

**Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee
Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank Herring Benchmark Review
Aquarium Boardroom, NEFSC, Woods Hole, Mass., USA
2 – 5 May 2006**

Terms of Reference

Background

The TRAC was established in 1998 to peer review assessments of transboundary resources in the Georges Bank area and thus to ensure that the management efforts of both Canada and USA, pursued either independently or cooperatively, are founded on a common understanding of resource status.

Prior to 2003, scientists from both countries had participated in each other's peer review of the Gulf of Maine herring assessments but there has not been a joint peer review meeting. During the 10 - 14 February 2003 meeting, the TRAC considered the assessment framework for the Gulf of Maine herring assessments. At that meeting, consensus was reached on how to deal with the stock complex and management units. It was deemed necessary to undertake an evaluation of the entire complex with subsequent consideration of the individual components. Evaluation of the relative proportions of the biomass between the inshore Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank should be considered to give guidance for the individual components. It was also established that surveys indices from the NMFS bottom trawl survey would be divided into and treated as two distinct time periods pre-1985 and 1985-present. Despite considerable investigation of model formulations for the assessment, a number of issues remained to be resolved. It was noted that to verify and compare models, new and revised data need to be considered. Thus a continuation of the hydroacoustic survey is likely to elucidate trends in biomass. Improved age determinations for older fish should give a better indication of the total mortality in the stock.

The purpose of this meeting is to review and incorporate any new information from survey indices and the fisheries, revisit the model formulation issues and recommend a suitable approach upon which to base management advice.

Objectives

- Review progress made on the recommendations from the 10 - 14 February 2003 TRAC meeting.
- Update results with the latest information from fisheries and research surveys.
- Review the assessment model formulation issues and recommend an approach for stock status determination.
- Apply the agreed assessment approach to update the status of the coastal stock complex of Atlantic herring through 2005 and characterize the uncertainty of estimates.
- Using available data from acoustic, trawl surveys, and recent tagging studies, evaluate the relative proportions of the biomass between the inshore Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank to give guidance on the usefulness and the degree to which these results can be used to provide advice to managers.
- Review the harvest strategy biological reference points to meet management requirements of both countries.
- Review approach for the provision of projections to meet the requirements of both countries

Products

- Meeting Proceedings, which will document the details of the review and summarize the consensus results.

Participation

- NEFSC and DFO Stock Assessment teams and other laboratory scientists
- Invited external (not from NEFSC or DFO Scotia Fundy) reviewers
- Representatives from US and Canadian management agencies
- US State and Canadian Provincial representatives
- US and Canadian fishing industry participants