



US/EU Pelagic Fisheries Workshop

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council held a workshop in collaboration with the European Union's (EU) Pelagic Advisory Council (Pelagic AC) on May 1-3, 2018 in Gloucester, MA. The objective of this workshop was to provide a forum for US and EU fishermen, managers, scientists, and other stakeholders to interact and discuss possible solutions to the complex problems associated with the small-mesh pelagic fisheries in their countries. Additional information, presentations, and background materials are available on the Council's website at <http://www.mafmc.org/workshop/us-eu-pelagics-workshop>.

Summary of Key Points from the Workshop

The following bullets highlight the overarching themes, ideas, areas of concern, and key issues that emerged during workshop presentations and discussions. The points below represent the perspectives of individuals who participated in the workshop and are not intended to reflect the viewpoints of all participants or of the Council or the Pelagic AC.

General

- Intercontinental exchange of ideas shows commonalities and differences, with opportunities to learn in each case. Gear experiences are an example of close commonalities. The US is ahead on ecosystems considerations, while the EU is ahead on experiences with wind siting and MPAs. In all cases, there are opportunities to examine what's gone right and wrong so we don't repeat mistakes.
- There is a need to better integrate industry into research with the assessment teams so fishermen can have an impact on the assessment.
 - There have been improvements in the North Sea since the early 2000s. Interacting with ICES was a long struggle. The Pelagic AC was heavily involved in science from beginning, and was asked to become observers at first. Other sectors (e.g. demersal) are starting to get more involved.
- Utilizing part of a quota to encourage research by industry can help bring industry into the process and improve the science. It's not clear how it can work in the current US quota system and you need to make sure projects are actually going to help (i.e. be integrated into assessments or management).
- The concept of embedding NMFS economists with fishermen and/or processors to deepen socioeconomic understanding was discussed and should be considered as a follow-up.
- The EU focuses more on operational practicality vs the US focus on theory and subjective measures. This makes it more difficult for US fishermen to navigate scientific and management processes and increases the role of politics in the US.
- There is a need to include maximizing Optimum Yield in Ecosystem Considerations and general management discussions (for example Atlantic Herring and Haddock). Neither species is fully harvested, but the bycatch cap on haddock limits Atlantic herring fishing. The current approach is not pragmatic.
- Fishery participants need to present a united front and get involved earlier.
- Councils never select status-quo but sometime should – there are likely times when no action is best but there is a predisposal to always do something.

Ecosystem Approaches to Fishery Management (EAFM)

- Don't forget it's a "wicked problem" because of the inherent complexity, multiple perspectives of stakeholders, and lack of easy answers. The key is to not get paralyzed or fall for what *appears* be easy answers.
- We need to evaluate the impacts of leaving forage in the water – what are they eating? How are they impacting other species?
- There is still lots of uncertainty about what EAFM means for fishermen and other stakeholders – it's defined differently by each group.
 - Have to clearly describe the goals and objectives of any particular EAFM endeavor – The Council's Guidance Document and Risk Assessment work is heading in that direction.
 - There is a lack of clarity about how things are going to be operationalized/tracked/measured.
- EAFM is perceived as a danger by fishery participants in terms of EAFM leading to reduced catches. If EAFM increases our perception of uncertainty catch buffers will increase under the current system.
 - Initial results of EAFM have only meant quota cuts (e.g. Atlantic herring, and the forage discussion in the Council's EAFM Guidance Document).
 - We need a discussion about when EAFM could lead to quota increases.
- We need to ensure the implementation of EAFM, whatever that becomes, is rooted in data and tested.
- We should organize and communicate the research questions that are currently being pursued by EAFM, and integrate stakeholders into deciding what happens next.
- The role of marine mammals in EAFM should be examined and clarified.
- EAFM needs to account for different approaches by neighboring management entities.
- Pelagic fish, and the ecosystems used by pelagic fish in all their life stages, are both "common-pool resources" that affect diverse stakeholder interests well beyond commercial fishing interests. It is important that a diverse audience of stakeholders have standing and be involved in the management of pelagic fisheries.
- Next steps/first steps
 - Evaluate/coordinate each Council's research needs relative to this "wicked problem."
 - Consider how/when EAFM can lead to higher quotas.

Bycatch Issues

- Gear solutions seem unlikely but it's worth having ongoing discussions with industry (worst approach is for gear solutions to be developed without industry).
- Fleet communications are used informally in the EU and formally in US Herring/Mackerel and seem to be effective. You need to have good incentives to encourage participation.
- Not having information on impacts of bycatch on any species of concern makes evidence-based decisions difficult.
- Restricting the fleet based on uncertain estimates does not encourage participation in bycatch avoidance.
- Be careful about assuming something that works in one place is going to work everywhere – need fishery by fishery ground-truthing.
- The US seems to have a high degree of management/enforcement relative to small quotas.
- We need to make sure rules don't work counter to reducing bycatch. Some current rules are forcing fishery to not be able to avoid bycatch and this should be further evaluated.
- SBRM creates a problematic feedback loop: low discards = low coverage = concern by public about what bycatch is and high uncertainty about bycatch relative to low bycatch caps.

Acoustics

- Unstructured data dumps are not going to be useful.
- We need further discussions about how we could utilize industry acoustic platforms/data.
- There is a large potential for value for pelagic fisheries, for either creating an index (long term) or for biomass scaling (short term).

Assessments

- Butterfish and Mackerel are examples of how to include industry in the assessment process. They started with discussions with stakeholders early on before the data and modeling meetings. Otherwise fishermen come into the process too late.
- Cooperation is dependent on personalities – leadership can break down barriers to openness.
- Research is a key opportunity for more EU/US collaboration & progress. We need to find more ways to actually get data that is collected into assessments.
 - A database of successes could point the way to what works.

Other Issues to watch, discuss more in future

- Wind and other competing ocean uses (marine spatial planning) will be an ongoing issue.
 - Aquaculture – larger in EU than East Coast. EU has separate Advisory Council, limited ability of Pelagic AC to comment on other (Aquaculture) issues.
 - Sand Extraction
 - Deep Sea Mining
 - Wave/tidal power.
 - Marine Protected Areas & effort shifts
 - Marine Portal (pros and cons, limited data included, can used in multiple ways)
- There is a danger for fisheries to be overwhelmed by other interests in marine spatial planning processes.
- Sustainability Certification Issues.
- Existing fishery restrictions (time/area).
- Uses of ITQs for catch or bycatch.
- Seismic issues and impacts on fisheries.

The Gloucester Pelagics workshop was followed up by a workshop in June 2018 in Denmark involving more European participants. The agendas from both workshops are included following this summary but a report is not yet available for the Denmark workshop. In general it reinforced many of the concepts that emerged from the Gloucester workshop.

Based on both workshops, two areas seem likely for initial next steps. First, the lessons learned from the European egg survey work for mackerel should be considered for future US egg surveys, and prospecting for eggs beyond the range of the current US survey collections should be considered to determine if current efforts are capturing the primary range of mackerel eggs. Second, the application of acoustics for surveying mackerel is an area of interest by both researchers and industry, and collaborative efforts on acoustic surveying should be considered.

