



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
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Shad & River Herring Technical Committee Meeting Summary

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Technical Committee Members: Wes Eakin (Chair, NY), Matthew Jargowsky (Vice-Chair, MD), Michael Brown (ME), Patrick McGrath (VA), Reid Hyle (FL), Conor O'Donnell (NH), Brad Chase (MA), Ken Sprankle (USFWS), Patrick McGee (RI), Kevin Job (CT), Brian Neilan (NJ), Ruth Haas-Castro (NOAA), Johnny Moore (DE), Jim Page (GA), Ted Castro-Santos (USGS), Jeremy McCargo (NC), Kyle Hoffman (SC), Jim Hawkes (NOAA)

ASMFC Staff: James Boyle and Katie Drew

Others: Sheila Eyler, Emily Bodell, Jeff Kaelin, Thomas Gadowski, Alan Bianchi, Jackie Stephens, Bruce Kindseth

Review Delaware Co-op Sustainability Metric Management Review

Sheila Eyler, the Delaware Co-op Technical Committee Chair, gave a presentation detailing the Co-op's management response to one of their sustainable fishery benchmarks (the Smithfield Beach index) triggering in 2023. The Smithfield Beach index surveys the abundance of adult spawning female American shad in the Delaware River Basin at Smithfield Beach, Pennsylvania. The Smithfield Beach index is one of six benchmark indices in the SFMP and is the second index that is below (exceeding) its benchmark since the SFMP was updated and approved in 2022. The other index that is exceeding its benchmark is the Total [Female] Mortality index, which was identified as part of the 2020 Stock Assessment. The remaining four indices (Non-Tidal Juvenile Abundance Index, Tidal Juvenile Abundance Index, Ratio of Harvest to Smithfield Beach, and Mixed Stock Landings) have not exceeded their respective benchmarks in three or more of the most recent five years of the respective time series. In response to exceeding the Total Mortality benchmark as part of the 2020 Stock Assessment, the Co-op updated their SFMP in 2022 and initiated management actions in all jurisdictions to reduce harvest on adult American shad by 33%. Those management actions were largely in place for the 2023 fishing seasons and included gear restrictions and harvest caps on the commercial fishery and a reduction in bag limit from three to two for American shad in the recreational fishery. The Co-op is not currently considering additional management actions due to the management actions that were already implemented in 2023. Furthermore, there has been very low harvest in the commercial fishery in recent years and low harvest in the recreational fishery (logbook surveys suggest less than 1% of fish are being retained). No TC members expressed concerns with the lack of additional management actions.

Review Florida Sustainability Metric Management Review

Reid Hyle presented on Florida's sustainability metric management review due to the states St. Johns River adult electrofishing survey being below the threshold for the seventh consecutive year (the trigger for a management review is three consecutive years below the threshold). There is not a commercial fishery for American shad in the St. Johns River, just a small recreational fishery. The recreational fishery



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is limited to small portions of the spawning grounds. While adult abundance has decreased in recent years, the juvenile abundance indices have been high since 2020. Fall river flows appear to have the strongest correlation with higher juvenile abundance indices. The recreational creel survey has not seen an increase in effort, though CPUE from the survey has decreased since 2018. The estimated total catch has been below 4,000 fish since 2020, and harvest has been reported to be generally below 10%. Florida is not currently planning on taking any management actions as it does not appear that fishing mortality is what is causing the reduced adult returns. No TC members expressed concerns with the lack of additional management actions.

Consider Edits to Technical Guidance Document and Incorporating Stock Assessment Information into SFMPs

The TC first discussed the challenges with using Z-estimates from the assessments as sustainability thresholds in SFMPs. The primary issue is that the Z estimates from the assessments are calculated at the regional scale and not river-specific scale. The TC then discussed the best way to estimate spawning habitat, as well as how to estimate appropriate escapement targets. While surface acreage is the most commonly used metric to estimate available spawning habitat, it is not always the best measure of habitat quality. It is also difficult to establish a single coastwide escapement target as not all systems can support the same level of production. The TC discussed developing a work group to evaluate how each state estimates spawning habitat, as well as escapement targets. Connecticut mentioned that they would like to eventually re-open their river herring fisheries, so having escapement targets would be useful for determining when a system has recovered to the point that it may be able to support a fishery. Ken Sprankle, Brad Chase, and Kevin Job will compile the different state methodologies and report back to the TC at a future meeting.

Other Business

This was Wes Eakin's last meeting as TC Chair. Matthew Jargowsky will be transitioning from Vice-Chair to Chair. A new Vice-Chair will be elected at the next SRH TC meeting.