

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee: 2022 Stock Assessment Update Planning

Call Summary

Wednesday, November 10th, 2021, 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

TC Attendance: Josh Newhard (USFWS, Chair), Caitlin Craig (NYSDEC, Vice Chair), Alexei Sharov (MD DNR), Amy Schueller (NOAA-Beaufort), Chris Swanson (FL FWC), Edward Leonard (GA DNR), Holly White (NC DMF), Jason McNamee (RI DEM), Jeff Brust (NJ DEP), Joey Ballenger (SC DNR), Kurt Gottschall (CT DEEP), Matt Cieri (ME DMR), Shanna Madsen (VMRC)

ASMFC Staff: Kristen Anstead, Sarah Murray, Katie Drew, Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Heather Powers (ACCSP)

Public: Jaclyn Higgins, Peter Himchak, Jeff Kaelin, Will Poston

The Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee (TC) met via webinar to discuss the timeline and data needs for the 2022 Stock Assessment Update to the 2020 single-species benchmark. The Ecological Reference Point (ERP) assessment will not be updated, but the ERPs from the 2020 reports will be used to determine stock status. The major decisions and due dates are highlighted below, followed by sections that provides more detail on what the TC discussed. Additionally, the stock assessment timeline is included at the end of the call summary along with a list of the fishery-independent survey data that will be requested in the next few weeks.

- The new ASMFC stock assessment update report format will be used.
- ASMFC Staff will clarify SAS membership, specifically for NC and SC.
- ASMFC and Beaufort will evaluate which bait age samples have been sent to Beaufort already and which need to be sent as soon as possible.
- Reduction and bait landings through 2021 will be available by April 15th, 2022. ACCSP will work with the TC and data contacts to validate the state/jurisdiction bait landings.
- Data templates for fishery-independent survey data will be circulated to TC members by late November/early December and will be due on February 1st, 2022. TC members should note in the data submissions any missing data or reduced sampling due to COVID for 2020-2021 data.

Stock Assessment Update Report Format

The TC considered a revised format for stock assessment update reports. The Assessment Science Committee recently developed a standardized format for stock assessment update

reports that is in the form of a Term of Reference (TOR) Report where each TOR is addressed and relevant tables and figures are included. The new format streamlines the report and reduces redundancy with the benchmark assessment. Extra materials, like diagnostic plots, are included in an appendix. The TC accepted this format for the stock assessment update report.

Stock Assessment Subcommittee Membership

The Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) membership for the update is the same as the 2020 benchmark with a few exceptions. Rob Latour (VIMS) is no longer a member of the TC or SAS, although he is still involved in menhaden research and is in communication with the SAS following some of his contributions in the benchmark. Shanna Madsen (VMRC) said that Virginia is currently in the process of hiring a stock assessment scientist and hopefully the new hire will replace Rob on the committees. It was also noted that Corrin Flora was on the 2020 SAS as the TC Chair, but she will be replaced by Josh Newhard on the SAS since he is the current TC Chair. Joey Ballenger was also on the SAS as a previous TC Chair and it remains unclear if he, or Holly White, the TC member who replaced Corrin, should serve on the SAS. ASMFC staff will follow up with Holly and Joey.

Bait and Reduction Age Samples

For previous assessments, each state sent their bait samples to the Beaufort Lab for ageing. An ageing workshop was scheduled for 2020, following the benchmark, for state agers and Beaufort agers to compare methods and eventually move towards the states ageing their own bait samples. Due to COVID, the workshop was delayed and is not currently scheduled. Therefore, for this assessment update, states should send their bait age samples to Beaufort as they have in previous years. Some states send samples annually, while others likely haven't sent samples since the 2020 assessment. Therefore, Kristen Anstead and Ray Mroch will work together to determine which samples need to be sent and when. Ray stressed that Beaufort is currently working on the reduction ageing through 2020 and can absorb the bait age data, but only if it is sent in a timely manner.

Landings Data

Beaufort will be able to provide the reduction landings data by April 1st, 2022. For the bait data, Heather Powers (ACCSP) will work with the TC representatives and state/jurisdiction contacts to validate the bait landings. Due to the management document development currently underway with the Plan Development Team (PDT) for menhaden, validated landings are already available through 2020. ACCSP landings through 2021 should be available by April 15th, 2022, although they will be considered preliminary. MRIP recreational data will be queried by a member of the SAS. Shanna noted that Virginia's purse seine snapper rig bait landings will not show up in ACCSP and she and Heather will have to work together to make sure Virginia's bait landings are complete.

Fishery-Independent Survey Data

The TC reviewed a list of the survey data used in the benchmark assessment. Only those surveys used as indices will be requested for the update. Kristen will send each state the data she has on file from the 2020 assessment (terminal year 2017) and request that the TC members update the data through 2021. Numerous states indicated that there will be missing data points or reduced sampling in 2020-2021 due to COVID. Kristen asked that TC members note data gaps on their data submission forms and the SAS will evaluate how to handle missing data. Kristen will circulate data request forms in late November/early December and the data will be due by February 1st, 2022.

Research Recommendations

The TC reviewed the 2020 benchmark's research recommendations to note which have been addressed since the benchmark, as required by one of the update TORs. No progress was noted on the research recommendations, although the TC will revisit the list next summer as well.

Board and ERP Updates

Sarah Murray updated the TC on the recent Board discussions about their interest in a spatially-explicit model for menhaden. Earlier this year, the TC and ERP WG produced a memo on potential spatially-explicit approaches, which highlighted that any of the approaches would likely extend the timeline for completing the next benchmark assessment, currently scheduled for 2025. The Board indicated at their October, 2021, meeting that completing the benchmark stock assessment in 2025 as planned was the highest priority. Therefore, the next benchmark assessments will focus on refining the ERP approach developed in the 2020 assessments. While some spatial considerations may be incorporated in the process of refining the ERP models, spatial modeling will not be pursued until the 2025 benchmark assessments are completed.

Other Business

Kirby Rootes-Murdy noted that compliance reports are due on April 1st, 2022.

2022 Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Update Timeline

Assessment Process: The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will be conducting an update to the 2019 Atlantic Menhaden Single Species Benchmark Stock Assessment in 2022. The update assessments will involve several assessment webinars. The update will be coordinated by ASMFC staff and is not peer reviewed.

Terminal Year: 2020 or 2021, depending on data availability

- November, 2021: Technical Committee (TC) call to plan stock assessment update
- Late November/early December, 2021: Data requests sent out to TC members for the fishery-independent survey data
- December, 2021: Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) call to plan stock assessment update, timeline, tasks
- February 1st, 2022: Fishery-independent survey data due from the states through 2021 (proposed terminal year)
- March 2022: Index standardization subgroup (FIG) works on developing indices (two FIG webinars)
- April 15th, 2022: Bait (ACCSP) and reduction (Ray Mroch, NOAA Fisheries Beaufort Lab) landings through terminal year (2021)
- April, 2022: Beaufort Assessment Model (BAM) inputs (indices, landings, etc.) due to Amy
- May 2022: Update the BAM (two SAS webinars); SAS writes report draft
- Early June, 2022: SAS Check-in call to finalize report
- Mid-June, 2022: Report goes to the TC for review
- Late June, 2022: TC reviews and approves assessment update
- July, 2022: SAS finalize reports and include in Board meeting materials
- Early August, 2022: Present stock assessment update to the Board
- August-September, 2022: SAS/TC follow-up work from Board (i.e., projections)
- October, 2022: Board sets Total Allowable Catch (TAC)

Fishery-Independent Surveys used for YOY Indices

- Rhode Island Trawl
- CT River Alosine
- CT Thames
- CT LISTS
- NY Peconic
- NY W LIS
- NY Juv Striped Bass
- NJ Ocean Trawl
- NJ Striped Bass Seine
- DB Inner Bays
- MD Coastal Trawl
- MD Striped Bass Seine
- VIMS Juv Trawl
- VIMS Striped Bass Seine
- NC p120
- SC Electrofishing

Fishery-Independent Surveys used for Age-1+ Indices

- CT LISTS
- DB Adult Trawl
- NJ Ocean Trawl
- MD Gill Net
- VIMS Shad Gill Net
- NC p915
- SEAMAP
- GA EMTS