S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, October 17, 2017
Mobile, AL

Chairman Herbert called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with the following in attendance:

Members
Rick Schillaci, Menhaden Advisory Council for the Gulf of Mexico, Moss Point, MS
Jason Adriance, LDWF, New Orleans, LA
Ray Mroch, NOAA Beaufort Lab, Beaufort, NC
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Peter Himchak, Omega Protein, Tuckerton, NJ
Travis Williams, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Scott Herbert, Daybrook Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Borden Wallace, Westbank Fishing, LLC, Empire, LA
Joe O’Hop, FL FWRI/FWC, St. Petersburg, FL

Others
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Tabitha Lindley, Omega Protein, Inc., Houston, TX
Ben Landry, Omega Protein, Houston, TX
Shane Treadaway, Westbank Fishing LLC, Empire, LA
Robert Leaf, USM GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Ed Swindell, Marine Process Services LLC, Hammond, LA
Gavin Rhodes-Harrison, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., New Orleans, LA
Mike Copeland, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., New Orleans, LA
Fernando Martinez-Andrade, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Al Vidrine, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
Dominique Seibert, LA Sea Grant, Belle Chasse, LA
Jimmy Sanders, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jeanne Lebaco, Sierra Club, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve Shepard, Sierra Club, Ocean Springs, MS
Chris Blankenship, GSMFC Commissioner, AL

Staff
Dave Donaldson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Debbie McIntyre, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions
Chairman Herbert welcomed everyone and VanderKooy addressed housekeeping issues. Introductions were made.
Adoption of Agenda
Schillaci moved to approve the agenda, Mroch seconded, and the agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes
The MAC reviewed the draft minutes from the last annual meeting on March 14, 2017, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Adriance moved to accept the minutes, Wallace seconded, and the minutes were accepted.

Public Comment
Herbert offered the audience a chance to provide any comment related to the agenda topics or anything else menhaden-related.

Mr. Steve Shepard with the Mississippi chapter of the Sierra Club provided some comments related to concerns over what he feels is overfishing of Mississippi Sound leading to only young, small fish compared to Louisiana waters. He reported personal observations of the vessels fishing nearly on shore and the need to move them out to at least the ICW to allow a buffer for some menhaden to survive. Mr. Shepard also brought up concerns over bycatch and lack of published reports from observers of the fleet. He would like to see well documented quantification of the total bycatch so that the public could review it and look at the impacts he knows the industry is having on all our other species.

Update on 2017 Gulf Menhaden Season
Mroch reported on the Gulf menhaden landings through September of this year. 27 vessels fished in 2017 with 4 run boats, and through September landed around 423,000mt of menhaden. So far, effort is down about 10% compared to the same time last year. As everyone knows, this was a very active tropical season with several systems pushing through in June leading to fewer fishing days. July was average but August and September were both lower as hurricanes Harvey and Irma impacted the western and eastern Gulf respectively. If the remainder of the season proceeds similar to last year, it is expected that the landings could be around 480,000mt which would be 2.9% decrease from the 5-yr average. The expected landings are around 10% higher than what Mroch had predicted in his March forecast.

Update on the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery
Mroch provided a short update on fishing in the Atlantic through September. This past year, the coastwide TAC was increased following the stock assessment to 200,000mt with about 77% being allowed to be taken by the reduction fleet in VA. The Reedville plant operated with 8 vessels again this season. In addition, one VA snapper boat had minor landings at the plant for reduction. Through September, a total of 91,530mt has been landed which is a 19% decrease from 2016 and a 23% decrease from previous 5-yr average.

Texas Cap for 2017
Mambretti reported that very little fishing took place in Texas waters in 2017. The fleet made a total of 41 sets in Texas waters and landed 2.7M lbs which was about 8% of the available TAC at around 1.2M lbs. Reporting continues to work well between NOAA and TPWD, and the fleet.
Review of Port Sample Acquisition and Processing in 2017 and Discussion of 2018 Sampling

VanderKooy and Mroch reported that the port sampling went well this year with both LDWF and MDMR providing the sample preparations and delivery to Beaufort for ageing. At this time the process will likely continue in the same arrangement in 2018. There were no noticeable delays in CDFR reporting despite the occurrence of several tropical systems in the Gulf including four named storms. Mroch reported that the Gulf port samples will be processed ahead of the Atlantic’s in anticipation of the SEDAR next year.

Mroch indicated that there is still movement to switch the industry over to electronic reporting rather than paper CDFRs which require scanning and proofing, sometimes delaying the timeliness of the effort data for reporting back to the MAC.

Gulf Menhaden Assessment SEDAR Schedule

VanderKooy provided the SEDAR timeline for 2018. Data from the state agencies, through 2017, would need to be delivered to Dr. Schueller by early May to be able to have the indices developed for the Data Workshop scheduled for the first week of June. Several conference calls will be required to get ready for the Assessment Workshop the first week of August, and the draft assessment report should be complete in time for presentation to the MAC and the Commission ahead of the November 7 Review Workshop. It is anticipated that the SEDAR will be published before the end of 2018. All workshops will be held in New Orleans to accommodate the Gulf participants.

Marine Stewardship Certification (MSC) of Gulf Menhaden

Landry reported on the sustainability certification process they are conducting through MSC. SAI Global out of Dublin was selected for the assessment and review to MSC. Both Omega and Daybrook have partnered as clients for the pre-assessment. With the positive results of the updated stock assessment in 2016, it seemed like a good time to move forward as several customers of meal and oil were looking for sustainability designations. There will be another round of public comment coming up. Certification provides consumers and customers with confidence that product is healthy and safe. It is expected that the certification process should be complete by early next year.

Election of Officers

The chair position moved back to the state agencies. Schillaci nominated Adriance for Chair in 2018. Mambretti seconded and Adriance was unanimously approved.

Other Business

Herbert gave the audience an opportunity once again to provide any additional public comment or ask questions of the MAC. There were none. VanderKooy reported that the next Commission meeting will be in March somewhere in Florida; more details will be coming.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 am.