

TAUTOG TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY
Providence RI,
April 24, 2007

The ASMFC Tautog Technical Committee met to consider state reduction proposals to achieve a fishing mortality rate of 0.20 as required in Addendum IV, consider state specific assessments, and elect a Vice-Chair. The following is a summary of the meeting.

TC members in attendance:

Jeff Brust
Paul Caruso
Joe Cimino
Sandra Dumais
Michael Luisi, Vice-Chair
Jason McNamee, Chair
Richard Wong
Chris Vonderweidt, Staff

After discussing state reduction proposals the Technical Committee agreed that the following criteria were the most appropriate. TC members agreed to redo their state proposals using the following criteria.

- U, or exploitation rate, will be used to calculate the reductions. This was decided because the reductions as represented in the reduction tables were actually reductions in U and not F. The U calculated for the coastwide VPA F value of 0.28 is $U = 0.23$ and is equal to a 25.6% reduction to the U target of 0.17 (based on the F target of 0.20).
- States will use the average of 2003, 2004, and 2005 landings for the base year to smooth variability in the MRFSS landings data.
- New reductions tables will have to be prepared that incorporate the new 3 year average data from the MRFSS landings.
- States will create new reduction plans based on the new tables.

After reviewing state specific assessments, the Technical Committee came to a consensus on the following. Addendum IV's language allows for state specific assessments that are "at the same level of precision as the most recent assessment."

- The Massachusetts VPA is at "the same level of precision as the coastwide assessment." However, since it is an aggregate of both Rhode Island and Massachusetts data the committee asked that Massachusetts include; 1.) The two Rhode Island age zero indices and 2.) The most current landings data.

- The RI proposal was a RI specific VPA. The committee felt that this assessment was not at "the same level of precision as the coastwide assessment" as indicated by a strange retrospective pattern and a MSR value that was higher than that in the coastwide VPA.
- Massachusetts and Rhode Island will submit a regional assessment using the before mentioned data. This combined assessment should be more precise and reliable than the state specific assessments originally submitted by MA and RI.
- New Jersey's assessment was neither rejected nor approved. However, the TC asked whether NJ could produce a VPA with the state data that it used in its state specific assessment. The committee concluded that at this point, it could not deduce whether the current assessment is at "the same level of precision as the coastwide assessment". The committee noted that the NJ assessment was difficult to compare to the coastwide assessment, because it was a different kind of analysis, containing no metric that could be compared to the coastwide VPA to get at a precision estimate. Another comment that was made by the committee was that the NJ trawl data was an index of fish that had a majority of fish not recruited to the fishery yet (under 14"); therefore to assess an F estimate based on a portion of the stock that was not subject to F was problematic. For these reasons they did not make any recommendations on the current NJ assessment but asked NJ to produce a VPA.

The committee agreed to forward some general statements to the Board regarding reduction proposals and state specific assessments as follows.

- By allowing state specific assessments, and the nature of VPA, states who do not perform a state specific assessment and use the coastwide assessment would have to reduce more than 28.6% to compensate for states who aren't reducing to that level based on their state specific assessments. If this compensation is not undertaken, achieving the reduction in F will not happen.
- If the state specific assessments are accepted, the states that put forth state specific assessments should be required to abide by their assessment for a number of years, committing the time and conducting the necessary surveys, which removes the temptation and ability to switch from state specific to coastwide assessment results from year to year depending on which one requires the fewest reductions.

Finally, Michael Luisi of Maryland DNR was elected as the new Vice-Chair of the Tautog Technical Committee.