

10/3/2012 RIMFC Ad Hoc Atlantic Herring Panel

4:00 PM East Farm, URI, Kingston, RI

The Meeting convened at 4:00 with the following people in attendance:

Bill Mackintosh (BM) RIFMC (Chair)

John Lake (JL) RIDFW

Jason McNamee (JM) RIDFW

Robert Ballou (RB) RIDEM

Steve Mederios (SM) RISAA

George Allen (GA) RISAA

Dave Monti (DM) RIFMC

The meeting began with a presentation given by JL explaining the results of the recent Atlantic herring stock assessment (attached). The new techniques which are aimed at recognizing Atl. Herring's role as a forage species in the ecosystem as well as a commercial species were described and the results displayed. The stock is not overfished and over fishing is not occurring. Next JL displayed the current Atl. Herring regulations in RI, pointing out that it is very easy for vessels to enter into the state waters Atl. Herring fishery because commercial licenses are open during the time period of fishing and the required licenses are not restricted. As noted from the last meeting more control over entities fishing for Atl. Herring in state waters is needed to gather better data, ensure compliance to RIDEM regulations, and to lessen gear conflicts. Furthermore it was pointed out that RI is not on a level playing field with Massachusetts because RI has zero possession of river herring while Mass allows a 5% bycatch allowance to federal vessels transiting from federal waters.

JL then presented RIDFW's proposed management measures. These measures would allow vessels fishing in federal waters to transit state waters with up to 5% of river herring bycatch mixed in with Atlantic herring. River herring would still have a zero possession limit in RI state waters. RIDFW will issue an annual Atlantic Herring fishing permit to vessels planning to fish for herring in state waters. The permit would be issued after an informational meeting with RIDFW staff. All vessel captains would have to meet with RIDFW staff to ensure they have the correct credentials to fish for Atl Herring in RI state waters. These include a commercial fishing license, proper endorsements, and a vessel declaration. All vessels/captains would be required to demonstrate that they are enrolled in the SMAST river herring avoidance notification system and provide contact info to RIDFW. Charts displaying the general locations of fixed gear in state waters would also be provided. The Atl herring fishing permit would be revoked if any violation occurs in state waters. Vessel captains and RIDFW staff will monitor the SMAST river herring information and inform captains to move on if river herring catches in state waters reach the 5% level.

GA stated that the move on requirements must be very clear and should be required in regulation. BM stated that the SMAST program is a good strategy but that prompt notification to vessels is key to success. RB stated that he thought if state waters

were closed during high (>5%) river herring bycatch it would lend more support to our proposal at the ASMFC. GA and SM asked if further monitoring (both observer and port sampling) is required in state waters. JM pointed out that S Mast does do port sampling in RI. JL pointed out that the large federal Atl herring vessels are required to have observers regardless of whether they are fishing in state or federal waters and are responsible for the majority of the catch. The data generated by these observers should be sufficient to characterize river herring bycatch. S Mast also has a study fleet of commercial vessel monitoring for bycatch levels. RIDFW does not have the resources to put observers on smaller state waters vessels. GA pointed out that one 5% river herring bycatch of a typical Atl herring vessel catch could wipe out the population of local RI fish runs. RB stated that RIDFW would establish a % bycatch level that would precipitate a state waters Atl herring closure. RB stated it was unclear if additional monitoring would be necessary to allow state waters fishing and continue the zero possession of river herring already in place in regulation. JM stated that the proposal is better than the current status quo and is intended to reduce river herring bycatch. BM asked if federal vessel trip reports could be required from vessels fishing in RI but landing elsewhere. JL replied that we currently collect vtrs from all federal vessels landing in RI and that collecting vtrs from vessels fishing in RI but landing in other states was likely possible but very difficult to track for compliance. RB concluded the meeting by explaining that RIDFW has submitted a river herring sustainable fishing plan to ASMFC. He explained that last year all of the fishing activity in state waters warranted a reexamination of the RI zero river herring possession limit in state waters relative to Atl herring bycatch. He outlined the time table and process at the commission. He stated more information would be given when the plan was vetted at ASMFC. Having no more business the panel adjourned at 5 PM.

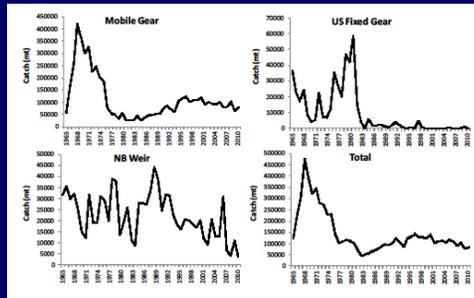


Stock Assessment – Model & Data Overview

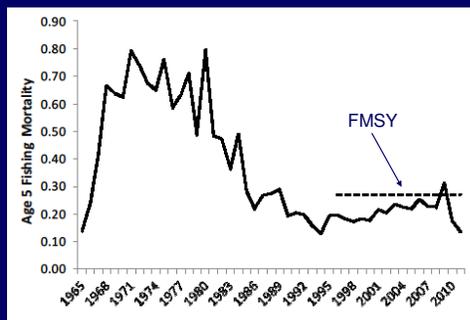
- Peer reviewed assessment for Atlantic herring occurred at the 54th Stock Assessment Workshop June 5- 9, 2012
- Fishing mortality (F) & stock biomass estimates were generated using Statistical Catch at Age Model (ASAP SCAA), F_{MSY} , SSB_{MSY} , and MSY calculated with a stock recruitment model.
- Catch data separated into two categories, mobile and fixed gear, for the purpose of determining catch at age.
- Natural mortality (M) value was estimated yearly based on Hoening and Lorenzen methods. Provides the scale of natural mortality and accounts for decreasing natural mortality with age for each year.
- Consumption of herring based on food habits data of fishes, marine mammals, and sea birds.
- Natural mortality rates adjusted upwards by 50% between 1996 - 2011 to account for observed increases in consumption during this period and to resolve a retrospective pattern in the model.
- Maturity at age estimated for each year.



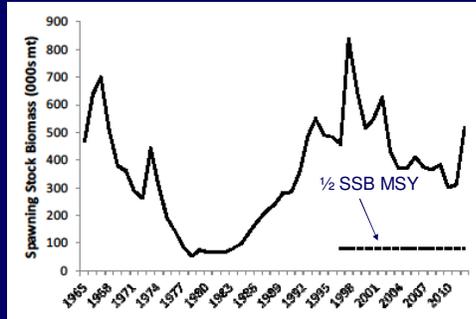
Atlantic Herring catch data (mt)



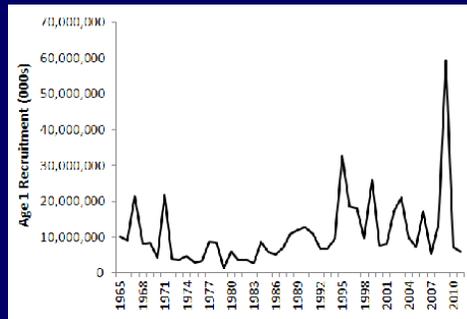
Atlantic herring age-5 fishing mortality



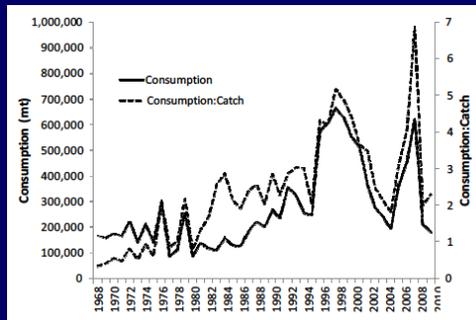
Atlantic herring spawning stock biomass



Atlantic herring age-1 recruitment



Consumption of Atlantic herring by predators



Status & Projections

Based on SAW54 ASAP model

F_{MSY}	0.27	
F 2011	0.14	
F_{2011}/F_{MSY}	$0.14 < .27$	No Overfishing
SSB_{MSY}	157,000 mt	
$\frac{1}{2} SSB_{MSY}$	78,500 mt	
SSB 2011	517,930 mt	
SSB_{2011}/SSB_{MSY}	$517,930 > 157,000$	Stock is Not Overfished
MSY	53,000 mt	



< 1 % chance that stock will experience overfishing or be overfished by 2015 based on F_{MSY} and MSY projections.

ASMFC / RIDFW Management

- Mirrors NEFMC regulations for Area 2 (SNE)
- Area 2 managed on a quota / ACL system
- RIDFW regulations limit vessels harvesting Atlantic herring to 165 feet in overall length and 3000 horsepower
- Mid-water/pair trawlers must have a specific license endorsement (MWPT)
- Zero possession of river herring in state waters



Proposed RIDFW Atlantic herring Fishery Management Plan

- Allow 5% river herring bycatch for federal vessels fishing for Atlantic herring in federal waters.
- Create a RI state waters Atlantic herring fishing permit.
- Permit issued after pre-season meeting where vessels must meet the following requirements:
 - Demonstrate participation in SMAST river herring bycatch monitoring program.
 - Document that captain(s) and vessels possess proper credentials for any state waters fishing activity.
 - Review RIDFW regulations and fixed gear location charts.

