

2022 FALL NRCC MEETING SUMMARY
Hilton Garden Inn – 100 Boardman Street, Boston MA
October 24-25, 2022

Attendees

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)

Joe Cimino, Vice-Chair, Day 1

Bob Beal, Executive Director

Toni Kerns, Interstate Fishery Management Program Director

Patrick Campfield, Fisheries Science Program Director

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC)

Mike Luisi, Chair

Wes Townsend, Vice-Chair

Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director

Brandon Muffley, Staff

Dr. Paul Rago, Chair, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)

New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC)

Eric Reid, Chair

Rick Bellavance, Vice-Chair

Tom Nies, Executive Director

Chris Kellogg, Deputy Director

Dr. Lisa Kerr, Chair, SSC

NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC)

Dr. Jon Hare, Science and Research Director

Dr. Michael Simpkins, Chief, Resource Evaluation and Assessment Division

Dr. Russell Brown, Chief, Population Dynamics Branch

NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO)

Mike Pentony, Regional Administrator

Sarah Bland, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries

Dave Gouveia, Assistant Regional Administrator for Analysis and Program Support

Liz Sullivan, Sustainable Fisheries Division (NRCC staff support)

Laura Hansen, Sustainable Fisheries Division (NRCC staff support)

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

John Carmichael, Executive Director, Day 1

Guest Presenters

KB McArdle, NEFSC, Fisheries Monitoring Operations Branch, Day 1

Kiley Dancy, MAFMC, Day 1

Jonathan Star, Scenario Insight, Day 1

Douglas Christel, GARFO, Day 2

Dr. Brian Linton, NEFSC, Day 2

Additional Attendees- Virtual

Geoff White, ASMFC, ACCSP Director
Julie DeFilippi Simpson, ACCSP, Day 1
Mary Sabo, MAFMC staff
Jason Didden, MAFMC staff, Day 1
Julia Beaty, MAFMC staff, Day 2
Jose Montanez, MAFMC staff
Hannah Hart, MAFMC staff, Day 2
Karson Cisneros, MAFMC staff
Dr. Cate O'Keefe, NEFMC SSC Vice-Chair, Day 1
Mike Pierdinock, NEFMC
Angela Forristall, NEFMC Staff,
Dr. Jamie Cournane, NEFMC Staff
Jonathon Peros, NEFMC Staff
Janice Plante, NEFMC Staff
Sam Asci, NEFMC Staff
Joan O'Leary, NEFMC Staff
Rachel Feeney, NEFMC Staff
Robin Frede, NEFMC Staff
David McCarron, NEFMC Staff, Day 1
Jennifer Couture, NEFMC Staff
Michelle Bachman, NEFMC, Day 1
Dr. Anthony Wood, NEFSC
Dr. Charles Adams, NEFSC
Sean Lucey, NEFSC
Brant McAfee, NEFSC, Day 1
Dr. Charles Perretti, NEFSC, Day 2
Dr. Larry Alade, NEFSC, Day 2
Jessica Blaylock, NEFSC, Day 1
Paul Nitschke, NEFSC
Ryan Shama, NEFSC, Day 1
Sara Weeks, NEFSC, Day 1
Susan Wigley, NEFSC, Day 1
Dr. Victoria Luu, NEFSC, Day 1
Bridget Harner, NEFSC, Day 1
Moiria Kelly, GARFO Staff, Day 1
Spencer Talmage, GARFO Staff, Day 2
Cynthia Ferrio, GARFO Staff
Douglas Potts, GARFO Staff, Day 1
Sue Tuxbury, GARFO Staff, Day 2
Sam Tolken, GARFO Staff, Day 1
Karla Gore, NOAA Southeast Regional Office, Day 1
Roger Pugliese, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Staff, Day 2
Myra Brouwer, SAFMC, Day 1

Public Attendees

Katie Almeida, The Town Dock

Dr. Matthew Cieri, Maine Department of Marine Resources

Francine Karp, Harbor Light Software, Day 1

Brooke Lowman, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, Day 1

Jacki Odell, Northeast Seafood Coalition

Jay Odell, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Day 1

Kate Wilke, TNC, Day 1

Kelly Whitmore, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, Day 2

Note: NRCC decisions and action items that resulted from this meeting are in bold for ease of reference.

– Day 1 –

1. Catch Accounting and Data Management

Mr. Dave Gouveia provided an update the Fisheries Dependent Data Initiative (FDDI) and Catch Accounting and Monitoring System (CAMS). Since the spring, staff have been developing the regional electronic vessel trip report (eVTR) data model, transitioning from the design phase to implementation phase; modifying Fish Online eVTR applications to support lobster and clam reporting; making enhancements to the Commercial Fisheries Dealer Electronic Reporting System (CFDERS); continuing development of universal trip identifier (UTID) and “one stop reporting” (OSR) efforts; and continuing development of CAMS. It was noted that there is not a definite timeline for the UTID, due to competing priorities (noted above), and the team has been more focused on OSR. OSR work has progressed as ACCSP’s eTrips eVTR application is capable of supporting OSR reporting of the GARFO eVTR and SERO SEFHIER logbook programs. However, a new permitting system recently implemented at SERO has created some technical issues that have prohibited additional progress. GARFO, HMS, and ACCSP are working with SERO to address those issues.

Mr. Gouveia provided an update on CAMS, and noted that an internal review and comparison of legacy AA landings outputs to CAMS was completed, which found CAMS data to be accurate and satisfactory for use in stock assessments. The majority of an internal review of CAMS discard outputs was also performed, but additional work was needed to finalize the review. As a result, only the landings component of CAMS was used in the 2022 stock assessments and discard estimates for assessments were based on previous methodology. Mr. Gouveia shared that the current project plan of CAMS is to use discard outputs and values for the spring 2023 assessments. He further noted that a peer review of CAMS by the Center of Independent Experts (CIE) is scheduled for January 2023. Ms. Toni Kerns expressed the concern that there are still two discard methods being used estimate discards, which will lead to continued discrepancies between NEFSC and GARFO estimates. Mr. Gouveia explained that they are in the process of finalizing a single discard method, but cautioned that although a single methodology would be utilized in CAMS, there still may be differences in the actual discard estimates depending on the

lens used for estimating discards. Mr. Gouveia explained that the primary charge of CAMS was to develop a common set of landings and discards for each stock for each fishing trip. In essence, creating one common set of base data. Those data will then be utilized for quota monitoring and stock assessment purposes by applying the appropriate criteria used for quota monitoring and stock assessments. Mr. Mike Pentony added that there will always be different estimates for discards given differences in fishing vs calendar year, or a different stratification, etc. With CAMS, however, they will be drawing on one set of data and using the same method of calculating discards. Dr. Mike Simpkins further stated that once the CIE review is complete, both quota monitoring and assessments should be using CAMS for landings and discards.

Mr. Tom Nies questioned whether the Assessment Oversight Panel (AOP) had truly approved the review and comparison of legacy area allocation (AA) landings outputs to CAMS, stating that they did not have a choice about using it, since the AA tables are no longer produced. Mr. Nies also asked whether Atlantic herring will be using CAMS for catch data moving forward. NEFSC will follow up on whether Atlantic herring will be using CAMS for catch data moving forward (**Action Item #1**).

Mr. Nies pointed out that the algorithm for the AA tables previously used for stock assessments were published in 2008, but that he does not know the algorithm for dealer matching imputation system (DMIS), and asked if the algorithms were comparable. Mr. Gouveia stated that as he understood it, the algorithm used in DMIS was a common open source method and that, based on the comparisons done between the CAMS and the AA Tables for 2019, the algorithms are comparable. Ms. Kerns and Mr. Nies expressed some concern about the amount of time available to prepare for the CIE review. Mr. Nies asked if the review would be public, and whether it will look at quality control (QC). Mr. Gouveia replied it would be public, but that the review was focused on the methods used to generate the base data to support quota monitoring and stock assessments, and that there is QC embedded in CAMS, but that is not within the scope of the CIE review.

Mr. Gouveia gave a presentation about the data processing and quality program at GARFO, which includes the collection of dealer and vessel reports, dealer and vessel compliance, dealer and vessel data auditing, and data reconciliation (industry data investigation, or IDI). The program is in the midst of modernizing the regional fishery dependent data collection system design and processes, including the incorporation of electronic technology as appropriate. There are several challenges, including the complexity of dealer reporting systems, which are distinct, and therefore business rules and audits cannot be deployed uniformly across each system. Additionally, the contract funding for staff devoted to assisting industry with data reconciliation was lost, which resulted in this task being shifted to our Port Agents. This additional task was added to their existing portfolio that results in less time dedicated to data reconciliation.

Dr. Chris Moore stated that it seems like things are going alright internally (at GARFO and NEFSC), but wondering about how to handle the overlap with the South Atlantic, especially as climate change begins to create more overlap. Mr. Gouveia explained that there isn't any reluctance from anyone, but that there are different structures in place. The South Atlantic has been a little behind in switching from paper to online, and APSD is trying to focus on the big ticket items, like highly migratory species (HMS).

Mr. Nies stated that it seems like a lot of the focus of quality control program was on timely data submission and correct vessel and dealer identification. He asked about how erroneous data or missing data was addressed (for example, unrealistic prices or poundage). Mr. Gouveia stated that there are thresholds for various species price and pounds as well as missing data fields. Missing data or data outside of those thresholds are flagged and the dealer or vessel operators are contacted to address the error or omission. But he added that it is impossible to catch every error. Mr. Nies also asked who looks for errors in the day-at-sea (DAS) database, pointing to a specific instance of a DAS overage in the monkfish fishery. Mr. Gouveia stated that his staff are working with enforcement to improve DAS monitoring.

2. Observer Program Performance

Ms. KB McArdle provided a presentation of the observer program performance, including Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP), Groundfish at-sea monitoring (ASM), industry-funded scallop (IFS), and herring industry-funded monitoring (IFM). She provided an overview of the retention and recruitment challenges, and the efforts the Fisheries Monitoring Operations Branch (FMO) has taken to increase retention of observers, including cross-program efforts, work with provider companies, and program-specific efforts. She also gave some other program challenges, such as COVID-19, specialized gear fisheries, proximity to ports, competing needs of the observer program across multiple fleets, and observer safety.

Mr. Nies asked how the Northeast compares to other parts of the county, and Ms. McArdle explained that other regions manage their programs differently, for instance having 100-percent coverage. Attrition is high since Covid. Dr. Paul Rago asked if observers were acknowledged for their hard work, and Ms. McArdle explained that there are awards given to highly performing observers. Mr. Pentony asked if the achieved coverage rate thus far for 2022 (37 percent) was typical for this time of year, or indicative of an issue. Ms. McArdle replied that this was typical, but if a provider is not on track to achieve 90 percent, they must provide mitigation. Mr. Pentony pointed that if two reasons for leaving (advance career and lack of career advancement opportunities) are combined, that could be a top reason for attrition. While there is a lot we cannot control, career advancement is something within our control, and perhaps it should be highlighted how the observer program can be a stepping stone to other opportunities. Ms. Kerns raised a concern about ASMFC staff receiving NEFOP data, and NEFSC agreed to follow up separately (**Action Item #2**).

3. Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) 3-Year Report

Ms. McArdle provided an overview of the SBRM 3-year review. Susan Wigley had been the lead for SBRM, and it is transitioning to Brant McAfee. The SBRM omnibus amendment (2015) included the requirements of what must be included in the report for each 3-year review. Due to COVID-19, there were limitations on the discard analysis, and NEFSC is dealing with a backlog of data. NEFSC plans to produce a timely 2021-2023 SBRM 3-year review report as required to the best extent practicable. The report will be significantly pared down due to the impact of COVID-19 waiver of observer deployments from March to August 2020, and the resulting data gap. The only year in this review cycle to have a completed discard and sample size analysis is

2023. Work on the SBRM 3-year review report is planned for April-October 2023. Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) and Plan Development Team (PDT) chair(s) will be selected by January 1, 2023, and membership will be identified by March 1, 2023, to start work in April. **The NRCC supported this timeline.**

4. Did Not Fish (DNF) Reports

Dr. Moore led a discussion of the DNF reports, which were discontinued in 2015, and noted that some Council members and stakeholders expressed interest in reinstating the DNF requirement as they could be a much needed validation tool. He noted that the South Atlantic region still requires them, and there are some permit holders who fish in both the South Atlantic and mid-Atlantic. Reinstating the DNF reports is part of the draft implementation plan for 2023 for MAFMC, but there are workload issues, and MAFMC would like input from NEFMC, as any action on this should be a joint action between the two councils.

Mr. Nies relayed that there was some interest from party/charter sector, but no interest from the commercial sector, and it was not on the NEFMC's priorities list. Dr. Moore indicated that he expects it to remain on the MAFMC's priorities list, and that MAFMC would take the lead if NEFMC agreed to participate. Mr. Rick Bellavance asked how important the DNF reports were, since there was no way to affirm a charter boat didn't fish. For example, if a vessel doesn't submit a report, the assumption is they didn't fish, but there isn't a two-ticket system like there is in the commercial fishery to verify if they were fishing or not. Mr. Pentony agreed that if a permit holder were to fill out a year of DNF reports, NMFS would have no way to validate that those reports and it would be important to evaluate whether it is worth the effort to find a way to validate the vessel reports. Mr. Bellavance pointed out that by signing the DNF, there is an extra level of enforcement. GARFO was asked to query for-hire permits against reporting to inform further discussion regarding the reinstatement of DNF reports (**Action Item #6**)

5. Stock Assessments

Dr. Simpkins gave a progress report from the assessment working group (AWG), which had been directed to focus on the larger-scale, priority issues, including the following:

- **Sustainability** - Seek a sustainable level of work for all staffs involved - For all issues, consider how to address w/ existing resources, or using fewer resources
- **Throughput** - Evaluate recent and planned throughput, consider ways to enhance
- **Flexibility** - Consider ways to enhance flexibility and reduce overhead
- **Guidance/oversight of RTWGs and WG chair** - How to support RTWGs, share best practices, and address challenges as they arise?
- **Data bottlenecks** - How to address existing data bottlenecks?
- **RTWG membership** - How to take best advantage of inclusion of diverse experts?
- **Report delivery times** - How to expedite delivery, while meeting requirements?
- **RT-MT transitions*** - Improve these and ensure sufficient time for success

Dr. Simpkins highlighted many of the successes the new assessment process has achieved in these issues, but also acknowledged the challenges for each topic the AWG has discussed so far. The AWG will continue to review these issues, and implement any recommendations. A critical

impediment has been with the processing and provision of data, and NEFSC is seeking resources for additional capacity.

Mr. Nies questioned whether the Georges Bank (GB) haddock assessment could be considered “successful,” given the Canadians unwillingness to participate in the GB cod or GB yellowtail flounder assessments. Dr. Simpkins elaborated that he had been referring to the additional action that was taken to react to the challenges of the assessment, but Mr. Nies pressed this, pointing out that issues had been raised early, but it took a long time to address and resolve. He also expressed concern that the process was not sustainable. Mr. Nies also pointed out that research track (RT) assessments on the same stock are likely to be separated by 6-8 years. Dr. Hare clarified that all had seen issues in these groups before action was taken, and that this will be a good lesson to learn from, so that earlier action will be taken.

Mr. Nies also expressed concern about finding errors in assessment reports too late. He also relayed concern about precision, Level 1 MT stock assessments, and the quality of the Level 1 reports. Level 1 assessments do not receive peer review, and so have ended up getting reviewed at the SSC meetings. Dr. Lisa Kerr pointed out that, given missing data, additional review was suggested, but this was not applied uniformly. Mr. Nies expressed concern about stocks that were not scheduled for an assessment (research track or benchmark) since 2008. Mr. Nies also questioned whether the qualifications for RT chairs, which had been agreed upon by the NRCC in 2015, were still be followed. He expressed concern about the shift of fiscal responsibilities (such as a Council hiring a facilitator to assist the RT). Last, he raised the overall timeline of RTs – while it has been taking approximately 2 years to complete an RT, another Council’s executive director relayed that theirs are done in 2 months. Dr. Russ Brown pointed out that in the past with benchmarks, there would be a small group of internal people, and possibly a single Council staffer, and those reviews went faster. But now there is a more inclusive process, with more stakeholders being able to participate, especially with the shift to virtual meetings, rather than all meetings being held in Woods Hole. This does mean that there are more data issues (data access, participants being less familiar with databases, etc.), and the reviews take longer. The chairs used to always come from Population Dynamics Branch, but the new process has opened it up to others. Dr. Brown also mentioned that they are offering facilitator training to all RT chairs.

Ms. Sarah Bland reiterated Dr. Brown’s response, and added that it can be difficult to find someone willing to serve as a chair, which led to the need for a facilitator (funded by NEFMC). She also mentioned that Michele Traver and others are putting together guidance documents to help pick a chair that allows them to expand the pool of who can chair.

Ms. Kerns asked if there would be a step in the process if ASMFC is brought in to host a data workshop.

Dr. Rago agreed that it is good to have inclusiveness, but that if the process or the terms of reference are too generalized, that can be a barrier that prevents ideas from coming into the mix. It might be necessary to relax one standard – either inclusiveness or generalizing.

Mr. Nies suggested that at the AOP meeting, the SSC Chair from the Council that manages the stock should have more of a say in the MT review level, and that the AOP should not make decisions about levels based on workload. He added that the SSC Chair has a better understanding of the issues likely to be raised during the development of ABCs, and that their opinion should carry more weight than of a representative who has limited interest in the stock or familiarity with the fishery. Mr. Eric Reid expressed concern about RT extensions being granted and time deadlines not being met.

Dr. Simpkins asked if the AWG should continue its review of priority issues (report delivery, RT-MT transitions, and sustainability), or move to something else. Mr. Bellavance suggest adding report accuracy to the report delivery. Dr. Rago asked, with respect to the AOP process, if there was something that could be improved, whether there was an algorithm to what the levels should be. Mr. Nies pointed out that some SSC members have said there should not be any Level 1s, due to issues that the SSC then tries to fix on the fly, and there have been inconsistencies about how the levels have been applied. Dr. Rago stated that those issues have not occurred for Level 1 assessments in the Mid-Atlantic. Dr. Brown pointed out that the value of the AOP is to structure the management track (MT) peer review to be efficient, and give the appropriate review time to each MT. The AOP attempts to reach consensus, but at some point, a decision must be made.

Dr. Simpkins gave an update on the Research Track Steering Committee (RTSC), for which Dr. Brown has volunteered to chair. There were four applicants from the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions, and the NRCC deputies recommended adding all four, in addition to the representatives from ASMFC, MAFMC, NEFMC, three participants from NEFSC's Population Dynamics Branch, and one representative from NEFSC's Ecosystem Dynamics and Assessment Branch. **The NRCC supported the membership for the RTSC.**

Regarding the schedule, the key challenge was the need to add up to two more cod stock MTs, given the work on the RT. Additionally, the cod RT will not be ready for the March 2023 review. While there was some discussion about the merits of changing the schedule, it was agreed that staff from NEFMC, GARFO, and NEFSC would meet to discuss the timing of the cod research track and related action(s), prior to the research track and groundfish committee meetings in November 2022 (**Action Item #7**).

Mr. Nies expressed some concern about the cod assessment delay having an impact on skates, as well as the next halibut assessment. Mr. Bellavance also was concerned about silver hake, which is not on the RT schedule. Dr. Brown agreed that there has not been an RT or benchmark on skates, and there are questions about reference points. Perhaps in a future skate MT, it can be a level 3 – while there is not much new information, there could be new ways to consider the data. If cod is delayed, skate can remain on the MT schedule, and perhaps be elevated for a higher level of review. Mr. Nies agreed, and pointed to some new technical memos on data limited stocks that could help. Regarding halibut, there are stock identification issues, plus the bi-national aspect, and Mr. Nies suggested that perhaps the management unit could be revised to exclude the Canadian management unit. Regarding silver hake, Dr. Brown would like to explore higher level models, and pointed to issues with tracking cohorts. He suggested that if it were on

the RT schedule for 2027, it could give the RTSC a reason to suggest research to help look at these issues.

Additional discussion regarding assessments took place on Day 2, but the summary is incorporated here for clarity.

6. East Coast Scenario Planning

Ms. Kiley Dancy and Mr. Jonathan Starr provided a presentation regarding the current status of scenario planning. A summit meeting will be planned for February 15-16, 2023. It was agreed that MAFMC would find and pay for the hotel for the meeting, but that member organizations would be responsible for their own participants to attend. Ms. Kerns suggested that if food was provided, a working lunch would be possible. Dr. Moore suggested that the agenda be developed first, but that MAFMC could provide lunch, if needed.

Regarding design, Mr. Starr stated that he expected a good list of priority issues to be discussed at the summit, and most discussions would likely be best in plenary, rather than breakout groups. Mr. Reid asked if breakout groups would create more work for the core team to recombine the information, and Mr. Starr agreed, pointing out that breakout groups would also require logistics (extra space) and so the goal should be to keep as much in plenary as possible.

Regarding the number of participants per organization, Dr. Moore asked if there was concurrence on ten. While several agreed, Dr. Jon Hare and Mr. Pentony expressed concern about limiting NMFS to ten people, given the need to cover two regional offices, two science centers, and headquarters. Mr. Starr stated that the majority of participants should be managers, and Mr. John Carmichael mentioned that it might be hard to bring in advisory panels or SSC members, and that science roles should be to provide information, not to make decisions. **The NRCC generally agreed that Regional Administrators, Science Directors, and likely someone from General Counsel should be included but not counted towards the limit of ten.** Mr. Nies asked if there were any concerns about inviting non-Council/non-staff to the summit. GARFO will speak with General Counsel on any potential legal issues (Federal Advisory Committee Act) with funding participation of members outside of Council and Commission Staff (**Action Item #3**).

Mr. Starr outlined the potential categories of actions:

- Actions that could be undertaken by individual management bodies;
- Multi-region or coast-wide coordinated changes, with no legislative changes;
- Recommendations that would require legislative change;
- Federal policy changes (non-legislative); and
- Guiding principles to evaluate future management actions in light of climate resilience/adaptability.

Mr. Nies expressed concern that there would be recommendations that a Council did not agree with. He also expressed concern about recommendations for legislative change, given the limitations on Council members with respect to grassroots lobbying. The Scenario Planning

Core Group will explore the respective limitations of recommending legislative changes and potential effects on the outcome and messaging of scenario planning exercise ahead of the summit meeting (**Action Item #4**). Dr. Hare pointed out that this was a list of potential actions, rather than recommended actions. Dr. Moore stated that if the report is too general, it would be useless, but too specific, it will cause issues – there needs to be a middle ground. Mr. Pentony pointed out that, if the outcomes are considered recommendations, which would require consensus. Likely, there will be a list of actions with associated limitations (legislative barriers, non-consensus, etc.), and seeing them as “potential” actions could be useful. Mr. Carmichael pointed out that “action” in this context did not need to be a fishery action (i.e. framework or amendment), but could be steps that could be taken. Mr. Nies suggested that the group “*identify* possible actions,” to differentiate from recommendations. Dr. Moore asked whether ideas that are only supported by one or a few would make the list, and Dr. Hare suggested that participants could vote up potential actions. Mr. Carmichael also suggested there by some criteria for evaluating potential actions: Can it be done? What problem does it solve? What are the risks?

The Scenario Planning Core Group will compile a draft report of the Summit meeting in time for the Spring 2023 NRCC meeting (**Action Item #5**). Dr. Moore clarified that the review of the draft report is to agree that it represents what occurred, not to change what happened.

– Day 2 –

7. Atlantic Sturgeon Action Plan

Mr. Nies provided a brief overview of the sturgeon action plan, stating that most of the measures apply to gillnet fisheries, including several different fishery management plans (FMPs). He posed the question whether the Councils should take a coordinated approach, given the joint management of monkfish, and potentially do an omnibus to pull in dogfish, Northeast multispecies, and skates. Dr. Moore stated that sturgeon was discussed at the last MAFMC meeting, and it was moved up to be a definite action, despite there being no final implementation plan. He suggested talking to the chair of the protected resources committee, and agreed that working together could increase effectiveness and efficiency. Mr. Beal stated that ASMFC would not need to be included in a larger omnibus action, but would likely take action to follow suit on any actions that affected the dogfish fishery. Mr. Pentony provided the context that the Councils will need to develop an action in 2023 in time to implement by 2024. The NEFMC, MAFMC, and the ASMFC agreed to talk with their respective staff about a potential joint effort to address the Atlantic Sturgeon Action plan, and would hold a leadership call to discuss further (**Action Item #8**).

8. Port Sampling

Brian Linton provided a presentation about the reductions to port biological sampling, which will likely introduce uncertainty in landing-at-age data. Simulation testing is needed, as it would be useful to understand the magnitude of the issue on model performance and scientific advice. Conducting a simulation will also be useful to help us understand the tradeoffs between sampling costs and the level of sampling necessary to maintain reliable scientific advice. While the

Population Dynamics Branch does not currently have the full capacity to investigate this issue, this topic does offer the opportunity for potential collaboration.

The program costs approximately a million dollars per year. Mr. Pentony explained that, while the funding has remained flat, the costs (program administrative fees, quality control, the sampling contract) have increased with inflation. Dr. Moore suggested that the Agency could use Inflation Reduction Act money, and asked if additional funding would allow an increase in samples in 2023, or if nothing would be in effect until 2024. Dr. Brown suggested that if there were an infusion of funds in 2023, they could make recommendations to increase samples, but was not sure whether the contracting company could implement that increase. Mr. Wes Townsend suggested that observers could take samples as part of their work. Mr. Brandon Muffley ask whether there would be value for the Councils or Commission to work with NEFSC to support a contract for the simulation work. GARFO will investigate modifications to the port sampling contract to accommodate potential funding increases that would provide additional samples, and determine what the lead-time would be to bring on additional port samplers to achieve increased port samples. Additionally, GARFO will determine how much funding would be needed to achieve the 2015 sampling level (225,000 samples) (**Action Item #9**).

9. Offshore Wind

Mr. Doug Christel provided an overview of the offshore wind projects. Dr. Brown mentioned that the option of floating wind farms could potentially open the amount of habitat that could be covered by wind, but that there isn't enough communication regarding this topic. Mr. Christel explained that part of the reason NMFS has partnered with Responsible Offshore Development Alliance is to increase the amount of communication and information sharing including through an upcoming Synthesis of the Science workshop dedicated to floating wind technology. Efforts on the west coast have been more focused on floating, whereas the east coast has been more focused on fixed, and there are more efforts to explore. Mr. Reid expressed concern about how wind turbines are anchored to the bottom and connected to each other. Dr. Rago encouraged the use of vessel monitoring system (VMS) data, and asked if there was any potential linkage between VMS and CAMS data. Mr. Christel stated that there have been efforts to compare VMS data for some fleets, and to use other sources as well (cooperative research data, catch data, etc.). Mr. Bellavance stated that developers weren't interested in sharing the data from their fishery monitoring plans, and Mr. Christel replied that the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance is looking into the issue and that there are conversations about sharing the data responsibly through data sharing agreements. There is at least one memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a developer to share data with NMFS, with others possible. Mr. Reid asked how shore-based economic impacts were assessed, and Mr. Christel explained that they use ex-vessel prices and a multiplier. They are also exploring the topic with SeaGrant and other funding opportunities to learn more, and it's been raised as part of the draft fishery mitigation/compensation guidance being developed by BOEM.

10. Other Business

There was recently a decision to not publish Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) catch data that has over 50 percent standard error (PSE). Mr. Bellavance expressed concern

about who would have access to the data and whether it would have an impact on assessments. He also pointed out that there were other management uses for the data, beyond the incorporation into assessments. This topic will be discussed at the Spring 2023 meeting, and staff NMFS' Office of Science and Technology will be invited to the meeting (**Action Item #10**).

Ms. Sarah Bland provided a brief update on the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports. GARFO and NEFMC staff have planned to use an upcoming herring action as a test case, and by the spring meeting, GARFO will be able to provide an updated process for the other FMPs to follow (**Action Item #11**).

Regarding future meetings, Dr. Moore expressed a desire to stop using the term "hybrid." He suggested that meetings have a virtual option, especially to allow for public participation, but that participants should be attending in person. Ms. Kerns also requested that meeting materials be submitted and distributed sooner, to allow for NRCC members to better review ahead of the meeting.

Next Meeting

The Spring 2023 NRCC meeting is scheduled for **May 9-10, 2023**, in Gloucester MA. GARFO is chairing and hosting.