

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 19, 2019
New Orleans, LA**

APPROVED BY:
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

for
Ray Mroch

Chairman Mroch called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

Jason Adriance, LDWF, New Orleans, LA
Ray Mroch, NOAA Beaufort Lab, Beaufort, NC
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Peter Himchak, Omega Protein, Tuckerton, NJ (on conference call)
Matt Hill, MDMR, Biloxi, MS (on conference call)
Scott Herbert, Daybrook Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Francois Kuttel, Westbank Fishing, LLC, New Orleans, LA
Joe O'Hop, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Ben Landry, Menhaden Advisory Council, Houston, TX

Others

Robert Leaf, USM GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Al Vindrine, Daybrook Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Borden Wallace, Patronus Consulting, New Orleans, LA
Shane Treadaway, Westbank Fishing, LLC, New Orleans, LA
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Ben Young, LDWF, Lafayette, LA
Trevor Moncrief, MDMR, Biloxi, MS (on conference call)
Tommy Williams, Daybrook Fisheries, Baton Rouge, LA
Fernando Martinez-Andrade, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Joe Jewell, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Chad Hanson, PEW, Crawfordville, FL
Kendall Dix, Healthy Gulf, New Orleans, LA
Corky Perret, Poplarville, MS
Amy Schueller, NOAA Beaufort Lab, Beaufort, NC (on conference call)
Gavin Rhodes-Harrison, Daybrook Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Ed Swindell, Marine Process Services, Hammond, LA

Staff

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

Introductions

Chairman **Mroch** welcomed everyone and **VanderKooy** addressed housekeeping issues. Introductions were made.

Adoption of Agenda

Herbert moved to approve the agenda, **Mambretti** seconded, and the agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes

The MAC reviewed the draft minutes from the last annual meeting on October 16, 2018 in South Padre, Texas. **Mambretti** moved to accept the minutes, **Adriance** seconded, and the minutes were accepted.

Public Comment

Mroch offered the audience a chance to provide any comment related to the agenda topics or anything else menhaden-related. There were no comments.

Update on 2018 Gulf Menhaden Season

Mroch reviewed final landings for the 2018 menhaden season. Three factories were active, Moss Point, Empire, and Abbeville with 28 regular vessels and five run boats. It was a wetter-than-average spring so there was high river flow as well as nutrients and the Dead Zone was average in 2018. The total landings for last year came in at 525,635 mt. The 2018 landings compared to March 2018 forecast showed actual landings were 24% higher. It is unclear why the forecast was so far off; it is typically within 14% but landings were high in the early spring with very high catches seen in May. Landings were steady all season with the exception of September when two tropical systems kept the boats off the water. Based on the 2018 effort, NOAA forecasts the landings for 2019 to be around 454,000 mt. **Mroch** is still exploring the potential shift to electronic reporting of the Captain's Daily Fishing Reports (CDFRs) and will continue to find funding to implement the move by 2020.

Update on the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery

Mroch provided a brief update on the 2018 fishing season along the Atlantic as well. On the Atlantic, there was one factory which operated at Reedville, VA for reduction. Following the last assessment, the total TAC was raised to 216,000 mt of which 152,392 mt were available for reduction. The total landings in the reduction fishery finished at just over 141,000 mt. This was an increase of almost 10% compared to 2017. A total of eight reduction vessels operated at Reedville as well as one snapper boat in Virginia, and four bait boats. 2018 was the third year in a row of large menhaden landings in the Northeast so an episodic event was declared for bait only which four states participated in. The season began average and uninterrupted until Hurricane Florence reduced fishing in September/October.

Updated indices of abundance from Louisiana fishery-independent sampling

Adriance provided an update on the Louisiana derived abundance indices. The industry requested these be provided from the previous year's fishery-independent samples to provide some 'forecasting' tools. However, LDWF provides no predictions. Generally, the seine, trawl, and gill-net indices have been increasing the last two years. Wallace asked if the high water levels affect the indices. **Adriance** explained that the effect of river flow on the indices has not been looked at in years and is not part of the monitoring in the current report.

Summary of Reference Points Workshop

VanderKooy explained what took place at the benchmark reference points workshop in February in New Orleans. State managers, industry reps, and ENGO and conservation reps all participated. The workshop was facilitated and the group discussed goals and objectives for the fishery. Using some exploratory tools provided by Dr. Doug Butterworth, the group agreed to continue moving forward with potential candidate reference points and any associated harvest control rules. Another workshop will be held later this spring to test the robustness of a variety of reference points in a management scenario. Following that work, the group hopes to find an option that all stakeholders can live with and collectively suggest to managers for potential implementation. The industry would like this for

their MSC effort and the ENGOs would like to have some control strategy implemented and all agreed to work proactively to that end.

One of the needs that came out of the workshop was for the state reps to explain how the legal process works in each agency to adopt or implement potential management strategies. Each agency representative addressed what was required to move forward with potential reference points and harvest control rule. **Mambretti** indicated that Texas would require about 18 months. The TPWD requires stakeholder outreach, Commission review, and finally legislative action. **Adriance** explained that the LDWF Commission has the authority on a quota. If it is handled with a quota, the regular rule making process would work but there must be public comment, legislative oversight, and potentially a legislative hearing on the proposed rule. The process would take at least six months once on agenda.

In Mississippi, Joe Jewell explained that the change must be approved by their Commission. There must be a notice of intent, public comment and assuming no major issues, the rule could be adopted in 90 days. If public hearings are requested, the process could take 120 days. **Mareska** indicated that the AMRD does not have a time issue, as it would only require amending a current regulation. The Director would take the issue to the Commissioner and the Conservation Advisory Board. There would likely be a public comment period but it could be adopted in the fall when the Alabama Commission meets.

O'Hop and **Hanson** reported that the FWC is similar to Louisiana and it could take a minimum of six months to a year to implement anything. Not having purse seining in the state would be the first hurdle however, it would be hard to set a rule when there was no fishery. The Florida Commission meets five times a year and following discussion, a draft rule, public hearing, and final rule, the proposed action could take place.

In the event that a suitable set of reference points and harvest control rules could be agreed upon in the workshop process by the various stakeholders, **VanderKooy** hopes that it would help the process but ultimately, implementation is at the state level, not the GSMFC. We are simply going through the process, it is up to the industry and agencies to work together should we arrive at an acceptable management proposal.

MSE Analysis of Reference Points for Gulf Menhaden: An Initial Illustrative Example

Leaf spoke about the proposed way forward and gave a brief review of the post-workshop actions. Since the New Orleans workshop, we have assembled a technical team to put the strawman models together which includes **Leaf**, Doug Butterworth, Rebecca Rademeyer, Dave Chagaris, and they will keep Amy Schueller in the loop. **Leaf** reviewed the short term schedule of goals moving forward. The technical team expects to be finished reviewing all the reference points and goals suggested in the workshop by late April. **VanderKooy** will set up a mid- to late June workshop for the team and all the stakeholders to meet again. The first day would be only for the team to finalize the data elements and model runs and the second day would be for the stakeholders to review all the potential reference points and determine those that seemed to fit the fishery and overall goals the best. At that point, the process will hopefully be wrapped up and the MAC could develop a proposal for presentation to the GSMFC at the October meeting and the state agencies could begin to consider.

Marine Stewardship Certification of Gulf Menhaden

Landry updated everyone on the progress being made on MSC certification. The Atlantic has been recommended for certification by the third party certifier and the Gulf is behind the Atlantic

but both fisheries seem to be on track for completion. It is expected that following the recommendation for Atlantic Menhaden certification, the other stakeholders will file an appeal with MSC and SAI Global.

Other Business and Public Comment

Mroch offered the audience a chance to provide any comment related to the agenda topics or anything else menhaden-related. There were no comments offered.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05pm.