



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116
 John Pappalardo, *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

GROUND FISH (October 7-9, 2008)-M

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 25, 2008
TO: Council Members
FROM: Lori Steele, NEFMC Staff, Herring PDT Chair
SUBJECT: **Priorities for Herring Cooperative Research/Research Set-Asides for the 2010 Fishing Year**

The New England Fishery Management Council is scheduled to develop Atlantic herring fishery specifications for the 2010 fishing year during the summer/fall of 2009. Although Amendment 1 implemented a three-year specification process for the herring fishery, specifications for 2010 only are being developed because a benchmark stock assessment for herring is anticipated to occur through the Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) in late 2009, and results will be available in early 2010. It would therefore be more appropriate to await the results of the TRAC stock assessment and develop a more comprehensive three-year specification package for the 2011-2013 fishing years based on the new biological information and based on any related provisions that are adopted in Amendment 4 to the Herring FMP (currently under development).

Herring Research Set-Aside (RSA) was allocated for both for 2008 and 2009 as part of the specifications for the 2008 and 2009 fishing years, with the allocations below available for use each of the two years:

Area 1A	1,350 mt
Area 1B	300 mt
Area 2	900 mt
Area 3	1,800 mt.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service received four research proposals in response to the 2008/2009 Herring RSA Program request for proposals. The Science and Research Director for the Northeast Fisheries Science Center selected one proposal to be funded through the 2008/2009 Herring RSA Program submitted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) entitled: "The Effects of Fishing on Herring Aggregations." The GMRI project was awarded the full 1,350 mt from 1A and 300 mt from Area 1B during 2008/2009. Under this award, GMRI proposes to assess the effects of midwater trawling on a herring aggregation using acoustic sonar prior to, during, and following trawl fishing activity in 2008, and would continue to assess the effects of

fishing activity on herring aggregations in 2009, although the specific research design will largely be dictated by 2008 research results. The first research trip for this project was initiated very recently.

The RSA process outlined in Amendment 1 requires the Council to first identify research priorities on which to base the Request for Proposals and the selection of projects to fund through the RSAs. Assuming that the Council agrees to set RSAs for the 2010 fishing year (to be determined when the 2010 fishery specifications are developed during 2009), the timing of the process and the need to request and review proposals necessitates that the Council identify the research priorities for the 2010 RSA at this time. NOAA Fisheries will be soliciting proposals for the 2010 RSA program through an announcement in the Federal Register in December of this year.

The Herring Plan Development Team (PDT) reviewed the 2008 and 2009 cooperative research priorities and discussed this issue briefly. The PDT recommends that the 2008 and 2009 top priorities for cooperative research be carried over through the 2010 RSA process. These priorities were included in a larger list of research needs in Amendment 1 but were selected by the Herring PDT and the Council at the time for their potential relative to industry-based cooperative research. These issues still represent some of the most important research issues relative to the herring fishery and remain appropriate for priorities for cooperative research.

The TRAC stock assessment for Atlantic herring, scheduled for December 2009, should yield an updated list of data and research needs that can then form the basis of the priorities for cooperative research and RSAs during the 2011-2013 fishing years. At that time, the Committee and Council should evaluate the success of the GMRI project and conduct a more comprehensive review of the RSA process to date.

The Herring Committee will meet on September 30/October 1, 2008 to provide a recommendation to the Council relative to the research priorities for the 2010 fishing year. Council staff will then draft a letter based on the Council's final recommendations, similar to the letter for 2008/2009 (attached), which will initiate the RSA process for 2010.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR COOPERATIVE RESEARCH

FY2008/2009 (PROPOSED FOR FY2010)

1. Efforts to define localized depletion on a spatial and temporal scale; continue to develop hydroacoustic surveys to provide an independent means of estimating stock sizes and/or defining localized depletion (long-term research possibilities)
2. Investigate bycatch/discards in the directed herring fishery (including protected species)
3. Continue commercial catch sampling program and portside bycatch survey (long-term research possibilities)
4. Synthesize predator/prey information and conduct investigations to address information gaps; investigate the role of herring in the Northwest Atlantic ecosystem and the importance of herring as a forage species for other commercial fish stocks; assess the importance of herring as forage relative to other forage species in the region (long-term research possibilities)
5. Develop and test gear modifications to minimize interactions with non-target species in the Atlantic herring fishery
6. Develop tagging and morphometric studies to explore uncertainties in stock structure, stock mixing rates, and the impacts of harvest mortality on different components of the stock (long-term research possibilities)

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November 29, 2006

Nancy B. Thompson, Ph.D.
Acting Science and Research Director
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

Dear Nancy:

As part of the 2007-2009 Atlantic herring fishery specifications, the Council proposes to set-aside 3% from each of the management area TACs to support herring-related research during the 2008 and 2009 fishing years. The herring research set-aside (RSA) process is described in detail in Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Herring FMP, which was submitted by the Council in May 2006 and is currently under review by NMFS. The RSA process in Amendment 1 requires the Council to first identify research priorities on which to base the Request for Proposals and the selection of projects to fund through the RSAs.

In anticipation of approval of the RSA process in Amendment 1 and the RSAs proposed in the 2007-2009 herring specifications, the Council, with input from the Herring Plan Development Team (PDT), has developed the following list of research priorities for the 2008 and 2009 herring RSAs. These priorities were included in a larger list of research needs in Amendment 1 but were selected by the Herring PDT and the Council for their potential relative to industry-based cooperative research. The Council considers the following list to be a “two-tier” list of herring research priorities, with items #1-#3 representing those which the Council views as most important at this time. The list also identifies possibilities for long-term research projects, as addressing some of these priorities may require a long-term approach.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR COOPERATIVE RESEARCH

1. Efforts to define localized depletion on a spatial and temporal scale; continue to develop hydroacoustic surveys to provide an independent means of estimating stock sizes and/or defining localized depletion (long-term research possibilities)
2. Investigate bycatch/discards in the directed herring fishery (including protected species)
3. Continue commercial catch sampling program and portside bycatch survey (long-term research possibilities)

4. Synthesize predator/prey information and conduct investigations to address information gaps; investigate the role of herring in the Northwest Atlantic ecosystem and the importance of herring as a forage species for other commercial fish stocks; assess the importance of herring as forage relative to other forage species in the region (long-term research possibilities)
5. Develop and test gear modifications to minimize interactions with non-target species in the Atlantic herring fishery
6. Develop tagging and morphometric studies to explore uncertainties in stock structure, stock mixing rates, and the impacts of harvest mortality on different components of the stock (long-term research possibilities)

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Assuming the herring RSA process is approved in Amendment 1, we hope that NMFS can publish the Request for Proposals and begin the process of selecting research projects during the early part of 2007. Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Howard
Executive Director

cc: Patricia Kurkul, NMFS Regional Administrator
Council Members