
ALWTRT Monitoring Work Group Key Outcomes

May 17-18, 2016

Gloucester, MA

Overview

The monitoring work group for the ALWTRT met in Gloucester, MA on May 17-18, 2016. During the full TRT webinar in November 2015, NMFS outlined a phased plan for improvements to the co-occurrence model. The monitoring work group meeting was part of the first phase: improve fishing effort data availability to support the further development and implementation of the Plan. The intent of this phase is to decrease the variability of the effort data and develop a more comprehensive and consistent set of effort data. The group's role was to help brainstorm ideas on how to improve the current reporting mechanisms and collection of fishing effort data.

Objectives of the work group included:

- Review and finalize the phased plan for updating the co-occurrence model
- Focus discussions on how to improve fishing effort data consistency
- Consider a reporting requirement and what would be required to design and implement such a requirement

Topics Presented and Discussed

All presentations are available online.

<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/whaletrp/trt/meetings/index.html>

Phased Plan for Updating Model

Kate Swails, NMFS, reminded the work group of the phased plan for updating the co-occurrence model. This plan was introduced during the Team's November 2015 webinar.

- Phase 1: Gain a better understanding of and standardize gear location and characterization
- Phase 2: Gain a better understanding of whale distribution by incorporating opportunistic and passive acoustic data into the model
- Phase 3: Develop options to refocus what the model 'does' (i.e., shift from a "reactive" model to a more "predictive" model).

| Participant | Affiliation |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bob Black | IEc |
| Erin Burke | MA DMF |
| Peter Burns | NMFS |
| Beth Casoni | MA Lobstermen's Assoc |
| Neal Etre | IEc |
| Caroline Good | Duke University |
| David Gouveia | NMFS |
| Steve Keane | South Shore Lobstermen's Assoc |
| Scott Kraus | New England Aquarium |
| David Laist | MMC |
| Patrice McCarron | ME Lobstermen's Assoc |
| Bill McLellan | UNC-W |
| Brian Morrison | IEc |
| Cheri Patterson | NH DFG |
| Story Reed | MA DMF |
| Dan Shark | IEc |
| Erin Summers | ME DMR |
| Kate Swails | NMFS |

She emphasized that Phase 1 is not more important than the other two phases but will likely take more time and effort to complete.

Fishing effort and Co-Occurrence Model

The first part of Day 1 of the meeting focused on 'What data do we have?' Bob Black, IEC, presented a review of the model activity, gear data, and limitations of the current data. The current data limitations of the model include inconsistent data across states, difficulty capturing emerging fisheries, Federal lobster vessels with no trip reporting requirements, and a coarse resolution of location data. The group discussed whether the data was adequate to support development and monitoring of the TRP. Some participants suggested using Bayesian state approach based on a subsample of data; however, NMFS would prefer raw census data over modeling.

Partner Data to Address Concerns

Continuing the Day 1 discussion of current data, state representatives from MA, ME, and NH presented an overview of data collection for each state. Each state data differ slightly but all states comply with the ACCSP standards. Cheri Patterson presented an introduction to ACCSP as a way to eliminate duplicate reporting. All New England states conform to ACCSP standards but key elements are not data standard (number of pots, number of vertical lines). ACCSP works with bottom up management so if the work group wanted certain elements added as data standards then NMFS would need to work with ACCSP to have these elements added (example: recently added HMS module).

Dan D'Entremont, NMFS, provided the group with examples of the current Federal VTR form. One form covers all fisheries and is wide ranging. Only a small percentage of lobster permit holders report through VTR (if they hold another permit). The group discussed the merits of continuing to use VTR to collect fishing effort data.

Ted Hawes, NMFS, briefly described the NMFS permit program. There are approximately 70 permit types encompassing 4500 vessels. Most permits are limited access permits. Permit forms are all paper though an electronic system is forthcoming and all vessels currently have an account with Fish Online. Fish Online provides access to all databases and could be a potential location for a new MMPA reporting requirement.

Discussion concluded with some members of the group re-iterating that they are opposed to redundancy in reporting requirements. Select data is currently required on reports elsewhere so then it becomes a question of how to integrate this current data.

Defining Elements of the Report

Discussions on Day 1 moved on to identify data needs and specific elements of the report. B. Black presented an overview of the types of data useful for data analysis to further ALWTRP objectives. The group developed a list of data needed for both environmental/economic analysis to accompany rulemaking and also data to help improve NMFS understanding of fisheries. The group decided to focus on the data necessary to improve the understanding of fisheries as the higher priority. Although location data is currently collected it was emphasized that more spatial specificity is needed.

| Data for Improved Fishing Effort (Higher Priority) | Other Data (to be collected later) | |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of traps/strings fished | Landings | Panel size |
| Traps per trawl/panels per string | Time of haul (day/night) | Panel spacing |
| Number of vertical lines | Soak time | Groundline between traps |
| Length of vertical line (amount of rope in water) | Number of trips | |
| Location (with increased specificity), potential VMS requirement? | Number of permitted traps | |
| Rope gauge/material/strength | Gear loss (date/location) | |
| Use of anchor line and anchor weight | Port (Home/landing) | |
| Weight of traps | Number of crew | |
| Buoy type/configuration of surface system | Vessel size | |

Defining Reporting Scheme

Day 2 of the meeting focused on the question, ‘How do we collect data?’ The group began to discuss key dimensions of a new reporting system specifically for MMPA requirements. Some highlights of the brainstorming included:

- Federal Permit
 - Generally in favor of this idea with considerations for state entities (perhaps have an opt out provision if states are currently collecting required data)
 - Make sure authority under MMPA is clear (regulatory ‘hammer’)
 - Need to justify a new requirement so it doesn’t seem arbitrary
 - Support for a permit by gear type (gillnet/trap) with a reporting requirement
 - Emerging fisheries would be captured with this permit
- Support for mandatory vs voluntary as past voluntary return rates have been small
- Support for electronic reporting system
- Timing
 - Support for annual reporting capturing monthly activity
 - Need to consider permit cycle timing with states and Federal entities
- Spatial Specificity
 - Consider in future
 - General support for using existing management areas/demarcations
- Gear Parameters
 - Include those identified as high priority
- Regional Differences
 - Make sure that a similar discussion happens with Southeast Industry members as there may be regional differences to account for
- Funding
 - Funding would need to come from the Federal level

Updating SPUE Data

Day 2 concluded with a discussion on improving the use of available data for species distribution. Scott Kraus, New England Aquarium, provided the group with an update on new emerging patterns in right whale sightings data. Given these changes it may be necessary to include other variables in the model to estimate species distribution. NMFS stated that they envisioned a SPUE work group much like the fishing effort data work group to discuss modeling options and potentially layering risk modeling in as part of the discussion.

Next Steps

- Develop options for reporting requirement
- Investigate Federal permit idea with NMFS General Counsel and NMFS Leadership
- Get input from Southeast Region Industry members prior to Full Team meeting
- Fall 2016/winter 2017—full team webinar or face to face meeting pending budget
 - Updates on Plan
 - Plot pre-vertical line rule co-occurrence with entanglement events that can be traced to where the gear was set
 - Discussion on reporting requirement options