

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD

Crown Plaza Old Town
Alexandria, Virginia
February 5, 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Call to Order 1
Approval of Agenda..... 1
Approval of Proceedings 1
Public Comment..... 1
Update on Cooperative Research 3
Update on Chesapeake Bay Research Guidance Group 5
Update on the Ecological Reference Points 6
Advisory Panel Nominations..... 8
Adjourn..... 9

INDEX OF MOTIONS

1. **Approval of agenda by consent** (Page 1)
2. **Approval of proceedings of October 21, 2008 by consent.** (Page 1)
3. **Motion to nominate Ron Lukens to the advisory panel.** (Page 8)
4. **Motion to adjourn, by consent** (Page 9)

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

George Lapointe, ME (AA)	Bill Goldsborough, MD (GA)
Pat White, ME (GA)	Russell Dize, MD proxy for Sen. R. Colburn (LA)
Doug Grout, NH (AA)	Jack Travelstead, VA proxy for S. Bowman (AA)
G. Ritchie White, NH (GA)	Louis Daniel, NC (AA)
Vito Calomo, MA, proxy for Rep. Verga (LA)	Bill Cole, NC (GA)
Najih Lazar, RI, proxy for Mark Gibson (AA)	John Frampton, SC (AA)
David Simpson, CT (AA)	Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Lance Stewart, CT (GA)	Robert Boyles, Jr., SC (LA)
James Gilmore, NY (AA)	John Duren, GA (GA)
Pat Augustine, NY (GA)	Spud Woodward, GA (AA)
Tom McCloy, NJ, proxy for D. Chanda (AA)	William Orndorf, FL (GA)
Gilbert Ewing, NJ, proxy for Asm. Fisher (LA)	William Sharp, FL, proxy for G. McRae (AA)
Roy Miller, DE, Proxy for P. Emory (AA)	Steve Meyers, NMFS
Bernard Pankowski, DE, proxy for Sen. Venables (LA)	Jaime Geiger, USFWS
Tom O'Connell, MD DNR (AA)	A.C. Carpenter, PRFC

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Ex-Officio Members

Staff

Vince O'Shea
Robert Beal

Braddock Spear
Chris Vonderweidt

Guests

Derek Orner, NOAA

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Presidential Ballroom of the Crowne Plaza Hotel Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia, February 5, 2009, and was called to order at 9:35 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Patten D. White.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIRMAN PATTEN D. WHITE: I would like to welcome everybody to the Menhaden Meeting. The meeting is called to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIRMAN PATTEN D. WHITE: We have an agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda as it is written? Yes, Bill.

MR. WILLIAM GOLDSBOROUGH: Mr. Chairman, I was wondering if we couldn't also and shouldn't also have a report on where we stand with the '09 assessment. I don't see that on the agenda anywhere. With particular reference to a previous discussion, you will remember at the August meeting we received a report from the technical committee suggesting that a new population model by Dr. Steve Martel be considered for use in the '09 assessment in parallel with the existing model.

We directed that consideration be undertaken. Then the stock assessment subcommittee met in November and had a discussion on that, and that has been since our last meeting. It seems like we would do well to hear report on how that discussion we went.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Thank you. Any other additions? Seeing none, the agenda is approved.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIRMAN WHITE: The proceedings from the October 21st meeting; any comments, additions, deletions? Seeing none, we will accept the proceedings.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIRMAN WHITE: I don't have the signup sheet, but I know there were a couple of people that had signed up to speak in the public

comment section. Ron, do you want to come up?

MR. RON LUKENS: I am Ron Lukens. I am the senior scientist for Omega Protein Corporation. Chairman White and board members, I appreciate the opportunity to be here and provide you with some comments in what we think is some good news. Normally I would be speaking to you today about fish or fishing operations or the fishing season, but today I want to talk briefly about our Reedville, Virginia, Plant and some exciting things that are going on there.

In 2008 both of our main boilers, which are the fish cookers, were rebuilt and had computerized controls installed. This allows the operator to control the boilers from a remote computer. As a result we have gained about 30 percent efficiency and that results in less fuel burned. Coincident with that improvement, we're now burning low sulfur fuel, and that drastically reduces pollutants emitted from these boilers. The boilers were rebuilt because they were malfunctioning and had broken down.

While we're pleased with the outcome, the associated downtime did cause us to delay the start of our fishing operations and it caused the company to lose fishing days. In the off season operations don't shut down. Instead a lot of work is done to fix up, clean up and basically put our house in order in preparation for the upcoming fishing and processing season.

This year two new state-of-the-art airless dryers are being installed in the plant. Installation of the airless dryers will have far-reaching environmental impacts. The most immediate noticeable result is the tall smoke stack, which is a noted landmark, will disappear from the Reedville skyline.

By virtue of being airless, the high-efficiency combustion gases are separated from the process drying gases. All this is very technical and by the way was provided by our environmental officer, Bill Purcell, and I appreciate that. The dryer furnaces will now be burning a low-sulfur fuel and that reduces our sulfur emissions from the dryer.

Processing gases where the distinctive fish plant odor derives are pulled out of the dryer and sent

to the condenser where the moisture is removed. Any remaining gases following condensation are hard-piped to the boilers for incineration, and that is at 1,600 degrees Fahrenheit. The airless dryers also eliminate the need for air scrubbers which eliminates the point-source discharge into Cockrell Creek.

This improvement will eliminate air emissions from the processing and result only in emitting combustion gases, and those will be cut by half. The water soluble portion of menhaden is evaporated into barometric condensers into what is called fish solubles, and we use that to market fertilizer products.

This process creates approximately 300,000 gallons per day of what is called evaporator condensate that is treated in two aerated ponds. Ordinarily water from the treatment ponds would discharge into Cockrell Creek. However, in 2009 this treated condensate will be further treated by a dissolved air flotation device, creating water that can be used in the plant.

This will reduce the groundwater usage by 300,000 gallons per day with free water created from the processing of the fish. We call it "free water" because it comes from the fish. It is not taken out of the ground. The only liquid discharge left is our cooling water discharge, and that will be lowered significantly because we will be using some of the 300,000 gallons per day to run through the cooling water operation.

Omega is also implementing an environmental management system in 2009 based on International Standards Organization Standards – that's ISO standards – for Environmental Management. This system brings environmental management to the forefront of the operation of the company. It employs a style of management that facilitates constant improvement of our environmental performance.

Finally, I think it is worth pointing out that 98 percent of our 2009 capital budget for the rebuilt plant is for environmental projects. We're very excited about these environmental improvements. The results will be good for the environment, but we will also see significant improvements in our operating efficiency. We're look forward to starting the 2009 fishing season and the opportunity to evaluate our improvements. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing us to share this information with you.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Thank you, Ron; that is all good news. I appreciate your comments. Ken.

MR. KEN HINMAN: Mr. Chairman, my name is Ken Hinman; I'm president of the National Coalition for Marine Conservation and also a member of the Menhaden Advisory Panel. I signed up to speak on a topic that was not on the agenda. You just added it to the agenda, so I hope I'm not out of line.

I attended the Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee Meeting on November 3rd in Raleigh and I listened to preparations for the 2009 benchmark stock assessment, including the terms of reference and the modeling approaches to be used. I am concerned by the lack of ecosystem-based information in the assessment; a concern that was expressed in the 1999 peer review and repeated in the last benchmark peer review in 2003 and highlighted in the report of the 2004 Menhaden Science Workshop.

Frankly, I was rather astonished that with a management plan put in place since the last assessment to conserve the species, while addressing uncertainty about the status of menhaden's ecological role, a cap that will expire next year, the subcommittee is not even discussing these issues as it prepares for the next stock assessment.

And why? That's because the management board has yet to act on past scientific advice that goes back at least ten years; that is, the need to specific goals for conservation and management of menhaden as a forage fish; goals for which new reference points can be developed. I am commenting here on the reference points that are used in the stock assessment presently; spawning stock, fecundity and fishing mortality.

These are, as the 2004 Menhaden Science Workshop Report pointed out, designed for stock replacement. They are of no value in assessing the status of menhaden as forage. As past reviewers have pointed out, and I quote, "A reference point responsive to menhaden as a forage species would be one which maximizes population abundance, taking into regard the allocation of fish between fishing mortality and natural mortality."

That means new reference points must be based not simply on the ability of the stock to replace itself but on population size, age structure and the availability of prey in time and space. Now, setting reference points for use in interpreting this new assessment to achieve population size and age structure I think fishery managers do all the time, so is allocating menhaden between fishing mortality and natural mortality.

There is a widely held misconception that is repeated in the stock assessment that estimating the natural mortality for use in the assessment, even using a multi-species VPA, somehow accounts for the needs of predators. It does not. In a population like menhaden that has been reduced from an unfished state to a fishing-induced equilibrium, the amount of predation has been reduced to accommodate desire yield to the fishery. As a result the estimate of the natural mortality used in the assessment is actually influenced by the fishing mortality rate.

The predation that is supposedly determined is therefore an a priori allocation to predators rather than an actual determination of predator needs. I have two recommendations. The first – and this picks up on something Bill mentioned at the beginning – is to I think redirect the stock assessment group to use the alternative model developed by Steve Martel et al for side-by-side comparison with the existing model.

The way I interpreted the discussion in November was that they were planning not to use that model. His alternative age-structured model is not a multi-species model; however, it fits better with what is going on in the fishery. The total population is down to the low points of the sixties and seventies; recruitment is at historic lows; juvenile abundance indices are low; all the largest adults no longer appear in the fishery in large numbers.

The Martel Model does explain these things. The current model does not and it cannot. Finally, I would like to just reiterate in your discussion today on ecological reference points that these are things that I think the notion that you are not ready to develop them is mistaken. I think we now set reference points, fecundity target, fishing mortality target.

We have triggers based on CPUE and the proportion of age two to four fish to the general

population, and there is nothing magical biologically or scientifically about those reference points. They were arrived at based on management goals established to achieve a certain yield from the fishery on a sustainable basis.

The kind of ecological reference points we're talking about are simply targets and thresholds set in familiar terms that we already use, population biomass, age structure of the population and allocation of mortality. I want to just end with reminding you of what Yogi Berra said that if you don't know where you're going, you probably won't get there. I think these are decisions that really need to – I hope you have a good discussion on those today. I would also say that I don't think you should decide that you can't do something until you have decided what it is you're trying to do. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Thank you, Ken. Those are the only two people that were on the signup sheet; is there anybody else that has any other comment? All right, back to the board; update on cooperative research.

UPDATE ON COOPERATIVE RESEARCH

MR. BRADDOCK SPEAR: You might recall back in August I gave a brief update to the board on a meeting that was held back in May to explore the possibility of cooperative research with industry. This is just an update on a call we had recently on that progress. Back in May about 20 industry and scientific folks got together and started initially just talking about what each others needs and processes were and see if there was a match where industry could get involved in research projects that would benefit the assessment and management.

The scientists, like I said, explained their data needs for the assessment. Industry talked about their routines that they use for spotting menhaden from planes. The two big outcomes from that meeting were a discussion about a spotter log survey where the aerial survey that the Omega pilots already use can be slightly modified with no additional funding and minimal effort to benefit or possibly benefit the technical committee.

The second outcome was the beginning of a proposal for a coast-wide aerial survey. One of the big conclusions that came out of that discussion was the current pilots for Omega and Ark Bait up in Massachusetts and Rhode Island and likely the other pilots that spot menhaden don't have time to participate in a coast-wide aerial survey for menhaden abundance. There is just not enough time in the week.

This aerial survey would have to be done kind of independently of industry and would require a sufficient and a significant amount of funding. We talked about those two outcomes at our recent conference call. The update on the Spotter Log Survey was implemented for the first time in 2008.

Joe Smith at the NOAA Office in Beaufort, North Carolina, developed log sheets that essentially break up the Chesapeake Bay into different areas and also developed one for Narragansett Bay that breaks it up into different areas so that pilots can take account of menhaden schools, the number of schools in these areas and an estimated magnitude or number of fish in these schools.

The Chesapeake Bay Survey, the Omega pilots also go up the coastline up to New Jersey so there is an area for that part of the survey as well. From those data sheets, Joe Smith and Jay McNamee in Rhode Island can begin to develop an index for each area about relative menhaden abundance.

There have been studies done and studies in the literature for this being done I think on sardines in California, so it is an adopted methodology that has been modified to fit these areas and this species. Based on discussions in the conference call, it seemed like that this might produce some useful information for the technical committee.

This was, again, the first year that this was collected so it won't become useful or we won't know if it is useful for at least another few years once some trends come out. We did discuss improvements that can be made to the log sheets. One was expanded coverage. The Ark Bait pilot, Everett Mills, volunteered his time in filling out more log sheets because he actually surveys from his plane from Rhode Island down to New Jersey, almost to the point where Omega's pilots fly north and thereby giving us coverage from the Chesapeake Bay all the way up through

Narragansett Bay, which is a pretty coverage of the core range of menhaden. That will be done for 2009.

Another improvement that was discussed was adding a component of knowing the area covered of these planes. That might be done through the GPS systems that are already in the planes and essentially downloading the area-covered logs from those machines and incorporating those into some electronic form that the technical committee can use for analysis. That will give a more refined estimate of observations per unit effort.

The third improvement that we talked about was some sort of validation for this survey; whether it is done through an observer program on the planes, not every flight but getting observers up in the planes to validate what is being reported by the pilots; or, what is been used in the LIDAR Survey, which is high-definition video that is attached to the plane and turned on as the planes go and can later be analyzed to validate what the pilots see. Either one of those validation schemes, the observers or the video, would cost some money; not a major amount of funds but there would be some money needed for that.

The next topic that we briefly talked about was the coast-wide aerial survey. It was designed because it would fill the most important data need for the stock assessment and the technical committee, and that is a geographically broad adult abundance index. Right now the primary adult abundance index is a pound net survey in the Potomac River, so something broader would be extremely helpful for the assessment.

It was believed that an aerial survey is the most cost-effective and time-effective way to do this. Just some rough startup cost estimates was on the order of about a million dollars per year at least for the first couple of years, hopefully getting less once equipment was bought and the process refined.

Then it was suggested that a dollar amount that's bigger than anything that the technical committee members can write grants for, so they so saw that as kind of a bigger picture dollar amount that could be possibly rolled into other survey requests that go to the administration or congress. That's it and I'll be happy to take any questions.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Any questions from the board? Vito.

MR. VITO CALOMO: Again, a lot of times I don't ask questions. Being a fish spotter pilot myself, a fish spotter from 1967 to 1989, I think you're on the right track. Sometimes, Mr. Chairman, if you don't know where to look you will never find them. That wasn't a quote from Yogi Berra; that's my quote, Vito Calomo, I guess.

Mr. Chairman, as I've given a report for years following the menhaden industry, because we're three generations into from my family, is there is an abundance of menhaden into what I call the northern part of the Atlantic. But from New Jersey to say all the way to Maine there was an abundance of menhaden like we haven't seen in – I think the last time I flew an airplane was '89, so that is about 20 years. They were all of different age classes.

Prior to that, Mr. Chairman, for at least three years prior to that the zero age class of menhaden in Massachusetts waters seen by me from Woods Hole to Gloucester, Massachusetts, was the biggest abundance I have seen in over 30 years. Mr. Chairman, I think Omega Protein, who is sitting here today in the audience – or their representatives are sitting here in the audience – did make an agreement with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission here – and I can attest to that – that they would offer some assistance.

The assistance that they would offer is in their benefit, whether it be the planes or the vessels or their expertise. I think we should call upon them even though these are hard economic times. I do understand that, but we don't have that kind of funding to do this kind of research. When you start talking hundreds of thousands or millions or dollars, that is beyond what we can do and beyond I think many grants that can be written, as you said, Brad.

So, I think it should be a joint effort that I brought forward several years back when we started to talk about this, to get rid of all this boogeyman I hear about everyday that there is no menhaden, and yet the boats that go menhaden fishing, they are finding it easier to catch them and their range has gone actually into Canada. I think we're on the right track. I think we need to

– you know, back in New England we always talked about cooperate research.

We had many scientists go out on the fishing trawlers to find out what is there. I think this time it's cooperate research, and whether using the planes or the vessels, I think this is a great opportunity to join hands in a partnership of science, fishermen and others. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Thank you, Vito, and I do recognize the partnership and I do see a lot of additional work that the Omega people have been doing in their aerial surveys in response to the discussions that we have had. Is it sufficient; no, it isn't sufficient on any of our parts, Vito, but I think they are working with us on that and I think we have got to continue on, and we will certainly appreciate their support on that. Ritchie.

MR. G. RITCHIE WHITE: Just to follow up a little bit on what you said, Vito, I think the agreement on research was between Omega and the state of Virginia and not the commission. I think there is a little bit of a difference there so that we're not in the loop on how much that is and what is transpiring. Now having said that, we certainly appreciate everything Omega is doing and hope that they're able to do more with the great needs that we have. Thank you.

MR. CALOMO: Ritchie is probably right, but I always thought there was availability to use their platforms, their vessels in the research process throughout the range that they go. That's what I remember, anyhow. In fact, I pushed it very hard. The other thing I am going to say to you, Mr. Chairman and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is I was – and I still probably am – pretty good at fish spotting, not that I'm about to go fish spotting anymore.

But if I can help out in any way in my capacity as a member of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, I still know what I'm talking about. I still have people in the business. I still understand it and I will still help you if you need my help. Thank you.

UPDATE ON CHESAPEAKE BAY RESEARCH GUIDANCE GROUP

MR. SPEAR: Okay, moving on to the Chesapeake Bay Research Guidance Group

Discussions, staff is passing out a one pager that gives a little more detail than my presentation, but I will go through it and I'll be happy to answer questions. You will recall from the annual meeting Alexei Sharov, the technical committee chair, gave a presentation on research progress that has been going on for menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay Region.

One of the conclusions that came from that presentation and discussion was there are a number of research projects that are proposed and funded by entities other than ASMFC and that those projects might not directly answer specific management questions that the board has. That was sort of the driving factor in the board choosing to form a Research Guidance Group.

Just a little more background on the issue, over \$5 million of research now has been funded for menhaden and its ecological role. Those proposals are reviewed by the CBSAC. That group is primarily tasked with reviewing and prioritizing the proposals that are submitted to the NOAA Chesapeake Office. They don't necessarily seek out proposals for studies that might answer specific questions that directly relevant to this board.

We're now over three years into this research program that was established with Addendum II. If you recall the board set the four research priority areas to look into or answer questions about localized depletion. We expect management action by the end of 2010, which is quickly coming up. What is needed?

Staff has drafted, based on your guidance, a proposal for a policy-level group with connections to the management board, to NOAA, the environment community, industry and academia. This group will review the research and provide guidance to academia or the states to ensure that ASMFC's research and information needs are met.

It is proposed that the membership of this group would the state administrators from Maryland and Virginia, the executive directors from ASMFC and PRFC, the Director of the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office and a representative for the conservation community – Ken Hinman's name was brought up at the last meeting – and an industry representative, Ron Lukens. The plan

coordinator for menhaden would staff this guidance group and also provide that information back to the management board.

The long-term goals of this Research Guidance Group would be to identify research and monitoring programs that would support the assessment and management, answer specific questions and to develop and implement a long-term funding strategy to support this research. A couple of the immediate tasks that this group can get into is providing comments to the NOAA Chesapeake Office on terms of reference that they are in the process of developing.

The Chesapeake Bay Office obtained funding for an independent peer review that they are using to review the research that has been done to date, and this is an opportunity to develop terms of reference that will help answer specific questions on the progress and usefulness of that research for management.

That review is scheduled for the week of April 20th. The Chesapeake Bay Office is holding their annual fishery symposium during that week and it will coincide with that symposium. Once that review is conducted and completed, there will be hopefully some recommendations, and it would be part of this group's responsibility to make sure that those recommendations are implemented.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Thanks, Brad. The question as far as Ron and Ken's participation in this guidance group, you said that their names were put in there. Have they been notified of this and are they willing participants?

MR. SPEAR: They have been notified and they are willing.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Any questions regarding Brad's presentation? Okay, a tie into that, then, is an update on the ecological reference points. We had a letter and I think everybody has got a copy of it from George Lapointe, and I am going to turn that over to George for initiating the discussion, please.

UPDATE ON THE ECOLOGICAL REFERENCE POINTS

MR. GEORGE D. LAPOINTE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I apologize for the lateness of the

memo. It was one of those things that I talked about in October and I got started in early November, and it slid off my plate until about two weeks ago. I don't remember if it was the Menhaden Board, but I think it was at the Policy Board there was discussion about ecological reference points and a working group to pursue those ideas.

I was concerned about the formation of a new group, the cost associated with it and in the end wrote this memo that talks about my understanding – and it is just my understanding of what the ecological reference points discussion means and my recommendation that we use the Management and Science Committee and Multi-Species Technical Committee to explore this work.

If it is done in the context of menhaden, obviously the menhaden technical people or our assessment people need to be involved in it as well. That is my recommendation. I had a conversation with Bill Goldsborough yesterday or the day before about this, and he said, "I don't want study; I want action."

And that's fair enough, I want action if it is appropriate, and I don't know the answer to that yet. I don't think Bill's and my views are that far off. It is to look at how we would incorporate the ecological reference points. I don't think what I'm suggesting and what Ken Hinman has suggested is that far off except I don't know the appropriate means yet because I'm not the guy to pick that.

So, I mentioned it to Matt Cieri and I mentioned it to Linda Mercer, my MSC committee member. Linda put on the caution that if in fact they do a lot of work on this there may be some costs associated with it. I think that is a fair enough comment because quite often we task people with work that they may not have the time or the resources to take care of, and so that is the context within which it is offered.

The other thing I suggested was that if this is the route to go that we put together some terms of reference. I don't think we need to do that today, but I think we need to do it in kind of a timely way. If this board thinks that's the right to go, my suggestion would be for people to send in within the next two weeks ideas about reference points. We could circulate that to board members for their review and approval and then

task the MSC and the Multi-Species Technical Committee to pursue that work.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Thank you, George, and I would urge, as George just said, that people do get their comments in the next two weeks. I would appreciate brief comments from the board as far as his point of having this run through the commission's Management and Science Committee. Jack Travelstead.

MR. JACK TRAVELSTEAD: I think the chairman's suggestions are reasonable. I don't agree with establishing another new group to look into this. I think we've got the right people in the right groups to pursue this. I would think staff might be able to help us with the terms of reference as well rather than just counting on individual members to send in their suggestions, although I wouldn't object to that at all.

I think we do need to be a little bit worried about the cost and how that might play given the situation that all the states are in and ASMF is in with the current economy. I am wondering if perhaps, when we get a report back on terms of reference, we could also have a report back on what the projected cost will be.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Good suggestion. Louis.

DR. LOUIS DANIEL: Hoping this is the time to bring this issue up – I think it might be – you know, we recently had legislation in North Carolina that prohibited menhaden fishing off of Brunswick County. There was a move afoot to prohibit menhaden reduction fishing off North Carolina to our Marine Fisheries Commission last year.

I recently got another call from the legislature on prohibiting menhaden fishing off North Carolina. I am trying to come up with reasons and explanations as to why it is unnecessary based on the status of the stock. There are three principal issues that I think I need to just have on the record so that we can deal with them at some point in an addendum or whatever we plan to proceed.

I think having a more conservation reference point to take into account the ecological function of menhaden, which I think this is the time for that discussion, is important, but also I think some looking into a coast-wide cap and not just a bay-wide cap, but some kind of a coast-wide cap

that ensures at least my folks back home that it is not just an open-ended fishery in the ocean. I think that can go a long way towards stemming some of the concerns that are mostly unfounded but prevalent in North Carolina right now.

And then the last issue – and I didn't want to get into a big debate last night at the late hour, but I do have significant concerns if we are indeed using the multi-species VPA M estimate. I think it is probably very risk prone based on the discussions that I heard last night. I think I need to have more confidence in that estimate, and it would be nice to see what the traditional M estimates are compared to the MS VPA estimates. I think that would be a useful comparison to have at some point in the board's proceedings.

MR. LAPOINTE: Again, when I was talking to Linda about this and being concerned about cost, one of things she suggested was there are folks at the National Marine Fisheries Service – you know, Mike Fogarty has done a bucket load of work on ecosystem-based management, and Steve Murowski as well is quite versed in it.

I think the cost is certainly an issue but there are ways to address the issue without going crazy on it. There are two individuals who I am sure would be willing to cooperate. I haven't talked to them about it, but it fits in with the work that their agencies and they are interested in individually, who have a lot of knowledge and could help us out.

ADVISORY PANEL NOMINATIONS

CHAIRMAN WHITE: I am sure we can have their time fulltime; is that all right, Steve? Okay, thank you. Any other comments on this issue? Advisory Panel nominations; we have one, I think.

MR. SPEAR: Yes, there was one nomination submitted since the last board meeting from Virginia for Ron Lukens to serve as a member of the advisory panel.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Are there any serious objections to that? Seeing none, welcome aboard, Ron. Under other business, I am going to turn back to Brad for a discussion on the '09 assessment and see if we can clarify what Bill's questions were on that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAR: Bill is right, the stock assessment committee got together since the last board meeting and began talking about which models to bring forward with this next stock assessment. Just to take a step back, we're set up for peer review of this stock assessment in March 2010. The committee is on a schedule to complete the assessment for their purposes by late 2009.

The next meeting that is scheduled is for May of this year, which would be the data workshop. The purpose of this past meeting was, again, to begin discussion of the models that might be used in this assessment. Since the last assessment was peer reviewed, a new model has been put forward and has been played with using menhaden data and got the attention of the committee and is certainly interested in exploring it.

It is the model that was developed by Steve Martel at the University of British Columbia. He participated through conference call at this meeting and went through the details of his model. The committee is interested in learning a little bit more. It certainly has not ruled out using this model or using it in parallel with the previous models.

The purpose was to just get some information and learn more about it. He has shared the code and the details of it with the committee and our staff, Genny Nesslage. She is just now completing I believe the Lobster Assessment and will be able to dedicate a portion of her time to exploring this model.

The other purpose of the data workshop will be, again, to look at the pros and cons of all models that could potentially be used for the Menhaden Assessment and not just the previously use model or the Martel Model. The plan is to thoroughly evaluate any model that is on the table and provide justification for or against using those models. We will have a report for the board in August on that workshop since it will fall after the May board meeting week.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Bill, does that answer most of your questions or do you have – go ahead.

MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Yes, in large measure; a couple of questions, though. Do we have the ability within the stock assessment

planning framework to undertake a parallel track or is that something that has to be scheduled way in advance? In other words, should the outcome of these analyses be, yes, we should go down that road; will we still be able to?

MR. SPEAR: Yes, I believe it is standard practice for our stock assessment committees, if they choose an alternative model that previously hadn't been used, that it be developed in parallel with the previous model and both are sent to peer review.

CHAIRMAN WHITE: I guess my question to that, then, would be is there time and money that allows us to do that?

MR. SPEAR: Yes.

ADJOURN

CHAIRMAN WHITE: Any further questions on that issue? There is nothing else on the agenda. Unless I see anything else from the board, that finishes our agenda. We are adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 10:23 o'clock a.m., February 5, 2009.)