

Canada/US Transboundary Steering Committee Meeting
April 20, 2011
Summary Minutes

Item 1 – Opening Remarks

***Arran McPherson – Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) – Representing Faith Scattolon
Canadian Co-Chair***

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) was unable to provide any debrief on the federal budget due to the current election.
- Mr. David Bevan has assumed the role of Associate Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.
- Mr. France Pégeot joins DFO from Industry Canada as the new Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for the International Affairs group.
- Mr. Kevin Stringer has taken on the role of Assistant Deputy Minister, Program Policy.
- Mr. David Balfour is the new Senior Assistant Deputy Minister under Ecosystems and Fisheries Management Sector.
- Mr. Mitch Bloom is the new Associate Assistant Deputy Minister.
- Dr. Siddika Mithani is leading the Oceans and Science Sector as Assistant Deputy Minister.
- Ms. Arran McPherson is the new Associate Regional Director-General, Maritimes Region.
- Dr. Alain Vezina is the new Regional Director of Science, Maritimes Region.
- Mr. Ted Currie is on a one-year assignment with DFO's Oceans Management Division in National Headquarters.
- Mr. Donald Humphrey is acting as the Habitat Working Group Co-Chair.
- Mr. Kurt McAllister has joined the Habitat Working Group.
- The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed 16 Designatable Units (DUs) of Atlantic salmon in November 2010. Four of the DUs are the responsibility of Maritimes Region and were assessed as Endangered, and include Inner Bay of Fundy, Outer Bay of Fundy, Southern Uplands, and Eastern Cape Breton.

Patricia Kurkul – National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) – US Co-chair

- Congress recently passed the 2011 budget for the remainder of the fiscal year (through September), but the U.S. has not learned specific details of the budget.
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is completing its first year of sector management under the Northeast (NE) Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. It was agreed that revenues have improved and bycatch is down significantly. Trends indicate that the industry is fishing more efficiently and targeting healthier stocks. It appears that some consolidation has occurred, but it is not clear if vessels that are not targeting groundfish have redirected effort to other species, or are leasing out their current annual quotas, (which are based on fishing history).
- NMFS announced measures for the 2011 NE multispecies fishing year (FY) which began May 1st. These measures include recently agreed changes to the Georges Bank (GB) yellowtail flounder quota.
- It is anticipated NMFS will release a preliminary report on how the NE multispecies fishery operated during FY 2010. Both the Council and NMFS are planning to look more closely at the operation of the fishery in the coming months.
- The Department of Interior (DOI) announced that final Federal permits had been issued to the first offshore wind farm in the U.S. It will be built in Nantucket Sound, south of Cape Cod. The administration is moving aggressively to further develop wind farm sites on the east coast and numerous additional areas have been identified as possible sites. Several of these areas are very productive fishing grounds and the fishing industry and NMFS are concerned.
- NMFS recently convened a meeting of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team's (ALWTRT) Northeast Subgroup (November 2010) and Mid-Atlantic/Southeast Subgroup (April 2011). The ALWTRT is working to develop conservation measures that would reduce the risk of serious injury and mortality to large whales that interact with vertical lines (buoy lines) in commercial trap/pot and gillnet fisheries.

Item 2 – Habitat Working Group Report

- Four representatives from NMFS visited the Maritimes Region as part of tidal power site visits that occurred last fall. The white paper on tidal power is to be finished and presented at the fall Steering Committee meeting.
- The Working Group is seeking further direction from the Steering Committee regarding future priorities. It was suggested the Working Group review their previous work plan and explore previously identified priorities, work with the Integration Committee to determine the future direction of the group, and report back to the Steering Committee at its September meeting.
- Interest was expressed in learning more about Canadian activities involving wind power. It was noted that Nova Scotia Department of Energy released a discussion paper on a proposed marine renewable energy legislative framework. DFO Oceans Management Program in Ottawa is working with NS Energy and with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) to ensure that any management regime established for marine renewable energy respects integrated ocean management principles. Ted Currie is currently on an NRCan-funded assignment with DFO Oceans dedicated to this process. The Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment held a Panel Discussion on Marine Renewable Energy as part of its December Council meeting. There is no expressed interest in offshore wind energy in the Maritimes Region that is known; development activity has been with onshore wind power.

Item 3 – Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC)

- The 2011 Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) meeting is scheduled for June 20-24th in St. Andrews, NB. The TRAC has added a new item to its Terms of Reference (TOR) this year. Based on discussion at last year's meeting, the TRAC will perform an analysis of survey design. This is already underway at the North East Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) and DFO staff will provide additional information on their survey design.
- Regarding the TRAC assessment cycle, members discussed the feasibility of performing multi-year assessments. A discussion document will be drafted and presented at the June 2011 TRAC meeting. The TRAC will then seek input from the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC) members and ultimately present the proposal at the September 2011 Steering Committee meeting.
- With respect to data sharing practices between the U.S. and Canada, DFO is working to provide data on landings to the U.S. and is confident that the few remaining technical issues can be resolved. Both countries are exploring multi-year, specification setting processes, and there is a plan to conduct joint discussions and follow up with internal, country-specific discussions. Discussions will also be held by the Northeast Regional Coordinating Committee (NRCC). The TRAC process would occur concurrently with the Canadian process, and some Canadian stocks are already in a multi-year assessment cycle.

Item 4 – Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC)

- Greater flexibility was afforded in the rebuilding period and catch level requirements for Grand Banks (GB) yellowtail flounder due to the passage of the International Fisheries Clarification Act.
- Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC) reconsidered their guidance for the 2011 Total Allowable Catch (TAC). Revisions were based on the low probability of exceeding F_{ref} for the stock, and an expected five percent increase in biomass.

- The overall TAC increased from 1,900 mt to 2,650 mt.
- Canada announced their new quota of 1,192 mt in late March; the Canadian season began on January 1, 2011.
- The New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC) is developing a revised timeline for the GB yellowtail flounder rebuilding plan. The new timeline should become effective by May 2012 and will allow for rebuilding to occur over a period greater than 10 years.
- TMGC will meet this summer prior to the NEFMC's Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting to provide the SSC an opportunity to consider the recommendations of the TMGC prior to making their own recommendations.

Item 5 – Oceans Working Group Report

- The Oceans Working Group was established in April 2008 with Terms Of Reference (TOR) calling for the group to function as a formal mechanism for development of an Ecosystem Overview Report. The Report was completed in 2009 and consists of four parts: (1) Geological System; (2) Oceanographic System; (3) Major Ecosystem Components; and (4) Ecosystem Structure and Dynamics. The Report has since undergone an informal peer review by experts in each of the four chapter subject matters. Updates were completed on March 31st and the document will be released this summer as a Canadian Technical Report.
- It was noted that with the completion of this Report, the Oceans Working Group TOR have been completed.
- The Council in the U.S. is starting to think about managing through ecosystem management. Canada is considering the application of this type of framework to a number of Canadian activities, and it was suggested that the U.S. should consider steps forward, possibly through the NRCC process.

Item 6 – Species at Risk Working Group Report

- The Species at Risk Working Goup continues to collaborate on several issues, including DFO's participation in a sub-group meeting of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) participation in a Canadian Right Whale Action Plan meeting and joint participation by DFO and NMFS in a Large Whale Entanglement Workshop held in Woods Hole.
- Updates were provided on several species of interest, including Atlantic sturgeon, loggerhead sea turtle, northern right whale, and cusk.

Item 7 – Closing Remarks

- The 2011 fall Steering Committee meeting will be held September 21-22 in Halifax, NS.