

MID-ATLANTIC COUNCIL

2012 Planned Council Meeting Topics

August 14-16, 2012 -- Philadelphia, PA

- Swearing in of New and Reappointed Council members
- Election of Officers
- Adopt Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Specifications for 2013
- Adopt Bluefish Specifications for 2013
- ~~Consider public hearing comments and approve final measures for Amendment 3 to the Spiny Dogfish FMP~~
- Review Public Hearing Draft for Amendment 17 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass FMP (black sea bass recreational management)
- Approve RSA Priorities List for 2013 (and beyond if warranted)
- Review Visioning Report
- Review scup allocation project results

October 16-18, 2012 -- Long Branch, NJ

- Approve Dogfish Specifications for 2013 (and beyond)
- Approve Amendment 3 to the Spiny Dogfish FMP for secretarial submission
- Review Public Hearing comments and/or Adopt/Approve Amendment 17 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass FMP (black sea bass recreational management)

December 11-13, 2012 --Baltimore, MD

- Adopt Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Recreational Specifications for 2013
- Approve SSCs multi-year research priority recommendations
- Review Draft Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management Advisory Document

MID-ATLANTIC COUNCIL

July- October 2012 Schedule of Events

July

Jul 11-13 Developing a New International Architecture for Maritime Policy, NY, NY
Jul 16-19 NEFSC Surfclam Invertebrate Subcommittee Meeting, Woods Hole, MA
Jul 17 Marine Resource Education Program Steering Committee, Baltimore, MD
Jul 25-26 SSC Meeting - ABC recommendations for SF/SCUP/BSB/Bluefish, Balt., MD
Jul 27 SF/SCUP/BSB/Bluefish Monitoring Committee Meetings, Baltimore, MD

August

Aug 7-9 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Meeting, Alexandria, VA
Aug 8 Monkfish Committee Meeting, East Boston, MA
Aug 9 Habitat Plan Development Team, Boston, MA
Aug 14-16 Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting, Philadelphia, PA
Aug 19-23 American Fisheries Society 142nd Annual Meeting, St. Paul, MN
Aug 28-30 Public Hearings for Spiny Dogfish Amendment 3, RI, NJ. VA
Aug 29-30 Modeling Protogynous Hermaphrodites Workshop, Raleigh, NC

September

Sep 4-7 West Coast Fisheries Leadership & Sustainability Forum, Monterey, CA
Sep 10-14 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting, Charleston, SC
Sep 15-21 Sea Grant Week, Girdwood, AK
Sep 17-19 NEFSC Surfclam Invertebrate Subcommittee Meeting, Woods Hole, MA
Sep 25-27 New England Fishery Management Council Meeting, Plymouth, MA
Sep 26-27 SSC and Monitoring Committee Meetings - ABC recommendations for Spiny Dogfish, Baltimore, MD

October

Oct 8-12 NEFSC Surfclam Invertebrate Subcommittee Meeting, Woods Hole, MA
Oct 16-18 Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting, Long Branch, NJ
Oct 21-25 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission 71st Annual Meeting, Phila., PA
Oct 23-25 New Council Member Training, Silver Spring, MD

2013 Council Meeting Schedule

- February 12-14, 2013: Embassy Suites Hampton Roads
1700 Coliseum Drive
Hampton, VA 23666
757-827-8200
- April 9-11, 2013: Embassy Suites Raleigh Crabtree
4700 Creedmoor Rd.
Raleigh, NC 27612
919-881-0000
- June 11-13, 2013: Double Tree by Hilton Tinton Falls-Eatontown
700 Hope Rd.
Eatontown, NJ 07724
732-544-9300
- August 13-15, 2013: Double Tree by Hilton Wilmington
4727 Concord Pike
Wilmington, DE 19803
302-351-5503
- October 8-10, 2013: Montauk Yacht Club
32 Star Island Road
PO Box 5048
Montauk, NY 11954
888-698-8668
- December 10-12, 2013: The Westin Annapolis
100 Westgate Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-972-4300

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Specifications

(As of August 2, 2012)

Fishery Management Plans	2011			2012			2013				
	Council Approved	Specs Package Submitted	NMFS Final Rule	Council Approved	Specs Package Submitted	NMFS Proposed Rule	NMFS Final Rule	Council Approved	Specs Package Submitted	NMFS Proposed Rule	NMFS Final Rule
Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass · Commercial · Recreational	08/18/10 12/15/10	10/01/10 ^b 02/17/11	12/28/10 06/30/11	08/17/11 12/14/11	10/02/11 03/18/12	Interim Rule: 12/30/11 04/30/12	04/23/12 05/23/12				
Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish	06/09/10	07/19/10	02/14/11	06/15/11	08/09/11	10/26/11	03/21/12	06/12/12	07/31/12		
Dogfish	10/13/10	01/28/11	06/07/11	10/12/11	01/27/12	03/19/12	05/22/12				
Bluefish	08/18/10	11/29/10	03/31/11	08/17/11	12/02/11	02/15/12	04/27/12				
Surfclam, Ocean Quahog	12/27/10 ^a										

^a Final rule applies for surfclam and ocean quahog fishing years 2011, 2012, and 2013.

^b Supplement to the package with recommended scup TAC increase to NMFS 01/26/11.

*Status of Open Amendment/Framework Actions
(as of August 2, 2012)*

<u>FMP</u>	<u>AMD\FW</u>	<u>Issues Addressed</u>
Squid / Mackerel / Butterfish	Amendment 14	<i>Alosine</i> incidental catch
Summer Flounder/ Scup/Black Sea Bass	Amendment 17	Spatial/regional management of black sea bass recreational fishery
Dogfish	Amendment 3	Authorize RSA program Consider alternatives to seasonal quotas Limited Access Quota Rollover EFH Definitions
Surfclam/ Ocean Quahog	Amendment 15	Cost Recovery EFH updates Ocean Quahog overfishing definition
	Amendment 16	Excessive shares and ownership disclosure

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Status of FMPs, Amendments and Frameworks
 (As of August 2, 2012)

FMP/Amendment	Date Approved by Council	Lapse	Date submitted to NMFS/NERO	Lapse	FR Notice of Plan Availability	Lapse	Proposed Rule Publication Date	Lapse	Plan Approval/Disapproval Letter	Lapse	Final Rule Publication Date
Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish Framework 5	04/12/12	5	04/17/12								
Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish Framework 6	04/12/12	5	04/17/12								
Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish Amendment 14	06/14/12										
Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Amendment 15											
Dogfish Amendment 3											

"Lapse" is the amount of time in days from Council approval to column-heading action.

Didden, Jason T.

From: Moore, Christopher
Sent: Friday, July 06, 2012 1:39 PM
To: Didden, Jason T.; Robins, Rick; Anderson, Lee
Subject: FW: butterfish and mackerel determinations
Attachments: Butterfish and Atlantic mackerelStatusUpdate-2.docx

fyi

From: Galen Tromble [<mailto:galen.tromble@noaa.gov>]
Sent: Friday, July 06, 2012 12:49 PM
To: Christopher M Moore; Karen E Greene
Subject: butterfish and mackerel determinations

Hi Chris,

I'm finally getting back to you on the question of the status determinations for butterfish and Atlantic mackerel. It required some digging to figure out what was going on in the assessment process and results and how that matched up with our procedures for reporting status. In the end, we determined that the status of butterfish should be changed to unknown, but Atlantic mackerel will retain the determinations from the previous assessment. I've attached an informal document that explains the rationale.

If you have any questions about this, please let me know.

Galen

Status Determinations for Butterfish and Atlantic Mackerel

For two Mid-Atlantic stocks, butterfish and Atlantic mackerel, the most recent stock assessments were rejected during peer review – that is, it was determined that the assessments did not provide valid scientific advice related to the stock biomass or fishing mortality rates. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council requested that NMFS review the reported status determinations for overfished and overfishing status for these two stocks.

Background.

Consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and National Standard guidelines, NMFS makes determinations of the status of the stock relative to reference points for biomass and fishing mortality. The basis for reporting stock status is the most recently accepted stock assessment. When a new assessment is conducted, accepted, and deemed best scientific information available by the Scientific and Statistical Committee, the assessment is used to support the latest status determination.

In some cases, assessments are rejected if the results are inadequate to determine stock status. This can result from problems with data or methodology, or both. When an assessment is rejected, it is as if no assessment had been conducted, and NMFS continues to report stock status based on the previously accepted assessment.

In a smaller number of instances, the assessment and peer review process also looks at the previous assessment and identifies an error in data or methodology that would invalidate the previously accepted assessment on which the current status determinations are based. In other words, the process makes a judgment that the previous assessment should not have been accepted. In this case, the current status determinations are changed to 'unknown.'

Analysis.

NMFS has reviewed the assessment and related reports for butterfish and Atlantic mackerel, using the criteria described above, and determined that the status of butterfish will be changed to unknown, but Atlantic mackerel will retain the determinations from the previous assessment. A brief explanation is provided for each below.

1. Butterfish – change overfished status from Yes to unknown. The 2009 stock assessment was partially rejected (biomass only) and overfished status has been based on 2004 assessment results and overfishing status based on 2009 assessment results. The following is an excerpt from the 2010 Panelist Report, which supports invalidating the 2004 assessment:

“The estimate of Bmsy from the 2004 butterfish assessment was based on the biomass scale reflected in the result of the 2004 KLAMZ model configuration. Given that the biomass estimates from the current assessment (which was an improved analysis due to the prior on the survey q) reflected an entirely different scale (4-6X larger - see comments in ToR 3 above), the panel

concluded that the scale of the biomass estimates from the 2004 assessment was too low. Thus, it is unlikely that that the 2004 estimate of BMSY is valid."

Tim Miller from the NEFSC reiterated that the scale of the earlier assessment was 4-6 times too low for biomass so too much uncertainty in that determination. The new assessment used the same underlying model, but different data were used and new computer code. Assessment scientists did not have reasonable confidence to determine overfished status, but concluded that the stock was likely not subject to overfishing. Butterfish will remain in a rebuilding plan until new reference points and estimates of stock size can be determined. The stock will be footnoted as follows:

The overfished status of butterfish is unknown, based on the fact that the last assessment was unable to estimate stock size with reasonable confidence. In addition, the previous assessment conducted in 2004, was found to have significant problems in retrospect, such that stock size estimates is highly uncertain. In order to maintain a precautionary approach, this stock will remain in a rebuilding plan until it can be confirmed with reasonable confidence that stock size has reached an appropriate rebuilding target.

2. Atlantic mackerel: No change in status – leave as not subject to overfishing/not overfished, based on results of 2005 assessment, which was accepted using, an ASAP model. A benchmark assessment was attempted in 2010 using VPA, but was rejected. No review of the previous assessment was made by the authors, similar to the butterfish assessment, so the 2005 assessment continues to serve as the basis for stock status.

*Excerpt from the 2010 assessment: "Atlantic mackerel *Scomber scombrus* were previously assessed in 2005, and the conclusion of that assessment was that the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring. The status was based on results of a model fit using the Age Structured Assessment Program (ASAP) that included a split in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) spring research bottom trawl survey index in 1985. That model served as a starting point for the most recent assessment using data updated through 2008. However, multiple configurations of ASAP models using the updated data, including models with predation removals, were not robust to various assumptions and exhibited significant retrospective patterns. Due to generally better diagnostics from a virtual population analysis (VPA) model configuration, this approach was chosen by the Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee (TRAC) as the benchmark model.*

Despite having the best diagnostics of those models considered, the benchmark VPA was faced with resolving disparate trends between the NEFSC spring survey, CPUE indices, and total landings. Furthermore, splits in the NEFSC spring survey time series created large changes in catchability that could not be fully explained. These issues resulted in a benchmark model that still contained a significant retrospective pattern and produced highly uncertain estimates. Because the estimates of SSB40% and MSY40% were dependent on the assessment results, and

both estimates were also highly uncertain, the TRAC did not recommend their adoption and conclusions regarding stock status relative to biological reference points were considered inappropriate."

In summary, the benchmark tried to put forth a VPA, but there was a great lack of confidence in the data and a significant retrospective pattern, so the assessment was rejected. There is no similar statement as in the butterflyfish assessment, regarding the validity of the earlier 2005 assessment so the results of that assessment will be used to maintain stock status as not subject to overfishing/not overfished.



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901-3910
Phone: 302-674-2331 | Toll Free: 877-446-2362 | FAX: 302-674-5399 | www.mafmc.org
Richard B. Robins, Jr., Chairman | Lee G. Anderson, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: 8 – 02 – 2012
To: Chris Moore / Council
From: Jason Didden
Subject: MSB RSA

Chris,

One wrap-up item from the June meeting is to establish the RSA for mackerel and butterfish. No action is needed for the squids because they are going into year two of 3-year specs. My recommendation is that the Council take this up during the Executive Director's report and provide a motion as to the Council's intent. The specifications EA can incorporate the Council's preference during document review so this will not slow the regulatory process down. My recommendations for mackerel and butterfish are:

Mackerel: 3% (though usually no one applies for it because the quota is not approached)

Butterfish: 2% of the 7,560 mt ACT. This would translate into 151 metric tons (mt). Approximately 59 mt of that would be set aside (not auctioned) to cover butterfish discarding in longfin squid RSA fishing. This has been the practice in recent years where recent data on the ratio of butterfish discarding to longfin squid landings is used to create an "RSA shadow allocation" of butterfish so that any butterfish discards during RSA longfin squid fishing are accounted for. This shadow allocation has utilized all of the butterfish RSA in recent years due to the low butterfish ABCs/ACTs (so there has been no butterfish auction). This year however there would still be approximately 92 mt for the actual RSA auction with a 2% RSA. While the Council could set up to 3% for RSA, given zero butterfish have been available for auction in recent years, it may be prudent to move in an incremental fashion to see how an already substantial increase plays out before going to the full 3% in terms of quota monitoring, especially given the other changes proposed for the 2013 butterfish fishery.

Preliminary AM 15 Timeline/Action Plan - River Herrings/Shads as Stocks in the Fishery

June 2012 Council initiates Amendment

Aug 2012 Action Plan Created, FMAT assigned

Sept 2013 Workshop with Management Partners & FMAT on management approach

Oct 2012 Staff completes scoping document

Nov 2012 Scoping Comment Period & Scoping Hearings

Dec 2012 FMAT develops alternatives, DEIS writing begins

Mar 2013 FMAT provides recommendations re: required alternatives.

April 2013 Joint Committee & AP Meeting to get input on alternatives

May-Jul 2013 DEIS Creation concluded, FMAT Informal Review, Edits

Aug 2013 Council approves DEIS for Submission to NMFS, selects preferred alternatives (if any)

Sep 2013 Document perfection

Nov 2013 FR the DEIS, Public hearings for Am 15 with DEIS

Jan 2014 Council receives comments

Feb 2014 Committee meets to select alternatives to recommend to Council

April 2014 Council selects preferred alternatives for submission

May 2014 Document Perfection w/ NMFS

July 2014 Proposed Rule

Sept 2014 Comment Period Closes

Dec 2014 Final Rule

Jan 2015 Final Rule Effective



Last updated: June 16, 2012

CONTACT: Jason Didden (302) 526-5254

Summary of Feb 2, 2012 Workshop on Opt-In Angler Panels

The workshop was originally titled as a workshop on "Volunteer Angler Surveys" but "Opt-In Angler Panels" more accurately describes the topic of the workshop. Opt-in angler panels recruit participants to report catches or fishing effort through a variety of means, including mail-in forms, online forms, and phone-based applications. The types of recreational fishing information collected vary from program to program, but a key similarity of all opt-in angler panels is that they are comprised of self-selecting individuals who volunteer to participate. In other words, an opt-in online angler panel is not a probability sample, and consequently quite unlikely to accurately represent all anglers. As discussed below, this means that traditional analysis methods may be inappropriate for use with opt-in angler panel data and that opt-in angler panel data will likely be biased, depending on the variables being examined.

On February 2, 2012 the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC - www.mafmc.org), in cooperation with the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP - www.countmyfish.noaa.gov), brought together a group of people who are involved with programs that collect opt-in angler data in order to examine questions such as: "Which data needs can be best filled by this kind of data?" and "How can such programs establish and sustain angler enthusiasm and support?" This document summarizes the results of the workshop and proposes a framework for evaluating whether and how opt-in angler panel data should be solicited and/or used. A webinar of the workshop was recorded and is available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/events/volunteerdata.htm>. There is a wealth of information recorded on

the webinar and this summary focuses only on key, generalizable findings. A spreadsheet summarizing many of the Atlantic Coast programs that collect opt-in angler data was constructed by the workshop participants and is also available at that site.

The workshop was divided up into three parts and this summary maintains that structure. First, several state and independent programs described their programs, and participants discussed the attributes, challenges, and lessons-learned for those programs. Second, experts in survey design described statistical properties of both opt-in panel data and probability sample data. Third, the workshop had a general discussion on a potential framework for evaluating and using self-reported data. This summary was initially drafted by Jason Didden of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (the organizer of the workshop) and then circulated among the workshop participants for comments. Afterwards, this document will be presented and reviewed by the MRIP operations team to determine its usefulness as a general guide related to the collection and use of opt-in panel data for fisheries management purposes.

Part 1: Program Descriptions (States and Independent Groups)

The presentations and webinar recordings of the presentations are available at: <http://www.mafinc.org/events/volunteerdata.htm>. Four primary points are summarized below from the program descriptions and subsequent discussions:

1. Self-reported data have been very important for developing bag/creel and size limit regulations for some states. Predicting the impacts of many bag/creel and size limit regulations requires knowledge of the distribution of lengths of fish caught, including discards. Having enough reported fish lengths facilitates regulatory analysis on critical species such as summer flounder and black sea bass. This is especially true for released fish, as data on released fish are necessary to predict the impacts of any regulation that involves lowering size limits (including slot limits). Self-reported lengths have also been used for allocating striped bass catch between separate resident and migratory fish quotas in the Chesapeake Bay based on fish length.

2. There is a subset of avid anglers who are very keen to provide their data and also very suspect of MRFSS/MRIP data primarily because they (or their friends) were not interviewed. The concern is how to use such data since avid anglers may have different catch rates from the average angler, and if participants are opting into a program, it will not be known how they differ from the average person. Also, there may be a tendency for self-reporters to only report successful trips, which would make catch rates from self-reported data appear higher than the actual average catch rate and bias any estimates that are made based on self-reported data by opt-in participants.
3. Some programs have had substantial drop-offs in participation after the first year or two. Incentives, such as obtaining a bonus fish tag, shirts, or other rewards can help participation. Acknowledging receipt of data, allowing people to see that their data have been recorded, and providing feedback about how the data have been used are equally critical. Stating upfront how data are likely to be used is important to establish accurate expectations. Some have, but quite a few programs have not fully settled into a regular suite of outreach methods that they feel are sufficient to obtain reports from a large and diverse group of anglers that will participate consistently over the long run.

Programs need to make it easy to participate. For example, the Virginia rack collection program provides freezers at certain ports for anglers to donate carcasses for length measurements and age samples. The donation aspect may be a sufficient incentive to anglers as the samples can contribute to stock assessments and other analyses to track the health of fish stocks. However, the most popular programs have material incentives along with a history of their data getting used in assessments or management.

4. New technologies have increased reporting options. For example, GPS-equipped smartphones allow apps to upload real-time or near real-time reports with either rough or detailed location information. Satellite uplinks can also facilitate uploading in remote or offshore locations. Real-time uploads can also facilitate assignments of dock-side validation for retained catch, but validation of discarded catch is more difficult, requiring expensive and/or impracticable human observers or possibly video monitoring technology. MRIP is exploring video monitoring technology in other projects.

Part 2: Statistical Considerations

The workshop included presentations from two sampling design experts: Kristen Olson, PhD from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Survey Research and Methodology Program, and Cynthia Jones, PhD from Old Dominion University's (Virginia) Center for Quantitative Fisheries Ecology. Dr. Olson provided an overview of probability sampling and opt-in online panels from a "general survey quality" perspective, while Dr. Jones focused on fisheries-specific data collection issues. Together they provided a big-picture perspective of issues with both surveys and opt-in online panels.

For a survey, the goal is to obtain a sample that is representative of a target population, or at least understand why a sample is not representative, so that responses can be adjusted or weighted accordingly. This is accomplished through probability sampling – units are randomly sampled from a clearly defined frame (potential contacts) with known probabilities of selection. In a probability sample, the participants are selected by the researcher using a chance or probability mechanism – being a part of the sample is independent of the characteristics of members of the sample. Because of this probability selection approach, the process of selecting a sample can be replicated by an outside researcher. Probability samples have the advantage that survey results can be linked back to the target population with quantifiable precision levels.

Probability samples stand in contrast to an opt-in panel in which the participants are selected through their own decision making processes – being a part of the sample may depend in part or wholly on their characteristics. Unlike probability samples, opt-in panels do not have the advantage of replicability – every opt-in panel may yield a different answer. It is difficult to predict how different these answers may be, because opt-in panels cannot be directly linked back to the general population. Although probability samples can be affected by selected persons not participating, or by incomplete sample lists, these errors are measurable in a probability sample. In an opt-in panel, there is no list from which the sample is drawn and the differences between those who participate and those who do not are not known. For a fishing survey, if the likelihood of certain anglers or trips getting contacted (or participating once contacted) is different from the

universe of anglers or trips, and the fishing activity of those anglers or trips is different from the universe of anglers, survey results will be biased.

Thinking about angling avidity highlights this issue as it relates to using opt-in panel data to estimate the broader population's fishing activity. If you mostly talk to avid anglers (those who fish most frequently), or mostly talk to people who successfully catch fish, you can't use that information to extrapolate up to the general population without introducing bias. For example, if only avid anglers are talked to, and they have higher catch rates or fish more than average, using their information to extrapolate up to the general population will result in biased catch and effort estimates (too high in this case). Similarly, estimates will be biased high if people who don't catch anything are less likely to respond than people who do catch fish (and a relatively high percentage of MRIP intercepts report no fish being caught). The old saying that a few anglers catch most of the fish comes to mind, and it seems at least possible that highly skilled and avid anglers are the ones most likely to be interested in participating in an opt-in panel.

These statistical considerations make self-reported data from self-selecting people very difficult to use when making generalizations about a population. Since such individuals are more likely to be avid anglers, their data can't be used to extrapolate to the total population without biasing the estimates. Again, this is because the self-selecting anglers are probably different from the average angler - they are after all spending a lot of time to record and report their catches, which is not done in a systematic manner by most anglers.

The degree of bias depends upon the relationship between the variables being measured and the likelihood of participating in the data collection program. If the two are highly correlated then there is a high likelihood for bias. A scenario with a high likelihood for bias is in estimating catch rates, where volunteers are more likely to be avid anglers who may have different catch rates than the average angler. A scenario with a lower likelihood for bias might be collecting fish racks for biological research such as determining the relationship between age and fish length. It would seem unlikely that avid anglers would fish on a population of fish that had different growth rates than the average fish.

Data from opt-in panels are currently being used to examine the length distribution of released fish. If the released catch of panel participants is different from the general angling population, then estimates of length distributions will be biased, which could affect predictions about the results of length-based regulations that are based on such data.

For data on a group of anglers that fished in a particular location or at particular time, such as a tournament, if all anglers participate in reporting then you can use the data for that particular group, especially if at least some validation of catch is done. This would be a census of catch for the event. Extrapolating beyond the group that actually reported data is where bias becomes an issue.

Part 3: General Discussion and a Framework for Evaluating and Using Self-Reported Data

The afternoon discussion centered on trying to figure out if, when, and how to use self-reported data from self-selecting anglers, and more generally how best to use the energy and desire of anglers to participate in data collection. Ultimately discussion centered on a set of considerations that should be evaluated regarding self-reported data. It would not be possible to create a complete decision framework in the course of a one day meeting, and often data need to be evaluated on a case-by-case-basis depending on both the characteristics of the data and the decision being evaluated. These considerations include:

What is the likelihood, based on the characteristics of respondents and the kind of data being reported, that data are biased?

- Variables that are closely correlated with the decision to participate in an opt-in panel have a high likelihood for bias.
- Collecting fish racks for size-aging studies would be an example of low likelihood of bias. It seems unlikely that avid anglers would catch faster growing fish.
- Gathering catch per trip information would be an example of high likelihood of bias. It seems likely that avid anglers would be more likely to participate in an opt-in angler panel and have different catch rates than the average angler.

- Using avid anglers to provide qualitative information, such as identifying or describing fishing access sites is likely to improve the completeness and quality of onsite sample frames and therefore reduce the potential for bias.
- Opt-in panel data should not be used without clearly identifying the potential for bias.

Are there other sources for the kind of data being reported?

- If providing the only sources of data or filling a major information gap, such as lengths of released fish, then self-reported data from an opt-in program may be the only information that data managers can obtain. However, making decisions with data that is potentially biased carries risks, even if it is the only source of information. The tradeoffs of using other data that may be less informative but unbiased would have to be weighed against data that on the surface appears more informative but is potentially biased.

What is the risk (fishery closures, overfishing) of using data that are likely biased without ways to examine and correct for such bias?

- If the data in question are being used for fishery quota monitoring, then the risks appear relatively high that unnecessary closures could occur (with negative socio-economic impacts) or closures may not be implemented early enough, resulting in negative biological impacts (overfishing and potentially long-term negative socio-economic impacts).

How well were the volunteers trained?

- Managers would want to be more cautious about data collected by volunteers with less training if measurement error or species identification were important for the topic being investigated. Measurement error and species identification errors can be minimized by good angler training. Conversely, training volunteers may alter their fishing behavior, which could also introduce bias.

What was the level of participation in each kind of data collection?

- Results from programs with very low participation rates would normally be treated more cautiously than programs with higher participation rates. Participation needs to be considered relative to the entire population. For example, a program with 1,000 participants is not necessarily better than a program with 100 participants if both are only covering 10% of the total angling population. Although a higher participation rate indicates a lower risk of bias, it does not indicate whether there is actually bias. The participants and non-participants may have very different fishing activities in a program with a high participation rate, as well as in one with a low participation rate.
- For opt-in panel data, it can be very difficult to assess the level of participation since there is no defined sample or sample frame.

Regardless of the answers to these questions, managers must always be informed in a very direct and upfront way about the potential for bias. It is not enough to relegate such discussion to a reference in an appendix in a historical document. Any time information that is likely biased is used, those biases must be described to decision makers if decision makers are to be able to effectively evaluate the data and make appropriate decisions.

A key challenge is that anglers are most interested in providing data on topics like catch and effort, which are also the topics most prone to bias related to participation from more avid (and skillful) anglers in a non-probability sampling framework such as opt-in panels. One point that should be highlighted is that MRIP survey data collection is also 100% dependent on angler participation since 100% of the data in MRIP are from anglers voluntarily participating in MRIP

surveys. Once the primary MRIP improvements are in place, MRIP needs to work on informing anglers about how MRIP improvements will result in unbiased data.

MRFSS estimates have been susceptible to bias for a variety of reasons over the years. MRIP has been systematically rooting out sources of bias, but it has taken a long time to do so. This was necessary because of the complex statistical issues involved and the need to pre-test and review alternative survey designs through pilot tests and peer reviews. Once MRIP can show that unbiased designs are in place (or at least that any design-based biases have been examined and corrected), angler trust and enthusiasm for providing data may be able to be harnessed within the survey framework of MRIP. Broad-based outreach about ongoing improvements and additional outreach once the main MRIP components have been implemented will be critical given the current level of distrust with MRFSS. Once improvements are in place, there will still be the issue of how much sampling is done to get a given level of precision. Even if probability sampling is used, unbiased estimates that are highly imprecise will still not be of great use to managers or earn anglers trust. Increasing sampling rates so that more anglers are contacted and therefore know their data are getting into the system could be useful for outreach as well as getting better precision with estimates.

An additional discussion noted that while opt-in data likely have bias problems, using self-reported data from a panel of anglers chosen randomly from a license frame is not as susceptible to these same sources of bias. One way to harness the energy of anglers who really want to participate in data collection could be to incorporate those avid anglers in efforts to get good participation in these panel-type surveys, where the self-reported (but not self-selected) data from a group of anglers are tracked and used to ground-truth other estimates. Getting champions for such programs outside of an agency could be useful for securing good participation.

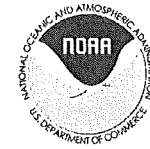
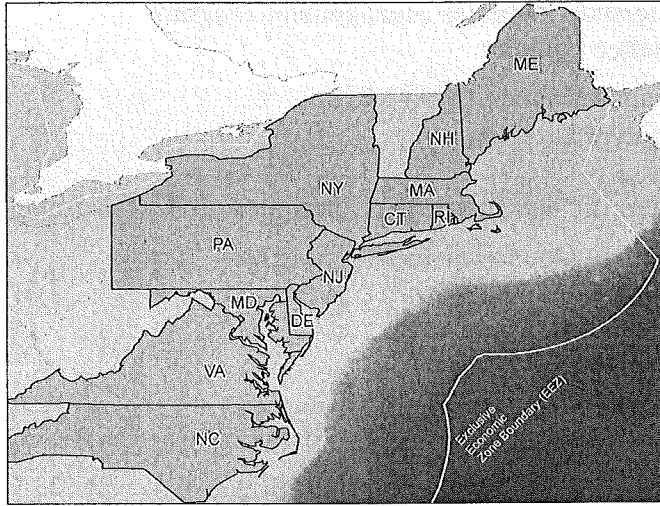
Conclusion

Many areas of scientific inquiry have made good use of citizen science. From birds, butterflies and frogs to water quality and weather, science has benefited from citizen science. With fishing, since the people likely to have high catches seem more likely to participate, a special problem arises. It is similar to posting to CNN or Fox News and asking a group of avid politics watchers to predict the results of the next election. They will want to provide input and will give very good input, but it is not likely that such a group will correctly predict the outcome of the next election. Conversely, talking to a tiny fraction of randomly selected likely voters can get very close to actual election results (http://www.realclearpolitics.com/bush_vs_kerry.html; http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2008/president/us/general_election_mccain_vs_obama-225.html). Fisheries data are a lot more complicated than the A or B choice usually involved in politics, but the underlying principles are the same.

Opt-in angler data may be useful for certain kinds of data that are not likely to be susceptible to bias, although it is difficult to anticipate what these data may be. However, the unique characteristics of self-selected participants are likely to introduce bias into certain kinds of data, especially catch and effort data. Managers must be made aware of such biases, and the likely extent of such biases should be examined when implementation of these programs is considered.

If anglers are asked to report information but then that information is not used due to these biases, it is possible that more harm than good will be done as a result of the program in terms of angler trust and confidence in recreational data collection overall. However, for certain kinds of information (for example biological specimen collection) opt-in participation by volunteer anglers may be a good way to harness anglers' sincere desire to participate in data collection that improves the science and management of recreational fisheries. In addition, more research should be conducted to examine possible ways to correct for bias when possible, in order to make the best use of the data that anglers do go through the effort of providing.

NORTHEAST REGION COORDINATING COUNCIL



Spring 2012 Meeting Agenda, Discussion Summary, Action Items, and Supplementary Stock Assessment Scheduling Discussion Summary

July 9, 2012

Spring 2012 Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC) Meeting Summary
May 21-22, 2012
Hilton Providence Hotel, Providence, R.I.

Attendees, by group affiliation:

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC):

Bob Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program
Patrick Campfield, Science Director

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC):

Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director
Rick Robins, Chairman
Dr. John Boreman, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Chairman

New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC):

Paul Howard, Executive Director
Chris Kellogg, Deputy Director
Rip Cunningham, Chairman
Jim Odlin, Vice-chairman
Dr. Chris Legault, SSC Chairman and NEFSC Research Fisheries Biologist

NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC)

Dr. Bill Karp, Acting Science and Research Director
Dr. Russ Brown, Deputy Science and Research Director
Dr. Fred Serchuk, Senior Scientist and Acting Chief, Resource Evaluation and Assessment Division
Dr. Jim Weinberg, Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) Chairman
Dr. Paul Rago, Population Dynamics Branch Chief (*day 2 attendee*)
Eric Robillard, Fishery Biology Program Leader (*day 2 attendee*)

NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office (NERO)

Dan Morris, Acting Regional Administrator, NRCC Chairman
George Darcy, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries
Kim Damon-Randall, Protected Resources Division
Mike Ruccio, Sustainable Fisheries Division (*NRCC staff support*)
Brett Alger, Sustainable Fisheries Division (*NRCC staff support*)
Doug Potts, Sustainable Fisheries Division (*day 1 presenter*)

Meeting summary:

Topics are summarized in order of discussion. As a result, there are slight differences in this summary document and the order of topics listed on the meeting agenda.

- I. Fall meeting carryover item: Update on Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to modify vessel baseline requirements (i.e., 10/10/20 upgrade rules)

Doug Potts gave an overview of the prior NRCC actions and process of events leading up to the ANPR. This included previous NRCC discussion about modifying, simplifying, or eliminating the vessel baseline requirements. A NRCC working group was established in 2011 to discuss potential changes to the vessel baseline program. The working group was chaired by staff from NERO and had representatives from both Councils, ASMFC, and NEFSC. The working group

conclusion last fall was that any changes to the program would need both more information to inform decisionmaking and strong justifications.

In support of these conclusions, the ANPR was issued with five broad scenarios for potential changes to generate discussion and comment from the affected public, as well to solicit information on the financial and time burdens related to the baseline program. The public submitted 35 comments on the ANPR, which provided a wide range of suggestions for potential program changes. Generally, there was some public support for modifying or removing the program; however, some commenters also expressed concern that changing the program could lead to consolidation or shifts to larger, more powerful vessels.

The NRCC asked several clarifying questions regarding the comments before discussing the potential next steps. The group agreed that the diverse nature of the fishing fleets and permit history in the region present substantial challenges when contemplating potential programmatic changes. While continuation of the working group was contemplated, the group ultimately agreed to reconsider continuing working group activities and any potential action on this topic as part of the fall NRCC priority setting discussions (Action Item #1).

II. Atlantic-Sturgeon Related Discussions

Dan Morris and Kim Damon-Randall provided a brief overview of the listing decision process to date, noting that the November 6, 2011, listing started the statutorily mandated 90-day (plus possible 45-day extension) clock for biological opinions to be finalized. Kim described the batched consultation approach being developed for the biological opinions for all species except sea scallop and lobster. Previously, the analysis was attempting to review species fishery management plan (FMP) by FMP. The batched approach provides a wider analysis based more on gear types, fishing areas, etc., as opposed to specific FMPs. Kim explained that the sea scallop and lobster fisheries have essentially no sturgeon interactions; thus, the biological opinions can be completed more quickly and are anticipated for June 2012. The completion target date for a draft of the batched biological opinion is August 2012. Concerns were raised about the implications of interactions with fisheries in the interim between listing and completion of the Section 7 and 10 processes.

Next, the NRCC discussed motions from both the ASMFC and NEFSC pertaining to the listing-related analysis and subsequent Section 7 and 10 processes. The discussion centered largely on what process could be undertaken to supply all or part of the biological opinion drafts for public/Council/ASMFC review and comment. The group discussed, without specific resolution, what group or bodies might be best suited to provide review and input on the biological opinion (e.g., the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs), advisors, or the full Council; ASMFC Technical Committee, etc.). The general process agreed to by the NRCC, which lead to Action Item # 2, is for NMFS to provide sections of or the entire draft biological opinions as soon as possible, ideally targeting early August with sufficient time to allow for MAFMC review prior to its August meeting. The draft will provide fishery descriptions, methods used for analysis, status of the stocks, decisions about jeopardy for the stocks, and ultimately, when completed, a recovery plan. Dan Morris spoke about trying to provide transparency in the Section 7 process, but also having to balance the Endangered Species Act (ESA) timing

requirements. Unlike rules issued under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, there is not a standard process for receiving or responding to comments on biological opinions. The group agreed to try and work through Council and ASMFC processes to conduct reviews and provide input. The agency will, in turn, respond and/or revisit the biological opinions, as needed, in response to the input received.

Some members had specific questions about the Section 7 and 10 processes, including how Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) and Alternatives (RPAs) may be generated. Kim reiterated that input on potential RPMs or RPAs would be most helpful. There was also a clarification in response to questions about a listing that occurred in Hawaii that completing the processes cannot take a number of years, as the ESA has explicit timing requirements. However, Kim did clarify that implementation of RPAs or RPMs could be done over time or potentially phased into operations. Some general discussion occurred on what the regulatory process might be for analyzing and implementing RPAs or RPMs. Kim and George Darcy clarified that measures would be implemented through Magnuson-Stevens Act rulemaking, necessitating National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable statutory and regulatory analyses.

III. NEFSC Social Sciences Branch-developed recreational fisheries bioeconomic model

Fred Serchuk provided an overview of development and preliminary discussion about the modeling approach with the NEFMC SSC. The model in question was developed by the Social Sciences Branch to evaluate the economic impacts of recreational management measures and was favorably received by the SSC during the initial general presentation of the model. The model was used to inform decisionmaking for the Gulf of Maine cod emergency action; however, the modeling approach and methods need to undergo peer review. There is not a regional peer review process for social science. Both Councils' SSCs have extensive social science expertise. The NRCC discussed convening a joint SSC group of the available social and economic scientists to review the model, possibly supplementing the group with some additional outside expertise.

The NRCC discussed the need to develop terms of reference for a peer review of this model and the timing of the review. Many of the regulatory processes that would potentially make use of the modeling approach will begin in the fall of 2012. The NRCC discussed the need to have a strong technical review of the model, but that it would also be helpful to have comments provided about the general utility of the model in management decisionmaking. Furthermore, it was discussed that some type of documentation about the model would be highly beneficial. No specific action items were generated, but based on the NRCC discussion there is a need to: Collaboratively develop terms of reference, establish who will be involved as reviewers and when a review might be conducted, and optimally, synchronize the process so that the review, documentation, and advice are readily available for fall regulatory processes.

IV. General Planning Discussions

a. *Meeting Week Co-ordination*

Bob Beal relayed that some ASMFC commissioners often have to attend NEFMC and ASMFC meetings in back-to-back weeks. Given the number of commissioners also involved with South Atlantic Council activities, there are also instances when the three groups meet in three consecutive weeks. The NRCC agreed that staff-to-staff coordination in planning meeting calendars could occur between the ASMFC and Councils. It was agreed that communications were essential in this effort. The NRCC noted that meeting schedules are often developed 18 months in advance, so early communications and planning are necessary.

b. *MAFMC-ASMFC Black Sea Bass Amendment Coordination*

A brief discussion was held to outline the timing of the Council and Commission's process for developing and implementing a joint amendment for black sea bass conservation equivalency. No action items resulted; however, communications between MAFMC, ASMFC, and the agency will be essential to coordinate the development for implementation in early 2013.

c. *Federal Budget Impacts on Priority Setting*

The NRCC received general updates both Dan Morris and Bill Karp regarding the potential Federal budget. While the process is not yet complete and changes are possible, almost every scenario being contemplated contains decreases of varying levels. Many NMFS vacancies in the Regional Office and Science Center are either not being filled or being very closely examined as to whether or not they can be filled. There was tacit acknowledgement from the group that all will likely have to do more with less resources and that priority setting will continue to be essential. The group discussed that, at some point, there may not be the capacity to do everything that has been done in the past. Bill Karp gave a brief overview of a strategic planning exercise underway at the NEFSC.

The group discussion touched on the resource demands to develop and implement Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) in addition to other activities. It was suggested that it may be advisable and necessary to outline priorities that are nondiscretionary, discretionary, or somewhere in between the two. The NRCC touched on refining multiple-year processes to gain efficiency. The unpredictable nature of court decisions, petitions for listing species, changes in priorities to address new information or situations, and emergency actions were briefly discussed as the group acknowledged that these factors complicate long-range planning. Much of the collective processes conducted by the NRCC member groups are operating at or near capacity with no reserve. The group discussed the need to balance the varying priorities of the member groups and that, in the future, it will be necessary to better explain how priorities are established. Each group will need to set its individual priorities, but coordination of the priorities across all the groups will be essential.

V. Ecosystem Based Fishery Management (EBFM) Update and Discussion

Both Councils gave a brief overview of the status of their EBFM development processes. The MAFMC has a subcommittee of its SSC that is discussing short, medium, and long-range EBFM objectives. A working group is being developed, and an EBFM Advisory Panel has been

formed. The NEFMC has a Plan Development Team (PDT) and Committee for EBFM discussion and development. The NEFMC is on a 6-year development timeline, but acknowledges that shifting priorities may postpone the start of the process until 2013.

Some questions were raised by the group about guidance and direction from the agency on EBFM. The NRCC also discussed the compatibility of the Magnuson-Stevens Act with potential EBFM approaches. There were minor discussions about spatial management and forage species management in connection with EBFM. Action Item #3, to revisit the topic during the fall meeting, resulted from the discussion.

VI. Scallop Assessment-Related Discussion

The NRCC had a brief discussion pertaining to the current assessment platforms used to assess scallops. Bill Karp relayed that a broad review of the assessment methodology, including the NEFSC HabCam, School of Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) drop camera, and other methods is being developed for a Center for Independent Experts (CIE)-type review process. The objective is to see how the various scallop assessment tools are complementary or where redundancies may exist. It was suggested that the continued discussion pertaining to use of NEFSC HabCam and the SMAST drop camera should be directly resolved between the two parties and not drawn out in the NEFMC proceedings.

VII. Stock Assessment Scheduling

Overview: The NRCC began the discussions by reviewing the upcoming stock assessment schedule as agreed to by the group in the fall 2011 meeting. The assessment schedule, including the Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW)/Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC), assessment updates, and operational assessments from December 2012 through 2014, were discussed at length. The operational assessment/research track was also more generally discussed, along with a general conversation about priorities and stock assessment capacity in light of potentially lower future budgets. It was generally agreed that no more than three stocks could be undertaken in any given SAW/SARC meeting cycle and, given the complexity of the terms of reference (TORs) and assessments, even this number was a substantial challenge that could potentially impact the quality of the peer review. In the past, the NRCC has discussed major priorities, including the stock assessment schedule, during the fall meeting. In recent years, the assessment schedule has been established in the fall meeting and revisited in the spring meeting, as needed. Given the lead time necessary to prepare data and analysis for stock assessment, scheduling changes are typically for events a year or more removed from the NRCC meeting.

Based on the fall 2011 schedule, the following species assessments were discussed, with changes in the schedule as described:

1. *Gulf of Maine (GOM) Atlantic cod (added to schedule for fall 2012)*

A fully accepted benchmark assessment for GOM cod occurred in December 2011, as part of SARC 53. However, the results of the assessment provided a markedly changed perception of the stock's status and were highly controversial. The NEFMC's SSC, independent scientists, and

the public raised numerous concerns about components of the assessment. Much of the New England Congressional delegation, state governors, and fishing port mayors made demands in early spring 2012 that a new and/or revised assessment of the stock was needed. The agency committed to so doing in the near term, with the results to be available for the 2013 fishing year that begins on May 1, 2013. This means inserting GOM cod into the fall 2012 SAW/SARC schedule. The agency also committed to initiate a longer-term process to evaluate the stock structure for cod in the North Atlantic. The NRCC discussed that it was not planned to conduct a second assessment for GOM cod a year removed from the most recent assessment and the insertion of an additional GOM cod assessment into an already at-capacity system causes substantial complications.

The draft TORs for the 2012 GOM cod benchmark were given a preliminary review by the NRCC. The TORs incorporate all the input received from the SSC and public, except for addressing stock delineation. The group discussed that the volume and complexity of the TORs would create challenges for both the assessment work and the peer-review process. The group made some minor modifications to the TORs. It was agreed that the TORs would be finalized after discussion with the NEFMC executive committee in mid-June (Action Item #5). The process for examining stock structure was noted as a longer-term process, which will likely require a subsequent benchmark assessment to incorporate results sometime in the next few years. The group noted that inserting cod into the schedule again in the next few years will likely require some additional shuffling of assessments.

2. *Georges Bank (GB) Atlantic cod (schedule unchanged)*

The group noted that there were some efficiencies of process by conducting both GOM and GB cod assessments at the same time. Similarly, TORs for both cod stocks could be made similar for both efficiency and consistency of assessment results. The larger issue, discussed at length, pertained to the impacts that result from adding the previously unscheduled GOM cod assessment into the fall 2012 schedule. The NRCC agreed that GB cod should remain on the fall 2012 schedule. The more substantial discussion pertained to the disposition of Atlantic surfclams and white hake, the two other species scheduled to occur with GB cod in the fall 2012 cycle as agreed last fall by the NRCC. Additional information about surfclam and white hake is summarized in the next sections.

3. *Atlantic surfclam (potentially moved to early spring 2013)*

Surfclams were previously agreed by the NRCC to undergo a benchmark assessment in the fall 2012 SAW/SARC cycle. Surfclam were last assessed in 2009. The group discussed that the current assessment is no longer adequate for surfclams. Some of the area included in the existing assessment has been continually closed for paralytic shellfish poison (PSP); however, the stock within these areas contribute to the biological reference points in the current assessment approach. Industry has raised concerns that several areas are undergoing heavy exploitation and catches are declining. This is not reflected in the current assessment approach, as the PSP areas provide a buffer of unexploited biomass. The stock is currently not considered overfished or subject to overfishing. The NEFSC relayed that substantial preparatory work has been undertaken for the surfclam assessment, including examination of more discreet area management. The NRCC agreed that conducting the surfclam benchmark assessment continues to be necessary. However, given the concerns of having four stocks in the December 2012

SAW/SARC cycle, the group discussed potentially keeping the two cod stocks in December 2012 and creating another two-stock SAW/SARC for February 2013. The details were not resolved during the NRCC meeting. Action Item #4 was created. The NRCC agreed in principle to have a SAW/SARC in December 2012 and another in February 2013. The action item is to conduct a late June conference call to determine the final disposition of the four species/stocks under consideration: GOM cod, GB cod, surfclam, and white hake. It was noted several times during the discussion that, despite the need for information on these four stocks, it creates severe strain on the already full system. The NRCC discussed at several points the likelihood that, if future collective resources of the Councils, Commission, and agency are reduced, it may result in reductions to the region's stock assessment capacity and/or processes.

4. *White hake (potentially moved to early spring 2013)*

White hake last underwent a benchmark assessment in 2008 and a data update was done in 2011 using 2010 data. The NRCC discussed some of the complications surrounding white hake: The last benchmark was done by an outside scientist who has asserted intellectual property rights to the model used. As a result, there is not a benchmark-approved model to use for stock updates. The NRCC discussed the importance of having good information for the white hake stock, as it an important species in the groundfish fishery, the stock is overfished, subject to overfishing, and under a rebuilding plan. Some discussion occurred about contracting an outside scientist to perform a new benchmark assessment. It was agreed that this was not ideal, and the results would still need to be peer reviewed through the SAW/SARC process. Much of the discussion that occurred for white hake pertained to which of the two species, hake or surfclam, should remain in the December 2012 SAW/SARC cycle. Ultimately, the NRCC agreed in principle to try and accommodate both of these species and the two cod stocks, as previously described, in two separate meetings in December 2012 and February 2013. The NRCC will discuss further in late June during a teleconference (i.e., Action Item # 4) and an addendum meeting summary will be prepared with the final scheduling results for these stocks/species.

5. *Summer Flounder (added to schedule for spring 2013)*

The fall NRCC 2011 assessment schedule did not have a benchmark assessment of summer flounder though the SAW/SARC process in the 2012-2014 timeframe. The NRCC discussed a recent Congressional request to conduct a benchmark assessment, noting that similar requests had been put forth by groups with recreational fishing interests. Summer flounder were noted by the group as a species that has undergone frequent benchmark assessments with annual updates performed for each year's catch advice. It was also recognized that the summer flounder fishery is highly visible, important to both commercial and recreational fisheries, and frequently subject to a heightened amount of political interest. The group discussed that, in the interim since the last benchmark (2008), quite a bit of additional data collection has occurred for summer flounder. Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data are now available for the recreational fishery. It was also noted that the stock is rebuilt, not subject to overfishing or overfished, and that catch levels have generally been stable or increasing over the past few years. Based on this discussion, a summer flounder benchmark assessment was added to the spring 2013 SAW/SARC cycle, replacing bluefish from the fall 2011 schedule.

6. *Striped Bass (unchanged from Spring 2013)*

The NRCC discussed whether sufficient resources are available to provide benchmark assessments for ASMFC-managed species such as striped bass. The group concluded that striped bass is a very visible, important species that undergoes substantial public and political scrutiny. As such, they agreed that the SAW/SARC process is very beneficial for vetting scientific information. The last benchmark assessment was conducted in 2007. It was noted that, despite the ASMFC not being a Federal Government entity, under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, there is language that provides Federal support for species managed under the act. The NRCC also noted that the ASMFC's Technical Committees perform the bulk of the assessment work leading up to the SAW/SARC. There are NEFSC scientists involved with the Technical Committees.

7. *Atlantic Bluefish (moved from spring 2013 to 2014)*

A bluefish benchmark assessment had been scheduled for the spring 2013 SAW/SARC cycle. The NRCC noted that the current assessment methodology from a 2005 benchmark assessment being used to provide annual stock updates appears to be providing good information for managing the fishery. The fishery condition is stable and the management program is noncontroversial. While much of the discussion on bluefish conveyed a sense of a benchmark assessment being a relatively low priority, the NRCC was concerned about the age of the assessment. As a result, the group agreed to move bluefish from the spring 2013 SAW/SARC schedule to the spring 2014 schedule. This allowed for summer flounder to be inserted in 2013, as previously noted, while ensuring that bluefish remains on the upcoming schedule.

8. *Illex squid/Butterfish (Illex removed from and butterfish added to Fall 2013)*

The NRCC agreed to remove *Illex* and insert butterfish in the schedule. The NRCC discussed that evaluation of butterfish may be more valuable as it occurs as a bycatch species in the longfin squid fishery and has the potential to be a limiting factor in that fishery. The current *Illex* management system appears to be working, and the assessment for an annual lifecycle species such as *Illex* would be challenging.

9. *Northern Shrimp/Tilefish (unchanged from fall 2013)*

Benchmark assessments for both species were agreed by the NRCC to occur as part of the fall 2013 SAW/SARC cycle. No additional discussion occurred during the spring NRCC meeting; thus the schedule remains unchanged.

10. *2013 Stock Assessment Updates and Additional Assessment Activities*

The Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) will evaluate Eastern GB cod, haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder in June. The NRCC has no specific role or input to this process; however, it is notable as it does involve NEFSC and NEFMC resources. Assessment updates were agreed by the NRCC in fall 2011 for bluefish, black sea bass, scup, and dogfish. Summer flounder is typically part of the assessment update suite of species, but, presumably, benchmark assessment results will be available in 2013. Multispecies groundfish catch and survey analysis for the biennial ACL process is also on the previously agreed to schedule.

The NRCC had brief discussions about the annual Mid-Atlantic updates. The discussion touched on moving updates to the operational assessment track and if multiple year advice can

be utilized for some or all of these species, specifically as resources are expected to be impacted by future agency and Council budgets. It was also discussed that the NEFSC would prefer to move the spring SARC from June to July; however, the MAFMC stated this would not work with their current specification timing process. No specific resolution or action items resulted from these discussions.

11. *2014: Stock Assessment Updates and Additional Stock Assessment Activities*

The TRAC will occur in June, as it is an annual process. Assessment updates or operational assessments will likely be planned for Mid-Atlantic species not undergoing a benchmark assessment. The NRCC discussed the need for information for both monkfish and skates to set the next series of catch levels for these species. Based on this need, the NRCC agreed that assessment updates for both would occur in 2014. Multispecies catch and survey analysis for biennial ACLs is scheduled to occur at some time in 2014 to feed into the NEFMC ACL-setting process. The schedule and processes for these species will be further developed during the NRCC priority setting discussions at the fall 2012 meeting.

12. *2014: Spring; Sea Scallops, Bluefish, Black Sea Bass—Fall; Atlantic Mackerel*

The NRCC had previously agreed that the SAW/SARC process would effectively end in 2013, being replaced by the operational assessment/research track process approved in 2011. However, the NRCC discussed that the research track has yet to be initiated. The NRCC discussed various concerns with the potential capacity to utilize the research track as intended, prioritization of stocks/issues for the research track, etc. These discussions did not lead to a specific resolution during the meeting. It was suggested that the stock assessment working group may need to be reconvened to further discuss how to further implement operational assessments (i.e., multi-year assessment advice from an integrated peer-review process) and the research track. The research track and operational assessments remain tentatively scheduled for 2014.

Because the NRCC envisioned that 2014 would be the start of operational assessments, no SAW/SARC benchmark assessments were scheduled for 2014 as part of the fall 2011 NRCC priorities discussion. The NRCC agreed that, until the new assessment system is fully resolved, benchmark assessments should be scheduled. As per past NRCC practice, the benchmark assessments identified for 18-24 months out are tentatively scheduled, subject to revision in the annual priority setting NRCC meeting held in the fall.

The NRCC agreed on the following stocks for 2014: Sea scallops, bluefish, black sea bass (spring); Atlantic mackerel (fall). The NRCC discussed that new assessment information for black sea bass is essential to improving understanding of the stock status and species life history. For mackerel, concerns were raised about the appropriateness of the biological reference points, as the fishery has been unable to harvest available quotas in recent years. The group speculated that changes in the environment may be influencing mackerel availability. Sea scallops will need new information moving into 2015, so a benchmark was added to 2014 to support that time line. Bluefish was previously discussed and was moved by the group from 2013 to 2014.

VIII. MRIP Calibration Workshop Update

John Boreman provided the group a brief overview of the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS)/MRIP calibration workshop, where he served as chair. John spoke from the

preliminary findings document previously made available through distribution. He relayed that the final report from the workshop was under final review at NMFS headquarters and was expected to be released soon.

Note: the final report is now available--

http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov/projects/downloads/MRFSS_MRIP_Calibration_Workshop_Report_2012.pdf

The NRCC had some discussion about how the calibration and workshop advice would apply to various management and assessment situations. No action items resulted from the discussion.

IX. Observer Sea-Day Allocation Discussion

The NRCC member groups had previously been provided the observer sea-day allocation report. The allocation has been derived using the method developed for the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM), even though the SBRM has been vacated by the Court and a new SBRM is under development. The vacated SBRM methodology remains the best available means for allocating sea days until the new amendment is complete and in place. The NRCC had a brief discussion about the ability of coverage levels to monitor Atlantic sturgeon takes. The NEFSC stated that it was cognizant of the heightened importance since the listing.

X. Catch Monitoring

The NRCC discussed the challenges facing the region with respect to catch monitoring. The potential impact of reduced appropriated funds was raised, as was the potential use of electronic monitoring systems. The group agreed that electronic monitoring may not be capable of trip-level accounting in the near term, but that there may be potential benefits of using such systems to complement monitoring programs.

The NRCC also discussed the need to move monitoring to a redesigned system that provides timelier and finer-scale information. The discussion highlighted that the need for this change is great, but also that the development and implementation of a completely redesigned monitoring system would take time. Action Item #7 was created so that a placeholder for continued discussion, updates on any development of new or redesigned monitoring programs, or introduction of agency guidance on electronic monitoring systems can be provided as part of the fall NRCC meeting.

XI. Northeast Region Management Evaluation Response

The NRCC discussed that there are currently multiple reports in varying formats repeating much of the same information. These include status of stocks reports, stock assessment and fishery evaluation (SAFE) reports, status of fishery revenues, etc. This discussion led to Action Item #6 to form a working group to examine opportunities to consolidate current efforts, eliminate redundancies, and provide information via the web. The working group will report back to the NRCC at the fall meeting.

XII. Deep-Sea Coral Discussion/Council Governance

The NRCC had a brief discussion about coordinating efforts between the two Councils as deep-sea coral protection measures are developed. The NRCC discussed that, as more broadly based issues such as EBFM and coral protection move forward, these efforts will require

communication to ensure consistency across existing Council jurisdictional boundaries. Action Item #7, pertaining to Council governance, was adopted by the NRCC. It is designed to ensure that the ongoing conversation about interactions and governance between the two Councils continue moving forward.

XIII. ANPR for National Standard 1 Revisions

George Darcy relayed that the comment period for the ANPR and August 1 and that a proposed rule, if warranted, is likely sometime in mid-2013. The NRCC discussed the need to have Councils comment on the issues that have arisen during development and implementation of ACLs and accountability measures. The NRCC also discussed that there are a number of open litigation cases involving the National Standard 1 guidelines. Any number of the outcomes from these cases may influence the potential revision process moving forward.

-End of meeting summary-

Stock Assessment Scheduling Teleconference Supplemental Summary

I. Finalization of Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 Assessment Schedules

The NRCC held a teleconference on June 25, 2012, to finalize the assessment schedule for the remainder of 2012 and beginning of 2013. Action Item # 4, established during the spring meeting, was designed to ensure that the NRCC reconvened to finalize the assessment schedule with sufficient time to develop terms of reference, coordinate independent peer reviewers, allow for the completion of the assessment work necessary to complete the terms of reference, and to provide advance notice to the Councils, agency, and public so that planning can occur to incorporate assessment results.

The outstanding issue to be resolved on the teleconference was to discuss scheduling of benchmark assessments for Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine cod (two stocks and two separate assessments), white hake, and Atlantic surfclam. As noted from the May meeting discussion, typically up to three stocks are scheduled for any given SAW/SARC cycle, and the complexity of the assessments in recent years has presented additional challenges in completing more than two stocks in a cycle. During the May meeting discussions, there was a strong sense of need among the NRCC to complete assessments for the four stocks/species previously listed. At the May meeting, the NRCC discussed having two potential SARCs: 1 in December 2012 with two stocks/species, and another in February 2013 for the remaining two stocks/species.

In the interim between the May NRCC meeting and the June teleconference, the NEFMC was notified by NMFS that two groundfish stocks, American plaice and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder, are making inadequate rebuilding progress and must have revised rebuilding programs developed and implemented within 2 years. The NEFMC requested that assessment updates be performed in 2013 for these two stocks to better inform the process of revising the rebuilding programs.

In the interim between the May NRCC meeting and the teleconference, the NEFSC completed internal examination of available staff resources, data delivery schedules, peer-review contracting requirements, and the overall timing for potentially accommodating the four requested benchmark assessments and groundfish stock updates. In addition, the NEFSC held a conference call with the NEFMC Executive Committee on June 7 regarding the assessment schedule. During that call consensus could not be reached on which stocks would be scheduled on the February 2013 SARC and whether or not the two assessment updates for American Plaice and Southern New England winter flounder could also be scheduled in 2013. The NEFSC stated clearly during the conference call that there are insufficient resources to complete all of these tasks, despite the needs expressed by the NRCC. The potential tradeoff discussed by the NRCC was to not hold a February SARC and conduct the groundfish updates or to hold the spring 2013 SARC and not update groundfish assessments. The NRCC agreed that the two cod stocks will be included in the December 2012 SARC cycle, with white hake and Atlantic surfelams assessed in February 2013.

During the NEFSC/NEFMC conference call the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank TORs were agreed upon without any changes from the version reviewed by the NRCC during the May 2012 meeting.

There were concerns that the inability to update American plaice and Southern New England winter flounder would force catch advice to be formulated based on old, potentially outdated information. The lack of recent, updated information would also make revising the rebuilding programs very difficult. The delivery schedule for the white hake assessment results was also discussed. Final results will likely be available in April 2013. It will be challenging to incorporate the assessment results into the 2013 fishing year that begins on May 1; however some potential options were discussed that can be further developed.

A more general discussion was held about the future processes that may be necessary to address continual assessment resource limitations. The NRCC acknowledged that having to prioritize and potentially not have full benchmark or updated assessment information for all desired stocks/species will likely keep occurring moving forward (*see May meeting general planning discussions for more information*). No action items were generated from this discussion. The NRCC will discuss the assessment schedule and available resources in detail at the November 1-2, 2012, meeting.

-End of supplemental summary-

2012 SPRING NRCC MEETING AGENDA

Day 1--Monday, May 21

Approximate time: 13:00-13:10

1. Welcome, introductions, modifications and additions to agenda, announcements
(Morris, Karp, Ruccio)

13:10-13:45

2. Fall meeting carryover item: Update on Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to modify vessel baseline requirements (i.e., 10/10/20 upgrade rules)
 - a. Overview of comments received on ANPR (Doug Potts, NERO)
 - b. Discuss next steps for action (Morris, Darcy, NRCC)

13:45-15:15

3. Atlantic Sturgeon-Related Discussion:
 - a. Update on biological opinion analyses, completion timeline (Morris, Damon-Randall)
 - b. NEFMC and ASMFC motions for review of listing and biological opinions (NRCC discussion)
 - c. Relationship between Federal/Council ESA listing response through Section 7 process (Morris, Damon-Randall)
 - d. State response through Section 10 process (Damon-Randall; Beal)
 - e. General plenary discussion on sturgeon issues, Council and Commission processes to address take mitigation, etc. (NRCC)

15:15-15:30 - Break

15:30-16:00

4. NEFSC Social Sciences Branch-developed recreational fisheries bioeconomic model (Karp and NEFSC staff):
 - a. Develop plan for NEFMC and/or MAFMC SSC peer-review of model
 - b. Discuss potential timing issues for 2013 recreational management measures development

16:00-16:30

5. General Planning Discussion Items:
 - a. Coordination of MAFMC and ASMFC meeting weeks—objective: Modify schedules to avoid back-to-back meeting weeks (Moore, Beal)
 - b. Black sea bass Amendment 17 development and implementation timing (Moore, Beal)
 - c. Budget impact effects on priority setting (NRCC)
 - d. Science Center Strategic Planning (NEFSC)

16:30-17:00

6. Update on Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management Approaches:
 - a. Update on MAFMC activities/development (Moore, Robins)
 - b. Update on NEFMC activities/development (Howard, Cunningham)
 - c. General discussion and planning (NRCC)

17:00-17:30

7. Stock Assessment Related Topics:
 - a. Scallop Survey Issues (Karp, Howard):
 - i. Discuss NEFMC motion pertaining to the adequacy of habcam use in annual scallop surveys
 - ii. Discuss scope and process for peer review process

17:30

Conclude Day 1

Evening Event --- 18:30 Dinner at Bravo Brasserie, 123 Empire Street Providence

Day 2--Tuesday, May 22

08:30-10:30

Stock Assessment Related Topics Continued:

- b. Review, discuss, and revise, as needed, assessment schedule for next 12-18 months, including SARCs 55-57 (December 2012-December 2013); Mid-Atlantic Operational Assessments; NEFSC special topics; TRAC participation (Karp and NEFSC staff).
Specific topics:
 - i. Implications of removing white hake from SARC 55; discuss rescheduling or alternatives to benchmark assessment approach
 - ii. Timing, TORs, and potential process for incorporating cod stock structure analysis
 - iii. MRIP calibration update (Boreman); discuss integrating MRIP information into stock assessments (NRCC)
- c. Operational Assessment Process (Karp and NEFSC staff)
 - i. lessons learned from pilot groundfish process
 - ii. schedule for upcoming operational assessments
 - iii. schedule for upcoming research track
- d. Additional assessment-related discussions, as needed (NRCC)

10:30-10:45 - *Break*

10:45-11:15

8. 2012 Proposed Sea-Day Discussion (Karp, Rago)

11:15-11:45

9. Catch Monitoring Discussion:
- a. Councils and Commission overview of monitoring needs emphasizing potential shortfalls and anticipated future challenges (Howard/Cunningham, Moore/Robins, Beal)
 - b. General discussion: Can more be done with less with respect to monitoring? (NRCC)

11:45-12:15

10. NEFMC Fishery Performance Evaluation in Response to Touchstone Report (Howard/Cunningham)

12:15-12:20

11. Deep Sea Coral Protection Coordination Discussion (minimal discussion):
- a. Overview of recent MAFMC and NEFSC coral protection discussions and actions (Moore/Robins, Howard/Cunningham)
 - b. General coordination and planning discussion (NRCC)

12:20-12:30

12. Unfinished business, additional topics, review action items, adjourn meeting (Morris, Karp)

NRCC Spring Meeting 2012 Action Items

May 21-22, 2012—Hilton Providence, Providence, RI

Color code key: ASMFC MAFMC NEFMC NEFSC NERO NRCC

1. Baseline/Upgrade Restrictions: Revisit issue at Fall NRCC Meeting during priority setting discussions.
Responsible parties: NERO
Due Date: Fall NRCC Meeting

2. Draft Atlantic Sturgeon Biological Opinions:
 - a) Provide draft biological opinions to the public and Councils as soon as possible. Distribution to occur no later than early August 2012.
 - b) NRCC intercessional status review conference call to be held by the first week of July. Note: MAFMC August meeting notice deadline for *Federal Register* publication is July 12.
 - c) Intercessional teleconference topics:
 - i. Establish who should receive biological opinion information;
 - ii. Establish what types of briefings are needed for groups receiving the information;
 - iii. Discuss process for how the information can be best reviewed;
 - iv. Discuss the potential timing of Council reviews, process for public and Council comment and Agency responses, and timeline for finalization of the biological opinions.

Responsible parties: NERO
Due Date: See items a) and b), above

3. Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management: Revisit issue at Fall NRCC Meeting.
Responsible parties: NERO
Due Date: Fall NRCC Meeting

4. Stock Assessment Scheduling: Develop SARC schedules for December 2012 and February 2013 to include George's Bank cod, Gulf of Maine cod, white hake, and Atlantic surfclam.
Responsible parties: NEFSC (lead), NERO, NEFMC, MAFMC, and ASMFC
Due Date: NRCC teleconference to be held by the end of June, exact date TBD

5. 2012 Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod assessment terms of reference: Provide Gulf of Maine cod assessment terms of reference to Report to NEFMC Executive Committee for finalization.
Responsible parties: NEFSC
Due Date: June 7, 2012, NEFMC Executive Committee Meeting

6. Fishery Performance Workgroup: Examine current fishery performance evaluations (SAFE reports, fishery revenue reports, status of stocks, and other similar evaluations), explore ways to consolidate current efforts, eliminate redundancies, and provide information via the web.

Responsible parties: NERO (initial coordination and logistics; chair TBD), NEFSC, NEFMC, MAFMC, and ASMFC

Due Dates: Appointment of working group participants by the end of June 2012;

Working group to hold first meeting by the end of July 2012;

Working group progress report to NRCC at the Fall Meeting.

7. Potential Fall Meeting topics raised during Spring Meeting discussions:
 - a) Council governance.
 - b) Updates on next generation fishery dependent data collection options; potential working group formation for further development on topic.

Fall Meeting dates: November 1 and 2, 2012. Host: MAFMC. Location, agenda, and meeting times to be determined.

