



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Herring Advisory Panel

Webinar

August 25, 2020

The Herring Advisory Panel (AP) met on August 25, 2020 at 9:30 AM via webinar primarily to review the 2020 management track assessment, review SSC recommendations for 2021-2023 OFL/ABC, and finalize the range of alternatives for Framework 8.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Bert Jongerden (Chair), John-Paul Bilodeau, Beth Casoni, Jeff Kaelin, Ray Kane, Zach Klyver, Meghan Lapp (Vice-Chair), David Mussina, Gerry O'Neill, and MaryBeth Tooley; Deirdre Boelke (PDT Chair), Rachel Feeney, and Janice Plante (NEFMC staff); Emily Gilbert and Aly Pitts (GARFO staff). In addition, about half of the Committee and about ten members of the public attended.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- Dr. Jonathon Deroba reviewed the results of the 2020 management track assessment and AP members were provided the opportunity for questions.
- Deirdre Boelke reviewed the SSC recommendation for 2021-2023 OFL/ABC recommendations.
- The AP developed several new ideas for consideration in Framework 8.

AGENDA ITEM #1: REVIEW 2020 MANAGEMENT TRACK ASSESSMENT

Dr. Jonathon Deroba presented slides reviewing the results of the recent management track assessment. The stock is considered overfished, and poor recruitment trends have continued since the last assessment in 2018. There were several questions and one AP member expressed concern that there is no accountability for Canadian weir catches; while the US is severely reducing quotas there are no real limits imposed in the fixed gear fishery in Canada across the border.

AGENDA ITEM #2: REVIEW 2021-2023 OFL/ABC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SSC

Ms. Deirdre Boelke reviewed the SSC and PDT memos related to OFL and ABC recommendations. There were a handful of questions and the group moved on to other aspects of Framework 8.

AGENDA ITEM #3: CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF FRAMEWORK 8 ALTERNATIVES

The AP focused on a few sections that did not yet have a final range of alternatives.

Motion 1: Kaelin/O'Neill

Recommend the fixed-gear set-aside should be status quo for Framework 8, 30 mt.

Vote: 6:2:1, motion carries

JP Bilodeau	N	David Mussina	Y
Beth Casoni	Y	Gerry O'Neill	Y
Jeff Kaelin	Y	James Ruhle	absent
Ray Kane	Y	MaryBeth Tooley	N
Zach Klyver	Y		
Megan Lapp	abstain	<i>Bert Jongerden (if needed)</i>	

AP Discussion

- Support for maintaining access for a historical fishery.
- But a 30 mt set-aside is relatively small, and participants may not bother. It is expensive and takes lots of work to set and maintain a weir or stop sein. A smaller quota may be better so less is removed from the 1A sub-ACL, but whatever value is used may not be harvested anyway. So removing anything is potentially taking it away from Area 1A.

Motion 2: Lapp/Kaelin

To add an alternative for Area 2 only, that would close the directed herring fishery at 90% of the Area 2 sub-ACL, with a 40,000 lb incidental limit until 98% of the herring sub-ACL in Area 2 has been reached. At 98% of the Area 2 sub-ACL, the incidental limit would revert to 5,000 lbs.

Rationale:

The rationale would be to align the mackerel and herring fisheries (mackerel closes at 90%, with a 40,000 lb trip limit thereafter until 98% of the quota is reached, when the incidental limit drops to 5,000 lbs). Consistency is important and having a 40,000 lb limit for a longer period of time in the season would help continue the mackerel fishery for a longer period of time.

Vote: 9:0:0, motion carries

JP Bilodeau	Y	David Mussina	Y
Beth Casoni	Y	Gerry O'Neill	Y
Jeff Kaelin	Y	James Ruhle	absent
Ray Kane	Y	MaryBeth Tooley	Y
Zach Klyver	Y		
Megan Lapp	Y	<i>Bert Jongerden (if needed)</i>	

AP Discussion

- PDT has pulled together lots of info about past behavior to help inform potential possession limit alternatives, but past effort patterns will not be very informative, especially for low quota years. Also, many herring and mackerel trips are mixed, so it is difficult to tell which are directed “mackerel” trips, and things can change after a vessel has left the dock. It was suggested again that

RSA data are limited but could be more informative for identifying how much herring is typically landed on directed mackerel trips.

- Overall, the AP supports a higher possession limit in all areas and hopes the addition of this alternative does not end up the only alternative selected in FW8. They support even more flexibility in Area 2 because that is the primary area for mackerel fishing, but it would be advantageous to have more flexibility in the other herring management areas as well.
- Major points about rationale were: desire to establish consistency between plans and this option mirrors mackerel plan, there can be substantial mixing of herring and mackerel, this option, overall desire to have a system that works in short and long term. Trying to let the mackerel fishery occur as long as possible.
- Concern expressed by one member that all these alternatives apply to any trip with some herring landed; therefore, the 40,000 lb TAC could get used up relatively quickly if small mounts of herring are landed on every squid trip for example.

Motion 3: Kaelin/

Maintain the research set-aside at 3% of each sub-ACL for 2021-2023 in Framework 8.

Motion failed for lack of a second.

AP Discussion

- Interest to keep the program alive – but AP members not sure what minimum amount of quota would be needed to support the current RSA project for bycatch avoidance and port sampling. If 3% of the current sub-ACLs is not enough than maybe it is not worth running these programs with this source of funding until quotas increase.

Motion 4: O'Neill/Tooley

Support automatic carryover of up to 10% of each sub-ACL for Framework 8.

Rationale: When the Council suspended carryover in 2018 the total ACL was going from large annual quotas to much lower quotas, now the situation is different, and the carryover is a much lower proportion of the total quota. The concerns that were present before about exceeding ACLs are not the case now.

Vote: 6:2:1, carries

JP Bilodeau	Y	David Mussina	N
Beth Casoni	Y	Gerry O'Neill	Y
Jeff Kaelin	Y	James Ruhle	absent
Ray Kane	abstain	MaryBeth Tooley	Y
Zach Klyver	N		
Megan Lapp	Y	<i>Bert Jongerden (if needed)</i>	

AP Discussion

- The potential rollover from 2019 is relatively low and there are other buffers in this system that will provide sufficient room between the 2021 OFL and the 2021 ACL plus any additional rollover from 2019. These fish have been allocated and the plan should do what it can to support the sustainable harvest of allocated fish.
- Minority input – because there is so much uncertainty and the long-term trend of herring is declining, there is an argument to be conservative. If catch from previous years was not harvested it may be more beneficial in the long term to leave those fish in the ecosystem.

OTHER POINTS NOT UNDER MOTIONS

- No motions were made for alternative management uncertainty buffers, but concerns were expressed about the current range of alternatives. The alternatives are all relatively large, about 50% of the total ABC. Some advisors expressed concern that quotas should not be reduced dramatically on one side of the border, while there is no quota on the other side. Several advisors expressed disappointment that there is no accountability of NB weir catch and encouraged the Council to address this with Canada. Can a lower management uncertainty buffer be considered in FW8?
- Most of the AP is not in favor of Option C for the possession limit options – the range of 5,000 to 20,000 is not workable and would not address the problem these alternatives are trying to address. Maybe 20,000 could work for some trips; it is borderline, but any less would not enable vessels to even leave the dock for test tows.
- No motions were made about the idea raised at the June Cmte meeting to consider implementing a herring possession limit at the start of the season. The AP members that spoke are not in favor of including an alternative like that in FW8. Several reasons were offered to explain why not. First, that is unnecessary micromanagement of a relatively small fleet. The current participants communicate regularly about fishing patterns during the year and voluntarily adjust behavior and catch to help spread available quota during the year. Second, implementing possession limits at the start of the year could increase regulatory discards unnecessarily. If both mackerel and herring fisheries are open it does not make sense to impose a regulation that reduces potential economic benefits and potentially increase discards. Finally, if and when quotas increase

OTHER BUSINESS

The state of Massachusetts is also sending correspondence to NOAA Fisheries about declaring the herring fishery a disaster, due to recent assessment results and reductions in quota.