

Northeast Consortium

University of New Hampshire

University of Maine

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

December 15, 2011

Capt. Paul Howard
Executive Director
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Capt. Howard,

The Northeast Consortium has facilitated an independent technical evaluation of the collaborative research project:

“Ecological role of adult and juvenile anadromous forage fish in downeast Maine estuaries: sea-run alewife and groundfish prey.”

This project received funding from the Northeast Consortium, in FY2005 (\$95,075) to study the role of alewife in estuarine food webs before, during and after spawning runs. The objectives were to assess the ecological role of alewife as predator and prey in downeast Maine estuarine food webs, and to assess the relationship between spatial distribution, seasonal timing and densities of alewife in estuaries relative to their movement between freshwater and saltwater habitats. Dr. Karen Wilson of the University of Southern Maine (USM) led the project in partnership with Dr. Theo Willis and Dr. Larry Waxler of USM, Chris Bartlett of Maine Sea Grant, and several commercial fishermen.

I am pleased to submit the evaluation documents to the New England Fishery Management Council. This includes the final report and two evaluation reports.

The Review:

The evaluation served as a formal assessment of the project. Two independent scientists each conducted a mail review of the project, providing comments and suggestions, which while occasionally critical, were made with the intent to improve the research, applications of the data, and future research. The reviewers were asked to focus on the final report, but supporting documents were included in the review package to give further perspective on the project. The evaluation reports were sent to Dr. Wilson in November, 2011, and her written response is enclosed.

Evaluation Criteria:

The evaluation criteria are listed in the enclosed document that describes the Northeast Consortium evaluation process. Reviewers were asked to focus on the second criteria,

certification of results, i.e. whether the experimental design was appropriate and if the conclusions are well supported by the data.

Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality:

Each reviewer signed the Northeast Consortium's conflict of interest and confidentiality policy for the technical evaluation of projects. The evaluation reports submitted do not necessarily reflect views of the Northeast Consortium, the reviewers' employers, or governments. The review comments are being submitted to the Council anonymously. However, I am always willing to act as a liaison for questions of the reviewers regarding any aspect of the evaluations.

The Northeast Consortium values this collaborative research project and the contributions that it can make to fisheries management and our collective knowledge of the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank ecosystem. Thank you in advance for your consideration and assistance in ensuring the appropriate use of the study and the evaluation reports in the management arena. Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Rachel Gallant Feeney
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CC:

Phil Haring, NEFMC
Chris Glass, Northeast Consortium

Enclosures:

- The Northeast Consortium's guidelines for the final technical evaluation for collaborative research projects, including evaluation criteria.
- Wilson, K. "Ecological role of adult and juvenile anadromous forage fish in downeast Maine estuaries: sea-run alewife and groundfish prey." Final report submitted to the Northeast Consortium September, 2009.
- "Technical evaluation report." Submitted to the Northeast Consortium April 29, 2011.
- "Technical evaluation report." Submitted to the Northeast Consortium August 1, 2011.
- Wilson, K. and T. Willis. Response to the technical evaluation submitted to the Northeast Consortium December 15, 2011.