

Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel Working Group

Report on November 19, 2018 Meeting

The Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) Working Group met on November 19, 2018. The main focus of our discussion was the work on Chris Roebuck's boat, the Karen Elizabeth, that was awarded this fall for NTAP. Chris's boat is a twin trawler and is very unique to the East Coast of the United States. A twin trawler actually tows two identical or different nets to catch the species it's after. We are using 2 identical Bigelow nets for our project. This time, the wing spread on the Bigelow is not as consistent as it should be so the research project is to see what the actual effects are on catchability of different species because of wing spread. As we are all well aware, different species react differently to mud clouds, ground cables, legs, and twine herding them. According to the manufacturer of the net and all the test tank work done with the net when it was being tested, the ideal spread between the wings of the net is 12.9 meters. The test is to see if the lack of or too much spread effect the stock assessments of index-based stocks we manage under ACLs. Index-based stocks are highly susceptible to variation in survey catch.

The project will be done by setting one net at the control wing spread of 12.9 meters and the others at varying spreads, ranging from, on the underside, 11.5 to 9 meters, and, on the higher side, between 14.2 to 15.5 meters. The idea is to test whether the reduction in catches are steady decreases so they could quantify them, or if it just falls off the cliff at a certain point so we would not be able to use those tows that do not meet the minimum and maximum spreads in assessments. I believe the NEMAP survey does not use any tows that are below 12 meters and above 14 meters. They use the same net as the Bigelow but they have a cookie sweep instead of a rock hopper like we use here.

The project will be 14 DAS, 7 in the Northern area (Gulf of Maine) and 7 in the Southern area (Southern New England and New York Bight). The species being looked at in the North are Dabs, Monks, GoM BBs, Red Hake, Witch, Northern Windowpane, and possibly Thorny Skates and Halibut. In the Southern area, the species are Monkfish, Red Hake, Windowpane, SNE BB, SNE YT Flounder, Skates, and Silver Hake.

The full NTAP will meet December 17th to decide whether or not it concurs with the outcome of the working group's work, and we should have a follow up in January at the council meeting.

Wrap-up, action items, next steps

The group agreed to follow up on these tasks:

1. Refine priority species list, including species for length-based analyses (NEFSC).

2. Develop draft experimental design based on agreement reached at this meeting and share with NTAP WG for further concurrence in addition to additional stock assessment expertise (NEFSC).
3. Develop at-sea real-time analytic tool (NEFSC).
4. NTAP members consider availability to join future gear trial experiments set for Spring.
5. Door experts develop recommendations for gear configurations (Bison: Alexander, Goethel; Thyboron 4: B. Ruhle, J. Ruhle; Others: TBD).
6. Summarize meeting and present to next full NTAP meeting.