



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmfc.org

**Tautog
Advisory Panel Conference Call
June 30, 2017
10:30 a.m – 12:30 p.m.**

Advisory Panel Members: Greg Jackson (DE), Denise Wagner (NJ), John Mihale (NY), Wes Blow (MD), Jack Conway (CT)

ASMFC: Ashton Harp

Public: Angel Willey

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Tautog Advisory Panel (AP) met via conference call on June 30, 2017 to discuss the management alternatives in Draft Amendment 1. The following summarizes the comments made by AP members on the call. Due to low attendance the comments made are not representative of the entire Advisory Panel, rather they are individual comments (5 out of 12 AP members were on the call). There was discussion about re-populating the Tautog Advisory Panel.

In general, two members of the AP preferred the Board not move forward with regional management or any new measures. As a result, they are in favor of status quo for most options. The other three members are in favor of regional management and selected respective regional options.

SECTION 2: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals

One participant would like the status quo goals to remain because the revised goal statement (Option B) indicates regional management would be implemented.

One participant is in favor of *Option B. Revised Goal Statement*.

Objectives

One participant is in favor of any new/revised objective that do not mention regional management. There is a preference to maintain the coastwide F target = 0.15, which was the original F target in the FMP. The participant is in favor of NOAA Fisheries imposing regulations in the EEZ. The new objective to diminish the illegal fishery should coincide with fines that are high enough to deter illegal activity. If regional management is imposed then it should only be for the recreational fishery.

Two other participants agreed the fines for illegal fishing need to be increased. Currently the fines are a cost of doing business, they are not a deterrent.

One participant questioned the objective to increase habitat for tautog. In New Jersey, commercial fishermen cannot fish on artificial reefs therefore they didn't want to increase the number of artificial reefs. Overall they didn't want an objective that took away ground from historically fished areas.

Biological Reference Points

Two participants are in favor of *Option A. Status Quo*. If there is a change to the way the fishery is managed then they want a public hearing.

F Mortality Target

Two participants are not in favor of regional reference points; they prefer *Option A. Status Quo*. There is a preference to maintain the coastwide F target = 0.15, which was the original F target in the FMP. They are also in favor of *Sub-Option B3*.

Three participants are in favor of *Option B. Regional Reference Points*. One participant was in favor of Sub-Option B2 and two are in favor of Sub-Option B3.

Probability of Achieving F Target

Two participants are not in favor of defining a probability of achieving F target; they prefer *Option A. Status Quo*. There was a general discussion about the data used in stock assessments. They believe it keeps coming up with overfishing/overfished stock status because the surveys are not designed properly.

Two participants are in favor of *Option B. At Least a 50% Probability*

F Reduction Schedule

All are in favor of *Option C. Five Years* because they want to a longer period of time in between stock assessments. In turn, this will give new measures a proper chance to take effect.

Stock Rebuilding Schedule

Two are in favor of *Option A. Status Quo*.

One participant is in favor of *Option B* and one in favor of *Option C*.

SECTION 4: MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Regional Management

Two participants are not in favor of regional management, they prefer *Option A. Status Quo*. The New Jersey AP member said the NY and NJ fisheries are too different to be managed with regional measures and each state will not compromise. The New York AP member does not think the LIS boundaries can be enforced.

Three participants are in favor of *Option B. Regional Management*. A Connecticut AP member said opening day for tautog in the Long Island Sound is “mindboggling” because it is such a popular fish and there are so many people on the water.

Long Island Sound Boundaries

The NY and NJ AP members are not in favor of regional management and therefore not in favor of either boundary options.

The CT AP member would accept either option.

LIS Recreational Measures

The NY AP member is not in favor of any recreational options that would change the current measures. A fish possession limit would be devastating to the fishery down the line because people will not spend money to catch one tautog; a 4 fish possession limit is the lowest the fishery can go. The legitimate recreational fishery is not damaging the resource during the very small season. The measures currently in place will work over time. The only area for improvement is in enforcement and reducing poachers.

The CT AP member understands where NY is coming from, but has seen huge increases in effort. As a tautog fishermen for 55 years in the Long Island Sound he has seen the fishery take off in the last decade. One of the big problems is the CT tournaments that happen almost every weekend in the fall. In addition, there are literally thousands of people in the new jig fishery that fish every week. .

LIS Commercial Measures

The NY AP member is not in favor of any commercial options that would change the current measures. Although he does not think the measures in *Option A. State specific reductions* would have much of an effect on rod and reel fishermen (with the exception of the May closure), there may be an impact on pot fishermen.

LIS Slot Limit

The NY AP member said trophy fishing is a big part of the fishery, therefore a slot limit will not work. It would kill the fishery in the LIS.

The CT AP member said a slot limit has been discussed at the CT Marine Advisory Council, however the specific size limits have not been discussed. The CT fishermen may be in favor of a slot limit, however he is unsure about this specific option.

NJ-NYB Recreational

The NJ AP member had no comment. The preference was to defer to public hearing comments. Although it was noted that it is not fair for another state to compromise or become more restrictive just to achieve regional management measures.

NJ-NYB Commercial

The NJ AP member prefers Option B1 because it there is not quota attached to it.

The NY AP member said the commercial fishery (rod and reel) could live with giving up 6 days in April (Option B1), although he doesn't think it is necessary because he sees a lot of ripe females each spring. When looking at the bag limits it was noted that the 25 fish bag limit is a NY state law. If selected this option could hurt commercial pot fishermen.

NJ-NYB Slot

The NJ AP member is not interested in a slot limit because it is not conducive to the trap fishery, especially the dead market fishery. The traps are hauled up at rapid speed which generally results in mortality. If the fish was not within the slot then it would be discarded, but it would be a waste because the fish would likely die.

The NY AP member said larger fish are more vulnerable to mortality when being brought onboard, therefore it doesn't make sense to have to throw them back. Normally if the fish dies then it still goes to market.

DelMarVa Recreational

The DE AP member would like *Option A. Status Quo*; does not want the same measures as other states.

The VA AP member would like *Option D. Regional Management*.

DelMarVa Commercial

The DE AP member doesn't like either option; wants to see a commercial quota. Fishing for 4-5 fish is not commercial fishing. He wants 50-100 lbs a year.

Commercial Quota

The NY AP member is in favor of *Option A. No Commercial Quota Procedures*. He said there are many latent license and a food fish license in NY allows one to fish for tautog and most other species. There are close to 1,000 licenses, of which 34% shows no landing in recent years. If the

quotas was determined by licenses or historical participation then it will be a very difficult process.

The NJ AP member wants the commercial fishery to stay as is. There are a lot of fishermen in the area that have not been targeting tautog liked they used to because the illegal fishery has ruined the market prices. That is the reason why the fishermen are no coming close to the NJ quota.

The DE AP member prefers *Option B*. He also noted that DE's de minimis commercial status and the tautog bycatch in DE that is not getting reported will mean a low quota for DE.

Commercial Harvest Tagging Program

Three participants are in favor of *Option B. Commercial Harvest Tagging Program*.

The NJ and NY AP members are in favor of *Option A. No tagging program*. They believe the fines and enforcement should be increased prior to a initiating a commercial harvest tagging program. If increasing the fines is not a feasible avenue then the NJ AP member believes there may be value in a tagging program, however the tag should be applied near the tail, not the gill. The NJ AP member wants to enter the live market fishery but needs the black market fishery to be shut down first.

There was a discussion about the Philadelphia market. It was noted that the fish markets house the illegal fish in the basement and only sell them to regular customers, therefore law enforcement would still have to find a way to reprimand establishments that hide illegal fish.

There is concern the tags could increase mortality, which would affect fishermen in the live market. If a fish dies after being sold then the harvester is likely to be at fault. In addition, restaurants will start to demand fish without tags that stay alive.

Tag Application

Three participants are in favor of *Option A. Harvester Tagging*.