



# **Research Steering Committee Meetings - Feb. 28, March 16 and April 14, 2011**

## **Report for the April 26-28, 2011 Council Meeting, Mystic, CT**

# **Review of RSC Meeting in Late 2010**

- **Committee addressed roles and responsibilities in view of changing external circumstances**
- **SSC development of Council research priorities**
- **“Networks” funded by NMFS, NCRP**
- **Sector operations**

# Core Functions

- **Develop research priorities that address cooperative research and that may differ, but add to the SSC's recommendations**
- **Continue to conduct reviews of cooperative research project reports**
- **Ensure linkages between funded projects and the management process**
- **Promote the utility of project results in the management process where appropriate**
- **Assume a larger “steering and oversight” role**

# **February 28, 2011 Meeting**

- **“Overview of “Networks:**
- **Teams of individuals and organizations**
- **Funded to share resources, develop and transfer new gear, information and operating practices to fishermen**
- **Process facilitated by the participation of sector managers and members**
- **Focus on improving gear selectivity and avoidance of stocks with low ACLs**

# **Cooperative Research Projects**

- **RSC conducted 9 project reviews over the course of three meetings**
- **1 oceanographic - drifter study, larval movements**
- **1 biological – sand lance behavior and taxonomy work**
- **1 habitat – effects of the WGOM closure on groundfish stock abundance in rocky habitats**
- **1 fish movements/stock boundaries – haddock migration in NE waters**

# More Projects

- **2 social science – Maps of fishing territories; Movements of NE groundfish vessels and crew, 1994-2004**
- **3 fishing gear modifications – use of sq. mesh panels; raised webbing gillnets; and the “mini Eliminator” trawl**

# RSC Comments

## Drifter study of a front in the coastal ME current system:

- Study tracked drifters in ME, inshore of Monhegan Is. to better understand the transport of plankton, larval fish and invertebrates in coastal waters.
- Results not directly applicable to mgt., but may be useful to ecosystem/habitat researchers.

# **Biological study of sand lance in the southern GOM:**

- **Study intended to develop gear to capture sand lance alive for behavioral studies and to quantitatively measure abundance.**
- **Study only partially successful. RSC recommended another technology. Work may be useful to the Ecosystem Processes Division at the NEFSC.**



# **Effects of the WGOM closure on groundfish populations in rocky habitats**

- **Gillnets were used as a sampling tool to demonstrate that some species were found in greater abundance inside the closed area.**
- **RSC commented that more and advanced analyses of the data are necessary before project results could be used in a mgt. context; also claims about the successful use of gillnets as a sampling tool were overstated, although the work could contribute to the information available about using gillnets to survey hard bottom habitats.**

## **Haddock Migration in NE Waters**

- **Part of a long-term study in which over 20,000 fish were tagged and released over 2 years, the study was designed to provide information on fish movements between stock and sub-stock management boundaries and across the boundaries of 4 year-round groundfish closed areas.**
- **The RSC agreed with the technical reviews, that results were preliminary and that GB and GOM haddock consist of groups of spatially separated populations which interact at some level.**

**Use of square mesh side panels and increased taper in trawl gear; Testing raised-webbing gillnets to reduce cod bycatch while targeting pollock:**

- **Modified trawl gear was used to look at the effects of escape panels on cod and haddock catches. The RSC noted the loss of the target species, a need for stronger modeling and a better presentation of the statistical analyses; Overall, a good concept**
- **The gillnet gear modification studied was intended to decrease the bycatch of cod while targeting pollock. Findings were promising, but considered preliminary. The RSC encouraged follow-on work.**

# **An atlas-based audit of fishing territories;** **Mapping Mobility of groundfish vessels** **1994-2004**

- **Both of the social science studies provided snapshots of fishing community use of defined areas, as well as the attitudes that shape fishing behavior.**
- **They each were considered very valuable from historical perspectives and could contribute to the preparation of social impact analyses in the Groundfish FMP and/or in the preparation of SAFE reports.**

# **Bycatch reduction in the haddock fishery through Eliminator trawl use on fishing vessels in the 250-550 hp range**

- **Project proponents contend that at least one of the nets tested (250 x 40 cm fishing circle) reduced the catches of cod and flatfish as well as monkfish and skates.**
- **After reviewing more data following an initial presentation by Pls, the RSC recommended that the GF Committee and PDT consider the larger of the two trawls tested as a “new gear” in the B-regular DAS program and in the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock SAP.**

# **Other Issues**

- **The Council may wish to address other issues that have been discussed in various venues since the last Council meeting:**
- **Research catch accounting**
- **Selling of research catch**