



New England Fishery Management Council

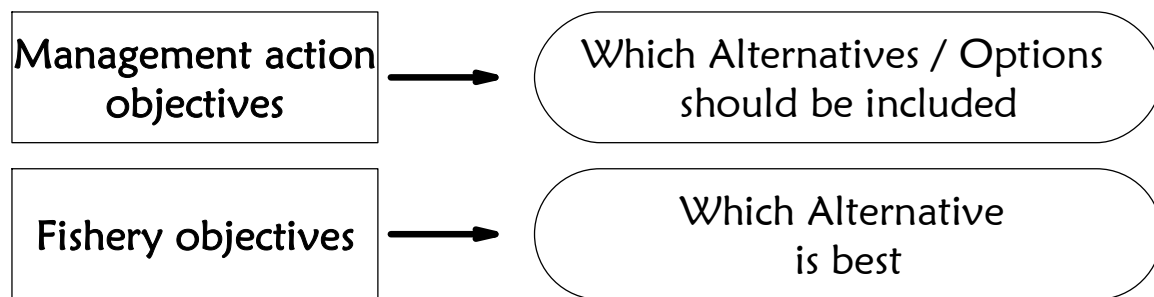
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MEMORANDUM

Date: 11/1/2006
To: Pelagics Committee
From: Chad Demarest, Whiting PDT Chair

SUBJECT: Goals and objectives for the Small Mesh Multispecies fishery

As you may remember, at the September Council meeting I presented a slide regarding objectives for the Small Mesh Multispecies (SMM) fishery. It had a schematic that looked like this:



To this end, I would like to present some thoughts in the hopes of establishing written objectives for both the upcoming management action and for the fishery as whole. This may all look scarily familiar to those engaged in a similar groundfish “objective” process that will take place on November 6.

Semantics

In the interest of keeping terms somewhat distinct for discussion purposes, I will use the words “goals and objectives” to refer to fishery-wide objectives and “purpose” to refer to the objectives of the upcoming management action. This distinction is wholly semantic, but the idea is that there should be a set of stated objectives for the operation of the fishery as well as a purpose for the specific action being taken.

Recent examples

Recent NEFMC FMPs have grasped the distinction intuitively. Herring Amendment 1, for example, amended the Herring FMP Objectives by specifying one Goal for the fishery, and 11 Objectives for the fishery. This action also had three stated “purposes.” The Red Crab FMP has four Goals and nine Objectives for the fishery, in addition to the

stated purpose for the management action. Going back a little farther in time, the monkfish FMP even included four distinct objectives pertinent to the management of that fishery.

The task at hand

The Small Mesh Multispecies fishery currently has no stated objectives. Amendment 12 contained vague objectives specific to rebuilding overfished stocks (ie., objectives relevant to the action being taken), but no overall guidance applicable to the management of the fishery. The Groundfish plan, under which the SMM fishery has been managed, has three sets of stated objectives, but you have to dig around to find them:

1. *Policy for multi-species fishery management (1983)*
2. *Groundfish FMP (1986)*
3. *Amendment 13 to the FMP (2003)*

The *Policy for multi-species fishery management* has two objectives:

- Allow the fishery to operate and evolve with minimum regulatory intervention
- Adopt initial measures to prevent stocks from reaching minimum abundance levels

The original Groundfish FMP says only that:

The objective of the Northeast Region Multi-Species Fishery Management Plan is:

to control fishing mortality on juveniles (primarily) and on adults (secondarily) of selected finfish stocks within the management unit for the purpose of maintaining sufficient spawning potential so that year classes replace themselves in the stock on a long-term average basis; and to similarly reduce fishing mortality for the purpose of rebuilding those stocks where it has been demonstrated that the spawning potential of the stock is insufficient to maintain a viable fishery resource; and further to promote the collection of data and information on the nature, behavior and activity of the multi-species fishery, and on the effectiveness of the management program.

Amendment 13 to the Groundfish FMP begins to get a bit closer to what we traditionally think of as management objectives:

1. Manage the northeast multispecies complex at sustainable levels.
2. Create a management system so that fleet capacity will be commensurate with resource status so as to achieve goals of economic efficiency and biological conservation and that encourages diversity within the fishery.
3. Maintain a directed commercial and recreational fishery for northeast multispecies.
4. Minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse impacts on fishing communities and shoreside infrastructure.
5. Provide reasonable and regulated access to the groundfish species covered in this plan to all members of the public of the United States for seafood consumption and recreational purposes during the stock rebuilding period without compromising the Amendment 13 objectives or timetable. If necessary,

management measures could be modified in the future to insure that the overall plan objectives are met.

6. To promote stewardship within the fishery.

The question I asked at the Council meeting, and I'll ask the Committee again, is "are these the right objectives for the Small Mesh Multispecies fishery?"

Moving ahead

I would offer that objectives for the fishery should include broad aspirations that encompass aspects of the SMM fishery deemed to be of particular importance. Further, I am not sure that it is fruitful to re-hash the National Standards (NS) in the objectives for a fishery, as they are somewhat set in stone and it assumed that all management alternatives evaluated in a document will be compliant with not only the NS, but all applicable laws.

Objectives listed in the FMPs I noted above may be of interest. Several of these essentially rephrased (or lifted text from) the NS, but quite a few were specific to the needs of the fishery and may have proved important in selecting management strategies for those fisheries. For the purposes of stimulating discussion, some examples are:

ATLANTIC HERRING

1. Harvest the Atlantic herring resource consistent with the definition of overfishing contained in the Herring FMP and prevent overfishing.
2. Prevent the overfishing of discrete spawning components of Atlantic herring.
3. Avoid patterns of fishing mortality by age which adversely affect the age structure of the stock.
4. Provide for the orderly development of the herring fishery in inshore and offshore areas, taking into account the viability of current and historical participants in the fishery.
5. Provide for long-term, efficient, and full utilization of the optimum yield from the herring fishery while minimizing waste from discards in the fishery. Optimum yield is the amount of fish that will provide the greatest overall benefit to the Nation, particularly with respect to food production and recreational opportunities, taking into account the protection of marine ecosystems, including maintenance of a biomass that supports the ocean ecosystem, predator consumption of herring, and biologically sustainable human harvest. This includes recognition of the importance of Atlantic herring as one of many forage species of fish, marine mammals, and birds in the Northeast Region.
6. Prevent excess capacity in the harvesting sector.
7. Minimize, to the extent practicable, the race to fish for Atlantic herring in all management areas.
8. Provide, to the extent practicable, controlled opportunities for fishermen and vessels in other Mid-Atlantic and New England fisheries.

RED CRAB

- o Consistent with the National Standards and other required provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, manage the Atlantic deep-sea red crab fishery at sustainable levels.

- Create a management system so that fleet capacity will be commensurate with resource status so as to achieve the dual goals of economic efficiency and biological conservation.
- Maintain a directed fishery for Atlantic deep-sea red crab, while at the same time allowing all fishermen the continued opportunity to land appropriate amounts of red crab as bycatch.
- Minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse impacts on fishing communities during the transition from an unregulated fishery to a regulated one.
- Develop biological, economic and social measures of success for the red crab fishery and resource.
- Develop a controlled access system to keep fishing capacity matched to the available resource.
- Promote research and improve the collection of information to better understand red crab population dynamics, biology and ecology, and to improve assessment procedures in cooperation with the industry.
- Minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse impacts associated with management of the red crab fishery on other fisheries.
- To the maximum extent possible, maintain a twelve month fishery.