



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman
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MEMORANDUM

Date: July 29, 2019
To: Council
From: Jason Didden, Staff
Subject: July 29, 2019 River Herring / Shad (RH/S) Advisory Panel (AP) Meeting Summary

AP Members Attending: John Punola, Doug Feeney, Greg DiDomenico, Meghan Lapp, Katie Almeida, Bill Gordon, Pam Lyons Gromen, Jeff Kaelin, Eleanor Bochenek, and Fred Akers.

Others Attending: Jason Didden, Dave Bethoney, Peter Hughes, Aly Pitts, Alan Bianchi, Doug Christel, and Wes Eakin.

Jason Didden first provided an overview of: recent RH/S cap operation, the RH/S Progress Update, staff RH/S cap options, input from the Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish (MSB) Monitoring Committee, and Council staff recommendations.

AP Input

Jeff Kaelin – Given the time constraints for 2020, I support the staff recommendation and a trailing framework to address practicability of the RH/S caps. The loss to the fishery does not appear practicable. A framework should address that few fisheries are constrained by RH/S. The Council should consider that Atlantic herring is allowed a substantially higher ratio, and did not reduce the RH/S caps when the Atlantic herring quota was reduced. That ratio, 3% is a rational approach to allow for the harvest of optimum yield. A similar ratio for mackerel would result in a 540 MT RH/S cap. The current numbers, considered with the increases seen in RH/S abundance in the federal surveys, represent a death spiral for the fishery and we need a framework to evaluate these issues, including getting the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) involved. We should consider ways in a trailing framework how to do a better job of coordinating the Atlantic herring and Mackerel fisheries' RH/S caps – there's a lot of RH/S cap that's probably not going to get caught in the Atlantic herring fishery.

The SBRM does not assign observers due to the fishery's low discard rates. A framework should also consider integrating portside sampling data.

Greg DiDomenico – I support Jeff Kaelin's comments (see above). At some point the focus on just a few vessels needs to come to an end, and industry is looking forward to getting back into this

fishery. The forgoing of yield is intolerable, especially given historical quota projections and industry's related investments. With the 5-year river herring review and listing determination, the fishery has done its part. I support whatever restrictions can be lifted that are acceptable and science-based.

Pam Lyons Gromen – I like the story map for run counts and hope that it can be completed to serve as a 1-stop place for RH/S run count trends. I support the MSB Monitoring Committee recommendation of exploring New England and Mid-Atlantic RH/S cap alignment through a white paper, and to consider small mesh bottom trawl or other contributing gears. I'm concerned that even though we are generally down from pre-cap RH/S catches, we have been rising the last few years and whether that trend will continue.

For 2020, I don't support the staff recommendation – the higher cap ratio used during 2016-2018 was during a time of a lower mackerel quota and would be higher than the original ratio used when the cap was originally set in 2014. Sticking with the original ratio keeps catches around a medium level and it seems artificial to bump the ratio up. I support the status quo, what was put in the mackerel rebuilding framework, the initial 89 MT going up to 129 MT after/if 10,000 MT of mackerel is landed. It is worth exploring (in a framework) whether spatial options, possibly parsing out part of the cap, might be appropriate as it is troubling that there is a segment of the fishery that cannot participate later in the year.

Pam Gromen requested a breakdown of RH/S incidental catch proportions by gear from 2005-2012 versus 2014-2018, to refine the combined 2005-2018 gear analyses in the RH/S update. From 2005-12 small mesh bottom trawl accounted for 30% of RH/S incidental catch and from 2014-2018 small mesh bottom trawl accounted for 62% of RH/S incidental catch. However, from 2005-2018 small mesh bottom trawl RH/S catches were variable without trend in the amount of RH/S caught. The change in the relative proportion results from the reduction in mid-water trawl catches.

Bill Gordon and Fred Akers remarked that the low observer coverage seems like a big problem.

Bill Gordon provided a reference to CT River fishway shad counts: https://www.fws.gov/r5crc/migratory_fish_counts.html. He also asked whether correlations exist between run counts and the mackerel fishery. Staff responded that there has not been any conclusive analysis linking run counts to trends in other fisheries (or to other specific factors).