

Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC)
Minutes from August 23-24, 2010 Meeting
St. Andrews Biological Station, St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada

These Minutes represent a consensus summary of the principal discussions and conclusions from the meeting, organized according to subject, and are not intended to be a chronological transcript of the meeting. The minutes are reviewed by the TMGC members and alternates, and posted on the internet upon agreement by the Co-Chairs.

Attendees:

Co – Chairs: George Lapointe – U.S., and Michael O’Connor – Canada

U.S. Industry: Jim Odlin and David Preble

Canada Industry: Claude d’Entremont and Tim Nickerson

U.S. Science (NMFS): Loretta O’Brien

Canada Science (DFO): Lou Van Eeckhaute, Julie Porter and Sharon McGladdery

U.S. Management (NMFS): Tom Warren and Travis Ford

Canada Management (DFO): Verna Docherty

U.S. – New England Fishery Management Council Staff (NEFMC): Tom Nies

Canada Observers: Alain d’Entremont, Christine Penny and Judith Maxwell

Review of Agenda and 2009 Minutes

There was one addition to the meeting agenda with respect to quota trading. The minutes from the September 2009 meeting were approved by consensus. It was noted that there is still frustration that the minutes have taken a long time to be completed, and there was a renewed commitment to have these minutes approved in a timely manner. It was suggested that the first draft of the minutes should be completed within two weeks of the meeting

Presentation of Final Canadian TAC Catch Numbers from 2009 Fishing Year and Update of 2010 Fishing Year Programs and Catches

The Canadian 2009 fishing year (calendar year 2009) quotas and catches were presented and are summarized in the following table. Landings were initially presented by month and discards by quarter (see attachment). Final catch includes estimated discards from the scallop fishery and groundfish fishery.

Stock	Quota (mt)	Scallop Discards (mt)	Final Catch (mt)
Cod	1,173	69	1,209
Haddock	18,900	54	17,649
Yellowtail	483	84	87

The yellowtail flounder quota in 2009 was a bycatch reserve for scallop discards and groundfish catch.

The Canadian 2010 fishing year quotas and catches to date were presented and are summarized in the following table.

Stock	Quota (mt)	Scallop Discards (mt)	Catch (mt)
Cod	976 *	32	291
Haddock	17,612	8	10,195
Yellowtail Flounder	756	182	197

*Adjusted downward from 1,012 due to overrun of 36 mt in 2009.

The catch data is through 20 August, and the scallop discard estimate is through 30 June. It was noted that a directed fishery for yellowtail flounder has not commenced as of yet, but is still being evaluated.

There was a brief discussion on the offshore scallop fishery on Georges Bank and management measures that have been adopted to reduce the interaction with groundfish species. In particular, the fleet has implemented area closures during key times of the year to avoid yellowtail flounder and cod.

Presentation of Final U.S. TAC Catch Numbers from 2009 Fishing Year and Update of 2010 Fishing Year Programs and Catches

The U.S. 2009 fishing year (May 1, 2009 – April 30, 2010) quotas and catches were presented and are summarized in the following table. Landings were initially presented by month and discards by quarter (see attachment).

Stock	U.S. TAC (mt)	Catch (% of TAC)	Total Catch (mt)	Discards (% of catch)
Cod	527	89%	467	36%
Haddock	11,100	14%	1,563	1%
Yellowtail Flounder	1,617	109%	1,770	31%

The U.S. 2010 fishing year (May 1, 2010 to August 14, 2010) quotas and catch were presented and are summarized in the following table.

Stock	U.S. TAC (mt)	Catch (% of TAC)	Total Catch (mt)
Cod	338	23%	77
Haddock	11,988	1.4%	164
Yellowtail Flounder	1,200*	25%	257

*Subsequent to the TMGC meeting, and prior to the completion of this document, the U.S. adjusted its 2010 GB yellowtail TAC to 1,047 due to Fishing Year 2009 overharvest.

It was noted that with the introduction of sector management in the U.S. in 2010, regulatory discards related to trip limits will no longer be permitted; however, regulatory discards will continue in the segment of the fleet managed by days-at-sea, a portion of the scallop fishery, and for minimum size requirements. The U.S. provided a handout (attached) that described the methodology for calculating groundfish discards.

Review of Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) Status Reports

Eastern Georges Bank Cod

The information that was presented is reflected in the TRAC Status Report 2010/03. As was the case in 2009, there were two model formulations used based on different natural mortality (M) values for fish ages six and older. As the strong 2003 year class ages, there will be additional information on M for older fish in subsequent years which will allow for the determination on M. The biomass trend is flat or slightly downward, and fishing mortality is above Fref.

The TMGC membership discussed the disadvantages of TRAC providing two assessment models, both of which were equally viable. There is also ongoing concern that, while the TMGC has set TACs to keep fishing mortality (F) below the fishing mortality reference point (Fref), this has not been the case based on either assessment, due to a retrospective pattern. There is recently a declining trend in fishing mortality however. Although TRAC included information that attempted to quantify the retrospective, no adjustments were made to the two model results.

Eastern Georges Bank Haddock

The information that was presented is reflected in the TRAC Status Report 2010/04. It was noted that biomass has peaked and is now declining, as expected based on the TRAC status report. The fishing mortality rate is below Fref. TRAC will provide risk curves for biomass changes in the 2011 assessment for this stock. There have only been a few opportunities to observe recruitment at the recent high level of biomass and recent year classes have been poor.

Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder

The information that was presented is reflected in the TRAC Status Report 2010/05. It was noted that F has been below Fref for the last two years, the first in the time series. Biomass declined markedly compared to the 2009 assessment, due to the reduced estimate of the strength of the 2005 year class. The Canadian survey data from 2008 and 2009, each of which had a very large tow, was included, but downweighted.

Discussion of Shared TAC Recommendation - Eastern Georges Bank Haddock

The TMGC agreed that 22,000 mt is an appropriate shared TAC for the Eastern Georges Bank haddock stock for 2011. Although the movement of the 2003 year class through the fishery due to declining biomass is leading to lower quotas, it is hoped that there will be better recruitment in future years. The discussion highlighted that this is a natural decline from record high biomass and not a result of overfishing.

Discussion of Shared TAC Recommendation - Eastern Georges Bank Cod

After discussion of the status of the stock and the two models, the TMGC agreed that 1,050 mt is an appropriate shared TAC for the Eastern Georges Bank cod stock for 2011. Discussion focused on the merits of each formulation and any possible way to reconcile advice resulting from the two different perspectives on natural mortality.

The TMGC highlighted ongoing concerns over poor recruitment and low productivity, and felt that this stock needs to be husbanded to a healthier status. A catch of 1,050 mt in 2011 is predicted to result in a low risk of exceeding Fref based on consideration of the two formulations. Specifically, 1,050 mt is the average of the catches from the two models estimated to result in a 25% probability of exceeding Fref in 2011, and is expected to result in some biomass growth (up to 10%).

Canadian members of TMGC indicated that this stock has been included as part of a designatable unit with the NAFO 4X5Y stock by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) in their assessment of Canadian Atlantic Cod stocks. COSEWIC considers this unit to be Endangered. The process of whether this unit will be listed on the Species at Risk Act in Canada will evolve over the following two years.

Discussion of Shared TAC Recommendation - Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder

The TMGC agreed that 1,900 mt is an appropriate shared TAC for the Georges Bank yellowtail flounder stock for 2011. U.S. members supported this TAC based on the required U.S. rebuilding program, and Canadian members supported this TAC because it will result in biomass growth, and they felt that it was important to come to an agreement on a shared TAC. All TMGC members were pleased that there was agreement on a harvest level for yellowtail flounder, given the inability to reach consensus for the 2010 quota. Discussion focused on the retrospective pattern (F is higher than predicted while SSB is lower), especially given that the 2005 year class no longer appears as strong as it did in the 2009 assessment. A catch of 1,900 mt in 2011 is expected to result in a low (<25%) probability of exceeding Fref and an expected 10% increase in biomass.

Other Business

The USA members provided an update on the alternate rebuilding plans being considered by the Council. The current plan is to rebuild with a 75% probability by 2014, while the alternatives are to extend the timeframe to 2016 and rebuild with a 50%, 60%, or 75% probability. The SSC will be providing an ABC that relates to each of those four possibilities.

The topic of trading quotas between countries will be added to the 2011 agenda. It was agreed that any discussion on trades would not affect the sharing arrangement (i.e. the process of setting of the shared TACs would remain the same, and trading quotas would be a separate process).

A letter sent from members of TRAC to the TMGC was tabled for discussion. In the letter, TRAC proposed that a paper be developed to look at the advantages and disadvantages to changing the periodicity and/or timing of assessments for the three groundfish stocks. It was agreed that TMGC supports exploring this concept and the Canada/US Steering Committee should be advised that the paper developed by members of the TRAC will be forthcoming by their spring 2011 meeting. TMGC members expressed a desire to see the paper prior to submission to the Steering Committee.

Terms of Reference (TOR) for 2011 TRAC

The TMGC discussed the draft TOR for the 2011 TRAC and suggested modifications. In particular, a term of reference was added to address the design for both the USA and Canadian surveys and whether yellowtail flounder is being adequately surveyed by all three surveys. A discussion was also held on the timing of TRAC this year and the lack of Canadian reviewers available due to the lateness of the schedule. It was agreed to revert to a June TRAC meeting for 2011.

TMGC Agenda for 2011

The agenda for 2011 will be based on the 2010 TMGC agenda, with the addition of the item on quota trades.