

Technical Evaluation Report

of the
Northeast Consortium collaborative research project,

“A Collaborative Effort to Examine New Strategies for Managing
Closed Bottom Habitats for Sea Scallops”

Anonymously reviewed
Dec. 15, 2011

1. Introduction

This report documents an independent peer evaluation of the project, “A Collaborative Effort to Examine New Strategies for Managing Closed Bottom Habitats for Sea Scallops.” This collaborative research project received funding from the Northeast Consortium in FY2007 and was led by Dr. Brian F. Beal of University of Maine at Machias in partnership with Mr. Terry Stockwell of Maine Department of Marine Resources, Mr. Christopher Bartlett of ME Sea Grant/Cooperative Extension, and 7 industry collaborators. This mail review serves as a formal assessment of the completed project.

2. Reviewer

The following information about the reviewer is provided as evidence of the authority and expertise of the individual and to help authenticate the independent nature of the review process. The reviewer has signed the Northeast Consortium’s “Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policies for the Technical Evaluation of Projects” agreement. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Northeast Consortium.

I have a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences and have been working in the field of marine fisheries ecology and population dynamics in Northwest Atlantic systems for over 25 years, with experience in research, research administration, fishery management and student mentoring.

3. Documentation

In advance of the evaluation, the reviewer was provided with the project’s final report entitled, “A Collaborative Effort to Examine New Strategies for Managing Closed Bottom Habitats for Sea Scallops.” It was submitted to the Northeast Consortium in June 2009. Along with the final report, the reviewer received the project’s funding proposal, an annual report from July 2008 and a PowerPoint presentation of the first year’s results.

4. Comments and Recommendations of the Reviewer

The reviewer was asked by the Northeast Consortium to address the criteria developed for the evaluation of Northeast Consortium-funded projects that are

complete, noting specific strengths and weaknesses of the project. All criteria were considered, but evaluation was focused on the second, "Certification of results."

Project success: Did the project accomplish its stated goals and objectives?

- *Yes. Some objectives (hypothesis 2) were modified, but this was fully justified and appropriate given the conditions encountered when the project was brought to the field. One minor point: Hypotheses 1 and 2 seem to imply that size (legal vs sublegal) will be an analysis factor in the experiments, but this was not carried through. I suspect this is a matter of semantics.*
- *The stated goals were very broad and difficult to evaluate from the report, which was more strongly focused on the scientific aspects of the project. However, it appears from the presentation and those mentioned in the report that the goals of developing working relationships with industry members and establishing dialog concerning management options likely were met.*

Certification of results: Is there adequate description of the experimental design, methods, and data analysis? Were these approaches appropriate? Are the data accurate, precise, and believable? Are the results and conclusions well supported by the data, statistically valid, and contribute to a sound basis for management decisions and policies? If not, can anything be done to allow this?

- *The experimental design, methods and data analysis were appropriate to the hypotheses and were adequately described. The methods followed those proposed quite closely, with some additional work included (sampling the sites a year after the 30-day experiment was completed), which was not originally proposed. The data appear accurate, as precise as might be expected from field data of this sort, and are believable. The results should be useful to future attempts to develop stock enhancement of scallops, though the spat settlement results were not encouraging for the vicinity of the study.*

Dissemination of results: Are the project deliverables (publications, reports, and communications materials) of high quality and understandable to end-users?

- *Yes, the report is very well-written and complete. The PowerPoint also is easily understood.*

Project partnerships: As best can be discerned, was the project of mutual interest to participants and were all partners engaged throughout the course of the project, including project design, data collection and analysis, and application of the results or products? What were the most and least successful aspects of the partnership?

- *It appears that the project was of mutual interest to all participants throughout the project from design through implementation. I cannot comment on the most and least successful aspects of the partnership.*

Project impacts: What impacts has the project had or could it have? What are the potential effects on fishing practices; socio-economics; and fisheries, coastal, and ocean management?

- *The project has provided groundwork that will help guide future efforts for stock enhancement of scallops in the local region and also to a lesser extent in a broader region. Important aspects of the results include the variability in results from geographically adjacent microhabitats as well as interannual variability. The results suggest that collection of wild spat will not be a viable option for this region in the near term, but that closed areas could be a useful management tool (this result is less clear).*

End-Users: Who specifically could benefit from knowing about the research (i.e. fishing sector, management organization, working group, or plan development team)?

- *Those who could benefit from knowing about this research include all those who are involved with efforts for stock enhancement of scallops. This could include all of the above in addition to groups more oriented to aquaculture.*

Overall rating. Rate the overall project according to the criteria listed above as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor. Explain the reasoning behind the rating.

- *Very good. The original objectives were largely met, and additional objectives were addressed which added to the value of the project. The execution of the project was logical and scientifically sound, the analysis straightforward and the report well-written and clear.*

Future research. Is additional research needed to answer the original questions posed by the project? Are there obvious avenues of further research that should be pursued?

- *The report did not discuss future research. Additional research is not required under "Handling Experiments" hypothesis 1 unless there is a likelihood of different results with legal-size or sub-legal scallops. Hypothesis 2 was found to be impractical due to field conditions. The objectives under "Wild Spat Collection" were met and all the hypotheses addressed, but further work would definitely be possible to learn more about the reasons for the differences in results between locations and years.*

Additional remarks. Provide any further comments not covered in a prior section.

- *I was impressed with the amount of work that went into this project.*