

Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel Working Group Meeting

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

1:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Virtual

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I. Participants

A. NTAP Members:

Name	Affiliation
Kathryn Ford	NEFSC
Anna Mercer	NEFSC
Robert Ruhle	ASMFC Representative
Jim Gartland	MAFMC Scientist
Mike Pol	NEFMC Scientist
Sam Novello	NEFMC Stakeholder
Tim Miller	NEFSC
Chris Parkins	ASMFC Representative
Wes Townsend	MAFMC Member (NTAP Co-Chair)
Dan Salerno	NEFMC Member (NTAP Co-Chair)

B. Other Participants:

Name	Affiliation
Hannah Hart	MAFMC
Andy Jones	NEFSC

II. Notes by agenda topic

Welcome (Kathryn Ford/Hannah Hart)

Purpose of today's meeting is to discuss the final analytical methods and results of the restrictive rope research that was completed in fall 2022.

Review analytical methods and results from restrictor rope experiment (Andy Jones)

Presentation

- Andy presented the results and explained each figure and table in the draft manuscript.
- Overall Summary
 - Gear comparison – subtle differences but very narrow depth range, study not designed to focus on gear performance.
 - Catch composition ordination – large, systematic differences between spring and fall but not between control and restrictor rope treatment.
 - Analyses focused on longfin inshore squid, little skate, scup, butterfish, winter flounder, silver hake, red hake.
 - Catch aggregate weights and catch-at-length weights showed no major differences between control and restrictor rope treatment.

- Slight difference for longfin inshore squid, but no clear mechanism and small effect size so group agreed difference was minor.
- Incorporated solar zenith, season, order of tow, direction of tow relative to the current into models but found very little difference in model performance by including these.

Discussion on further or refined analyses (Group)

- There were no large differences identified between control and treatment. Discussion about “what is a big enough difference to matter” - paper should mention in discussion where there are multiple ways to interpret a result.
- Agreement that methods are sound and there is enough to publish.
- Agreement that nothing stands out in terms of a treatment effect.

Discussion on how we evaluate this and where do we go from here? (Group)

- Approach focused on the cost, not much focus on the benefits - does restrictor rope improve gear performance enough to improve catches? Need to test in water depths where restrictor rope would prevent overspreading.
- Could do it on multiple vessels.
- Can we coordinate/leverage existing survey work in wind farms? This should be possible.
- We should quantify the value of the work to wind farm studies.
- Rutgers at Ocean Wind 1 will be using a restrictor rope on Darana R. Just outside of depth range for VIMS NEAMAP (~160’).
- Restrictor rope may not be needed on shallower water surveys where overspreading is not an issue.
- Discussion about Gulf of Maine - State of Maine has an RFP for a fisheries survey out, will be a floating array and mobile gear will sample adjacent to the area; more difficult to use this type of gear in Gulf of Maine; if GOM will have all floating wind structures and no mobile gear sampling, then maybe it’s not useful to focus on developing this type of gear there. However, some members felt there is still value in understanding this gear in the Gulf of Maine.
- Is there intrinsic value for this work in informing not just wind farm work, but also the next generation of NEFSC bottom trawl surveying? (Question/point raised, not answered.) Recommend that be part of the paper discussion.
- The group coalesced around doing an expanded study into deeper waters in mid-Atlantic, full depth range of the BTS.
- No funding identified at this time; full panel should discuss before additional fleshing out of a study.

Action Items:

1. Andy will draft the discussion.
2. Andy will get a rough estimate of the number of tows needed to expand the study to the full depth range.
3. Kathryn will add this study idea to the NTAP full panel draft agenda (summer meeting) to discuss in the context of other priorities.

Meeting adjourned: 2:45 PM