

Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel

Proposed Use of Available Research Funds – 2021

Summary by J. Gartland

March 31, 2021

Project Title: Quantifying the impact of a restrictor rope on the composition, rate, and size-distribution of catch derived from a bottom trawl survey.

Objective: Implement a paired-tow experimental design to evaluate possible changes in catch composition, catch rate (CPUE), and size-distribution due to the addition of a restrictor rope on the 400 x 12cm, three-bridle four-seam survey trawl used by NEAMAP.

Application: The information generated by this investigation will be used to inform the development of a standardized bottom trawl configuration that may be adopted by institutions charged with sampling offshore wind energy lease areas located throughout a range of depths in the Mid-Atlantic and Southern New England. The adoption of such a fishing system likely will ensure that resulting data are comparable to and thus assimilated with the time-series of information generated by NEAMAP. Secondarily, this information may prove useful to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center as that organization contemplates approaches to more-fully standardize the performance of their survey trawl.

Genesis

- On March 19, 2021, the NTAP engaged in a lengthy discussion on the potential uses of the \$170k currently available to support trawl survey-based research. This restrictor experiment was identified as a top research priority, and a recommendation to fund this investigation was adopted by the Advisory Panel without objection.
- Non-NEAMAP NTAP members also recommended that this experiment be conducted by the NEAMAP Trawl Survey at VIMS, given the expertise of the captain and crew of the *F/V Darana R*, as well as VIMS scientific personnel, with this survey trawl. Members noted that leveraging the NEAMAP Survey to conduct this investigation represented cost-efficiencies that could increase data yield for this project (e.g., minimal start-up costs).
- Personnel from the NEFSC, *F/V Darana R*, and VIMS met on March 30, 2021 to discuss both the merits of and timeline for this investigation. At the conclusion of this meeting, NEAMAP (VIMS & *Darana R* personnel) agreed to complete this project, should this

work be recommended for funding by the Mid-Atlantic & New England Fishery Management Councils to the NEFSC.

Next Steps

- *April 2021* – Evaluation of the merits of this restrictor experiment by the Mid-Atlantic & New England Fishery Management Councils; develop & consider formal Council recommendations to the NEFSC to support this NTAP effort.
- *Summer 2021* – Populate an NTAP working group charged with refining research objectives & developing the experimental design.
- *Summer/Fall 2021* – NTAP working group finalizes research objectives & design (e.g., target location(s), requisite number of paired tows, necessary data elements, integration of NEAMAP acoustic data, etc.) in collaboration with the NEFSC Cooperative Research, Ecosystems Surveys, & Population Dynamics Branches.
- *Spring & Fall 2022* – NEAMAP conducts the field experiment; timing to coincide with survey cruises.
- *Winter 2022/2023* – VIMS, *F/V Darana R*, & NEFSC analyze resulting data, provide a report to NTAP & both Councils, and prepare a manuscript for publication.