

Canada/U.S. Transboundary Resources Steering Committee  
May 16, 2016  
Conference Call Meeting Minutes

**Canadian Participants:**

Morley Knight, DFO, Steering Committee Co-chair  
Kirsten Clark, Science, DFO  
Mark Craig, DFO, Integration Committee Co-chair  
Kristian Curran, DFO, TRAC Co-Chair  
Alain d'Entremont, TMGC Industry  
Jennifer Ford, DFO, TMGC  
Laura Hussey-Bondt, DFO, Resource Advisor, small pelagics  
Roger Stirling, GOMAC Co-chair  
Yanjun Wang, DFO, TRAC  
Tana Worcester, Science, DFO

**U.S. Participants:**

John Bullard, NMFS GARFO, Steering Committee Co-chair  
Terry Alexander, NEFMC, U.S. TMGC Industry Representative  
Jennifer Anderson, NMFS GARFO, Integration Committee Co-chair  
Liz Brooks, NMFS NEFSC, TRAC Co-chair  
Kiersten Curti, NMFS NEFSC  
Dave Gouveia, NMFS GARFO, SAW WG Co-Chair  
Sarah Heil, NMFS GARFO, TMGC  
William (Bill) Karp, NMFS NEFSC Director  
Allison Murphy, NMFS GARFO, Integration Committee  
Tom Nies, NEFMC, Executive Director, TMGC  
Terry Stockwell, NEFMC Chairman, TMGC Co-chair  
Mike Simpkins, NMFS NESFC, TRAC and TMGC

**Opening Remarks**

Mr. Morley Knight welcomed participants to the teleconference. Mr. Knight opened the meeting with four important updates. He provided an update to the current Canadian environment, indicating that Catherine Blewett will become the new Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) in June, replacing Matthew King who has retired. Ms. Blewett was the former Clerk of Nova Scotia's Executive Council and Cabinet Secretary. Mr. Knight also provided budget news: Canadian Coast Guard will be receiving \$45 million over two years and DFO is receiving \$81 million over five years to support marine conservation activities, including the designation of new Marine Protected Areas under the *Oceans Act*. He further noted that DFO will be receiving \$197 million over five years to increase ocean and freshwater science monitoring and research activities, which includes 135 new scientists for the Department, 26 of whom will be in the Maritimes Region. He indicated that Canada plans to increase its total area protected to 5% by 2017 and to 10% by 2020. These targets include finishing the processes for Areas of Interest

ready to be designated as Marine Protected Areas, including advancing the St Anns Bank Area of Interest. Mr. Knight mentioned that the Species at Risk Working Group will be collaborating in the coming months, and an update on its work would be welcomed at the September Steering Committee meeting.

Mr. John Bullard began by thanking staff for their preparation for the meeting. With regard to the groundfish fishery, new quotas were put into place for May 1, 2016. Quotas increased for 10 stocks, while a few others, notably Eastern Georges Bank (EGB) cod saw large reductions. As part of the same rulemaking, the U.S. implemented the agreed-upon quotas for the shared groundfish stocks. Mr. Bullard also discussed right whale abundance, indicating that he was pleased that the Species at Risk Working Group will be meeting this summer to discuss right whale monitoring and research initiatives and eager to learn about the progress being made toward addressing right whale entanglements in Canadian waters. This discussion is timely because recent declines in right whale abundance had added increased pressure to ensure the United States and Canada have equivalent management strategies. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries' Chief Scientist, Dr. Richard Merrick, is planning to convene a workshop in the fall to determine what is causing the downward trend in right whale abundance. Mr. Bullard suggested that this workshop also include appropriate Canadian staff.

Mr. Knight noted that Canada would be happy to participate in the Right Whale Steering Committee Working Group.

Mr. Bill Karp announced his upcoming retirement, stating that the Northeast Fisheries Science Center has begun the process to fill his position.

The co-chairs then proceeded to review the action items from the September 2015 meeting. It was agreed that: The Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) Terms of Reference (TOR) for the coming year were still pending; the TRAC template for interim year assessments for haddock were developed and presented at Transboundary Management Guidance Committee's (TMGC's) 2016 intercessional; the Steering Committee had still to consider the possibility of a benchmark meeting for haddock or cod in 2017; TRAC had otherwise completed their multi-year assessment schedule for the next three years; and TMGC had not yet completed their review of the Process Review Report.

## **TRAC Report**

Mr. Kristian Curran commended the hard work and good working relationship of TRAC scientists. For 2016-2018, the TRAC meeting is scheduled to be held during the second week of July. For 2016, the TRAC is scheduled to meet July 14-16 in Woods Hole, MA and a schedule has been set for finalized submissions and distribution of materials. The TOR for the July 2016 meeting are close to being finalized and the TRAC and TMGC are working together to make the final edits. Once final, the TOR will be sent to the Steering Committee for approval (a TRAC and TMGC agreed upon TOR was subsequently forwarded to, and approved by, the Steering Committee Co-chairs). Mr. Curran will remain as the TRAC co-chair for this year's meetings.

With regard to multi-year assessments, the TRAC members believe they will need to complete EGB cod and GB yellowtail flounder assessments annually. The TRAC plans to do an interim update for EGB haddock in 2016 and will use a finalized template agreed upon by TRAC and TMGC. At the 2016 meeting, the TRAC will discuss the utility of this template for use in subsequent years. An assessment for EGB haddock will be pursued again in 2017. The TRAC is set to complete one benchmark assessment in 2017. While a haddock benchmark assessment is overdue, an EGB cod assessment may instead be scheduled. This will be discussed at the 2016 TRAC meeting.

For next steps, the TRAC will hold a series of planning webinars to discuss an Empirical Approach for EGB cod prior to the July TRAC meeting. These webinars are not peer review meetings and decisions are not tabled but rather are intended to facilitate coordination among TRAC scientists; the webinars allow the team to coordinate and prepare for the July meeting (it was subsequently agreed that a TMGC representative from Canada and the US would be permitted to attend the webinars as ‘observers’).

#### TRAC Dates & Timelines:

- Deadline for exchange of data for Cod, Haddock and Yellowtail models and assessments is **COB, May 31, 2016**
- Deadline for exchange of data for Cod Empirical Approach is **COB, June 15, 2016**
- Meeting Working Papers to be submitted **COB June 28, 2016**
- Meeting Working Papers to be distributed **COB June 30, 2016**
- Meeting save-the-date notice went out May 25, 2016 and invitation to go out **June 13, 2016**

Finally, the TRAC discussed the availability of data from the U.S. spring survey, given that the U.S. spring survey has been delayed. Late submission of data may make the TRAC’s task more difficult. Ms. Liz Brooks clarified the U.S. research vessel’s schedule, stating that the survey is scheduled to end in early June. She indicated that it would be very difficult for the U.S. to have data processed and available for the July TRAC meeting.

Mr. Tom Nies questioned whether the TRAC’s cod webinars were open to the public. Mr. Curran indicated that they had not been and that the TRAC was following the same process as last year and years prior. The webinars were intended to advance work ahead of the July meeting, but that there would be full presentations and discussion of all information at the July TRAC meeting. Mr. Nies expressed the opinion that these webinars should be open to the public. Ms. Sarah Heil suggested that the TRAC share the schedule of webinars and topics with members of the TMGC.

Mr. Bullard thanked the TRAC for their hard work on the TOR, particularly for EGB cod, noting that it appeared that the group was close to agreement.

Mr. Alain d’Entremont raised concern with the U.S. spring survey schedule, recalling that data availability had been an issue in the past. Mr. Curran confirmed that the TRAC believes that the U.S. spring survey data will be included in the 2016 assessments.

**ACTION: Kristian Curran and Liz Brooks to send a schedule of the webinars to TMGC.**  
(Complete – Kristian Curran’s email sent May 16, 2016).

### **TMGC Update**

Ms. Jennifer Ford provided a summary of the TMGC’s April 4, 2016, conference call. The TMGC discussed the 2016 TRAC TOR for cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder and provided several rounds of comments. As previously stated, the TOR were nearly ready for the Steering Committee’s review and approval. The TMGC also briefly discussed the multi-year assessment schedule, and reviewed the TRAC template for Interim Updates. The TMGC hoped to work on the TMGC Review Report, but did not have the opportunity to make progress on this issue. They intended to make progress on the review during the summer of 2016 and have a full discussion at the September 2016 TMGC meeting in Boston.

Mr. Terry Stockwell added that the TMGC also discussed the impacts of a delayed U.S. spring survey. Further, they requested that the TRAC review this issue at their summer 2016 meeting.

Mr. Mark Craig sought clarification on the TMGC’s timeline for the TMGC Process Review Report, noting that the longer it takes for the TMGC to complete this task, the more outdated the information assembled last summer will become. Ms. Ford replied that the TMGC intends to complete the initial review of the TMGC Process Review Report before the end of 2016.

Mr. d’Entremont raised concern with the timeline, noting that the TMGC needs time to discuss and draw conclusions. He stated that the TMGC needs to make a commitment to complete this task. Ms. Heil agreed, stating that the review of the Process Review Report requires a two-tiered approach. The first phase would be the initial review to confirm that the appropriate information was collected. This phase could be completed by the end of 2016. The second phase would be a more in-depth assessment of the report, requiring critical thinking – assessing the information in the report and determining what, if any, issues need to be addressed.

### **ACTIONS:**

- **The TMGC to finalize their initial review of the TMGC Review Report by the end of 2016.**
- **TRAC to ensure that the delayed spring survey is placed on the agenda for the fall Steering Committee meeting.**

### **Mackerel Update**

Ms. Laura Hussey-Bondt provided a brief update on mackerel research. An update was provided on two International Governance Strategy (IGS) projects: one on estimating unreported catch and surveys for possible new spawning areas in Newfoundland and the other, a two-year project on environmental factors and their effects on mackerel distribution and population models. Additionally, there has been some collaboration on egg surveys. At present, there is no intention of managing mackerel jointly with the U.S. However, it is a transboundary stock, and collaboration between U.S. and Canadian scientists is expected to lead to better stock assessments in both countries. At this time, TRAC is not considered to be the appropriate venue for science collaboration on mackerel. Instead, U.S. scientists will be participating in the upcoming Canadian stock assessment led by Quebec Region, DFO. It was noted that mackerel is

not a jointly-managed stock and does not fall under the Terms of Reference of TMGC or the Steering Committee. As such, this agenda item was for information only. Although it was noted that there was a TRAC benchmark on mackerel a number of years ago, there was no consensus on a modelling approach at that time.

Mr. Bullard and Mr. Knight confirmed that continued collaboration on science will be valuable and that there may be room to collaborate more in the future.

**ACTION: Because of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's previous interest in joint science and/or management, Mr. Bullard to advise the Mid-Atlantic Council that, at this point, there is no plan to pursue joint management of mackerel.** (Completed on June 15, 2016)

### **Other Issues**

Mr. Bullard and Mr. Knight asked if there were any other issues to discuss.

Mr. Nies reminded the group that the TRAC and TMGC were required to finalize the wording of the TRAC TORs, which subsequently need to be approved by the Steering Committee. Mr. Curran indicated that Canadian TRAC members would discuss this issue immediately following the Steering Committee meeting and would ascertain U.S. participants' input.

Mr. Bullard asked Mr. Dave Gouveia about the next steps associated with the right whale workshop. Mr. Gouveia stated that the workshop is still in the planning phase. He will ensure that Mr. Knight and his colleagues on the Species at Risk Working Group are aware of the meeting schedule, so they can determine how best to participate.

### **ACTIONS:**

- **TMGC and TRAC to finalize the wording of the TRAC TORs and have them secretarially approved by the Steering Committee.**
- **Mr. Dave Gouveia to ensure that Mr. Knight and his colleagues on the Species at Risk Working Group are aware of the right whale workshop and the 'right fit' participants are invited to the workshop.**

### **Closing Remarks**

Mr. Bullard and Mr. Knight closed the meeting by reviewing the schedule for the TMGC and Steering Committee in September in Boston. The TMGC is currently scheduled to meet on September 7-8, 2016. The Steering Committee is scheduled to meet on September 8 or 9, 2016, depending on flight schedules. They thanked staff from both countries for the progress they had made and look forward to continuing the discussion in September.