

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD**

Crowne Plaza Hotel - Old Town
Alexandria, Virginia
August 6, 2013

Approved October 29, 2013

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ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Terry Stockwell, ME, proxy for P. Keliher (AA)	Tom Fote, NJ (GA)
Rep. Walter Kumiega, ME (LA)	Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Asm. Albano (LA)
Steve Train, ME (GA)	Leroy Young, PA, proxy for J. Arway (AA)
G. Ritchie White, NH (GA)	Loren Lustig, PA (GA)
Doug Grout, NH (AA)	Mitchell Feigenbaum, PA, proxy for Rep. Vereb (LA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	Bernie Pankowski, DE, proxy for Sen. Venables (LA)
Rep. Sarah Peake, MA (LA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Paul Diodati, MA (AA)	Tom O'Connell, MD (AA)
Bill Adler, MA (GA)	Russell Dize, MD, proxy for Sen. Colburn (LA)
Mark Gibson, RI, proxy for R. Ballou (AA)	Bill Goldsborough, MD (GA)
Bill McElroy, RI (GA)	Jack Travelstead, VA (AA)
Rick Bellavance, RI, proxy for Rep. Martin (LA)	Rob O'Reilly, VA, Administrative proxy
Rep. Craig Miner, CT (LA)	Cathy Davenport, VA (GA)
David Simpson, CT (AA)	Bill Cole, NC (GA)
Lance Stewart, CT (GA)	Louis Daniel, NC (AA)
James Gilmore, NY (AA)	Martin Gary, PRFC
Anthony Rios, NY, proxy for Sen. Boyle (LA)	Steve Meyers, NMFS
Pat Augustine, NY (GA)	Bill Archambault, USFWS
Russ Allen, NJ, proxy for D. Chanda (AA)	

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

Ex-Officio Members

Alexei Sharov, Technical Committee Chair

Kelly Place, Advisory Panel Chair

Staff

Robert Beal
Toni Kerns

Mike Waine

Guests

Michelle Duval, NC DMF
Wilson Laney, US FWS
Dick Brame, CCA
Charles Lynch, NOAA
Derek Orner, NOAA
Dan McKiernan, MA DMF
Cheri Patterson, NH F & G
Jeff Kaelin, Lund's Fisheries
Kelly Denit, NMFS
Fritz Rohde, NMFS
Robert Geisler, MSSA
Clint Waters, MSSA

Jeffrey Pierce, Alewife Harvesters of Maine
Darrell Young, Alewife Harvesters of Maine
Ed O'Brien, Chesapeake Beach, MD
Aaron Kornbluth, PEW Trusts
Joseph Gordon, PEW Trusts
Raymond Kane, CHOIR
Jim Price, CBEF
Patrick Paquette, MA Striped Bass Assn.
Benson Chiles, Chiles Consulting
Ken Hastings, Mason Springs Conservancy
Lynn Fegley, MD DNR

The Striped Bass Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Presidential Ballroom of the Crowne Plaza Hotel Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia, August 6, 2013, and was called to order at 2:10 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Thomas O'Connell.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIRMAN THOMAS O'CONNELL: My name is Tom O'Connell; and I welcome you to the Striped Bass Management Board Meeting.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: All of you should have an agenda before you. The first order of business is to approve the agenda. Are there any suggested changes to the agenda? I've got one, Fish and Wildlife.

MR. BILL ARCHAMBAULT: Mr. Chairman, if time allows we would like to give a quick update on the '14 cooperative tagging cruise where we are with that.

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: Sure, we'll put that under other business if time allows. Seeing no other comment, the agenda will stand approved. I want to mention this is our first meeting since the 2012 annual meeting in October. We do not have the proceedings from that meeting. If you recall, Joe's wife had an illness at that time and there were some issues.

Some of the proceedings were lost. Staff had prepared a meeting summary, and if you need to reference those in the future, contact myself or Mike. We do have a public comment period.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: This is an opportunity for members of the public to provide the board comment on items that are not on the agenda.

We have one person that has signed up to speak at this time, Jim Price. Jim, if you would like to come up to the microphone. While Jim is coming up to the microphone, we do have a one-

hour meeting time today. I'm going to try to keep us moving along. Jim, your write up was included in the board's packet of material, so if you could keep your comments to a couple minutes to highlight that, I appreciate it. Thanks.

MR. JAMES PRICE: My name is Jim Price; I'm president of the Chesapeake Bay Ecological Foundation. I would like to inform the board that the public was advised at a recent meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Program Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team that the team believes the ASMFC should be responsible for addressing the collapse of the Chesapeake Bay and Mid-Atlantic Coast striped bass forage base since ASMFC is responsible for managing striped bass and menhaden.

However, according to the ASMFC, the overfished status of menhaden is unknown, but overfishing is occurring. Although the ASMFC places a high priority, while continuing work on developing ecosystem reference points which would explicitly address the forage needs of menhaden predators such as striped bass, this work is anticipated to take some time because of its complexity.

It would be an understatement to say the board has been struggling with this issue for years. CBF has provided the ASMFC with a copy of our research summary and chart. We recommend that the ASMFC consider using biological reference points for the nutritional status of Chesapeake Bay striped bass as recommended by a recent published paper in the North American Journal of Fisheries Management.

That is a new piece of equipment, by the way, that has been developed. It is called a Bio-Impedance Analysis Meter. We can actually go out and check the health or the nutritional state of a fish without killing the fish or cutting it open. There has been sort of a breakthrough in the ability to do ecosystem management using this as one of the tools that would be able to determine whether there is enough forage for striped bass or not. I think it is a very important

issue for the board to consider, both Menhaden and Striped Bass Board. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: Were there any other members from the public that wanted to provide input to the board on items not on the agenda? The next item on the agenda is the review of some of the fisheries landings' data. As you may recall, we're in the process of peer reviewing the stock assessment that was completed this summer.

While that stock assessment and peer review is not available yet, some of the fisheries performance data is. Katie Drew is going to provide an overview of that. Then we're going to be just having a discussion in regards to preparing for the results of the stock assessment that will be available later this fall.

We had a motion postponed back in November of 2011 to take some action or consider some action, following the stock assessment completion. We'll be having that conversation today to manage the expectation as to what the timeline, what the pathway will be if the stock assessment suggests some management action should be taken. To begin that conversation, Katie is going to review some of the fisheries landings data, and then Mike is going to kind of bring us up to speed on the stock assessment and different pathways that we can take a look at if action is warranted this fall. Thanks, Katie.

FISHERY PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF LANDINGS AND INDICES

DR. KATIE DREW: As we just covered, I'm going to go over commercial landings, recreational landings, some of the adult indices as well as the juvenile indices, which have all been updated through 2012. This information was all included in the stock assessment. Then I'm just going to touch briefly on where we are with the assessment, and kind of what the next steps are in making sure it is available for management use.

Commercial landings was about 6.4 million pounds in 2012. This translates to about 839,000 fish, and it is 2 percent less than 2011.

You can see in the graph the affects of having a quota system in place for striped bass in that landings have been fairly constant since the late 1990s. Recreational landings were about 1.49 million fish harvested in 2012, and about 5.37 million fish released alive.

If you assume a 9 percent mortality rate due to catch and release; that translates to about 483,000 fish that were killed by catch-and-release mortality. The total removals were slightly less than 2 million fish attributed to the recreational fishery. These total removals are 30 percent less than 2011, so it continues kind of the downward trend that we've seen in the recreational landings.

You can compare this to the about 839,000 fish caught by the commercial landings, and you can see that the fishery is still dominated, as usual by recreational landings. It is about two-thirds recreational and about one-third commercial, even with the recent decline in recreational landings.

These are the adult fishery-independent indices that are used in the assessment. We also have two that I'm not showing on this graph, the New York Ocean Haul Seine Survey and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center Bottom Trawl Survey. They end before – the last couple of years of those are not directly comparable to the complete time series because of gear changes.

We ended those time series in about 2008, so I'm only showing indices that have data through 2012. You can see from most of them there has been a decline in at least a recent couple of years. New Jersey is the only one who has shown a little bit of an uptick in 2012. These are the fishery-dependent indices that we use in the assessment.

This is the MRFSS CPUE on the left, which has continued to decline, and the Virginia Pound Net Index, which shows a small uptick from a low value in 2011. I am also going to go over the juvenile abundance indices that we review every year for signs of recruitment failure. Just as a reminder, recruitment failure is considered to

have occurred when the index falls below the trigger value for three consecutive years.

The trigger value is defined as the 25th percentile of each index over a set period of time. That set period of time is different between the different indices. Recruitment failure was not triggered for any of the indices that we reviewed this year. This is the Maine Index. It is not included in the assessment but is considered as part of the trigger review. It was slightly above average in 2012. It was below the Q1 trigger point in 2010 but above it in 2011 and 2012 and so was not triggered.

This is New York and New Jersey. The 2012 value was below the trigger for both states. For New York it was also below it in 2011, although that may show the effects of Tropical Storm Irene moving through, which happened during the sampling period. However, 2010 was above the value for both states, so neither of them was triggered this year.

This is Maryland and Virginia, 2012 was again below the Q1 reference point for both states, but 2011 and 2010 were above Q1 for both, so it was not triggered. In fact 2011 was fairly strong for both indices. This is North Carolina; again North Carolina is not used in the assessment, but is considered as part of the trigger exercises, and it has been above its Q1 reference point for all three years.

I'm going to switch gear a little and talk about next steps for the assessment. As our Chair mentioned, we are somewhat in limbo at the moment with this assessment. The review was completed, or the review workshop was completed in July. However, the final report is not available right now. It is expected to be available sometime in mid-September. The biggest change is really the new F reference points that were proposed in the assessment to be consistent with the current SSB reference points.

That is probably the biggest change for management consideration. Overall, the peer review seemed to find it acceptable for management use. However, until we get the

final written report, we won't know all the details about what they considered acceptable, what they considered dubious or unacceptable, or what they had issues with that the board might want to consider going forward.

In addition, the model was run with preliminary 2012 data. We wanted to have something in place for 2012; but when we were completing the assessment, we did not have time to wait for the final data. The 2012 values of F and SSB that are coming out of the model right now are based on preliminary data.

The finalized data are available now at the moment, and we plan to update the model with those data prior to the October board meeting. When the October meeting comes around, we will have the complete stock assessment report, the complete peer review report, and an update with finalized 2012 data. But until then, it is not really ready for management use or management consideration. That is all I have, and I'll take questions.

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: Are there any questions or comments for Katie?

MR. LOREN W. LUSTIG: Yes, thank you for that excellent report. You mentioned I believe in your second or third slide that there was a 30 percent reduction in recreational landings. I believe the years being compared were 2011 and 2012. Could you give us some broad strokes of reasons why we have seen such a significant change? Thank you.

DR. DREW: I think probably the biggest effect; if you look at the graph, what you can see is that the blue bars represent the harvest, so that is what people actually land, and the red bars are what is on top of that that we assume died due to being released. It is really the releases that have dropped off.

In fact, it is even bigger when you actually look at the total number of releases and not just the percentage that we assume die. Probably this is an effect of the weak recruitment coming through; that those ones that are released are usually undersized, smaller fish; so with the

weaker recruitment that has been coming through the population, you've got less fish that are available to be caught that are undersized.

People are still catching the retainable ones, and those landings have not dropped off nearly as much. It is the smaller ones that people are releasing that just are not recruiting into the fishery as well. I think that is probably the big driver in terms of why these landings have dropped off.

MR. PATRICK H. AUGUSTINE: Thanks for the report, Dr. Katie. Have we used 9 percent as assumed mortality rate for the last three or four years or has that been constant for a longer period of time?

DR. DREW: We updated it for this assessment. The last time we were using 8 percent is based on the paper by Diodati and Richards; and the value of 8 percent is not what is actually in the paper. The final paper value was 9 percent, which is why we changed it this year. I think we were working off of some preliminary data for earlier years, which is why we used the 8 percent. But we did do a pretty thorough literature review on release rates, and it was consistent with a 9 percent mortality rate.

MR. AUGUSTINE: Okay, and to follow up, Mr. Chairman. Following up on Loren's comment about the recreational reduction; do you think or do we have any way of knowing whether or not the change to circle hooks has had any negative or positive impacts, or is it too early to tell what that switchover – where we've gone from J hooks primarily to circle hooks?

DR. DREW: I think there is not really a way to tell, because the problem is there are so many confounding factors in terms of releases and in terms of what causes release mortality. The fact is we have not really been able to track what proportion of the population is actually using circle hooks. I think we know there has been a general shift; but in terms of overall numbers of what is being released, that is not something we track or have an idea of.

MR. AUGUSTINE: The final technical one would be this would be based more on an ongoing study. Have we looked at the possible change in temperature in those areas where, for instance, north to south, where we've had a heat wave in New York for a period of time, and I think most up and down the coast, whether we'll see a related increase in release mortality.

I know that once the temperature gets over 68 or 70 degrees, boy, it is sure hell to keep these fish alive if you have had them on a line for a while. I'm wondering if that might be a study that someone might want to look at in the future. I think it would be of value.

DR. DREW: That was certainly one of the things we tried to look at with the release mortality this year; but the data just were not – most of the studies have focused on other factors, and so temperature was really hard to tease out from that, especially in saltwater. Also considering that the releases occur on a wave basis, which is basically a two-month time period, you would have to pick a temperature for that two-month time period. We had a time settling that, but it is something that the TC would like to see addressed further.

MR. WILLIAM A. ADLER: Could you go back to the slide on the commercial catches? What you are saying here is there are 839 fish landed, 6.4 million pounds; that was it? Okay thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I just wanted to ask on that last slide with the red bars. Before the completely red bars, they are just released alive fish. One of the great concerns in 2011 was the large drop in the B2s or the fish that were released alive. That was talked about quite a bit heading into that meeting in Boston. It appears that maybe that has continued; that the number of fish released alive is still down overall except for perhaps 2011 that looks like.

I can't read the axis from here; but since that was such a huge point that was made several times, is that trend continuing that the B2s are just a smaller component that they were previously. A little follow up there is what do

the proportionate at age, what does that show in terms of abundance for, say, the four to eight year old; and also separately the eight plus, because the eight plus has been used as sort of a diagnostic for the health of the stock as well.

DR. DREW: Yes, the B2s have continued to decline, and that is where a majority of that big 30 percent drop is coming from. I am afraid I don't have the catch-at-age data right now available to answer the question in terms of how that has changed over time, but I think it is consistent with what we're seeing here, which is proportionally fewer, smaller, younger fish in the catch.

DR. MICHELLE DUVAL: Just one point of information for the board; North Carolina is required to update our assessment of the Albemarle-Roanoke stock as well, and that is in a very similar timeframe as the coast-wide assessment. I expect that at the annual meeting I will be able to give you a little bit more information on that. It is currently being reviewed.

Then, Katie, I was wondering – and this is an ignorant non-modeler question I have for you, but just in terms of shifts in distribution, this is kind of a larger-scale question that is touching many other species besides striped bass. I'm assuming that this model doesn't have a spatial component to account for something like that.

Are there models out there or have you all discussed trying to take into account shifts in distribution? I'll just say for North Carolina we had zero fish landed commercially or recreationally this year, zero. I'm just wondering if you have any insight on that. Thanks.

DR. DREW: Certainly, as you said, you are correct this model does not have a spatial component. It is something we tried to look into. It is something we're definitely interested in with striped bass; not only because of possible temperature or whatever induced shifts, but also because this is almost a three stock complex really that we're managing as a single spatial stock.

Right now the data that we have, even with our expensive tagging data, are not quite good enough to help us set up a model with migration and immigration components. I think it is something that we want to consider going further with in the future, but right now we can't handle those kinds of shifts.

MR. THOMAS FOTE: We make a lot of assumptions, and you make assumptions based on the fishery being consistent for the last 20 years. This fishery has completely changed in the last 20 years. If you look at New Jersey, 20 years ago most of the striped bass fishermen were catch-and-release fishermen.

They really were not keeping – they would take one home a week, maybe a few like that, but they were mostly doing catch and release. That is when our numbers were really high. When you started cutting down on summer flounder and a few other species where these people could go targeting in May and June and everything like that, they all of a sudden switched to be striped bass fishermen, but they were meat fishermen.

Also, the gas prices went up. A guy or a girl, when they get their fish that they're going to take home, they go in, they don't sit there. A matter of fact, a lot of the charterboat captains said as soon as you put your two-fish limit in New Jersey, we're heading to the dock. That is really what happens here.

That has changed the whole philosophy of catch and release that was bringing those big numbers that we had in the nineties and even the early two thousands. The other problem is we've switched this fishery to a different fishery. Back then we were using poppers, little buck tails, and basically targeting small fish. When you use a three-pound and four-pound bunker as big as you can get, you are looking for big fish and that is what people are fishing for.

They are targeting the big fish. They're not looking for the small fish. That is going to cloud your figures. Trying to compare what was going on 20 years ago and what is going on now is a whole different fishery. We need to

basically put that into the mix. I'm not saying it is totally wrong, but there are a lot of changes in what the recreational sector has done, gas prices, the way the people fish, and who is fishing.

Those are the big three; I see that in Jersey. When I used to go out in 2002, maybe one guy on the boat would keep one fish. Now you go and they keep eight fish, but they go back to the dock, and that is what they're doing. There is not the continuously catch and release there was a long time ago, and also gas prices.

Gas prices; people are not spending a lot of money to go out and fish if they can't take something home to eat nowadays. It is a different type of fishery. We need to take that into consideration. Now I don't know if anybody is doing any surveys on that. I would basically look at Southwick and see if they put any information together like that, because they do a lot of studies on recreational fishing and their trends.

But we really needed to look at the trends. We make assumptions, and we make assumptions when we look at models. I know that always gets us in trouble. We're looking at them and things have changed in those models with the way the data is going now is because of what people are doing, then we have to take that into consideration and pay attention to it.

MR. PAUL J. DIODATI: I guess it wasn't clear to me. Is this all we're going to hear today relative to the updated stock assessment? Okay, so we're going to wait for the peer review results; but what you did present – well, you talked a little bit about the new reference points relative to fishing mortality, and I guess you are waiting to hear about that. Could you talk about what direction it might go; where would that benchmark go? Not what the value is but directionally what are you thinking?

DR. DREW: The big change that we made is – well, as you know, the current SSB reference point is sort of a historical or an empirical-based reference point where we used the estimate of the 1995 SSB as our threshold. For a number of reasons, we decided that we were satisfied with

the stock in that condition, so the 1995 SSB is our biomass threshold.

Previously in management, the F reference point that we chose to complement that was a model-based MSY reference point, so we used a standard MSY modeling approach to come up with an F value of about 0.3 that was supposed to match up with the historical SSB estimate that we used for our SSB threshold.

The problem we were finding is that the two of them didn't really have a theoretical background to link them. What we've done for this assessment is we've kept the SSB threshold the same, and instead we've done projections using empirical recruitment and what we know about the biology of the stock to project the stock forward and figure out what F value gives you that SSB value that we want, and that is our new F threshold.

Then we have a similar approach for the target, which the target is 125 percent of the 1995 SSB. We chose an F value in the same way, that if you project the stock forward with our empirical estimates of recruitment, the F that gives you that SSB target is our F target. What this does is it results in a lower F value than the current value we have on the record as our management threshold and target.

MR. DIODATI: I have a few more follow-ups. That sounds very logical to have gone that approach, to follow that. It seems that assuming that the peer review agrees with this approach; that the new F target and threshold is going to be lower than what we've been working with. From what I saw, what you already presented for a majority of the adult indices that you demonstrated are in decline. You also characterized what the group believes is recruitment failure that seems to be also going on in this fishery. I thought that is what I heard. I thought I heard you say recruitment failure.

DR. DREW: I wouldn't say failure. I would say I think the recruitment that we've seen in recent years, not counting 2011 – 2011 appears to have been a very strong year; but in the recent couple of years it has been lower than the very

strong recruitment that we saw that really helped the stock recover through the late nineties and early two thousands.

That was a very strong recruitment. What we're seeing now is lower values of recruitment. I wouldn't say it is a failure. It is definitely not near the values that we saw in the eighties when the stock was collapsed and crushed, but it is definitely lower than the peak recruitment that we saw that really helped the stock build up.

MR. DIODATI: But substantially lower for the past eight out of nine years?

DR. DREW: Lower, yes. I couldn't tell you the exact percentage so I don't want to oversell the situations, but definitely lower, noticeably lower than the strongest year classes we've seen.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: I just wanted to make sure that I heard Dr. Duval correctly when she was characterizing her recent fishery; and may I follow up with her with a question? Michelle, you said that there were no commercial or recreational landings thus far this year; did I hear you right?

DR. DUVAL: That is correct, Roy. Our commercial season starts December 1 of every year. We're not on a calendar year, so our 2013 fishing year actually starts December 1, 2012, and then runs through the spring. We had zero commercial landings. We've had for the recreational season, that is a calendar year, so for 2013 we had no recreational landings at all, and this is a winter fishery for us.

I'm talking about the ocean fishery. Of course, we have our internal water fisheries on the Albemarle/Roanoke, and we certainly had landings there, but I was specifically referring to the ocean fishery. We did have some releases that came in on the ocean fishery on the recreational side. I want to say it was something like 1,500 fish that were released, but dismally low.

MR. MILLER: Have you seen any trends in the Albemarle fishery, while we're on the topic?

DR. DUVAL: Certainly, both commercial and recreational landings have been lower the past several years; and again we're waiting for the stock assessment to be reviewed so we can determine what if any management action is required. Certainly, the juvenile abundance index in 2011, I think it was our second highest on record, which it was a great year for a lot of states up and down the coast in terms of the JAI.

MR. MILLER: Thank you. I just wonder, having heard that, how much of a factor climate change has been in the apparent decline in those North Carolina landings. Are those fish not going as far south, in other words, but I guess that is yet to be determined.

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: To keep us moving along, I'm going to let Mike move into his presentation, which is kind of a discussion of the next steps pending the peer review, to let the board know what different pathways are available if action is needed following the results.

DISCUSSION OF NEXT STEPS FOR MANAGEMENT PENDING PEER REVIEW RESULTS

MR. MICHAEL WAINE: Just to catch everybody up on how we got to this point as we anticipate the results of the peer review report; back in March of 2011 the board instructed the Plan Development Team to draft an addendum. That addendum contained management options that are aimed to reduce striped bass fishing mortality up to 40 percent.

It included measures that further protect the spawning stock when concentrated and vulnerable. Additionally, some of the background material that went into that document was recent performance of the fishery, status of the stock, the juvenile recruitment; basically all the things that Dr. Drew just took you through based on this most recent assessment; except at that time that was based on the 2009 stock assessment update results.

There was also some information on mycobacteriosis in habitat areas of importance.

The PDT drafted that for the August 2011 meeting. The document explored reductions in an F ranging from 0 to 56 percent using projections of abundance, spawning stock biomass and landings from 2011 through 2017 under lower average recruitment levels.

As a reminder, those projections were based on the results from the 2009 stock assessment update. Included in that document were the proposed commercial management options to achieve those projection scenarios. Those were changes to minimum size limits, reduction to the commercial quota, season closures and some additional spawning stock protection.

The protection for the spawning stock was focused on the jurisdictions of the Hudson River, the Delaware Bay, the Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle Sound/Roanoke River. Also included in the document were similar proposed recreational management options; changes to size limit, bag limit, season closures, modifications to the Chesapeake Bay spring trophy fishery, and spawning stock protection for that fishery as well.

The PDT drafted all those management options into a document and brought it back to the board in August of 2011. At that time we were also going through a 2011 stock assessment update. The board postponed action on that addendum until we got the updated results from that 2011 stock assessment update.

They tasked the PDT to incorporate the new results into the projections, rerun everything, and bring it back to the board for the annual meeting in 2011. At that point, they also reviewed the stock assessment update results from the 2011 assessment and decided to postpone further action on that draft addendum until the results from the benchmark peer-reviewed assessment became available. That is where we stand right now.

As a result, that addendum never actually ended up going out for public comment. I just wanted to paint that picture so we could put ourselves into a position as we anticipate that peer review report for the board to react to those results. As

Dr. Drew mentioned, that is available in mid-September.

I've laid out two timelines here for discussion purposes in terms of the board taking action. The first would be initiating a draft addendum at this meeting. Given that timeline, the PDT would update everything based on the anticipated results of this peer-reviewed assessment. We could bring a draft back for public comment in October of 2013. That would be at our annual meeting.

Then we would conduct public hearings through the winter and bring any document that was proposed today back to the board for final action at the February meeting in 2014. The second potential timeline would be to not take action today, but take action at our annual meeting in October.

At that point, the PDT would be instructed to draft the document for the February meeting. The board would approve it for public comment at that point. We would conduct hearings in the spring of 2014 and then take final action at the May meeting. Those are the two potential timelines moving forward.

Before I wrap up, I'll just mention to keep in mind what the implementation schedule would look like based on this hypothetical document that we've discussed timelines for. For example, Dr. Duval noted that North Carolina has a winter fishery that begins in late 2013. It is just something to keep in mind as the board discusses the next steps and is responsive to the benchmark peer review.

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: Thanks, Mike. I think it is important for the board to also, as you look at a February or a May action date by the board, states will need a time to implement any actions that would have been approved, depending on regulatory and legislative processes. We're looking for some input from the board as we prepare for the pending peer review.

MR. DIODATI: I guess one change I would make – well, I would probably want to see

modifications to the draft addendum that was prepared almost two years ago, if not two years ago, and to incorporate any new reference point changes or suggestions that might develop from the peer review. That would be one thing.

I would consider modifying that mortality rate reduction from 40 to perhaps something more akin to what the assessment suggests. It might be 30. Based on what I've heard just today, I would probably exempt North Carolina fisheries from any possible action, so that would be the Albemarle/Roanoke fisheries I suppose, from this. They don't seem to be contributing in any way to any possible declines.

Those kinds of things I would at least like to have a discussion at some point. I don't know if it is for today or the next meeting. I can see where we might want to discuss modifying and putting a finer point on the addendum. Personally I think the addendum does need to go through continued development, go through the public process. I felt that way two years ago; I feel even stronger today. I've heard nothing today or since the start of developing of the addendum that supports not taking an action.

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: I recognize we're on a tight timeline today. I think what I would like to do is get the board input as to whether or not the board feels like we should be directing staff to initiate an addendum at this meeting – if so, we're going to have to try to provide that guidance to the staff – or if the board wants to wait until results become available in October. We can focus the discussion on that point and then see where we need to go. People that want to speak, just raise your hand for a minute, I'll get you down. I've got Pat next.

MR. AUGUSTINE: I think the report and update that we had from Mike was excellent and very timely. I agree with what Paul's comments were, and I think I would like to be a little stronger, my words. I would like to have the PDT take a hard look at those recommendations that you made two years ago.

You have the inside information as to what the review was from SAW/SARC 57. I agree with

you, Mr. Chairman; I think if we take that updated information and have the PDT or technical committee and staff put together the skeleton for what this new amendment should look like, I think it would give us a leg up on where we're going to have to go.

I think anybody who doesn't realize we're going to have to take some corrective action either has their head in the sand or they're not paying attention. I don't want to embarrass anybody, but the fact of the matter is here is another case where we've paid so much attention to striped bass over the last 15 years, we haven't allowed it to crash, we aren't about ready to let it crash.

I think if we got a leg up on the public's input to us saying, hey, you guys are going to let this thing crash. In other words, let's get out in the forefront. I agree with you, let's start an amendment today with the skeleton information that we have and update it and go from there. I would be willing to make that motion later in the meeting, Mr. Chairman.

MR. JAMES J. GILMORE: I agree both with what Paul and what Pat said. I think we're definitely going towards some management. But as a practical argument here, I think if we started an addendum now we'd try to do a full one, and this really goes to Katie and Mike.

It is like I think you are going to have a lot more options, because right now we don't know. We've got 40 percent. Then maybe it is going to go down to 30 percent, but kind of shooting in the dark you are going to have like six, eight options, whatever, for each one of the different pieces of this, and the document is just going to get a lot bigger.

I like Pat's idea; if we could get something of a basic framework or a skeleton of this so we've got a document to build on when we come back; but as much as I'd like to save time. I'm not sure how unwieldy an addendum is going to be if we develop it now; and then we come back in October and we've got a lot of stuff in there that we really don't even need to consider. You tell me; do you think you guys could frame this thing in at least somewhat simplistic and reduce

it down to maybe your best guesses at what might happen? I think that is the only way we're going to save any time. Thanks.

MR. WAINE: Yes, I think there are some things we can do between now and when we meet at the annual meeting, specifically trying to update a lot of the background information, sort of set the stage for the addendum, pull in some of the information from the peer review report once we get that back.

Some of the management measures and what exactly those mean in terms of moving forward, and how those proposed management measures would be implemented; it would be helpful to have more direction from the board before we took those projections and tried to turn them into here are some proposed management measures to get us the fishing mortality reductions that you guys are interested in.

MR. FOTE: It seems like this is a lot of déjà vu. I've gone through this process I guess in the last 20 years. We've gone to striped bass and basically prepared an addendum about four or five times; and then basically because of what the stock assessment says, we didn't do it and put a lot of time and a lot of effort into going on.

I don't have my head buried in the sand; I'm looking at the facts. This stock is not crashing. The stock is not as robust, but understand when we had this stock when it opened up in '92, we had a moratorium for almost 10 years. Even when we opened it up, we opened it up with a limited commercial fishery and a limited recreational.

It was mostly catch and release, and that is why a lot of those big fish go to be bigger and maybe reproducing. We are probably more stable. I remember when we did bluefish. There was a real option to basically put in dramatic measures on bluefish and cut it all the way back down. Then we looked at the 50-year average on bluefish and found out we were above the 50-year average.

What I'm going to be looking at is the long-term average of where we are with striped bass under

all the factors that are going on and not doing another knee-jerk reaction as we've done four times. New Jersey has changed its regulation because of knee-jerk reactions twice, and I don't want to do it again.

MR. O'REILLY: I do support the addendum; I just don't support trying to do something right now. The reason I say that is I was part of the PDT in 2011. It was a very awkward situation. The PDT did not really know how to address the reductions in F because of various size limit regimes and other factors.

The PDT at that time looked more at hoping to come to the board with maybe some way of looking at maximum spawning potential. I know it was a very awkward situation, and I think that the technical committee by and large at that time didn't really support any kind of change, any kind of reduction either.

I would recommend that if there is going to be an addendum that ASMFC staff along with the technical committee be able to tell the management board what would be practical to move forward with in an addendum. I think an addendum can be something that can be positive. It doesn't have to be sweeping, but certainly there is some conservation measures that might be good to look at given that things have changed over time. We're focusing a lot on recruitment.

I know in Virginia for 2013, at least through the preliminary stages, we're looking at average to above average recruitment for the year. That is good compared to 2012, which was the lowest of all time in Virginia. Then you go to 2011; it was the highest. Recruitment is a pretty good arbiter of how things might be, and we know there has been bad recruitment. I think overlying this, the poor to average recruitment in Chesapeake Bay over the six years or so do play a role in maybe the need for some conservation measures in an addendum.

MR. JOHN CLARK: I would also like to wait to initiate the draft addendum until the stock assessment has been reviewed and released, so we can have a better chance to study that. To

follow up on what Tom was saying, I feel the same thing that we're seeing in Delaware. The stock has definitely come down but does not seem to be in any imminent danger of crashing.

Having the stock at a smaller but still large size has seemed to have had some positive impacts on some of our other fisheries; in particular weakfish are coming back some in Delaware Bay where they've been pretty much extirpated from the Bay for several years now. I'm not going to blame that all on striped bass, but all I'm saying is that now the striped bass stock has come down to a more manageable level, we are seeing weakfish again.

MR. TERRY STOCKWELL: I am actually happy to report to the board that Maine anglers are seeing the best striper fishing than they have had in the last four or five years; all year classes, slot fish, a lot of small ones. That being said, I am going to follow John and support initiation of a draft addendum at the October meeting, following the receipt of the peer-reviewed benchmark report. I do agree with Paul and Pat and Jim that the PDT should be tasked to take a look at the 2011 addendum, update it, and be prepared to bring back to us a template that we can move forward with in some expeditious manner.

MR. G. RITCHIE WHITE: I think the PDT could look at beyond Paul's suggestion a 30 percent; what it would take to get to the target, both spawning stock biomass and mortality rates, because I am kind of sensing that we're going to fall between a threshold and a target; because if we're below the threshold, we've got to take action. It seems logical that is where this is going to come out. That is what I would like to see is how do we get back to the target?

MR. RUSSELL DIZE: I would like to get my head out of the sand. It is not down there where Pat had said. In Maryland we have got so cotton-picking many striped bass that we're being smothered out in the commercial fishery. We've got two year olds that are like minnows in the marinas and around the boats.

We've got so many two years olds that our pound netters can't pound net for them. They are trying to catch croakers and spot and menhaden. They can't do it, because we've got so many two year olds that they fill the pound nets. They've got to cull all these. All this has to go on a culling board. They are a nuisance for us.

I would like to ship some up north and down to North Carolina. Listen, they are eating us out of the bay. I think they are responsible for part of our decline in the crab industry. I also think they are responsible for eating a lot of the other fish up in the bay. But the state opened up the hook- and-line fishery; in two days the quota was caught. That means we have got three and four year olds in there too, or maybe five year olds.

But we've got so many two year olds that it is impossible to count them. If you go home and tell our commercial and our charter fishermen that you are going to reduce it, I think they would revolt, because they can't even fish commercially for striped bass in the Chesapeake Bay. It doesn't even sound reasonable from Maryland that you would cut the production or the catch by 30 percent, because we would like to bring you down there and take some of the fish out of the bay. Two years olds are putting us under.

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: That was everybody on the list that asked to speak at this time. Just back to the agenda topic is whether or not the board wants to take any action today. We don't have to. We can be very specific and direct staff to begin drafting addendum. We could have staff just begin developing a skeleton that we can fill in come October, and that should help expedite the process a little bit. Pat.

MR. AUGUSTINE: I think listening to the comments around the table there were some excellent comments and a combination thereof. It just seems to me that with the direction that the board has suggested so far, it looks as though an update of the existing PDT, good interaction with the technical committee, determine the direction we should be going, because you are

going to have to give the information back to the board to give us a chance to make some suggestions.

Along with what Mr. Gilmore said, too many options are going to kill us. Keep the options sweet and short and tight. It is no rush, because as I had said and Tom responded, I don't believe he has his head in the sand or other people around the table who really have an interest in striped bass have their head in the sand.

I just want to make sure if we have some time between now and October to put this together, so we're ahead of the curve. We have control of it and we don't let emotions arise up in the public out there and they drive the process. This is a case where you, Mr. Chairman, can direct this activity to make sure we get it on track in a reasonable time.

I do think if we have enough information background that we bring forward, the assessment that comes back from the peer review, I think our technical committee has a pretty good idea the direction we have to go, but we don't know that yet. I think based on their best ability to sort out where we should go; let them bring us a – call it a white paper or call us a skeleton addendum for our next meeting.

Now if you need it in the form of a formal motion, I will make that, But I'm not sure we need that, because I think all it will take at that point in time is just to say I move that we create addendum, whatever, and be done with it, but in the form of a white paper or in the form of an update of the PDT report to the board; I think that will help us. Unless some new ideas come forward as a result of the peer review, I think we've got a handle on the direction we need to be going.

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: Just based upon the feedback that has been discussed today, it seems like the majority of people that spoke thought that we should wait until we get more results, but it would be beneficial for staff to begin working with the TC to update the Public Information Document so we have something to work with in October if we need to act. I would

ask that unless somebody believes we should be taking a different route at this time, we will proceed in that manner.

Okay, we'll go ahead and we'll work with Mike and the TC and the advisory panel as needed to put that information together for the October meeting. Our last item under other business; Fish and Wildlife Service wanted to provide an update on the tagging cruise. Bill, did you want to do that or Wilson?

OTHER BUSINESS

DR. WILSON LANEY: Just a quick update; recall that in 2013 we had a Coastal Recreational Fishing License Grant from North Carolina to me and Dr. Roger Rulifson in the amount of \$238,000 that allowed us to conduct both the traditional winter 2013. We had the full amount from the Coastal Recreational Fishing License Program that allowed us to conduct the traditional winter trawling for striped bass as well as to conduct charter hook-and-line trips out of Rudy Inlet, Virginia for tagging stripers. We were able to do that.

We had applied originally for a three-year grant that would cover 2014 and 2015 as well. The CRFL program challenged us to find a 50 percent match for the 2014 and 2015, and they gave us an extended period of time to locate a match, and we were unable to meet that challenge. As it stands right now we do have a sufficient match.

We're going to use part of our Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act allocation from the commission to match the charterboat component of the tagging program, which is \$8,000 for \$16,000 total. We don't have the funding that we need to conduct the traditional winter trawl program on a research vessel.

We do have two research vessels that have indicated that they are available and willing to do the work, but we would have to find the funding. If we went with the low bid, that total amount that we would need for that component

of it is somewhere in the neighborhood of about \$220,000, I think.

We were hoping to be able to tag using the trawl-caught fish as well as the hook-and-line-caught fish for three years in a row, so that we would be able to have a rigorous study design, and then compare survivability between the two different types of tagging operations. That is my report Mr. Chairman. I will add that Dr. Rulifson and I still have the potential I suppose for finding that total amount of funding through some other source, and we are still looking for potential sources of funding. That is my report.

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: Does the board have any questions for Wilson? Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: Wilson, how far out did you have to go this year to find stripers to tag?

DR. LANEY: I presume you want me to address that distribution question, and the answer is that this year we had to go further offshore than we've ever had to go before. We were mostly operating in the vicinity of the Chesapeake Bay Light Tower, for those of you who know where that is, in the neighborhood of 12 to 20 miles offshore, the mouth of Chesapeake Bay.

We did not catch a single striped bass in North Carolina waters this year using the trawler. All of our hook-and-line operations were off the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, because we could not find any reports of any striped bass in North Carolina waters. That continues a trend that we have observed since about 2007, I think, that the fish seem to be further north and further offshore during the winter months. Remember, we're operating in a very narrow spatiotemporal window out there, so we're only out there usually for a couple of weeks.

DR. LOUIS B. DANIEL: No, I'm going to ask you all for money. I've given the money. I did want to let you know that we are committed to this. This is an important coast-wide tagging study. All the states around the table benefit from this study. I hate losing this time series. We tried to do more, but we did the first year

and half the second year and committed to half the third year. Two hundred grand is not a lot of money when it is divvied up amongst 15, 16 states.

I would suggest – we will step back and do everything we can to make that money available as the 50 percent match, so don't think that time has run out and we can't still make something happen. I hope we can, but I've sort of foot my foot down on the 50 percent match, so I'm not coming up with anymore money.

I think we've been pretty generous in what we have put together. Think about that and soul search a little bit, because Roger and Wilson could give you a very detailed account of how important that cruise is not just for stripers but for sturgeon and for many other species that we all rely on at ASMFC for age and growth and that type of information. Just keep it in mind.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIRMAN O'CONNELL: Any other comments before we wrap the meeting up? All right, that is all the agenda items, meeting adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 o'clock p.m., August 6, 2013.)