

River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG)
Conference Call Summary
March 19, 2015
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

The River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG) held its fifth conference call on March 19, 2015 to discuss the following: 1) the status of the river herring conservation planning; 2) receive updates on TEWG-related initiatives; and 3) provide updates on TEWG subgroups and committee efforts. Below is a summary of the discussions.

1). River Herring Conservation Planning

NOAA Fisheries and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) have awarded research project grants to further understanding of river herring populations. One is in the New England (a multi-state and organization partnership to link life stages of river herring through marine bycatch mortality, freshwater productivity, and spawning stock recruitment from Maine to Connecticut through marine bycatch mortality, freshwater productivity, and spawning stock recruitment) and the other is in the Mid-Atlantic (Barnegat Bay Partnership and Rutgers University will conduct surveys and collect data to help improve understanding of historic and current distribution of alewife and blueback herring spawning habitat in Barnegat Bay and Raritan River).

As laid out a year ago, NMFS and ASMFC are drafting an initial conservation plan for the TEWG to provide comment on. The next step is for the ASMFC Shad and River Herring Management Board to review the plan before it goes to the public. The conservation plan is intended to provide updates on the implementation of research, conservation activities, and other updates from ASMFC and NMFS. The products from the TEWG subgroups will also be included. NMFS and ASMFC provided an overview of what the web-based plan would look like. ***It was noted on the call that the “Genetics/ Hybrids/Landlocked” subgroup page should be similarly labeled***

There were reports provided on an initiative related to the TEWG. An overview is provided below and additional information, including the full presentation, can be found on the TEWG website (<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/riverherring/tewg/index.html>):

- U.S. Federal Tribal Coordination: Jessica Pruden (NOAA/NMFS) provided an overview of the policies that guide NMFS consultation and coordination with Federally Recognized Tribes. Jessica reviewed one of the fundamental principles of the relationship between the Federal Government and Federally Recognized Tribes, the Federal Trust Responsibility. Jessica summarized NMFS and ASMFC coordination with State and Federally Recognized Tribes specific to River Herring management and conservation. NMFS and ASMFC solicited interest from the Tribes in participating on

the TEWG. The Passamaquoddy Tribe, Pleasant Point, designated Ed Bassett to serve as tribal expertise on the TEWG. The Passamaquoddy Tribe, Pleasant Point, drafted a comprehensive paper entitled: The Cultural Importance of River Herring to the Passamaquoddy People in response to NMFS' interest in understanding the cultural importance of river herring in the U.S. and Canada to East Coast Native American Tribes and First Nations to support the River Herring Conservation Plan. Lastly Jessica provided an overview of the funding opportunities available for river herring conservation specific to Tribes including NMFS Species Recovery Grants to Tribes; USFWS Tribal Wildlife Grant Program (Awarded to Passamaquoddy Tribe, Pleasant Point for river herring project in the St. Croix River); and the DOI BIA Tribal Cooperative Landscape Conservation Program. ***Ed Bassett was unavailable to attend the meeting to present on the Cultural Paper, but the request has been made for him to present at the June TEWG meeting***

2). General River Herring Updates and/or Initiatives

There was a report provided on updates and/or initiatives related to the TEWG:

- Darren Porter (Canadian commercial fisherman) provided a brief overview of his concerns regarding developments on possible hydropower turbines being used in the Bay of Fundy. While many species may be impacted, Darren was most concerned over the mortality of juvenile and sub-adult herring from the turbines. There was a discussion by the group on different types of turbines as well as studies on impacts from hydrokinetic turbines on herring. Additional concerns were raised by other members (e.g., some genetics studies have shown the rivers in the Bay of Fundy may be home to specific species of herring). Related studies were noted by other members that may help inform the topic (e.g., suggested by Paul Jacobson, Ted Castro-Santos). *** It was agreed that Alison Bowden and the rest of the habitat subgroup would further discuss the topic on their next call. Alison asked for any information to inform the topic to be sent to her***

3). TEWG Updates (More detailed summaries of the subgroup calls and progress are available on the TEWG website)

- General TEWG Updates (Coordinators: Diane Borggaard and Kirby Rootes-Murdy): Diane introduced Kirby Rootes-Murdy (ASMFC) to the group as the new ASMFC FMP Coordinator for Shad and River Herring. Also discussed was the next scheduled full TEWG call (currently for June 2nd, 2015). This date presented issues for at least a few individuals, a doodle poll will be sent around to try and find a different date/time. The next call will be September 1st from 1-4pm, and a poll for the December will be sent in the future. ***Kirby and Diane will

send around a doodle poll for the full TEWG to provide their availability for a call during the first two weeks in June, if possible***

- Fisheries Subgroup (Co-chairs: Jason Didden and Mary Beth Tooley): Jason Didden provide a brief update of work the MAFMC is currently doing on river herring. Specifically, the MAFMC is developing priorities for their request for proposals regarding research on how to set catch caps for river herring bycatch in their directed commercial fisheries. Jason is working with both the MAFMC Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) as they had not been involved previously. Jason is interested in getting some SSC members involved in the TEWG in some capacity, and is interested in ideas for the Fisheries Subgroup to discuss.
- Climate Change Subgroup (Co-chairs: Janet Nye and Mike Alexander): Janet Nye provided a brief update regarding the subgroup's call in December 2014. Additionally, she noted the subgroup compiled research needs, individually ranked them, and currently they are in the process of finalizing a summary of research priorities. The top three research priorities were 1) Environmental Tolerance and Thresholds 2) Behavior and Physiological variables on survival 3) River flow. In response to a question about funding opportunities, there are not many funding opportunities on physiological studies as many relate to a bigger picture of river herring conservation. One TEWG members noted that information from power plant discharged and ASMFC's Habitat #9 series may information the topic. Another TEWG member stressed the need to study the impacts of climate change specific to each species of herring (alewife vs. blueback) in part because of anecdotal evidence that they are being impacted differently. ***Any additional environmental tolerance information should be sent to Janet and Mike***
- Stock Status Subgroup (Co-chairs: Kevin Sullivan and Michael Bailey): Kevin Sullivan provided a brief update on the issues the subgroup has identified for developing a stock status for river herring, such as data standardization, ageing techniques, and collection of better assessment data. The subgroup has noted the data shortage with river herring. Kevin has begun a white paper that he'll be providing the larger TEWG group with soon. ***Additionally the ranking of those issues will need to uploaded to the TEWG website***
- Genetics/Hybrids/Landlocked Subgroup (Chair: Dan Hasselman): Dan Hasselman provided the group an update of the subgroup's last call from October 2014. The need for rangewide population structure, better molecular marker techniques and where incidentally caught river herring originate were ranked highest on the subgroup's list of areas needing research. Additionally, Dan noted that there is good progress on these topics based on the recent funded research for such work using new molecular markers.

- Habitat Subgroup (Co-chairs: Alison Bowden and Jeff Pierce): Alison Bowden provided the group with a brief update of the call the subgroup had back in November 2014. The subgroup is currently reviewing a white paper of progress to date. There is currently a project funded to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Habitat Program/The Nature Conservancy through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's River Herring Initiative which relates to habitat and details will be made available in the future.
- Species Interactions Subgroup (Chair: Eric Schultz): Eric Shultz provided a brief update of the subgroup's interests. Currently the subgroup is interested in the top down effects of predation on river herring, and of those species, as well as which species and area/location that may be having the biggest impact. One example they're looking at is striped bass predation on river herring in the Connecticut River, and the use of fishing quotas and bonus seasons on striped bass to reduce predation on river herring. From this was discussion of other species that prey on river herring including pelicans and cormorants. There was discussion of various predators such as striped bass, (e.g., Canada), white pelicans (e.g., North Carolina), cormorants (e.g., South Carolina). ***Eric will provide the full TEWG group with the paper he was referencing on the use of striped bass quota in Connecticut River, and Darren Porter with additional information on the striped bass bonus fishery***
- Ecosystem Integration Committee (Co-chairs: Diane Borggaard and Jon Hare): Diane and Kirby provided the group a brief update of the EIC call from March 9th. During that call Les Kaufman discussed his work on investigating historical landings of shad and river herring, while pushing the group discussion to focus on broader goals in understanding habitat considerations for river herring conservation. Les highlighted the need to focus habitat considerations on the watershed level as land use impacts may hold direct implication for river herring abundance. This discussion moved to considering ecosystem modeling while also acknowledging the lack of dedicated personnel and funding to delve further into integrated ecosystem modeling for river herring. The lack of long-term datasets for river herring and the need for consistency in run counts was also noted. The TEWG discussed this call in relation to broader coastal perspectives, most notably trying to account for ecosystem work that may be going on along the coast (mid-Atlantic and south Atlantic) as the view point of the TEWG has largely been the northeast. Toni Kerns and Kirby Rootes-Murdy pointed out that more information on the states regarding shad and river herring sustainable fishery management plan are available on the ASMFC website.

4). Other Items

Individual expert opinion and comments made during the discussions on other items or those with broad applicability included:

- Wilson Laney noted that the Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise did catch some river herring.
- The SAFMC is not currently focused on river herring, but this could change in the future.
- Any river herring incidentally caught in the South Atlantic shrimp fishery should be sampled to inform genetic studies.
- Theo Willis will be doing a VEMCO release in the spring of about 50-60 tags. TEWG members confirmed that there are receivers in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Lynn Lankshear (NMFS) will also provide Theo information on the ACT network.

5). Public Comment

None

6). Next Steps

1. Alison Bowden will continue the hydropower discussions with the Habitat Subgroup. Diane and Kirby will share the details of this discussions with the TEWG. Any information to inform the topic should be sent to Alison.
2. Any additional information on environmental tolerances of river herring should be sent to Janet Nye and Mike Alexander to inform the Climate Change Subgroup discussions.
3. NMFS and ASMFC will post TEWG subgroup products on the website.
4. Eric Schultz will provide the full TEWG group with the paper he was referencing on the use of striped bass quota in Connecticut River, and Darren Porter with additional information on the striped bass bonus fishery.
5. Lynn Lankshear (NMFS) will also provide Theo information on the ACT network.
6. Diane and Kirby will get a doodle poll out to everyone for scheduling the next TEWG call in June.
7. The River Herring Conservation Plan website will be updated to include the title of the “Genetic/Hybrids/Landlocked” subgroup.
8. Diane and Kirby will send the Conservation Plan to the TEWG for any comment. Following this, the ASMFC Shad and River Herring Management Board will review the Conservation Plan before it is made available to the public.
9. Diane and Kirby will get a meeting summary out to everyone as soon as possible.

Note: Draft Agenda and background materials can be found at:

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

TEWG Members

Michael Alexander

Mike Bailey

Diane Borggaard

Alison Bowden

Ted Castro-Santos

Kiersten Curti
Greg DiDomenico
Katie Drew
Phil Edwards
Ben Gahagan
Joseph Gordon
Ruth Hass-Castro
Carolyn Hall
Dan Hasselman
Paul Jacobson
Jeff Kaelin
Lisa Kerr
Peter Kube
Wilson Laney
Ben Lenz
Genine Lipkey
Stephen McIninch
Johnny Moore
Peter Moore
Janet Nye
Darren Porter
Kirby Rootes-Murdy
Roger Rulifson
Kevin Sullivan
Fritz Rohde
Eric Schultz
Lindsey Staszak
Lori Steele
Theodore Willis

Other Participants

Abigial Archer
Lisa Havel
Amy Hirrlinger
Andrew Jones
Dan Kircheis
Chad Holbrook
Toni Kerns
Jeff Kneebone

Aaron Kornbluth
Sean McDermott
Brad Schondelmeier
Sara Turner
Lynn Lankshear

River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG)
Conference Call and Webinar
March 19, 2015
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Call-In Number: 1-888-394-8197
Passcode: 815277

Webinar: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7389117626480153346>

Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary.

Meeting Purposes:

- Discuss status of river herring conservation planning initiative.
- Receive updates on TEWG-related initiatives.
- Provide updates on TEWG subgroups and committee efforts.

- 1:00 PM:** Welcome, introductions and getting organized
- Introductions and attendance
 - Opening comments (*D. Borggaard and K. Rootes-Murdy*)
 - Review agenda (*D. Borggaard and K. Rootes-Murdy*)

- 1:10 PM:** River Herring Conservation Planning and TEWG: Updates
- Conservation Planning
 - Updates (e.g., timelines) (*D. Borggaard and K. Rootes-Murdy, 15 min.*)
 - Related initiatives and/or efforts
 - U.S. Federal Tribal Coordination, highlighting some of NOAAs work in the Region (*Pruden, NMFS, 10 min. presentation, 10 min. discussion*)
 - Cultural Importance of River Herring to the Passamaquoddy People (*Bassett, Passamaquoddy Tribe, 10 min. presentation, 10 min. discussion*)
 - General river herring updates and/or initiatives (*10 min*)
 - Open discussion of anything relevant
 - TEWG Updates
 - Full meetings (*D. Borggaard and K. Rootes-Murdy, 5 min*)
 - Subgroups (*10 min. each: ~5 min. update and ~5 min. feedback*)
 - Fisheries (*J. Didden and M.B. Tooley*)
 - Climate Change (*J. Nye and M. Alexander*)

- Stock Status (*K. Sullivan and M. Bailey*)
- Genetics/Hybrids/Landlocked populations (*D. Hasselman*)
- Habitat (*A. Bowden and J. Pierce*)
- Species Interaction (*E. Schultz*)
- Ecosystem Integration Committee (*D. Borggaard and J. Hare, ~5 min. update and ~5 min. feedback*)
- Other

3:40 PM Public comment

3:50 PM Wrap up and next steps (e.g., future speakers)

4:00 PM Adjourn