MRIP Transition Team: Atlantic and Gulf Subgroup

FINAL Summary

January 16, 2015

Anson, Bagwill, Bray, Curtis, Cody, Errigo, Froeschke, Kerns, Methot, Porch, Rago, Tromble, Turner, Van Voorhees, Wright

Dave Van Voorhees gave a brief overview of the provided materials for the meeting's discussion (transition timeframe pros and cons tables, Gantt charts outlining the timeline for transition options, and list of federally managed species), and reminded the group to submit any edits or additions to the documents. Group members were asked to provide state/Commission managed species to the list and rank species in order of priority.

Overview of Pros and Cons Tables – revisited

At the previous conference call on December 19, 2014, the group was provided two pros and cons tables, developed from previous discussions, on the timeline of implementing the Fishing Effort Survey. The first table outlined the pros and cons for the number of years benchmarking should take place and the second outlined the impact on the stock assessment and management processes. The group reviewed the pros and cons of benchmark timing again, taking up the allotted hour.

The majority of the discussion focused on the issue of what is the *minimum* number of years benchmarking should occur. Overall, everyone agreed that two years of benchmarking would give more information about inter-annual variability before attempting to calibrate the data (i.e. after December 31, 2016). However, because there will most likely be outside pressure to move faster, some members of the group were in favor of attempting calibration after one year of data, with further data collection in a second year to 'fine tune' the calibration. Everyone agreed that it is a difficult choice because there are pros and cons for both methods and finding a balance that suits all needs is key.

Van Voorhees proposed potential key decision points for determining when and if calibration can move forward; these decision points had previously been discussed. Moving forward, developing a decision tree may be a simple way to describe the below stages. These proposed decision points could be utilized regardless of benchmarking time period.

1. After Wave 4 of the initial benchmarking year, using preliminary data from Waves 1-4
2. April 2016, using final estimates from one full year of data
3. Using pilot study data for MA, NY, NC, FL to compare two years of FES data in 2015

Discussion on 1 year benchmark to calibrate, followed by a 2nd year for 'fine tuning'

- Having a calibration after one year does not preclude the opportunity for a second or third year of side by side. At minimum, there will be two years of side by side collected.
    - Allocation decisions taken up by Councils after 2017 would have at least two years of benchmarking data available.
- Based on the pilot study, if the effort estimate is going to be several magnitudes higher, then the change from switching methods will be vast compared to the inter-year variability assessed with multiple years.
    - It could be advantageous to incorporate new estimates sooner than later and then fine tune with subsequent years.

- Delaying could be a conservation issue for some stocks (depending on viewpoint) – presents an increased legal risk.
- Better to plan for calibration after one year and be prepared to delay if the data indicate that is better, than to be unprepared after the first year and forced to speed up the process (e.g. Congress, Courts).
    - A court order could be a huge blow.
- Already have one year of data for MA, NY, NC, FL from the pilot studies– therefore are able to look at variability in those states in comparison to the 2015 data.
    - Could provide evidence for waiting until second year or moving forward.
- To quickly incorporate calibrated data into multiple assessments, we will only be changing one aspect of the stock assessment model (recreational catch data); will not be able to do benchmark assessments.
    - Can conceivably get many stocks done in one year (2016) with allotted resources.
- There is some risk of calibrating and assessing after one year, if there is high inter-annual variability in the FES/CHTS ratios. This could negatively impact confidence in any revised historical catch estimates. The calibration method will be peer reviewed – this could inform the decision about whether to wait for a second year of benchmarking data.
- Because APAIS numbers are not affected by this survey, the only change is with effects of effort and adjustments and magnitude will be realized to same extent across all species; therefore won't have to look at each species separately as done with intercept design.
- The longer benchmarking occurs, the longer management decisions will be made using CHTS data, which we know is less accurate than the new FES.

Discussion for 2 year benchmark prior to attempting calibration

- Two years of data could provide a more stable estimate of the change in effort
- Partners and stakeholders could be resistant to one year of data, feeling it is not sufficient to determine inter-year variability – increase buy-in with multiple years
- The one year approach assumes that the pilot study numbers are indicative of what is happening (not an anomaly); what happens if the first year is very different from the second year?
- If calibrating after only one year, you still need to wait until the second year to determine if the first year is an anomaly. Consistency in the magnitude of change across the states and to the results of the pilot studies will be important to examine and evaluate.
- Potentially gain confidence in the numbers if not having to 'fine-tune' one year after calibrating the time series – there is already lack of confidence in MRIP numbers, as is.
- Multiple years of data can lead to more informed decisions.
- Less uncertainty in having to redo assessments than with the one year calibration approach
    - Could be off on ACLs if the calibration is not right.
- There is uncertainty that *only* adjusting the catch statistic for the stock assessment model is feasible – it could require more effort and therefore more years would be better and provide more time for determining variability and stability of the calibrated estimates.

The group did not reach consensus on the approach to move forward. Many members accept that political and outside pressure necessitates the need for a shorter timeframe, with the option to extend depending on results; whereas other group members still feel that maintaining credibility with stakeholders and on the science side necessitates waiting until after two full years to calibrate. The

Team will need to determine the best method to present for moving forward, but that method does not have to be cemented in either direction (short or long) as one year from now there could be a potential situation where it makes sense to do something different; the decision should be based on best judgment.

Additionally, communicating the details of the Transition Plan and steps moving forward was a universal theme throughout the discussion. Team members expressed the importance of having a strategic approach to communicating the process, data changes, results, etc. to all user groups.

Regardless of timeframe, the year the stock assessments are done, all resources will need to be diverted to do so. It is also possible that the normal SEDAR process will need to be modified. Also, the calibration method should be developed and peer reviewed as soon as possible so it will be ready for use.