

APPROVED BY:

18 March 03

*Joseph W. Smith Jr*  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
*Corky Perret*

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
Tuesday, October 16, 2002  
Duck Key, Florida**

Joe Smith, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m., with the following in attendance:

**Members**

Barney White, Omega Protein, Inc., Houston, TX  
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA  
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Behzad Mahmoudi, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX  
Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Joe Shepard, (*Proxy to John Roussel*), LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

**Staff**

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Ginny Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, VA  
Lance Garrison, Garrison Environmental Research, Miramar, FL  
Jill Jensen, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA  
Chris Dorsett, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA  
Jim Twiggs, Mississippi Charterboat Association, Biloxi, MS

**Introductions and Membership Review**

J. Smith convened the meeting at 8:31 a.m. and started introductions.

**Adoption of Agenda**

J. Smith indicated that on the original agenda for the MAC meeting, Vince Guillory was scheduled to provide the Louisiana summary and forecast for 2003, but due to both a conflict with the concurrent Crab Subcommittee meeting and the recent string of storms, he was unable to prepare anything. Guillory indicated that he would provide something via mail in the next few weeks.

Smith suggested that with all the activity in Mississippi in the last several weeks regarding the reduction fishery, C. Perret should update the Committee on the current situation there under "Other Business." Perret agreed and also offered a short video of a

newscast which included some comments and information on shark/human interactions and the menhaden fishery.

D. Donaldson offered to update the Committee on the status of the menhaden port samplers. The modified agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.

### **Approval of Minutes (March 19, 2002)**

The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed. A correction was suggested to change "purse boats" to "steamers" in J. Smith's report. A new address was noted for Neils Moore and new fax numbers for Doug Vaughan and J. Smith. The corrected minutes were accepted by unanimous consent.

### **Status of 2002 Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Fishing Season**

Smith gave his status report on the 2002 menhaden fishing season. Landings through September 2002 were around 527,000 mt which was up 13% over the same period last year and 1% above the five year average. Total 2002 landings are projected to be around 580,000 mt. Weather was a factor during April/May, and September/October. Peak landings occurred in July at 144,000 mt. Menhaden were landed by 43 vessels in 2002. Effort may be down overall primarily due to increased tropical activity in September. The preliminary forecast for 2003 is around 535,000 mt.

### **Atlantic Coast Update**

Smith gave the update on the Atlantic fishery as well. Adjustments were made last year to the management board moving the industry to the advisory board. The current spawning stock biomass or SSB has been well above the target value and F is slightly below. They are still having a low recruitment to the fishery however. They are unsure of what is happening in the Northeast even though menhaden fishing effort has declined substantially. Smith promised to keep the Committee updated.

### **Multispecies Models: Menhaden Predator/Prey Interactions with Striped Bass, Bluefish and Weakfish on the Atlantic Coast**

Lance Garrison (NMFS Miami) presented the multispecies models currently being employed on the Atlantic to assess the Atlantic menhaden stocks. The model includes mortality in the form of predation from striped bass, bluefish, and weakfish. The model expands the interactions with the fishery to determine the impacts at various life history stages of those key predators and relies heavily on published diet analysis, consumption rates, and evacuation rates for each predator at different ages. Garrison's model is an extension of VPA stock assessment used by Vaughan previously for menhaden. This is Garrison's second year of funding from the ASMFC. Garrison indicated that a preliminary search for useful data in the Gulf to model was lacking and that additional studies of the menhaden predators needs to take place over the next ten years to achieve a satisfactory starting dataset.

## **Alternative Modeling for Population Dynamics**

Behzad Mahmoudi presented an alternative to “age-based” models which are currently being used in Florida. He went into considerable detail for the ECOPATH, ECOSIM, and ECOSPACE models. The interactions included in the model are much more elaborate and take into account predation, foraging, alternative prey, and is truly an “ecosystem” approach. The high number of interactions make this model very elaborate but easier than the Atlantic models because it uses the biomass approach rather than age-based data.

## **Status of CDFR Data Entry Initiative**

VanderKooy reported that at present, all the CDFRs through 1985 have been entered with the exception of 1991 which was incomplete until recently. Smith has located the missing forms from that dataset and the GSMFC is planning to enter it and the 1984 CDFRs before quitting in 2003. Both VanderKooy and Smith agree that the CDFRs are becoming harder to interpret the further back they go and Smith was not at the Beaufort Lab prior to 1984. This provides a logical break point and would place the Gulf dataset one year earlier than the Atlantic which starts in 1985. Consensus among the MAC was that this was an acceptable conclusion to this effort.

## **Menhaden Facts Website Discussion**

VanderKooy updated the group on the Gulf Menhaden Webpage. VanderKooy had provided the site to all the members of each of the Commission’s subcommittees and to date had received no additional comments. The MAC was pleased with the site and recommended immediate release to the public.

## **Election of Chair**

B. Wallace reported that the chair fell back to the states and Mississippi was nominated to the position. C. Perret accepted the nomination and was unanimously elected chair for 2003.

## **Other Business**

Perret updated the MAC on the recent events in Mississippi. Two of the three coastal counties requested that Mississippi’s Commission on Marine Resources (CMR) move the reduction fishery outside two miles from shore based on petition from the Mississippi Chapter of the CCA. Jackson County, home of Omega Protein’s Moss Point plant refused to ratify the CCA’s resolution stating that it had no merit. After meeting with the Harrison County Board of Supervisors and the CCA representatives, it was made clear that there had been no biological basis to make the request, they just didn’t like the boats so close and tourism and recreational fishing were more important in that county. The CMR will be meeting with the Hancock County supervisors in the next few weeks before making a regulatory decision.

Perret also presented a short video which included an interview with Dr. Richard Condrey (LSU). Dr. Condrey implicated the menhaden fishery as contributing to human/shark interactions by overfishing the menhaden stocks and essentially starving the sharks to the point of them targeting humans as prey. The MAC questioned Condrey's suggestion that the Atlantic stock was fished to 3% of its original population as it was completely false. The MAC pointed out that based on the shark attack database, the last few years have actually been lower than average although much more press coverage has occurred. This newscast further demonstrates the need and potential usefulness of a public website which clearly explains the fishery and provides the scientific data in laymen terms.

Finally, D. Donaldson (GSMFC) indicated that due to contractual regulations, Gulf menhaden samplers tasks may have to be assumed and supervised by the LDWF in summer 2004. These individuals would fall under the supervision of J. Shepherd and actually be LDWF field biologists. This arrangement does not preclude Smith from contacting the samplers and interacting with them.

It was suggested that an agenda item for next spring might include a presentation from Rocky Ward (TPWD) on the genetics study he has been conducting with Gulf menhaden. Staff was directed to make the necessary arrangements.

**With no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.**