

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Tautog Technical Committee Meeting
February 20, 2003
Draft – Conference Call Minutes – Draft

Attendees:

Paul Caruso, MA, Chair
Paul Piavis, MD
Alice Weber, NY, Vice Chair
Chad Boyce, VA

Bryan Oles, Social Scientist
Najih Lazar, RI
Lydia Munger, ASMFC

Call to order/Attendance

The Chairman opened the conference call at 2pm by requesting a roll of attendees and outlining the proposed agenda. One agenda item was added under other business, and that was a discussion of some potential changes in the direction of Tautog management.

Discussion of Catch Curve Analyses

The decision was made to move ahead to the discussion of catch curve analyses and return to a review of New Jersey and New York's revised reduction proposals once representatives from those states joined the call.

The discussion of catch curve analyses was guided by the memo that had been sent to the Technical Committee as well as by the straw man document prepared in advance by Paul C. It was noted that, depending on the direction the Committee's discussion takes, the recent use of independent analyses by states may result in a change in the direction of Tautog management. Such a change may result in the development of an addendum or an amendment to the FMP. It was also noted that whether or not a change in Tautog management results from these discussions, the Committee still needs to produce a set of guidelines for the use of catch curves as requested by the Tautog Management Board.

The discussion was framed by the straw man document, with the Chairman outlining that the discussion should cover each of the points in the straw man document and the Committee should decide which of the items in the document should remain and which should be removed. The details of the discussion are summarized in the revised straw man document (dated February 25, 2003).

Discussion of Revised Recreational Reduction Proposals

The Technical Committee came to a consensus that the calculations in New Jersey's proposal are acceptable and recommended that the Board approve the proposal as submitted.

For the proposal submitted by New York, the Technical Committee came to a consensus that Options 1-5 as submitted by New York are acceptable and recommended that the Board approve Options 1-5 of the proposal. For Option 6, the Technical Committee came to a consensus that, although the effects of the 6-day increase in bag limit are expected to be minimal, there is no

way to technically evaluate the effects of this change. Alice stated that she understood the concerns of the Technical Committee but that New York feels the trade off is reasonable.

Bryan Oles asked if the options presented by states are designed with current fishing practices in mind. Alice responded that there is an interest from the recreational fishery in closing the spawning season. Bryan pointed out that a 1 fish limit for a species that is considered a subsistence fish seems inadequate. He inquired as to the amount of input that charter boat industry has in the process as compared with other groups of fishermen. Alice responded that the one fish limit was put in place because nobody seemed to mind and also in the interest of keeping a bag limit for the dive/spear fishers. She stated that New York does not hear a lot of comments from subsistence fishers but that this was not surprising as this group is traditionally not well represented.

Changes in the Direction of Tautog Management

The traditional management model for ASMFC species revolves around the concept of a coastwide stock, with every state taking equal reductions in harvest for coastwide management. Unfortunately, Tautog does not necessarily fit this model. Does the FMP fit the biology of the species? Is it time for the Technical Committee to start talking to the Management Board about modifying the FMP and associated management measures?

Traditional management model for ASMFC species is the concept of a coastwide stock and everyone taking equal reductions in harvest for coastwide management. Unfortunately, tautog stock structure is different and when the plan was devised it was done in the typical ASMFC model. It could completely affect the way we do things. Start the discussion...should we even go there? Should we stay satisfied with the current management model?

Alice Weber stated that she would like to see a more clear indication from the plan of where we are headed because there has been so much going back and forth between coastwide and local/regional management. Paul C. noted that the Board may be uncomfortable with the concept of moving away from the traditional management structure.

Najih noted that he would like to see some discussion and feedback on whether to allow state specific assessments/management along the coast or whether to keep the coastwide assessment and management scheme. Najih is also interested in seeing, from a biological perspective, whether there have been any new findings on whether there is population mixing along the coast or whether the populations are fairly localized. He would like to see an evaluation of the regulations that have already been put in place and noted that there is no mechanism to evaluate whether these regulations have been effective or not. Paul C. responded that the FMP review process may offer a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of the previous year's regulations.

The Technical Committee would prefer not to have the assessment peer reviewed at the SARC when the five-year trigger for external peer review comes up in 2004. Paul C. expects that, in the event of regional assessments as mandated by the Board in the last addendum, data for the southern portion of the species range will once again be lacking. Paul C. tabled the discussion

for now and noted that it would be discussed again at the next Technical Committee meeting or conference call. Paul P. noted that Lisa Kline called him to say that Harry Mears (MARFIN) had some money available to Tautog research, especially at the southern end of the range and that Paul worked on a tagging proposal for Maryland and Virginia. This proposal may be able to answer some of the regional movement questions. Paul P. said that he would like to see the proposal go through the tagging committee.

Paul C. then reviewed the timeline resulting from this conference call. He noted that Lydia would draft the Technical Committee report to the Board regarding the revised proposals and would circulate the report for Technical Committee approval. Paul C. stated that he would revise the straw man document on catch curve recommendations, and that the Technical Committee should meet again in 2-3 weeks for a follow-up conference call based on the revised document. It was recommended that the idea of management model change be kept in the “back pocket” for the Technical Committee to think about.

As a final agenda item, Paul C. thanked Paul P. for his great work during his term as Technical Committee vice-chair and chair.

Alice Weber asked a question related to the mandatory collection and processing of age/length samples. Paul C. noted that the requirement is for 200 samples per state per year at ~5 fish per centimeter interval. Alice asked whether the samples had to be taken from the commercial or recreational fisheries and Paul C. said to mix the sources as best they could. The purpose of collecting these samples is to develop an age-length key. Paul C. noted that stratification (commercial vs. recreational) would be a greater concern if you were trying to develop a catch curve from those data.

The question of a Tautog aging workshop was mentioned, and it was noted that an aging workshop is not on the table for this year and the Committee would have to ask about having one next year.

Alice mentioned again that she wanted to get a feel for how everyone else is collecting their 200 minimum samples, since one could easily go out on a party boat for 2 days and collect the 200 samples but that would not be the most preferable option. Najih mentioned that in Rhode Island, samples are mainly collected from the recreational fishery since that is where most of the catch comes from. He said that charter boats and volunteers collect about 200-300 animals per year. Paul C. said that Massachusetts is happy to collect 200 animals most years. He stated that ideally, the collection should be stratified by gear, etc, but that most years they are happy just to get the required number of samples.

The call was adjourned at 3:25 pm.