CFRF Lobster Research Fleet Pilot Project Meeting

Wednesday, January 15, 2014, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Commercial Fisheries Center, Fred Mattera Conference Room
East Farm Campus, URI- Kingston, RI

Topic: Fleet Update and Feedback, Data Management & Use, Next Steps

Participants:
Alan Eagles, F/V Catherine Ann
Louis Fusco, F/V Diversion
Brian Thibeault, F/V Ashley Ann
Arthur DeCosta, F/V Sherri & Deke
John Peabody, F/V Lady Clare
David Spencer, F/V Nathaniel Lee; CFRF, President
Norbert Stamps, F/V Debbie Ann
Mark Sweitzer, F/V Erica Knight
Lanny Dellinger, RI Lobstermen’s Association
Burton Shank, NOAA-NMFS-NEFSC
Glenn Chamberlain, NOAA-NMFS-NEFSC
Don Coxe, Coxe Consulting
Scott Olszewski, RI DEM Marine Fisheries
Heidi Henninger, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen’s Association
Peg Petruny-Parker, CFRF
Anna Malek, CFRF
Jane Dickinson, CFRF

Meeting Summary

Opening remarks:
- Purpose of meeting is to provide an opportunity for fleet participants to give feedback on how the project is going, including observations on equipment performance in the field, and to give suggestions on data collection modifications. It was also intended to give a general summary of the data collected to date, and an overview of what next steps the support staff is working on.
- General observation is that the pilot project is proceeding well. It represents a very good team effort by the fleet participants, members of the Project Steering Committee, and the support staff. Much is being learned and good data is being collected.

Overview of data collected to date:
Total Project Area:
• 281 commercial sessions
• 347 ventless trap session
• 64 Observations
• 21,446 lobsters sampled

By Stock Area:
• Gulf of Maine: 17 commercial sessions; 1,783 lobsters sampled
• Georges Bank: 67 commercial sessions; 54 ventless trap sessions; 4,799 lobsters sampled
• Southern New England: 209 commercial sessions; 295 ventless trap sessions; 14,846 lobsters sampled

Current Data Management Procedures:
• The complete On-Deck Data (ODD) database is only reviewed by CFRF staff or technical consultants, as requested.
• Participating fishing vessel owners can request copies of the data submitted to the CFRF at any time. They can access their own records but not the records of others in the fleet.
• CFRF does not directly transfer lobster biological data to third party requests at this time.
• When reporting out aggregate data, the CFRF staff maintains the “rule of three”. (i.e. Aggregate data must be derived from at least 3 vessels to protect the confidentiality of information from individual vessels.)
• Quarterly reports of the data received by the CFRF from each individual fishing vessel are routinely issued to the vessel owners. They are free to share these reports if they choose to.
• A copy of the complete On-Deck Data Program database is conveyed to a staff point person at the ASMFC on a semi-annual basis. Fleet fishing vessels are identified by an ID number only.

Summary of Feedback from Fleet Participants:
• Tablets are holding up well and are easy to use; protective covers are not holding up well. There are difficulties with the closure mechanism, holes appearing, etc. One boat has substituted a Ziploc bag as a cover for the tablet and reports this is working well.
• Digital calipers appear to be holding up.
• GPS positions associated with sampling sessions have not been recorded a few times on a couple of fishing vessels – it was determined that this is due to not starting up On Deck Data out on deck where the signal can be reached – a conscious effort to remember this seems to be the best approach to solving this problem. Crew can also check to make sure this was recorded at the end of the session using the “View Data” function internal to ODD.
• Receiving data in the form of quarterly reports seems to be working satisfactorily- no real need to keep data on the tablets.
• One fishing vessel was not able to view the photos taken in ODD due to camera resolution issues. This tablet camera was reconfigured and the problem resolved.
• Other suggested parameters to track:
  o Shell Disease – After much discussion it was agreed to provide a way for lobstersmen to record the degree of shell disease (none, mild, moderate, severe). This can be accompanied by notes submitted in the observation section as well as taking pictures periodically (up to the data collector’s discretion when to take pictures). Lobstersmen will be asked to take pictures of shell diseased lobsters periodically indicating in the notes section whether the disease is severe, moderate, or mild to help reviewers
determine each individual lobsterman’s standards. [Note: In addition, gradations used by the NMFS Observer program will be consulted to help guide lobstermen on how to more uniformly classify shell disease.]

- **Shell Hardness** - Again after much discussion, it was agreed that this is an important factor that needs to be tracked. A simple tracking of soft or hard was agreed on.
- **Lobsters Discarded** - Lobstermen are concerned that legal size lobsters that are being returned to the ocean for various reasons are being looked at in this database as being landed because they meet minimum size requirements. Participants want a feature that enables them to indicate whether a lobster was discarded or retained.
- **V-notching** – It was clarified that this is to be recorded for lobsters that are caught with v-notches already in them – not for lobsters that the lobstermen are v-notching at that moment before returning to the sea.
- **Cull status** – This was discussed and the group agreed it is not necessary to record this at this time.

**Next steps:**

- Support staff will be working on revising the existing On-Deck Data Program to incorporate the changes discussed above into the tablet application.
- In addition, a separate section of the tablet application will be developed for recording data on Jonah crab (size, sex, eggs, retained/discarded). Note: It was pointed out that measuring crabs with digital calipers is time consuming and difficult. Suggestion was to follow the NMFS procedure of using a measuring board method.
- Bottom temperature sensors – Support staff will be working with VEMCO Miniloggers systems (development of means for temperature sensor to offload data to tablet through a reader device). The plan is to work this dimension into the sampling protocol for the whole fleet over the coming year after field testing in the spring. This will be coordinated with the e-Molt program run by Jim Manning, NMFS NEFSC.
- CFRF staff continues to look for funding to support continuation of this fleet. CFRF is in the process of requesting an approval from NMFS NEFSC to use remaining CFRF NOAA Award funds to support the fleet’s work for an additional year. In addition, new sources of funding are being pursued.
- Monitoring of other environmental parameters such as pH (ocean acidification), dissolved oxygen, etc. may be considered in the future as opportunities to work with scientists present themselves. Priority at the moment is to focus on adding capacity to record data for bottom temperature in addition to the biological data collected.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:30 PM.