in negative fish in some age classes, due to the differences in length frequency data used between the LIS region and the original NY-NJ region.

TC Feedback: K. Drew suggested that the subtraction be done at the total catch level – i.e., subtract the NY LIS recreational removals in numbers from the NY-NJ recreational removals and subtract the NY LIS commercial harvest in weight from the NY-NJ commercial harvest in weight – and then develop region-specific length frequencies and average fish weight to convert the remaining NJ-NY landings into catch-at-age. S. Dumais will provide J. Brust with NY's biological samples that can be identified to the north or south shore of Long Island through 2015, and J. Brust will pull NJ's raw MRIP intercept data.

3. 2016 Stock Assessment Update

At the May 2016 meeting, the Commission's Policy Board approved a 2016 stock assessment update for all other regions. The update will be produced in fall 2016. In preparation for the assessment, states will submit independent and dependent data by June 15th. The data can be uploaded via the Commission's FTP site or sent via email to A. Harp and K. Drew.

4. Future Meetings

The TC/SAS will meet again to review and discuss preliminary analyses for each region on June 7, 2016. Call details are provided below:

Tuesday, June 7th at 1 p.m.
Webinar link: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7975724681483070723

Call #: 888-394-8197
Passcode: 499811