NOAA FISHERIES

2019 New England Recreational Fishing Workshops

Summary Report

Background

The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office of NOAA Fisheries hosted a series of workshops to continue engaging the recreational fishing community in New England and to build on a similar, smaller workshop in 2017. The **goal** of the workshops was to facilitate a collaborative process for developing potential management approaches for the recreational groundfish fishery that balance the need to prevent overfishing with enabling profitability in the for-hire fleet and providing worthwhile fishing opportunities for anglers. The workshop **objectives** were:

1. Long-term: Think creatively about how the recreational groundfish fishery could be managed to improve alignment with angler and for-hire captain needs, including how to meaningfully utilize the new Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data.
2. Short-term: Develop short-term steps for working toward potential long-term management approaches that achieve, but not exceed, recreational catch limits, including Gulf of Maine cod and haddock.
3. Assess and evaluate available research around: methods for avoidance and reduction of bycatch mortality; calculation methods for dead discards; as well as release methods. Identify any gaps for future research.
4. Develop methods to regularly engage with captains and anglers throughout the season to get feedback on catch and trends, and develop ideas on how to enhance coordination between NOAA Fisheries, state partners, scientists, and the recreational fishing community.

The agenda addressed these objectives through presentations, panel discussions, small group discussions, and plenary discussions. The agendas and other workshop materials are available online: www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/2019-new-england-recreational-fishing-workshops

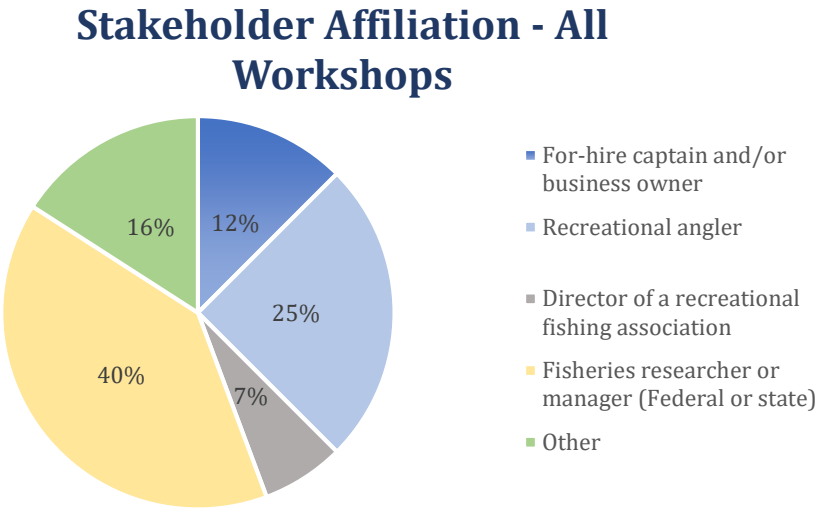
Schedule and Attendance

The workshops were held in the fall of 2019 in three New England locations.

Date	**Location**
October 19	Hotel 1620, Plymouth, MA
October 22	Hilton Garden Inn, Portsmouth, NH
October 24	University of Rhode Island Narragansett Bay Campus, RI

Cover Photo Credit: NOAA

In total, there were 75 attendees across the three workshops.[1] While 100 attendees registered for these workshops, there was near perfect weather all three days; therefore, there was a 25% attrition rate, primarily among the for-hire mode. Each workshop had diverse representation across stakeholder groups, with a mix of for-hire captains and business owners, private anglers, fishing associations, state agencies, the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, the New England Fishery Management Council (staff and Council members), researchers, and others (e.g., non-profit organizations, consulting firms, bait and tackle shops). The figure below graphically depicts the overall percentage of stakeholder affiliation for all workshops, although there were regional differences in participation. In Plymouth, the fishing community representatives were primarily private anglers, whereas the Narragansett meeting had the highest participation from local fishing associations. In Portsmouth, there was a mix of private anglers and representatives from the for-hire fleet.



Presentation Summary

NOAA Fisheries staff from the Regional Office and the Science Center presented background information on recent catch and the current management program. Management summaries focused on current recreational landing trends, including changes to recreational catch estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), and existing approaches to management. Each workshop also included presentations on current research related to recreational fisheries. Two of these presentations focused on providing science behind management or behavioral changes that can lead to an increase in haddock catch while decreasing angler interaction with cod, as well as methods to increase

[1] When duplicates are removed for facilitators and presenters who attended more than one meeting, the total number of unique attendees is 66.

release survival of cod, haddock and cusk in the Gulf of Maine. In addition, the Chair of the Atlantic Cod Stock Structure Working Group provided an update at the Plymouth workshop, while two researchers shared their ongoing and upcoming studies on cod in the southern New England region at the Narragansett workshop. See Appendix 1 for more information on the presentations.

Key Recommendations

This section focuses on recommendations from the short- and long-term management approach discussions, with the following overarching categories: new management measures; research, including pilot studies; and outreach and education. For more context and details around specific recommendations and presentations, refer to the individual workshop summaries, which are available online: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/2019-new-england-recreational-fishing-workshops

It is important to keep the regional differences and similarities in mind when reviewing the summary recommendations. A notation in the table indicates the meeting at which the idea was generated. Ideas that arose organically at multiple meetings will have more than one notation. A "*" indicates the idea was generated at the Plymouth, MA, workshop; a "^" indicates the Portsmouth, NH workshop; and a "+" indicates the Narragansett, RI workshop.

Recommendations – New Management Measures

Recommendation * = Plymouth, MA workshop ^ = Portsmouth, NH workshop + = Narragansett, RI workshop	**Short-term (S) or Long-term (L)**
Develop **multi-year regulations** with pre-planned triggers and associated adjustments to management measures that could be specified to ensure that catch was not too far above, or below, the sub ACL. (*^+)	S
Allow fishermen a **cumulative size limit** to convert discard mortality to harvest (e.g., 150 inches of haddock and 50 inches of cod, from multiple fish). (^)	S
Increase oversight of anglers through incentivizing participation in MRIP (through outreach or other methods); considering mandatory participation in MRIP; increasing enforcement; developing an app for private angler VTRs; or multi-tiered licensing. (^+)	S/L
Protect the long-term health of a fishery through increasing minimum fish size and incorporating ecosystem-level assessments. (*^)	S/L
Reduce discards with a **mixed bag** where anglers keep the first 10 fish caught of any groundfish species/size. (*)	S
Separate management measures by mode (for-hire fleet vs. private anglers). (+)	S
Use a **3- or 5-year running avg. of MRIP catch to evaluate management performance** relative to the sub-ACL, and determine if AMs should be triggered. This avg. catch data could also be used as basis for determining new measures (rather than the most recent year of data). (+)	S
Utilize short-term (e.g., monthly/seasonal) **spatial openings** for areas with low cod bycatch (based on MA DMF maps) rather than blanket closures in an area. (*)	S
Analyze the biological impacts of **slot limits**, and consider implementing if there are clear benefits to the population(s). (*)	S
Implement a **tag or 'punch pass' program** during shorter fishing seasons for low allocation species to improvement accountability (although it may require additional reporting/enforcement). (^)	S
In the short-term, recommend voluntary **gear modifications** (e.g. baited hooks vs. jigs) to reduce bycatch/mortality, and in long-term transition to mandatory with consideration of enforcement penalties in an effort to reduce mortality. (*+)	S/L

Increase MRIP intercept sampling by reallocating surveys from for-hire trips to private anglers, and rely on validated catch and effort data from for-hire VTRs. (+)	L
Transition MRIP from a sample to a census effort, with for-hire captains and private anglers submitting VTRs on a trip level. (+)	L
Evaluate how **seasons** are used as management measures through shortening seasons for some stocks with year-round or 10-month seasons to a spring/early summer season, or 6- to 8- month season. (*)	S
Consider **retention rules that change seasonally** based on different fall vs. spring mortality rates (haddock). (*)	L
Require the use of **descending devices** (for certain species) on for-hire boats, both reducing discard mortality and educating anglers about these cost-effective tools. (^)	S
Change the **start of the fishing year** to January 1. (^)	L
Instead of new management measures to control effort, **quota should be allocated by mode**, allowing more flexibility with an output control, and perhaps relaxing input controls. (+)	L
Recalculate the **Georges Bank cod catch target** based on the most recent 5 years of new MRIP data. (+)	S
Overall regulatory considerations: *importance of consistency between state and federal regulations, publishing final management measures in January/February, effective enforcement*	

Recommendations – Research and/or Pilot Studies

Recommendation * = Plymouth, MA workshop ^ = Portsmouth, NH workshop + = Narragansett, RI workshop	**Short-term (S) or Long-term (L)**
Analyzing several alternatives for **split management measures by mode**. (^+)	S
Test the **tag/punch pass program** for low allocation species over a short open season. (*^+)	S
Cumulative size bag limit (e.g., overall size limit for a species that could be made up of multiple fish). At end of the trip, survey anglers' satisfaction with this approach. (^)	S/L
Evaluate methods for developing **allocations by mode**, reviewing and comparing historical catch and VTR data, e.g., analyze allocation of GB cod to for-hire and private anglers. (+)	S/L
Full retention study where anglers keep the first 10 fish (mixed species), and then conduct a survey on angler experience relative to fishing trips where they target specific species. (^)	S/L
Determine the feasibility of a **management pilot study through an EFP** that would apply to multiple FMPs (state and federal). If feasible, the study would assess the ability of the for-hire fleet to adapt to customer's preferences of species/experience on a day-to-day basis. For example, in SNE, fluke, tautog, cod, striped bass, tuna, black sea bass, and scup. (+)	L
Research climate change impacts on species distribution, competition, habitat preference, and biological targets (reference point), e.g., study habitat projections and life cycle connectivity of sea bass and fluke. Use data to inform future allocations and regulations. (+)	L
Conduct a study to **validate VTR/eVTR data for catch** (vs. effort only) on party and charter boats, including an option to use EM systems to validate VTR data. This catch data can be used to ground-truth MRIP data, or replace MRIP sampling of for-hire vessels (shifting this effort to private anglers). (+)	S/L
Design a pilot study developing "**eVTR**" (or an equivalent reporting form) **for private anglers using an app**. (+)	S
Test and **analyze alternatives to increase collection of effort data** through using technology such as aerial surveys, remote sensing, or shore-based cameras to count anglers on shore and at boat ramps. (+)	L

Recommendations Outreach and Education

Recommendation * = Plymouth, MA workshop ^ = Portsmouth, NH workshop + = Narragansett, RI workshop	**Short-term (S) or Long-term (L)**
Publish annual regulations by January/February in order to allow for outreach of new measures at winter trades shows and for planning/marketing in the for-hire fleet. (*^+)	S/L
Improve angler education at 'point of sale' for licenses at trade shows, online, or in-person. Could also partner with states, USCG auxiliary, harbor masters, bait and tackle shops, etc. These can be printed materials (e.g., toolkit) for distribution at these outlets or by captains, and/or available online, and should be translated into several languages. (*^)	S
Develop outreach videos on: regulations; best practices – handling, gear modifications; and importance of participating in MRIP. These can be shared by fishing associations, fishing websites/blogs, and considered during licensing process (on a voluntary or mandatory basis, similar to the shark ID video, which is mandatory for an HMS endorsement). (*^+)	S
Create a **one-time mandatory training course** for anglers (similar to a hunter safety training course) that is in person or online and required to get your initial saltwater angler's license. (^)	L
Optional training clinics can also be held on: gear modification, bycatch avoidance, handling practices, and cooking lesser-known species. These can be held in schools or libraries. (+)	
Specifically assist MA DMF in their outreach efforts for the **GOM cod bycatch avoidance maps** and use of the app. Also assist with outreach around the **benefits of using a baited hook** verses a jig for lower cod bycatch and higher cod release survival. (*)	S
Overall outreach considerations: *collaboration with partners is key; outreach should be multilingual; develop an educational sub-committee that can develop an outreach and education plan*	

Next steps

Following the workshops, the Regional Office and Tidal Bay Consulting (TBC) presented key outcomes from the workshop at the Council Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) meeting on November 12 and the Council meeting on December 4, 2019. These outcomes were discussed within the context of discussions around recreational management measures for fishing year 2020, groundfish specifications for Framework 59[2], and Council priorities for calendar year 2020.

In addition, the Regional Office and TBC prepared detailed workshop summaries, which were distributed to workshop attendees, Council members, and posted online. The Regional Office will distribute both the overall report and individual workshop summaries to other partners in an effort to advance some of the research and state-level recommendations.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is leading a research project that addresses a workshop recommendation for a pilot study. In 2019, TNC collected electronic monitoring and reporting (EMR) data on one charter boat in RI and one party boat in NH, with the objective of validating catch information reported in these for-hire vessel trip reports. Results are expected to be distributed in the winter of 2020.

The Regional Office is already moving forward with one overarching recommendation from all workshops. This focuses on outreach and education of recreational management measures; best practices for handling catch, gear modifications, and bycatch avoidance; and the importance of participating in MRIP intercept surveys and telephone surveys. Pending funding, the Regional Office intends to develop scripts and work with a video production company to produce short (2-3 minute) videos on the topics above. These videos would be developed in coordination with state partners, and would be distributed through the recommended outreach methods (see Outreach and Education Recommendation table).

[2] We were scheduled to present at the Groundfish Committee meeting on November 25, 2019, but ultimately did not present due to day-of changes to the agenda.

APPENDIX I – LIST OF PRESENTATIONS

Science and Management Presentations

- *Federal fisheries management primer*
  - Emily Keiley, NOAA Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov

- *Marine Recreational Information Program overview*
  - Moira Kelly, NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Moira.Kelly@noaa.gov

- *Trends in recreational catch*
  - Scott Steinback, NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Scott.Steinback@noaa.gov

- *Update on groundfish stock assessments*
  - NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Fisheries Science Center staff:
    - Brian Linton, Ph.D., Brian.Linton@noaa.gov (MA)
    - Charles Perretti, Charles.Perretti@noaa.gov (NH)
    - Russel Brown, Ph.D., Russel.Brown@noaa.gov (RI)

Research Presentations

- *Deriving release survival estimates and best practices for promoting survival in the Gulf of Maine recreational groundfish fishery*
  - Matt Ayer, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA), Matt.Ayer@state.ma.us
  - Connor Capizzano, Ph.D Candidate, University of Massachusetts Boston & New England Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center (NH), ccapizzano@neaq.org

- *Gulf of Maine cod bycatch minimization*
  - Matt Ayer, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA, NH)

- *Update on the Atlantic Cod Stock Structure Working Group*
  - Richard McBride, Ph.D., NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Fisheries Science Center (MA), Richard.McBride@noaa.gov

- *Atlantic cod in southern New England: are they climate deniers?*
  - Joseph Langan, University of Rhode Island (RI), Joseph_langan@uri.edu

- *Hook and line survey for spawning Cod near the South Fork Wind Farm*
  - Brian Gervelis, Inspire Environmental (RI), Brian@inspireenvironmental.com