

Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel Meeting

-Webinar-

August 7, 2020, 1:00p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

This document summarizes the discussions of the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) which convened via webinar on August 7, 2020. A summary of key discussion points, recommendations, and action items is included. This summary does not capture every comment or discussion point, and included comments may not represent consensus. Relevant comments from follow-up correspondence between panel members post-meeting have been included.

I. Participants

A. NTAP Members:

Name	Affiliation
Anna Mercer	NEFSC
Terry Alexander	NEFMC Member
Anthony DiLernia	MAFMC Member
Bill Gerencer	MAFMC Stakeholder
Chris Parkins	ASMFC Representative
Wendy Gabriel	NEFSC
Frank Mirarchi	NEFMC Stakeholder
Jim Gartland	MAFMC Scientist
Michael Luisi	MAFMC Member
Phil Politis	NEFSC
Pingguo He	NEFMC Scientist
Robert Ruhle	ASMFC Representative
Tim Miller	NEFSC
Vincent Balzano	NEFMC Member
Vito Giacalone	NEFMC Stakeholder
Chris Roebuck	MAFMC Stakeholder
Mike Sissenwine	NEFMC Scientist
Dave Goethel	NEFMC Stakeholder
Dustin Gregg	NEFMC Stakeholder

B. Other Participants:

Name	Affiliation
Andy Jones	NEFSC, CRB
Matthew Seeley	MAFMC
Russell Brown	NEFSC, PDB
Paul Rago	MAFMC SSC
Michelle Duval	MAFMC Member
Daniel Salerno	Sector Manager
Elizabeth Etrie	Northeast Sector Service Network, Inc

II. Summary Discussion Points by Agenda Topic:

A. Door Testing on NOAA Ship Henry B. Bigelow - led by Phil Politis

Bison 8 doors were located by Terry Alexander, have been rigged at Trawl Works and are ready for testing.

B. Wingspread Experiment Publication - led by Andy Jones (NEFSC, CRB)

A draft publication on the results of the wingspread experiment has been prepared. NTAP panel members were encouraged to contact Andy Jones if they would like to review the draft. Center leadership encouraged a peer-review paper rather than a Center Reference Document. Submission is planned for early fall to Fisheries Research. Publication coming along. Key takeaways from the experiment that will be in the paper include; 1) changes in wingspread were observed to have no significant effect on efficiency, 2) changes in wingspread were observed to have a significant effect on total catch. The panel members asked if the results will have an impact on stock assessments. The answer was that the results could have an impact on stock assessments, particularly in terms of encouraging/supporting the use of swept area biomass

C. Swept Area Integration Update - led by Wendy Gabriel (NEFSC, PEMAD)

There are two possible approaches for integrating swept areas into stock assessments.

1.) Development of a new comprehensive database structure, with associated modifications to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's (NEFSC) Assessment Data Input and Output System (ADIOS). The timing of this approach depends on the availability of a database designer/architect and some programming support. Dedicated resources need to be sought out.

2.) Utilize the NEFSC Population Dynamic Branch's developed shiny application (App) using the statistical free-ware software R package 'Shiny'. The Shiny app accesses survey data on internal Center servers and works to adjust actual swept area to a standard area, and then generate indices. This can serve as a near-term way to integrate swept areas into stock assessments and would be implemented in summer 2021 stock assessments, after consideration by the Assessment Oversight Panel.

A meeting attendee asked if the R Shiny App can adjust for swept area and gear comparison and NEFSC staff answered yes. It was also asked whether the adjusted index data would be accessible to the public and NEFSC staff answered it could be upon request.

It was discussed that the change in area swept due to wingspread could be important for Index-based assessments. A panel member noted that for specific species like

yellowtail flounder a small change in estimated biomass can be important so integrating swept area into stock assessments is an important step forward.

D. 2020/21 Research Update - Led by Wendy Gabriel

Given the uncertainty about the future, planning will be difficult. Wendy Gabriel went over the COVID-19 based survey cancelations of Spring and Fall 2020 and announced that sea time will likely be limited in 2021. The panel had a discussion reevaluating NTAP research options due to COVID-19 uncertainty. The following research options were discussed.

- Rockhopper- chainsweep comparisons. There was a sense that more chainsweep comparisons would increase precision only slightly, although there was some interest, limited in scope of getting estimates for Georges Bank winter flounder, cod, and red hake.
- Carry over funding to Fiscal Year 2022 for future side-by-side work between the Bigelow and NEAMAP. NTAP would focus on developing the approach and methodology for the side-by-side research in 2020/21.

Pros:

- Side-by-side work was recently identified as the highest priority among NTAP panel members.
- Cooperative research projects are relatively highly visible and funded from dedicated budget lines, so would be relatively less likely to be redirected/lost if carried over.
- There is past side-by-side research we can learn from in developing approach

Cons:

- Carryover always has some risk of being redirected.
- Bigelow operating schedule and ability to accommodate a side-by-side project is uncertain and may be limited in FY21: the schedule is still under development, and demand for dedicated sea days is high.

- Mine currently available data to better understand/compare performance of NEFSC Bottom Trawl Survey relative to NEAMAP (NEAMAP-Bigelow tows in same strata, Bigelow-Hera side-by-side research in 2015, rockhopper-cookie sweep comparisons). Funding would support a postdoctoral fellow or similar, to undertake analyses.

Pros:

- This could provide a ballpark estimate of the number of tows that would be needed for a viable side-by-side calibration experiment.

- Data are already in hand.
- Project could be wrapped up in a single year.

Cons:

- Data may be sparse and require filtering (e.g., direct comparison of NEAMAP-Bigelow tows) or may depend on some assumptions about comparability of Hera/IBS yellowtail trawl to Darana R/NEAMAP trawl.

■ Extend inshore surveys (NEAMAP, MA/NH) into offshore strata in fall of 2020 to fill gaps from Bigelow.

Pros:

- Data could eventually fill time series gaps for some species, depending on strata sets covered and future availability of calibration coefficients.

Cons:

- Coverage of entire stock areas may not be possible.
- Data could not be included in stock assessment to fill gaps until calibration coefficients were obtained. Development of calibration coefficients would likely take several years, depending on available vessel time and funding. (In general, the NEFSC cannot commit to funding multiple years of support, or obtaining dedicated sea days on future ship schedules.)
- Analytical assessments can be conducted with missing years of indices and the importance of the missing data declines as more years of data are accumulated.

■ Design survey for wind energy areas suitable for integration in stock assessments

Include NTAP in the development of a comprehensive plan with multiple methodologies. Funds could be used to support a post-doctoral fellow to develop and document a survey plan in collaboration with NTAP, or support gear research for potential modifications for wind energy area habitats, if feasible.

Pros:

- NTAP represents a recognized regional pool of expertise in gear, trawling, and survey operations.
- Evaluation of feasibility of alternate trawl designs and methods will be part of a comprehensive review of sampling methods appropriate for wind energy areas, as the NEFSC identifies how to survey in wind energy areas and integrate that information with coastwide surveys.

- There is a potential opportunity to leverage external funding (e.g., BOEM).

Cons:

- Concrete scope would need to be identified. Survey science for wind energy areas may be under development from several perspectives and at different time scales (e.g., surveys required as a condition of lease, by developers; augmenting long-term regional monitoring surveys by state and federal agencies with compatible, interoperable methods). Role of ROSA is evolving.

Action:

- 1) *Explore and share past side-by-side research*
- 2) *Conduct a vote via email on new established research alternatives*
 - a) *NEFSC staff will compile ideas and send email*
 - b) *Panel members will send their prioritized preference to Matt Seeley*
 - c) *Matt will score and report out the results*
- 3) *Schedule next NTAP meeting and/or working group meeting (November 2020?)*