Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee
Meeting Agenda

February 24, 2020 from 1:00pm – 2:45pm

Participants

Bob Beal	Katie Drew	Lynn Fegley	Marty Gary
Sean Corson	Bruce Vogt	Pat Geer	Morgan Corey

- **ASMFC ecological reference point stock assessment for menhaden**
  - Katie Drew (ASMFC) shared a presentation on the ecological reference points (ERP) stock assessment developed for management use to account for Atlantic menhaden's role as a forage fish throughout its range
    - Developing ERPs was a decades long iterative process involving a robust modeling approach to describe predator-prey dynamics
    - Challenge of how to implement management based on different reference points – ERPs and traditional single species
    - Range of complexity in models developed
    - Used best available data (stock assessments completed 2017) for species chosen based on stock assessment timelines
    - Models set up to explore different scenarios based on different predator species management objectives
    - The ERP Workgroup recommends a combination approach of using various models, and emphasizes that there is no one right answer but the approach should depend on management objectives
  - Discussion:
    - Fishing menhaden sustainably does not guarantee striped bass recovery, but ensures that availability of menhaden is not limiting striped bass population growth
    - Would Chesapeake Bay specific abundance estimates for menhaden and striped bass add value to ERP modeling?
      - Current stock assessments conducted for entire coastwide stock, so abundance estimates could support more fine-scale modeling with greater spatial resolution
      - Chesapeake Bay is not a closed system
      - More refinement to come for ERP work

        - Forage research (Woodland, Buchheister, Houde) indicates striped bass are sensitive to changes in menhaden but have the ability to adapt when prey species are not available
            - Sensitivity of different predators in the ecosystem depends on portion of diet compositions
        - Invasive species effects (e.g. blue catfish) not factored in to ERPs
        - May 2020 ASMFC meeting discussion could potentially result in board decisions about adoption of ERPs or adding additional scenarios to support decisions about level of menhaden F

- **Update from the Invasive Catfish Workshop**
    - The Invasive Catfish Workgroup gathered for a workshop held January 29-30 at VCU Rice Rivers Center, bringing together stakeholders to develop collaborative solutions that address workgroup objectives and contribute to a management strategy that will guide state management plans
        - Common ground emerging from the workshop included an agreement to prioritize balancing commercial and recreational fishing interests, a focus on marketing blue catfish as a sustainable seafood option, and a need to better synthesize ecological impacts of invasive catfish
        - A management strategy following the Chesapeake Bay Program adaptive management format is currently being developed, with an expected timeline to finalize by end of March with workgroup and Ex Comm members feedback
    - Discussion:
        - Aim to capture the latest status of thinking around invasive catfish issue with the management strategy, and focus on prioritizing highest needs for near term action
        - What comes next for invasive catfish workgroup?

- **Telemetry array next steps**
    - NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office is exploring options to continue funding for some portion of an acoustic telemetry receiver array in the Chesapeake Bay, needed for tracking movements of important species to advance research that informs management. Continuing the array is a priority science need for the Sustainable Fisheries GIT, discussed on the November 2019 Ex Comm call.
    - Discussion:
    - The proposed array requires 33 receivers to cover 4 gate locations at the Bay mouth, Piney Point on Potomac River, Cedar Point, and Bay bridge

- The high end cost estimate to purchase all 33 new receivers and gear for maintenance is around $143K, but this is the expected maximum total cost and would likely be reduced through sharing agreements with institutions that already own acoustic receivers
- Current efforts are focused on accounting for all existing telemetry gear available to contribute to the array. In the upcoming weeks, decisions are expected on level of support from partners at DNR, VIMS, UMCES, DOD and NCBO.

➢ **Bay-specific relative abundance estimates**

- NCBO plans to move forward with funding for a 3-year project focused on developing abundance estimates for menhaden and striped bass after receiving positive support from partners in the management community
- Discussion:
- The project includes plans to embed agency staff within the project team for training on model approach and updating estimates after the project concludes
- Data sharing challenges may be involved, especially for records of menhaden landings
- Could telemetry data help improve abundance estimates over time?
    - Consider specific research objectives for the telemetry array, such as application for validating models e.g. abundance estimates

➢ **Member Updates**

- VMRC in process of shifting regulatory authority for menhaden in Virginia
- PRFC engaged in enforcement efforts
- Sean Corson briefed Chesapeake Bay Task Force representatives to reauthorize NCBO funding