

**ALWTRP Scoping Meeting
Portland, ME
July 14, 2011**

NMFS Staff: Dave Gouveia, Kate Swails, Allison Rosner, John Higgins

Number in attendance (not counting NMFS staff): 15

Including:

- Cheryl Leeman , Senator Olympia Snowe's Office
- Norm Olsen, Commissioner of Maine's Department of Marine Resources
- Sarah Cotnoir, Maine Department of Marine Resources, Take Reduction Team State Representative
- Patrice McCarron, Maine Lobstermen's Association, Take Reduction Team Industry Representative

Two participants suggested that attempting to reduce latent effort could potentially increase effort over time, by motivating latent permit holders to use their permits so they will not lose them. Another participant also expressed concern over latent effort and asked the Agency if they would account for increases in effort if now latent effort becomes active within the next 5 years. The Agency stated that it is difficult to quantify latent effort because the data we have shows who is fishing now. Agency expressed that monitoring through the continuing data collection will help to monitor if latent effort becomes active in the future, which will allow for the Plan to be modified accordingly. Using baseline information that has been collected, and will include 2010 data, is essential for monitoring changes from the baseline. There is no easy way to deal with latent effort. The Agency's new monitoring plan will allow for evaluating a 5 year snapshot of the fishery, which will help us to judge impacts of the full plan on entanglement rates and serious injury/mortalities, taking into consideration population growth and birth rates and effort increases.

One participant asked if the co-occurrence model could take into consideration trawls greater than ten traps. The Agency stated that the model was capable of calculating trawls larger than 10 traps, and also could convert endlines into feet of line.

One participant stated that two endlines would be necessary from 3-12 miles, and beyond 12 miles 20 trap trawls could be used in hotspots such as Jeffreys Ledge & Platts Bank.

One participant from Maine DMR stated that theoretically commenters could look for no action outside of hot spot areas of high co-occurrence. He also reminded attendants that the co-occurrence could be looked at by season instead of annually.

One commented stated that latent effort in state of Maine waters is not a real issue and that the real problems occur in federal waters.

Another participant stated that currently there are about 1200 permits in federal waters and it costs a lot to purchase one.

One participant asked whether the Agency would use the model to monitor every year. The Agency stated that the model will be used to monitor changes yearly, and will be looking at the 5 year scale for determining effectiveness of the Plan to reduce the need for action on a yearly basis, barring any major catastrophe.

One participant asked the Agency to comment on the status of humpback whales and what that would mean if humpbacks will be delisted. The Agency stated that if humpbacks are delisted/downlisted, the recovery factor would change and PBR will increase. The Agency also stated that the co-occurrence model has the capability of weighting the different whale species if the status does change. At the moment both species are treated equally given that they are both endangered.

One commenter stated that the federal requirement for the high flyer reflector should be removed. This requirement requires that fishermen use a 50 lb poly ball rather than a standard buoy. A whale could more easily become entangled in a high flyer than a standard buoy. The high flyer requirement puts a larger target in the whale's path. Another commenter stated that this is in place to help draggers avoid the traps. The Agency said they would look into the origin of this requirement and if it poses additional risk to whales.

Cheryl Leeman, a representative for Senator Snowe's office made attendees aware of a written statement by Senator Snowe and stated that the Senator supports scoping meetings as important means for industry to have input, therefore hopefully avoiding broad scale management approaches.

One commenter stated that better data was needed in order to move the exemption line to 3 miles.

One commenter supported the state implementing mandatory data collection through surveys and supported Maine DMR pushing for more data stating that the data will be used to find out how fishermen fish, not against them. Commenter also stated that he would rather take 20 minutes to fill out a survey than lose 200 traps due to a lack of data. A second commenter stated that he also supported mandatory federal license survey so the Agency will have a baseline and can monitor latent effort if it becomes an issue.

One commenter asked that Maine markings remain red, or incorporate red. Attendees discussed using alternating rope colors and most agreed that this would be too costly compared to marking the line by other means, though maybe it could be slowly phased in.

One commenter stated that he could possibly reduce the strength in the upper portion of his buoy line.

A participant from Zone D said that this was brought up at a Zone D meeting and they could support double marking system, with Maine remaining red and then adding a new color depending on the zone.

One participant asked the Agency how likely it would be for conservationists to accept these suggestions. The Agency stated that the testimony provided during the scoping meetings is very important for pushing new ideas forward since the TRT will need to make the best decisions based on the best information available. Having feedback makes it easier to support decisions. The Agency also stated that state scoping meetings, and meetings with the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation were equally important. After Agency receives ideas from industry and states on what modifications are feasible for industry, we will input this into the model and see what the risk reduction is. The model isn't perfect but will get better with more information.

One commenter stated that gear conflict with shrimpers and draggers makes one buoy trawls impractical in his area, though he could feasibly see trawling up to ten trawls with two buoy lines or twenties with two buoy lines.