

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel Meeting Summary

**Urban Forestry Center, Portsmouth NH
December 5, 2008**

Present: Chris Vonderweidt (ASMFC, Staff); David Ellenton (Chair, ME); Alton West (ME); Mary-Beth Tooley (ME); Jenny Bichrest (ME); Glen Robbins (ME); Peter Mullen (MA); David Turner (ME); Peter Moore (MA)

Observers: Terry Stockwell (Section Chair); Jeff Kaelin; Glen Laurence; John Kinnely

The Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel (AP) held a meeting in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on December 5, 2008. This meeting was in response to the Atlantic Herring Section tasking the AP to give recommendations for an addendum to achieve the goals of the following motion.

Move to initiate an addendum (Addendum I) to include the following:

- **Monthly or bimonthly quotas with payback and carry over**
- **Determination of landing and fishing days**
- **No fishing prior to June 1**
- **Timely reporting of state registered landings**
- **Restriction on harvest of juvenile fish**

The AP gave discussed and gave recommendations on each bullet point of the motion as follows.

Monthly or bi-monthly quotas

The AP unanimously opposes the idea of monthly or bi-monthly quotas with fixed percentages because they allow for less flexibility than a yearly TAC. Fishermen aim to sell their catch when market value is the highest and locking a certain percent of the catch into a quota period does not allow them to adjust to markets. Meeting participants prefer to fish based on markets rather than quotas.

The AP unanimous supports including an option for trimester quotas without specified dates or percentages. They recommend determining the trimester dates and percentages at the beginning of the fishing season using a system similar to days out meetings, or during a days out meeting. The AP was comfortable with trimesters rather than monthly or bimonthly quotas because there are three natural breaks in the herring fishery: January 1 – May 31 when only a small amount of herring are historically caught, June 1 – September 30 when mid-water trawlers cannot fish in Area 1A, and October 1 – December 31 when Area 1A opens up to mid-water trawlers. The AP does not want these trimester dates locked into the management program, however, and prefer to have the flexibility to set them at the beginning of each fishing year.

Determination of landings and fishing days

The AP unanimously agrees that the current system of days out should be changed to specify that fishermen are required to take a specified number of 'days out' per week but that *fishermen can choose the days that they take out*. They are concerned that the current system creates a strong incentive for fishermen to go out in dangerous weather. Other problems with specifying the day of the week are that boats and equipment can break down on a landing day and dealers and suppliers do not always want herring on the same days of the week.

The AP discussed how to control effort through landing restrictions but did not come to consensus nor endorse any of the ideas as a group. There was some support for a regulation that limits the amount of time that fishermen can fish per landing event. One suggestion which received significant consideration is a regulation that permits a maximum of 24 hours of fishing is per landing. There was also some support for allowing a maximum of 1 landing per 24 hour period.

No fishing prior to June 1

The AP unanimously oppose any regulations that prohibit landing until June 1. The current system enables managers to prohibit landing before June 1 and there is no reason to implement regulations that take away flexibility. Demand could shift making herring caught before June 1 more profitable.

State landings:

The AP recommends that states implement a similar system to the federal IVR system to help monitor quota for state permitted fishermen. They caution that the system must fit the fishery and would require slight modifications for fixed gear fishermen.

Restrictions on Harvest of Juvenile Fish

The AP unanimously supports returning to a 20% spawn herring tolerance rather than continuing with the current 'zero tolerance' system. The stock is healthy and there is no science showing that zero tolerance is necessary for a sustainable fishery.

There is support for dissolving spawning areas and switching to a year round 20% spawn herring tolerance as well. Under this system, fishermen could not land herring comprised of more than 20% gonadal stage V & IV fish. This system would help collect samples and give scientists a better idea of spawning seasonality and location.

Other business

The Advisory Panel would like the Section to revisit the 2009 specifications. They believe that the stocks are very healthy and could support a greater harvest of Area 1A fish.