

**River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG)
Ecosystem Integration Committee Webinar/Conference Call
September 17, 2015
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 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 and Jon Hare, co-chairs of the EIC, convened a call on September 17, 2015, 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. The EIC also discussed ecosystem considerations. 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:

- **Conservation Plan:** The EIC met to receive an update on the Conservation Plan, and changes to meeting schedule for the TEWG moving forward. Diane outlined that since the publication of the online Conservation Plan and based on that status of the TEWG/subgroup’s expected products, the need for the TEWG to meet via conference call four times per year was not needed moving forward. Instead, the TEWG will meet two times per year but subgroup meetings will occur as issues and topics emerge that the subgroup chair/co-chairs feel warrant a meeting of the subgroup. For the status of updates to the online Conservation Plan moving forward, NOAA and ASMFC staff will be updating the Conservation Plan on an annual basis. Similar to before, if there are items that the TEWG subgroups and/or members feel should be included or added to the online Conservation Plan that they should email Kirby and Diane as necessary. The EIC discussed the possibility of sending updates (quarterly suggested or some other frequency) to the TEWG between meetings to keep everyone informed on various issues.

- **ASMFC River Herring Data Standardization Meeting:** Kirby provided the committee an update on the upcoming ASMFC River Herring Data Collection Standardization Meeting. The meeting was developed based on recommendations from the TEWG (individual, not consensus) and ASMFC Shad and River Herring Technical Committee.

With different approaches currently utilized along the coast to monitor river herring, the main goal of the meeting was to help determine a standardized approach for surveys currently being carried out, as well as for future surveys that may be initiated in coming years. Other topics that will be discussed are data limited approaches to stock assessments. The meeting participants have been invited by ASMFC, with each state and federal agency or federally-recognized tribe involved in river herring management on the Atlantic coast nominating one or two attendees. The meeting will also be made available to the TEWG to listen and provide public comment through webinar. Dan Hasselman suggested that standardization of tissue samples is an important topic for the meeting.

- 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:

Dan Hasselman (Genetics Chair): The subgroup has not met in a while. There continues to be improvements in genetics research, and Dan has recently received samples from marine observer programs. In other news, Dan will be moving and working on Columbia River issues. He intends to stay involved with the TEWG, and will remain chair of the Genetics subgroup moving forward. In other news, there is an interest in continuing to process river herring tissue samples for genetics research work. Current limiting factors for conducting the work are staff and funding. Jason Didden will relay information to Dan about a possible funding opportunity.

Alison Bowden (Habitat Co-Chair): The subgroup met in May 2015 to receive an update on the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation habitat restoration final report and discuss green energy and its role in the Bay of Fundy currently. The NFWF habitat restoration report highlighted a tool used for evaluating areas for the greatest benefit for habitat restoration for alosine species. On the discussion of green energy, the subgroup discussed whether energy development in the ocean should be added to the Conservation Plan as an area to study further. Some members of the subgroup felt that it may be useful to write a white paper on energy development in the ocean in the U.S. and Canada.

Eric Schultz (Species Interaction Chair): The subgroup last met in November 2014. Eric will be following up with Kirby and Diane on getting information out on evaluating catfish's role in predation (and bioenergetics) on river herring. Eric noted it's a good method for the subgroup to evaluate for species interactions; it builds off of concern such as the diminish of river herring in Connecticut may be due to increased abundance of striped bass and the system may have increased predation on river herring.

Jason Didden (Fisheries Co-Chair): The subgroup has not met since August 2014. Jason has circulated an update on the 2014 draft report of data gaps and conservation ideas. Jason is seeking comments and edits from the subgroup and TEWG before finalizing the updated

¹ See TEWG meeting and subgroup summaries for additional information on subgroup progress: <https://www.nero.noaa.gov/protected/riverherring/tewg/index.html>

draft report. Canada remains a gap. A suggestion was made that Gerald Chaput from Fisheries and Oceans Canada made a presentation to the DSSRN in the past which may be beneficial. Chairs/co-chairs can provide other suggested contacts.

Kevin Sullivan (Stock Status Co-Chair): The subgroup last met in February 2015. With the notice of the River Herring Data Collection Standardization Meeting, there's been hesitation to have a meeting as the subgroup is interested in seeing the outcome of that meeting. The EIC discussed that following the Data Collection Standardization Meeting, Kevin and Mike with Diane will determine the timing for the next subgroup meeting and continue to identify potential speakers on data limited approaches.

Janet Nye and Mike Alexander (Climate Change Co-Chairs): did not participate on call

Jon Hare (EIC Co-chair) provided the committee an update of NOAA's Climate Science Strategy and increased priority in having climate change be evaluated in current and future research. Jon will provide the committee with a copy of the strategy.

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>

- Jason Didden provided the group an update that in the absence of the recently suspended Research Set-Aside program, the MAFMC will be setting up a Cooperative Grant Program for 2016 and beyond. Initially total funding amount may be \$400-500K. There will be the possibility for research topics and request for proposals specific to river herring. As the program becomes more developed Jason will provide the group with more information.
- Information To Be Considered (e.g., published papers)
 - *Konstantinos Ganias, Jeffrey N. Divino, Katie E. Gherard, Justin P. Davism Foivos Mouchlianitis and Eric T. Schultz*, In Press. A reappraisal of reproduction in anadromous Alewives: Determinate versus indeterminate fecundity, batch size and batch number. Transactions of the American Fisheries Society.

IV. Next Steps

The EIC discussed the following next steps:

- The EIC will provide any comments on the overlapping issues documents to Diane and Kirby. The EIC will continue to think about how to address the overlapping issues to avoid duplication and facilitate coordination.

- The EIC and its subgroups will continue to discuss and/or think about ecosystem issues.
- NOAA Fisheries and ASMFC will follow-up on the EIC's ideas for possible speakers for a future TEWG meeting (e.g., Carlos Garza).
- The next TEWG call is on September 24th, with a focus on tribal issues and reports from recent research on river herring avoidance in commercial fisheries.

V. Participants

- Committee Members

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

Alison Bowden
 Eric Shutlz
 Jason Didden
 Mike Bailey
 Kevin Sullivan
 Dan Hasselman
 Mary Beth Tooley
 Jon Hare

- Staff

Diane Borggaard
 Kirby Rootes-Murdy
 Dan Kircheis

- Additional TEWG Members

Katie Drew
 Kirsten Curti

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