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NMFS Atlantic Sturgeon Update

5-Year Review and Recovery Planning

August 8, 2018

Julie Crocker, Endangered Fish Branch Chief
Greater Atlantic Region Fisheries Office

5-Year Review

At least once every 5 years, the Secretary shall conduct a review of each listed species to determine whether it should be delisted or reclassified.

- Required by Section 4 of the ESA
- Each listed DPS to be reviewed independently under a single report

5-Year Review

On March 16, 2018, we published notice in the Federal Register that we are undertaking a 5-year review and asked the public to submit relevant information

60 day period to submit information closed on May 16, 2018. We received 9 submissions (all available at: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=NOAA-NMFS-2018-0041-0009>)

Information Received

Information was received from:

- Entergy, Inc.
- North Carolina Fisheries Association
- New York DEC
- Riverkeeper and Scenic Hudson
- South Carolina DNR
- Southern Environmental Law Center
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, South Atlantic Division
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – New England Field Office and Southeast Region

5-Year Review

A 5-year review does not change the listing status of the species

A 5-year review ends with a determination of whether the species' listing status should be changed. A separate rulemaking is required to make any such change, including collecting and considering public comments. We will need to make this determination for each of the five distinct population segments

5-Year Review

For Atlantic Sturgeon DPSs, we plan to:

- review information for and write the draft 5-year review internally (GAR and SERO)
- use the stock assessment as one of the primary sources of new information
- request the ASMFC Sturgeon TC members peer review the draft 5-year review
- complete one review document for all 5 DPSs.

5-Year Review – What It Includes...

- Is there relevant new information for this species regarding the application of the DPS policy ?
- Present updated information and current species status
- Five-Listing Factor Analysis

5-Year Review – What It Includes...

- Synthesis of Information: provides the rationale for the recommendations regarding whether or not to change a species' classification
- Recommended Classification (downlist/uplist/delist/no change needed)
- Recommendations for Future Actions

5-Year Review – Final Product

- We expect to issue one document that will contain the 5-Year Review for each of the five Atlantic sturgeon DPSs
- Notice of Availability will publish in the Federal Register
- Document will be available on our webpages
- Template that will be used is available on-line:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/endangered-species-conservation/endangered-species-act-guidance-policies-and-regulations#recovery-esa-section-4>

Recovery Planning

Section 4(f) of the ESA requires the Secretary to develop and implement recovery plans for the conservation and survival of listed species

A recovery plan serves as a road map for species recovery

Recovery Outline

In January 2018, NMFS published a Recovery Outline for the five DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon

The recovery outline provides interim strategies and goals for recovering the species

Available at:

https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/atlsturgeon/docs/ats_recovery_outline_gar_ser_final_508_compliant_v2.pdf

Recovery Planning – What's Next

Beginning stages of recovery planning for the Atlantic sturgeon DPSs

Considering whether to do separate plans, one plan or some combination for the DPSs, and whether to combine with a new shortnose sturgeon recovery plan

Shortnose sturgeon recovery plan published in 1998 (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/final-recovery-plan-shortnose-sturgeon-acipenser-brevirostrum>)

Recovery Plan – What It Includes

Recovery plans must incorporate, at a minimum:

- A description of site-specific management actions necessary to achieve species recovery (i.e., recovery actions).
- Objective, measurable criteria which, when met, would result in a determination that the species be delisted.
- Estimates of the time and costs required to achieve the plan's goal.

Recovery Plan – What It Includes

Typical Structure:

- Background – Life History, Status, Threats, Biological Constraints and Needs
- Recovery Goal, Objective and Criteria
- Recovery Strategy
- Implementation

Recovery Planning – Public and Partner Involvement

Development of the recovery plan(s) will be led by NMFS and informed by a variety of subject experts

We make draft recovery plans available for public comment and consider all input before finalizing a recovery plan

Questions, contact:

Lynn Lankshear, Atlantic Sturgeon Coordinator, NMFS, GARFO
978-282-8473; lynn.lankshear@noaa.gov

Andrew Herndon, Atlantic Sturgeon Coordinator, NMFS, SERO
727-824-5312; andrew.herndon@noaa.gov

Julie Crocker, Endangered Fish Recovery Branch Chief, NMFS,
GARFO
978-282-8480; julie.crocker@noaa.gov



Priority Data Collection for Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment

August 8, 2018

K. Drew

Board Task

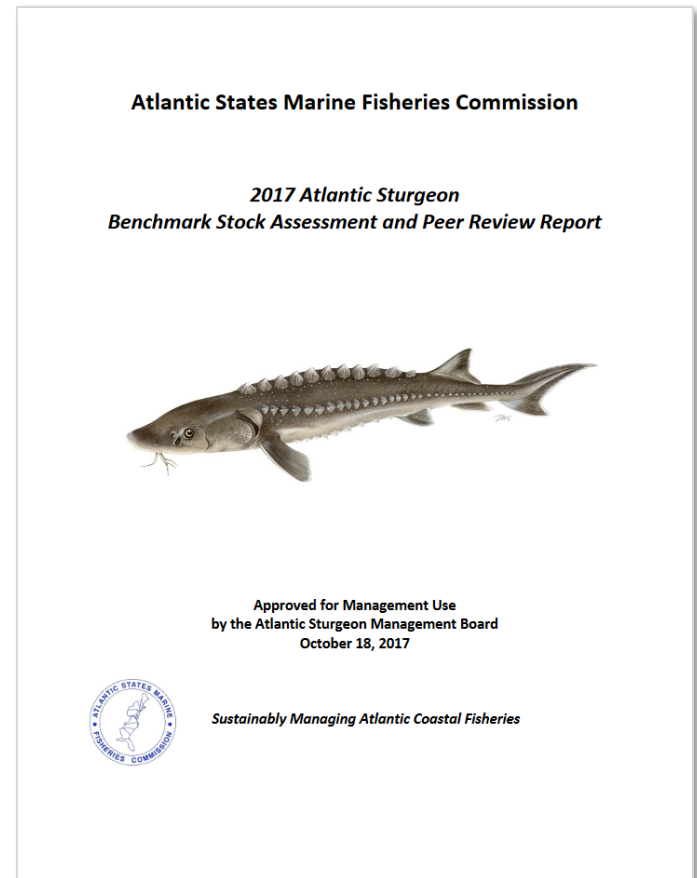


- Identify data sets most important to Atlantic sturgeon stock assessment
- Develop recommendations about where to focus state resources

Research Recommendations



- 2017 Benchmark Stock Assessment contains a detailed, prioritized list of research recommendations
- “Ideal world” list: no consideration of funding constraints
- TC re-prioritized to identify most cost-effective actions



TC Recommendations



1. Encourage data sharing among partner agencies and academic institutions.
2. Continue to conduct the FI surveys that were used to develop indices of abundance for Atlantic sturgeon or identified as being good potential indices with more years of data
 - Consider modifying existing surveys to be more effective at monitoring sturgeon

High Priority Indices



Survey	Years	Index Months	Average size
ME-NH Trawl	2000-2015	5,10,11	Juveniles & Adults
CT LIST	1984-2014	5-6,9-11	Juveniles
NJ Ocean Trawl	1990-2015	1,4,6,10	Juveniles & Adults
VIMS Shad	1998-2015	3-4	Juveniles
NC p135	1991-2015	Spring	Juveniles
NC p135	1990-2015	Fall (11-2)	Juveniles
USFWS Coop	1988-2010	1-2	Juveniles & Adults
NEAMAP	2007-2015	4-5,10	Juveniles & Adults
NYDEC JASAMP	2006-2015	3-5	Small Juveniles
SC Edisto	2004-2015	1-12	Juveniles & Adults

TC Recommendations



3. Continue to acoustically tag Atlantic sturgeon and maintain receiver arrays



TC Recommendations



4. Continue to collect and improve data on incidental catch of Atlantic sturgeon.

5. Collect data needed to quantify the numbers of Atlantic sturgeon killed by ship strikes each year.
 - Respond to sturgeon carcass sightings and maintain and share data on ship strike mortalities

TC Recommendations



6. Continue processing genetic samples to update and improve the DPS definitions, especially in the less well-represented regions (Carolina and South Atlantic)



TC Recommendations



7. Consider “snapshot” approaches to FI and FD monitoring

- Instead of starting new annual monitoring programs, conduct short term studies (2-3 years) of abundance, bycatch, etc. every 5 to 10 years
- Take advantage of short-term funding opportunities
- Partner with academic institutions (good grad student projects)
- Maintaining consistent methods across the snapshots is critical

TC Highlights & Concerns



- Permitting process makes many of these recommendations more difficult
- State budgets are already strained; unfunded mandates will mean difficult choices for state agencies

TC Highlights & Concerns



- Some of this work is already happening:
 - Improved bycatch monitoring through Sect. 10 process
 - Sturgeon carcass reporting rate study to improve ship strike mortality estimates
 - Processing backlog of genetic samples from under-represented DPSs



QUESTIONS



2018 Fishery Management Plan Review for Atlantic Sturgeon

2016 Fishing Year



Sturgeon Management Board
August, 2018

Status of the FMP and Fishery



- Amendment 1 – Complete Atlantic states moratorium since 1998; EEZ harvest and possession prohibited in 1999.
- Will remain in effect until stocks exhibit a minimum of 20 protected year classes of spawning females



Status of the Stock



- Listed under the ESA in 2012
 - 4 DPS listed as endangered, 1 DPS listed as threatened
 - Critical habitat designated in 2017
- 2017 ASMFC benchmark stock assessment indicates the population remains depleted relative to historic abundance
 - Coastwide population appears to be recovering slowly since the 1998 moratorium
 - Coastwide total mortality is sustainable



Bycatch



- Mortality from bycatch may be hindering population recovery
 - Gillnets and trawls, highest bycatch mortality rates
 - Total losses from bycatch largely unknown due to low to non-existent rates of observer coverage in most fisheries that may encounter sturgeon
 - The PRT reiterates the importance of mandatory reporting and/or observer coverage requirements to effectively monitor Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in state fisheries.



Ship Strikes



- Incidental mortality from ship strikes is an emerging issue
 - particularly vulnerable to ship strikes when there is a lot of cargo vessel traffic occurring in relatively shallow shipping channels



ESA Section 10 ITPs



- Most states are currently developing, or recently submitted applications for ESA Section 10(a)(1)(b) Incidental Take Permit (ITP)
- The PRT recommends states and jurisdictions continue to coordinate with the ASMFC regarding the status of ITP applications.



Aquaculture



- USFWS maintains Atlantic sturgeon at three facilities to research conservation, restoration and recovery techniques:
 - Northeast Fishery Center in Lamar, PA – 45 fish
 - Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery in SC – 8 fish
 - Welaka National Fish Hatchery in FL – 125 fish
- MD DNRs Atlantic sturgeon culture activities have been terminated due to lack of funding, with no plans to culture sturgeon in the future



Aquaculture, cont.



- LaPaz LLC (NC) was granted permission via Addendum II (2005) and III (2006) to import and commercially rear Atlantic sturgeon from Canada
- Recently shifted their focus away from the species and no longer has Atlantic sturgeon in their possession
 - Horse Creek Aquafarms (Addendum I) – 117 fish
 - West Virginia University, researching re-circulating aquaculture systems. The disposition of these fish is not well document



Compliance



- The PRT finds all states implemented management and monitoring programs consistent with the FMP in 2017.
- States are required to submit info on:
 - Results of bycatch monitoring for Atlantic sturgeon in other fisheries;
 - Monitoring results
 - Habitat status
 - Aquaculture operations status





Questions?

