

**ALWTRP Scoping Meeting
Providence, RI
July 18, 2011**

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

Number in attendance (not counting NMFS staff): 4

Commenter stated that Agency has assumed that groundline completed or perfected, but it is not. Quality of measures in place will not allow for results you want. Agency should focus on perfecting groundline. It was the right decision to move to sinking groundline, but needs to work. Industry has not felt true economic impact on this yet (because of the buy- out programs that were implemented earlier on). Agency responded that they are currently funding some projects to look at new line strength. Hoped manufacturers would work with industry to create better rope that meets their needs but it hasn't happened yet. Agency will continue, as funds are available, to listen to any ideas that will help us get to that point. Agency recognizes that current rope may not be durable. Agency is also creating a monitoring plan that will help to monitor results of entire plan and will incorporate a 5 year snapshot of entire plan. Will provide opportunity to avoid knee jerk reaction to look at everything surrounding entanglement as well as population/stock information.

Commenter asked if population explosion for humpback and fin whales will be taken into consideration when entanglements occur. The Agency stated that yes populations will be incorporated in the monitoring plan. There is also the option to weight the different species in the model.

Participant asked that for the co-occurrence model, if humpbacks are delisted, would whole model change significantly and be taken into consideration. Could this process start over if humpbacks are delisted? Agency stated that the TRT made the decision to focus on humpbacks and right whales. Humpbacks presented a difficult discussion because of pending status review. If humpbacks are delisted or downlisted, then PBR will change and it will have an impact on management actions. Can't move forward based on potential future information, but information will hopefully be out this summer. Optimistic humpback decision will be made before proposed rule, if not, we'll reconvene the team if decision comes down the road. Moving forward this way, proposed rule will publish in 2012 and the final rule will publish in 2014 so we have a lot of time.

Commenter stated that Section 7 does not look at any positive benefits of actions, for example trap reduction in area A is positive for protected resources. Suggested that the Agency do a better job of coordinating with lobster management staff. Agency stated that while it is true that Section 7 does not look at the positive benefits from actions, we will under this model. If you can translate the past trap reduction into endlines, then we can look at the benefits to reducing

endline risk reduction. Removing traps alone does not reduce risk because technically, with sinking groundline, it is assumed that there is no risk.

Participant stated that Area 3 is working on a plan to reduce effort over ten years, therefore a 55% trap reduction would result in an endline reduction. Gear with no endlines is not feasible because of gear conflicts. Effort reduction is the key.

Participants did not object to the need for better gear marking.

Agency asked participants their opinions on reduction in gear from trawling or if there are gear modifications that can be made, for example reducing the breaking strength of the top third of the endlines, weak link a third of the way down, stiff rope, etc. Participants responded that from an offshore perspective, a couple of the options might be doable if offered as a seasonable approach. In winter, cannot go to a small endline. Strength of the line would have to depend on the depth of the waters and season. Trawling up may not be an option because people have the size of the trawl that fits their boat. After trap reduction in Area 3, significantly less effort will result in $\frac{1}{2}$ an endline per square mile.