

**River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG)
Ecosystem Integration Committee Webinar/Conference Call
December 9, 2014
2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

Summary

I. Overview

The Ecosystem Integration Committee (EIC) of the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group was established to “ensure that the work of the subgroups is fully integrated to facilitate subgroup and TEWG discussions, as well as conservation planning development.” The EIC is comprised of chairs/co-chairs from the six river herring TEWG subgroups. Diane Borggaard (taking the place of Kim Damon-Randall) and Jon Hare, co-chairs of the EIC, convened a call on December 9, 2014, to continue discussions with the committee. The draft agenda focused on providing updates on any cross-cutting and overlapping issues discussed in the subgroup meetings. This meeting summary includes the primary discussion topics and outcomes to contribute to future TEWG discussions. The information provided below reflects individual expert opinion and not consensus.

II. Key Topics

A list of individual expert opinion provided by EIC members or the public on various overarching topics is presented below:

- Chairs/co-chairs provided summaries of each of the subgroup’s work to-date, including any larger considerations related to the subgroups for committee discussion.¹ Topics with broad implications related to the TEWG and its products included the following:
 - Subgroups are working to consider and compile information in a cohesive manner while avoiding redundancies from previous work (e.g., NMFS NEFSC’s predator effects virtual model being considered by Species Interaction Subgroup). Some subgroups have compiled a list of data gaps and/or conservation actions (e.g., Stock Status, Fisheries, Genetics). These subgroups have (Genetics) or are in the process of (Stock Status, Fisheries) conducting individual rankings. Additionally, some subgroups are continuing to consider existing literature and/or status of research to inform the identification of data gaps, research needs, etc. (e.g., Species Interaction, Climate Change).
 - The text from the EIC’s June meeting summary was considered and discussed (“As subgroup work progresses, white papers (i.e., written reports) which outline discussions specific to the TEWG’s expected products and related to

¹ See TEWG meeting and subgroup summaries for additional information on subgroup progress:
<https://www.nero.noaa.gov/protected/riverherring/tewg/index.html>
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each subgroup's overview should be submitted to the EIC and consequently the TEWG.”). NMFS and ASMFC asked that these white papers, even if in draft form, be provided by the end of January to help form the development and rollout of the River Herring Conservation Plan for March. Some subgroups will have a draft outline of a report (e.g., Climate Change) and other subgroups will capture the process they have used to date, what the current products are, the future direction, etc. (e.g., Stock Status). Although each subgroup will determine the format for their white paper, the status of TEWG products for the Stock Status, Genetics and Fisheries subgroups are similar so chairs/co-chairs may want to discuss formats.

- Preliminary findings of a coast wide survey (Maine to South Carolina) of river herring fishermen were presented by Julia Beaty and Dan Kircheis, NMFS. Dan and Julia have been working on a phone survey of current and former river herring harvesters from Maine to South Carolina. The survey focuses on harvesters' observations of changes in run timing, species composition, fish size, and abundance, as well as their perceptions of the health of the runs in their local areas, the greatest threats to their runs, and what to do about those threats. Dan and Julia have compiled a call list that represents over 1200 potential survey respondents, and this list is still growing. As of December 5, they have called 789 individuals and successfully surveyed 113. The responses to date show geographic patterns in descriptions of species composition (i.e. the amount of alewives vs. bluebacks), abundance changes, perceptions of the status of the runs, and threats to river herring populations. Answers do not vary much based on whether the respondent fished commercially, recreationally, or for personal use. Dan and Julia plan to finish the survey over the next few months and should have a final report ready by early spring. It is hoped that the results of this survey will be relevant to river herring conservation and restoration efforts and of interest to the TEWG. The survey effort is ongoing but preliminary findings were presented at the EIC meeting in case useful to future subgroup discussions (e.g., future presentation to subgroups). A subsequent presentation will be provided to the TEWG when more information is available (tentative March).
- NMFS acknowledged appreciation to the subgroups for making the process transparent by ensuring that any products (e.g., identified data gaps and/or conservation actions) be circulated to the TEWG for feedback to help broaden input.

III. Key Outcomes

A list of individual expert opinions provided by participants related to specific threats, data gaps, research projects, conservation actions, information to be considered and/or monitoring (i.e., the identified research projects and/or conservation actions) is provided below. These outcomes are listed in no particular order and are related to cross-cutting and/or overlapping subgroup issues. See the background document and table for the full list of cross-cutting and overlapping issues at <https://www.nero.noaa.gov/protected/riverherring/tewg/ecosystem/index.html>

- Data Gaps
 - Consideration of dam removal and the implications for interactions of landlocked and diadromous river herring. (This could be an important issue and the Genetics Subgroup has discussed.)
- Information To Be Considered (e.g., published papers)
 - Thomas E. Bigford (2014) Forage Species and Issues, Fisheries, 39:8, 340-340, DOI: 10.1080/03632415.2014.933425 (*Provided by Eric Schultz*)

IV. Next Steps

The EIC discussed the following next steps:

- The EIC will provide any comments on the overlapping issues documents to Diane and Marin before the TEWG meeting (if possible) or in two weeks (December 23rd). The EIC will continue to think about how to address the overlapping issues to avoid duplication and facilitate coordination.
- The EIC will convene the week before the next TEWG meeting. The EIC will continue to discuss ecosystem issues, and will put this on the agenda for the next call. Additional ideas for possible speakers should be provided to NMFS and ASMFC for the next meeting.
- White papers are to be sent to Diane and Marin, and the EIC, for feedback by the end of January.
- If there are any suggestions on how to facilitate the role of the chairs/co-chairs, please send them to Diane and Marin.

V. Participants

- Committee Members

The affiliation of each member can be found on the TEWG EIC website (see below):

Michael Alexander	Janet Nye	Jason Didden
Michael Bailey	Jeffrey Pierce	(portion of call)
Alison Bowden	Diane Borggaard	
Jon Hare	Eric Schultz	
Dan Hasselman	Kevin Sullivan	

- Staff

Julia Beaty
Dan Kircheis

VI. Meeting Materials

The following materials were provided to support the meeting. Additional information can be found at the TEWG EIC website:

<https://www.nero.noaa.gov/protected/riverherring/tewg/ecosystem/index.html>

- Draft Agenda
- Draft Word Document and Table of Overarching Issues
- Publication noted in “Information to Be Considered” section above