MEETING SUMMARY
Herring Committee
Holiday Inn, Mansfield, MA
May 31, 2018

The Herring Committee met on May 31, 2018 in Mansfield, MA to further discuss recommendations for Council consideration of federal management of river herring and shad. The Committee reviewed an updated version of a draft white paper considering the addition of river herring and shad as stocks in the Atlantic herring fishery and develop recommendations for the Council to consider. Staff developed a worksheet to help facilitate discussion.

Second, the Committee reviewed measures being developed by the Mid-Atlantic Council for a rebuilding plan for mackerel and discuss the potential impacts as they relate to the herring fishery. Finally, the group had an initial discussion of the 2019-2021 herring fishery specifications action. The Council is scheduled to initiate that action in June with final action in December. The Committee reviewed a draft action plan and discussed recommendations for the range of issues that will be included in that action.

The Committee also discussed two items under Other Business. First, the Committee had an opportunity to provide initial input on the RSA Program review being conducted by the Council with GARFO and the Center. Second, the Committee discussed possible options to mitigate potentially lower catch limits that may be implemented in the future.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Mr. Peter Kendall (Chairman), Dr. Matthew McKenzie (Vice-Chairman), Mr. Peter Christopher (NMFS/GARFO), Mr. Doug Grout, Mr. John Pappalardo, Ms. Cate O’Keefe, Mr. Vincent Balzano, Mr. Rick Bellavance, and Ms. Melissa Smith. The Committee was supported by Council staff members Deirdre Boelke, Dr. Rachel Feeney; Mr. Daniel Luers, and Ms. Carrie Nordeen (NMFS/GARFO); and Mr. Mitch MacDonald (NOAA General Counsel). Dr. Mike Sissenwine attended for the RSA program review agenda item. In addition, about 10 members of the public attended.
KEY OUTCOMES:

- The Committee passed a motion related to the river herring/shad white paper.
- The Committee developed a consensus statement related to the MAFMC mackerel action.
- The Committee discussed a motion to initiate an action for 2019-2021 specifications.

RH/S as a stock in the Atlantic herring fishery

1. Grout/Balzano

Move to recommend to the Council no action in Section 4.1.

Rational: The fisheries are already adequately managed and a federal FMP would likely not improve condition of the stocks. There is no directed fishery in Federal waters for RH/S and bycatch caps in the Herring and Mackerel FMP’s control the amount of incidental take of RH/S with bycatch caps and AM’s that prohibit fishing when caps are exceeded. The vast majority of the harvest takes place in state waters via in-river harvest at the stock level only on stocks that can be harvested at sustainable levels through ASMFC approved Sustainable Management Plans. All other areas are closed to harvest. Current management uses the best available science developed by ASMFC SASC that have both federal (NMFS and USFWS) and state scientists that have not been able to develop coast wide biological reference points that pass peer review due to data limitation. Thus any ACL’s developed through federal FMP would not be science based but proxy based ACL’s with the vast majority of the ACL allocated to state fisheries given the location of recent harvests of RH/S. EFH designation afforded by a federal FMP would not be a significant improvement over what is already occurring as “RH/S may already benefit from EFH designation of other species, such as salmon. In addition, each state already has an approved habitat program for RH/S that has identified RH/S habitat (spawning, egg, juvenile) and development of plans to restore access to riverine habitat.

Vote: 6:1:2, motion carries

MAFMC Mackerel Rebuilding Framework

By consensus, the Herring Committee recommends the Council draft a letter to the Mid-Atlantic Council supporting the in-season alternatives to manage mackerel landings that are under development in the mackerel rebuilding framework for FY2019-2021.

2019-2021 Herring Specifications

2. Grout/Pappalardo:

Committee recommends the Council initiate herring specification action for 2019-2021.

Vote: 8:0:0, carries