**Canada/United States (U.S.) Transboundary Resources Steering Committee Teleconference**

**April 28, 2021**

**Meeting Minutes**

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| ***Participants*** | |
| *Co-Chairs* | |
| **NAME** | **POSITION** |
| Mike Pentony | Co-Chair & Regional Administrator, NMFS-GARFO |
| Doug Wentzell | Committee Co-Chair, Regional Director General, DFO |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **NAME** | **POSITION AND/OR ORGANIZATION** |  | | |
| *Canadian Participants:* | |
| Robert Apro | Senior Policy Advisor, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), National Capital (Observer) |
| Ray Belliveau | Gulf of Maine Advisory Committee (GOMAC) Industry Co-Chair |
| Alida Bundy | DFO Research Scientist (Presenter), DFO Science |
| Kathryn Cooper-MacDonald | Resource Advisor, DFO Fisheries Management (FM) |
| Jill Currie | Acting Regional Director, DFO Policy & Economics (P&E) |
| Alain D’Entremont | Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC), Industry Co-Chair |
| Jennifer Ford | Director, DFO Resource Management and Licensing |
| Michelle Greenlaw | Head, Groundfish, Pelagics & Secondary Species, DFO |
| Terry Higgins | Integration Committee, Policy Advisor, DFO P&E |
| Donald Humphrey | Species at Risk Working Group (SAR WG) Co-Chair, DFO Aquatic Ecosystems |
| Tara McIntyre | Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) Co-Chair, DFO Science |
| Roger Stirling | GOMAC Industry Co-Chair |
| Jamie Tam | Visiting Fellow, DFO Science (Presenter) |
| Reide Thomas | Integration Committee, Policy Analyst, DFO P&E |
| *U.S. Participants:* | |
| Peter Christopher | Supervisory Policy Analyst, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) Sustainable Fisheries Division (SFD) |
| Jamie Cournane | Lead Fishery Analyst for Groundfish, NEFMC |
| Elizabeth Etrie | Industry, New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) |
| Marianne Ferguson | Policy Analyst, NMFS, GARFO National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NMFS GARFO |
| Robert Gamble | NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) |
| Jean Higgins | SAR WG Co-Chair, NMFS GARFO Protected Resource Division |
| Emily Keiley | Observer, Policy Analyst, NMFS GARFO SFD |
| Sean Lucey | Observer, NMFS NEFSC |
| Tom Nies | Executive Director, NEFMC |
| John Pappalardo | Industry, NEFMC |
| John Quinn | TMGC Co-Chair, Chairman, NEFMC |
| Eric Reid | NEFMC |
| Michael Simpkins | Chief, NMFS NEFSC Resource Evaluation and Assessment Division (READ) |
| Spencer Talmage | Fishery Management Specialist, NMFS GARFO SFD |
| Tara Trinko Lake | TRAC Co-Chair, NMFS NEFSC READ |

**Opening Remarks from Steering Committee Co-Chairs**

Mr. Michael Pentony welcomed Mr. Doug Wentzell and thanked the Canadian delegation for organizing the call. He noted that soon after taking office, President Biden published multiple Executive Orders intended to combat the climate crisis, as climate and the environment are priorities of the new administration. In mid-April 2021, President Biden nominated oceanographer Dr. Richard Spinrad to be the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Dr. Spinrad served as NOAA’s Chief Scientist during the Obama administration and was head of NOAA’s Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research from 2003 to 2010. Mr. Pentony also shared that Monica Medina was nominated as Assistant Secretary of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs for the State Department. Finally, in terms of executive staffing updates, Mr. Pentony noted that a new Assistant Administrator of NMFS has yet to be named.

Mr. Pentony provided an update on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. NMFS and NEFMC continue to work remotely. Both organizations are making strides to adapt to the virtual world and meet their respective missions. Mr. Pentony stated that in late March, 2021, NMFS issued an interim final rule to continue to provide the authority to waive observer coverage, some training, and other program requirements, on a case-by-case basis – a continuation of NMFS’ response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Next, Mr. Pentony spoke about U.S. groundfish management. Work continues on publishing a proposed rule for Framework 61, which would implement fishing year 2021 quotas for the transboundary stocks that were agreed upon in September 2020. Additionally, on September 30, 2020, the NEFMC took final action on Amendment 23 to revise the groundfish monitoring program. Implementation is targeted for May 1, 2022, and includes measures such as an at-sea monitoring coverage rate of 100 per cent for sector groundfish trips and two options to use electronic monitoring in addition to human at-sea monitoring. Mr. Pentony noted that electronic monitoring will be operational in the groundfish fishery on May 1, 2021.

Mr. Pentony then provided funding updates. At the end of March 2021, the Secretary of Commerce announced the allocation of an additional $255 million through *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* (CARES) funding. On the East coast, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will review state funding plans and process payments for eligible fishery participants. In the Northeast Region, Massachusetts was allocated $23.6 million, Maine was allocated $17.1 million, and New Hampshire was allocated $3 million. Additionally, the Biden Administration has proposed a $6.9 billion budget for NOAA. This would be the biggest budget in the Agency’s history if approved by Congress.

Lastly, Mr. Pentony provided an update on North Atlantic Right Whales (NARW). Seventeen NARW mom/calf pairs were observed in U.S. waters. However, the vessel strike and loss of one of these calves and reports of entangled whales are good reminders that there is still more to be done. Efforts continue toward reducing risks, including working through the take reduction process to reduce entanglement risks in trap/pot fisheries and assessing the speed reduction rule. Mr. Pentony finished by saying that Ms. Jean Higgins would provide a brief summary of those efforts during the Species at Risk section of the agenda.

Mr. Wentzell opened his remarks with a COVID-19 update as well, noting that DFO Maritimes has been fortunate with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the Region experienced single-digit COVID-19 cases throughout the winter months. However, a sharp rise in cases beginning in mid-April resulted in DFO Maritimes reverting back to an essential services posture. The majority of staff is still working from home full or part-time.

Mr. Wentzell then provided an update on staff changes. Regionally, Mr. Wentzell has been appointed as the Maritimes Region Regional Director General. Paul Gillis has joined the Maritimes Region as the new Associate Regional Director General. Paul is returning to the Maritimes from working in Ottawa as the Director General of International and Inter-governmental Affairs and the Director General of Strategic Policy. Lastly, Jennifer Ford has been appointed to the position of Director of Resource Management and Licensing. Nationally, Mr. Wentzell shared that Lawrence Hanson was appointed by the Prime Minister to the position of Associate Deputy Minister of DFO.

Next, Mr. Wentzell shared an update on Canada’s Blue Economy Strategy (BES), which is currently undergoing a multi-faceted engagement process. The Government of Canada remains committed to developing a BES that will sustainably grow Canada’s ocean sectors, ensure the health of our oceans, and support the prosperity and resiliency of our regional and coastal communities. The Strategy will build upon current work to advance oceans protection and conservation objectives, recognizing that long-term sustainable growth and prosperity can only be achieved alongside commitments to a healthy ocean. The BES will be informed by the views of Canadians through a multi-faceted engagement process which launched formally on February 8, 2021. Through a series of roundtables, and online engagement, the Government will hear directly from Canadians representing fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, shipping, and other industries, as well as from environmental organizations, Indigenous and coastal communities, women, youth, academia, and others

Mr. Wentzell then noted highlights from the Government of Canada’s Budget 2021 which was tabled on April 19, 2021 and balances protection with the needs of the fishing industry. One of the five themes was climate action and a green economy. Items of particular interest to DFO Maritimes Region include $2.3 billion over five years to support Canada’s Nature Legacy; about $1 billion over five years for ongoing marine conservation; $10 million next year to the Ghost Gear Fund to help reduce ocean plastics that threaten marine life; and $300 million over the next two years for Small Craft Harbour infrastructures.

Finally, Mr. Wentzell shared that the first NARW sighting this year occurred the week of April 28, 2021, in the Cabot Strait, by a Canadian air observer. Dynamic closure protocols were subsequently implemented in snow crab fishing areas in the region and the area remains a continued area of focus.

**Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) and Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC) Updates**

*Intersessional Updates – Allocation Shares Process*

The Canadian Co-Chair of TMGC, Mr. Alain d’Entremont, thanked Mr. John Quinn before leaving his position as the U.S. TMGC Co-Chair. He then introduced the new Canadian TRAC Co-Chair, Ms. Tara McIntyre, and asked her to provide updates on the allocation shares process. Ms. McIntyre shared that Dr. Paul Rago will be the meeting chair for the July TRAC meeting. Regarding allocation shares, Ms. McIntyre noted that the missing U.S. spring and fall 2020 surveys will impact the 2022 data. TRAC, therefore, presented both a two-year and five-year average at the TMGC Intersessional as options for addressing the missing data when calculating the allocation shares. Mr. d’Entremont stated that a two-year average was selected to determine allocation shares for 2022.

*Intersessional Updates – Cod DLMTool*

Ms. McIntyre and Mr. d’Entremont provided updates on the cod Data‐Limited Method Toolkit (DLMTool). Ms. McIntyre shared that the scientific components of the DLMTool passed a desktop peer review conducted by one Canadian and one U.S. reviewer. The final products were then refined by the cod Science team in collaboration with the cod sub-working group (WG) of the TMGC. Final outputs of the application were then presented to TMGC at the April 2021 intersessional. Mr. d’Entremont emphasized that the DLMTool is an interim approach being used to allow the management of the species moving forward, and is not a model. Ultimately, no management procedure could solve all the problems stemming from the data limitations. Two separate management procedures were selected and will be used by the TRAC to generate a range of catch advice. The first management procedure was a constant catch approach using the terminal year quota and the second was a constant catch approach using the terminal year quota with a 20 per cent reduction in catch. Available indicators for Eastern Georges Bank cod will also be presented at the 2021 TRAC meeting.

*Updates Regarding TRAC Assessments*

Ms. Tara Trinko-Lake updated participants on upcoming TRAC assessments. A virtual TRAC meeting is planned for July 12-13, 2021. Yellowtail flounder and cod will be assessed at the July meeting. A third day may be added for the TRAC review of Eastern Georges Bank haddock depending on the Haddock Research Track timeline and the need to provide haddock advice for 2022. Both an empirical approach and limiter approach will be applied to Yellowtail flounder for the development of multi-year advice. Mr. d’Entremont added that the limiter approach applied to Yellowtail flounder showed potential and that TMGC formed a sub-WG to support the process. The DLMTool will be applied to develop Eastern Georges Bank cod advice.

Regarding surveys, Ms. Trinko-Lake reiterated that the 2020 U.S. fall survey was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, TRAC does not anticipate any additional delays due to COVID-19. The 2021 DFO winter survey was completed and the 2021 U.S. spring survey is underway.

*Haddock Research Track*

Ms. Trinko-Lake provided an update on the Haddock Research Track. In addition to one stakeholder engagement meeting, the Haddock Research Track WG has held nine meetings, each consisting of one to three half-day sessions. For Georges Bank haddock, the WG covered the following TORs: ecosystem considerations (TOR 1), reviewed past research recommendations (TOR 7), recruitment processes (TOR 9), density-dependent growth (TOR 10), catch data (TOR 2), survey data (TOR 3), stock structure (TOR 12), and looked at preliminary assessment model runs (TOR 4). Ms. Trinko-Lake highlighted that the available studies on the Georges Bank haddock stock structure were not definitive. Model runs exploring alternative stock structure configurations will need to be explored. At this point, the WG has delayed further model runs until they can determine how to handle several biological parameters (e.g., length-weight relationship, weight at age, maturity). The WG is roughly three months behind schedule, which is a concern since the Canadian fishery opens January 1, 2022. Mr. d’Entremont added that due to these delays, the Steering Committee may have to consider a check-in on the existing haddock total allowable catch (TAC) for the coming year to allow the Research Track to complete its work. Furthermore, other options may have to be explored for the 2022 haddock TAC and Research Track outputs will then be applied in 2023.

Mr. Tom Nies cautioned participants about the Research Track delays. Should the Research Track’s final outputs be delayed into September 2021, implementing the final decisions ahead of the May 1, 2022 fishing season start will be difficult for NEFMC. Mr. Nies also requested clarification on the Research Track’s focus on stock structures, as it wasn’t his understanding that this was being considered under this process, and in turn has created most of the delay. Additionally, Mr. Nies expressed concern that there may be a potential for a mismatch between assessment results which alter stock structure and current management areas. Ms. Trinko Lake noted that the Research Track Working Group was directed to provide advice based on the current management boundaries.

Regarding the status of the Haddock Research Track, Mr. d’Entremont noted that the outputs will not be ready in time for either country’s next fishing season. In turn, TRAC is focusing on what can be done to manage haddock in an interim year, however a plan has yet to be established. The plan will hopefully be formalized for the July TRAC meeting. This would lead to a regular TMGC meeting with all three stocks (cod, yellowtail flounder, and haddock), as opposed to separating out haddock as had been discussed in September 2020. This has not been decided yet.

**Update on Herring Literature Review on Stock Structure and U.S. Rebuilding Update**

Ms. Michelle Greenlaw provided an update on the ongoing herring stock structure literature review. DFO issued a contract for the literature review last fiscal year. U.S. Science colleagues produced references to be included in the literature review as well. Once the contract is complete, DFO will review the results and then provide it to the U.S. for their review. Following the review from both DFO and U.S. Science, the final output is expected to be published in a peer reviewed journal. Ms. Greenlaw noted that the results thus far indicate that the weir stock is not entirely of U.S. origin. The results can be presented jointly to participants if necessary.

Mr. Nies followed up with an update on the U.S. rebuilding plan for herring. A rebuilding plan must be implemented in ten years or less if a stock is deemed to be overfished. U.S. is currently developing alternatives for the rebuilding plan that the NEFMC will consider in fall 2021. Mr. Nies added that two alternatives are currently under consideration: the current acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rule; and, the identification of a constant catch mortality that rebuilds over seven years. The second option produces higher catch streams initially. Mr. Nies added that recent herring recruitment has not been as high as previous years and that the lower recruitment must be considered in the rebuilding plan. Depending on the rebuilding plan selected, these changes will likely be implemented in the second-half of 2022.

**Collaborative Science Processes**

*International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group on the Northwest Atlantic Regional Sea (WGNARS)*

Dr. Jamie Tam of DFO Science provided an overview of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group on the Northwest Atlantic Regional Sea (WGNARS). Dr. Tam is the Canadian ICES-WGNARS Co-Chair alongside U.S. Co-Chair, Dr. Sean Lucey of NOAA. ICES is an intergovernmental marine sciences group while WGNARS is an expert group. WGNARS has been operating since 2009 and meets once per year, alternating between the U.S. and Canada. Since 2009, WGNARS has amassed over 50 participants with a wide range of expertise from 15 different national/international institutions including the Northeast Fisheries Science Centre, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, DFO Maritimes, and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Center. Dr. Tam noted that WGNARS is one of the first interdisciplinary groups at ICES. This interdisciplinary approach works to develop scientific support for management decisions and produce scientific output, such as two ICES Journal of Marine Science publications, one Canada Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences publication, and one Frontiers in Marine Science publication. Terms of Reference for the group are revisited every three years. WGNARS also organizes coordinates science symposiums, conferences, and workshops, and has successfully produced a variety of conceptual and ecosystems models in both the U.S. and Canada.

Mr. d’Entremont asked whether any future projects will be focusing on Georges Bank and/or the Gulf of Maine and how TMGC or other stakeholders could contribute to those potential projects. Dr. Tam responded that WGNARS’s latest ICES publication highlighted ongoing projects (conceptual models) for both Georges Bank and the Gulf of Maine, and that there is room for involvement in both projects. Dr. Lucey added that NOAA-NEFSC produces an Annual State of the Ecosystem Report on both Georges Bank and the Gulf of Maine for NEFMC. Additionally, WGNARS is considering multi-species modelling projects for the Georges Bank region.

Mr. d’Entremont then asked how WGNARS output reaches bodies such as TMGC to help with management decision-making, and how this process could work for cod, haddock, and Yellowtail flounder specifically. Dr. Lucey responded that stock specific ecological and socio-economic profiles will be developed in the coming years outside of WGNARS, but will be discussed by WGNARS, and some of these profiles could focus on cod, haddock, and Yellowtail flounder. He also mentioned that ICES publishes reports every year and has larger ones published every three years when the terms of references are addressed. However, both Dr. Lucey and Dr. Tam noted that much of what Mr. d’Entremont is referring to, as well as the connections between WGNARS and TRAC, will come through the Canada-U.S. Ecosystem Science (CAUSES) Working Group.

*Canada-U.S. Ecosystem Science (CAUSES) Working Group*

Dr. Alida Bundy of DFO Science provided an overview of CAUSES and its work, including the terms of reference, structure of the group, and its goals and mission. Dr. Bundy is the Canadian Co-Chair alongside U.S. Co-Chair, Dr. Robert Gamble. Dr. Bundy noted that CAUSES is much younger than WGNARS – first meeting in 2017. CAUSES mission is to conduct ecosystem and climate change research to inform management advice for shared stocks in the Eastern U.S. and Canadian marine ecosystems through communication, discussion, and shared expertise and tools between DFO and the NEFSC CAUSES has produced research products such as conceptual models for three transboundary stocks, namely cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder and supported published research on the effect of environmental factors and density-dependence on growth of Eastern Georges Bank haddock. CAUSES also has several ongoing research projects, including “The role of the Gulf Stream North Wall in the retention of larvae on Georges Bank and recruitment success” led by Dr. Gamble and “Trends and drivers of condition factors for groundfish species on the Northeast US Continental Shelf,” led by Dr. Laurel Smith. Lastly, Dr. Bundy noted several proposed research projects such as “Understanding shifts in distribution of TRAC species spatially and temporally across Canada/U.S. boundary on Georges Bank” to be led by Yanjun Wang, Sean Lucey, et al.

Mr. Nies thanked Dr. Bundy for the presentation and asked Mr. John Pappalardo to briefly touch on Ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) approaches being considered by NEFMC in the Eastern Georges Bank region. Mr. Pappalardo, the chair of NEFMC’s EBFM Planning Development Team stated that NEFMC has been exploring EBFM approaches for current fisheries in the Georges Bank area, as well as the species in focus for the Steering Committee. The attention of NEFMC in this regard so far has been on exploring trophic relationships among species and how they adapt to change, as well as addressing the multi-faceted goals and objectives involved in EBFM. The NEFMC has developed an example EBFM plan which will be shared with the public and stakeholders for input. Following the public engagement period, the input received will return to the NEFMC and its committees. Public and stakeholders input may lead to a new EBFM plan, or simply new policies within the existing fishery management plans. Finally, Mr. Pappalardo offered to discuss this plan in more detail at the next Steering Committee meeting if further interest exists.

Mr. d’Entremont asked how these NEFMC approaches could be integrated into decision-making, and whether it should be integrated through TRAC and/or TMGC. Mr. Pappalardo responded that the method of integration is an issue that has been identified, but options have yet to be explored.

Mr. Wentzell opened a discussion as to how the information from these various tables can be presented to the Steering Committee. There were suggestions that if the work from the tables could be incorporated in the near term (in the coming year or two), the information could be presented to TMGC or TRAC, who could then make an operational presentation to the Steering Committee. That would ensure that information that could potentially affect management decisions are reviewed and discussed at the appropriate committee level. Mr. Simpkins and Mr. Nies noted that much of the work that was presented at today’s meeting is much longer term than one or two years from now, and that the U.S. will also need to consider that the scope of the U.S. work can get very big, very fast.

Dr. Bundy concluded this section of the meeting by noting that an ecosystem-based approach embraces a wide range of methods and scope, and includes complementary pieces of information that could affect decision-making. It would be useful to fit U.S. EBFM information into the bigger picture.

**ACTION: U.S. presentation on the New England Fisheries Management Council’s Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management plan to be considered as a future agenda item.**

**ACTION: The Integration Committee to determine the best method behind integrating the information produced from the EBFM Tables into future Steering Committee proceedings.**

**Species at Risk (SAR)**

*Species at Risk Working Group Terms of Reference*

The U.S. Co-Chair of the Species at Risk Working Group (SARWG), Ms. Jean Higgins, updated participants on a series of proposed changes to the SARWG Terms of References (TOR). There have been substantial changes to the membership, the focus of the SARWG, and the surrounding policy environment since the SARWG TOR and associated work plan were initially developed in 2006. A detailed list of the proposed TOR changes were provided to participants prior to the meeting. Ms. Higgins noted that the proposed TOR changes aim to accomplish the following: remove objectives/activities completed since 2006; outline key roles to support planning/updates; outline logistics associated with annual meetings; provide more structure and opportunities to streamline updates (e.g., a matrix to provide updates for species of common interest); provide a network/contact list through identifying core roles in SARWG planning and science/management coordination; and, enhance coordination in areas where gaps may exist through clarifying the SARWG’s scope. Ms. Higgins emphasized the importance of the proposed TOR change to allow for information exchange and collaboration on transboundary candidate and listed/protected species, and related issues of common concern in Northern Atlantic coastal waters. The Canadian Co-Chair of SARWG, Mr. Donald Humphrey, requested an endorsement from the Steering Committee Co-Chairs on the proposed TOR changes. Mr. Wentzell indicated that the Steering Committee Co-Chairs will review and approve the changes secretarially.

*Species at Risk Working Group Updates*

Ms. Higgins provided U.S. updates on Species at Risk. The *Marine Mammal Protection Act* (MMPA) prohibits the take of marine mammals, but provides a conditional exception for incidental take in commercial fisheries. However, a Take Reduction Team must be convened if Mortality and Serious Injury exceeds the Potential Biological Removal limit set in the Biological Opinion for the fishery. An Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan update is in development under the scope of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team. A 60 per cent risk reduction is needed in the northeast region lobster and crab trap/pot fisheries, mainly due to the current status of the North Atlantic Right whale population. A proposed rule was released on December 31, 2020, comments regarding the rule were received through March 1, 2021, and a final rule is anticipated for summer 2021. This final rule would introduce measures such as modified gear marking and gear configurations, an increase in the number of, and area of, marked lines, and modifying of existing seasonal restricted areas to restrict buoy lines (but allow ropeless fishing), among others. Ms. Higgins then updated participants on the Draft Batch Fisheries Biological Opinion, initially released on January 15, 2021 in draft form. The development of the batch fisheries biological opinion was necessary to fulfill obligations under Section 7 of the *Endangered Species Act* (ESA). Preliminary determinations found that the proposed action is not likely to jeopardize any listed species or destroy or adversely modify any critical habitat. Ms. Higgins noted that the final biological opinion will be issued by May 31, 2021, and it will outline a conservation framework.

Next, Ms. Higgins provided updates on the NARW Vessel Speed Rule Assessment. The Assessment found that there was a decrease in mortalities, but an increase in both serious and non-serious injuries to NARWs. Compliance improved in Seasonal Management Areas over time, though poor compliance continues in discrete areas, and cooperation in voluntary areas is poor. Additionally, the economic costs are $28.3 to $39.4 million annually. The Assessment produced a series of recommendations, including modifying Seasonal Management Areas, enhancing enforcement and outreach, addressing vessel strike risk from small vessels, modifying or terminating voluntary speed reduction areas. Public comment will also be considered. Finally, Ms. Higgins touched on smaller ESA updates. NMFS will begin a status review of this Shortfin Mako to determine if listing is warranted after receiving a petition from Defenders of Wildlife. Additionally, the five-year status review of Atlantic salmon was completed and resulted in no recommended change to the endangered listing status.

Mr. Humphrey provided Canadian updates on Species at Risk. In terms of *Species at Risk Act* listing updates, management scenarios for both Shortfin Mako and lumpfish are currently underway and public consultations are planned for fall/winter 2021-2022. There may be opportunities for collaboration between Canada and the U.S. on Shortfin Mako, given the timing of both processes. Additionally, Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) re-assessments are planned for White shark and Atlantic Mud-piddock in April 2021, and Harbour porpoise in November 2021. Mr. Humphrey also shared NARW updates. The final NARW Action Plan received Ministerial approval and was posted to the SAR Public Registry on March 5, 2021. Work has begun on a second NARW five-year report. Finally, potential options are being assessed to re-establish the NARW recovery network. Regarding Leatherback Sea turtles, the 2007 recovery strategy is being amended to include critical habitat and other updates. Recovery strategy implementation continues with at-sea field surveys and sampling off Nova Scotia planned for summer 2021. A progress report for the 2013-2019 period is targeted for posting on the SAR Public Registry in 2021-2022. Additionally, the recovery strategy for Loggerhead Sea turtles was posted to the SAR Public Registry in December 2020. The action plan and implementation planning are still in development. For White shark, the recovery strategy, action plan, and implementation planning are planned for 2021-22.

Mr. Humphrey then shared funding updates for Species at Risk in Canada. Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk (CNFASAR) is a four-year program aimed at slowing the decline of aquatic species at risk through targeted funding for recovery activities. Total funding allotted through CNFASAR to the Maritimes Region is $8.7 million from 2019-2020 to 2022-2023. Additionally, the Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk (HSP) is an on-going funding program aimed at supporting the conservation and recovery of aquatic species at risk and their habitats. Funding allotted through HSP to the Maritimes Region is $750,000 in 2020-2021 and $775,000 in 2021-2022.

*North Atlantic Right Whale Management Measures (Canada and U.S. updates)*

Ms. Jennifer Ford spoke about NARW fisheries management measures in Canada. Canada continues to implement fisheries management measures including the continuation of the Dynamic Closure Area Protocol. Ms. Ford emphasized a change to the Dynamic Closure Area Protocol for 2021: in the Gulf of St. Lawrence dynamic area, if a NARW is detected again during days 9 to 15 of a temporary closure period, each applicable grid will become seasonally closed until November 15, 2021. Ms. Ford noted that the implementation deadline for non-tended fix gear and trap modifications was extended to January 1, 2023, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, Ms. Ford announced that DFO’s Ghost Gear Program will be expanded in 2022. The Sustainable Fisheries Solutions and Retrieval Support Contribution Program, or Ghost Gear Program, aims to: 1) retrieve and dispose of ghost gear; 2) invest in innovative gear technology; and 3) encourage international leadership and awareness.

**Action: Steering Committee Co-Chairs to approve the Species at Risk Working Group’s proposed Terms of References changes secretarially.**

**Closing Remarks**

Both Mr. Wentzell and Mr. Pentony thanked participants for their preparatory work that ensured an effective Steering Committee meeting. Mr. Pentony continued by acknowledging the importance of collaborative efforts regarding NARWs before closing the meeting.

NextMeeting scheduled for October 14, 2021.