DATE: June 29, 2022

MEMORANDUM: For Distribution

FROM: Michael Pentony

Regional Administrator, U.S. Co-Chair

Douglas Wentzell

Regional Director General, Canadian Co-Chair

SUBJECT: Distribution of the May 11, 2022, U.S./Canada Transboundary Resources Steering Committee Minutes

Attached are the final minutes of the May 11, 2022 Steering Committee meeting held via video-conference. Should you have any questions, please contact Marianne Ferguson (978-675-2188) or [Marianne.Ferguson@noaa.gov](mailto:Marianne.Ferguson@noaa.gov)) or Reide Thomas (902-237-9251) or [Reide.Thomas@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:Reide.Thomas@dfo-mpo.gc.ca))

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| \*U.S. Distribution  Peter Christopher, NMFS, TMGC  Jamie Cournane, NEFMC  Libby Etrie, NEFMC, TMGC Co-Chair  Marianne Ferguson, NMFS, Integration Committee Co-Chair  Jean Higgins, NMFS, SAR WG Co-Chair  Victoria Luu, NEFSC  Chris Moore, MAFMC Exec. Director | Tom Nies, NEFMC Exec. Director  John Pappalardo, NEFMC, TMGC  Michael Pentony, NMFS, U.S. Co-Chair  Eric Reid, NEFMC  Michael Simpkins, NEFSC, TMGC  Aja Szumylo, NMFS  Spencer Talmage, NMFS, Integration Committee  Talya tenBrink, NMFS, Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) Co-Chair |

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| \*Canadian Distribution  Robert Apro, DFO National Headquarters  Irene Andrushchenko, DFO, TRAC  Ray Belliveau, Industry, GOMAC Co-Chair  Jacinta Berthier, DFO  Kathryn Cooper-MacDonald, DFO, TMGC  Alain d’Entremont, TMGC Co-Chair  Jennifer Ford, DFO Resource Management  Kerri Graham, DFO  Michelle Greenlaw, DFO  Terry Higgins, DFO, Integration Committee Amber Lindstedt, DFO National Headquarters | Tara McIntyre, DFO, TRAC Co-Chair  Ian McIsaac, Industry, GOMAC Co-Chair  Leslie Nasmith, DFO  Sophie Pitre-Arseneault, DFO, Integration Committee  Heidi Schaefer, DFO, SAR WG Co-Chair  Jamie Tam, DFO Science  Reide Thomas, DFO, Integration Committee  Justin Turple, DFO International Fisheries  Doug Wentzell, DFO RDG, Canadian Co-Chair |

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

**May 11, 2022**

**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, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **NAME** | **POSITION AND/OR ORGANIZATION** |  | | |
| *Canadian Participants:* | |
| Irene Andrushchenko | Aquatic Science Biologist, DFO Science |
| Robert Apro | Senior Policy Advisor, DFO National Capital (Observer) |
| Ray Belliveau | Gulf of Maine Advisory Committee (GOMAC) Industry Co-Chair |
| Kathryn Cooper-MacDonald | Senior Advisor, DFO Fisheries Management (FM) |
| Alain D’Entremont | Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC), Industry Co-Chair |
| |  | | --- | | Jennifer Ford | | Director, DFO Resource Management (RM) and Licensing |
| Terry Higgins | Integration Committee, Policy Advisor, DFO Policy and Economics (P&E) |
| Ian McIsaac | GOMAC Industry Co-Chair |
| Tara McIntyre | Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) Co-Chair, DFO Science |
| Leslie Nasmith | A/Head, Groundfish, Pelagics & Secondary Species, DFO Science |
| Sophie Pitre-Arseneault | Integration Committee, Manager, DFO P&E |
| Heidi Schaefer | A/Regional Manager, Species at Risk and Integrated Planning, DFO Aquatic Ecosystems, Species at Risk (SAR) Working Group (WG) Co-Chair |
| Jarrad Sitland | Fisheries Management Officer, DFO RM |
| Reide Thomas | Integration Committee, Policy Analyst, DFO P&E |
| *U.S. Participants:* | |
| Jamie Cournane | Lead Fishery Analyst for Groundfish, NEFMC |
| Elizabeth Etrie | Industry, New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), TMGC Co-Chair |
| Marianne Ferguson | Policy Analyst, NMFS GARFO National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) |
| Jean Higgins | NMFS GARFO Protected Resource Division, SAR WG Co-Chair |
| Victoria Luu | Marine Resource Management Specialist, NEFSC Fishery Monitoring and Research Division (Observer) |
| Tom Nies | Executive Director, NEFMC |
| Eric Reid | NEFMC |
| Dan Salerno | NEFMC |
| Dr. Michael Simpkins | Chief, NMFS NEFSC Resource Evaluation and Assessment Division (READ) |
| Spencer Talmage | Fishery Management Specialist, NMFS GARFO SFD |
| Dr. Talya tenBrink | GIS Lab and Program Lead, NMFS GARFO, TRAC Co-Chair |
| Tara Trinko-Lake | Deputy, NMFS NEFSC READ, former TRAC Co-Chair |

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

Mr. Michael Pentony started his opening remarks by welcoming the participants and noting that April 25th marked the end of the NOAA “evacuation order” and the start of the return to office process. He stated that over the coming months, staff will return to the office after more than two years of working at home, but there will still be an emphasis on flexibility and telework. He followed with a report that 15 mother and calf Right whale pairs were sighted in Southeastern U.S. waters throughout the winter calving months. Many of these pairs have already moved north and have been re-sighted in waters in and around Cape Cod Bay in recent weeks, along with over 100 other animals from this small population. While these large numbers are exciting to see in U.S. waters, they are also a good reminder of the importance of reducing risks to these endangered whales. Next, he shared that on April 12, 2022, NOAA Fisheries approved Groundfish Amendment 23 in full. Management measures include a target at-sea monitoring coverage rate of 100% for sector groundfish trips, and the option for vessels to use two electronic monitoring models in place of human at-sea monitors, and other improvements to the monitoring program. NOAA Fisheries expects to publish a final rule and implement Amendment 23 this summer.  Beginning May 1, the at-sea monitoring coverage target was set at 99 percent and then will increase to 100 percent when Amendment 23 is implemented. Lastly, he introduced Dr. Talya tenBrink, who will temporarily replace Tara Trinko-Lake as the U.S. TRAC co-chair. She holds a PhD in Marine Policy from the University of Rhode Island and has worked for many years on socio-environmental systems. She leads the GARFO GIS Lab and Program.

Mr. Doug Wentzell followed by encouraging staff to revisit any action items at the end of the meeting and then launched into staffing updates. For the Gulf of Maine Advisory Committee (GOMAC), he announced that Roger Stirling retired and Ian McIsaac, joining from Ottawa, has replaced Roger as the GOMAC co-chair, working with Ray Belliveau. John Couture, formerly working at the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources, who previously played a role at TMGC, is now at Oceans North. The DFO Regional Director of Science, Alain Vézina, has also retired, replaced by Francine Desharnais from Defence Research and Development Canada. He added that Terry Higgins is retiring this summer and this will be her last meeting, but Reide Thomas will continue with the Steering Committee file. Lastly, Mr. Wentzell shared that the new Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, the Honourable Joyce Murray, started in December. They are working on key priorities for the Government of Canada such as rebuilding the Atlantic salmon population and modernizing the *Oceans Act*.

Mr. Wentzell then shared that Canada’s 2022 budget was delivered last month. It renewed funding for the Ocean Protections Plan and the Ghost Gear Program. He noted that this program is a great opportunity to work closely with the fishing industry to recover lost gear. The budget will also renew the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Fund. It will additionally provide funding for a Zero Plastic Waste Initiative that will involve federal partners.

Next, Mr. Wentzell provided an update on the Blue Economy Strategy. It will work with stakeholders and partners across Canada for robust planning around ocean space and will support coastal and Indigenous communities through filling gaps and updating labor shortages. It will try to answer the question of: “How do benefits of ocean economies stay in coastal communities?” A “What We Heard” report on the strategy was recently released and the government will be putting pen to paper to develop strategies over the course of the calendar year to build on recently received feedback.

For a fisheries management update, Mr. Wentzell shared that at the end of March, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans closed the commercial and bait Atlantic mackerel fisheries. This closure was needed after a series of reductions to Total Allowable Catch (TAC) year after year. There is a stock assessment planned for 2023 and there is optimism that the stock will rebuild. This closure was a significant decision.

Lastly Mr. Wentzell shared that the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, and the Minister of Transport, announced the North Atlantic right whale fishery and vessel management measures for 2022 back in March. They are closely monitoring whales in Canadian waters. There was a closure announced last week in the Gulf of St. Lawrence – a 15 day closure for specific snow crab grids north of the Magdalen Islands. DFO continues their extensive program of aerial, marine, and underwater acoustic monitoring and surveillance continues to survey active fishing areas – this area included.

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

*TRAC*

Ms. Tara McIntyre noted that there was substantial discussion about a variety of topics at the TRAC intersessional. TRAC discussed the 2022 winter survey biomass indices, Eastern Georges Bank Haddock catch advice, and data delivery deadlines. The latest Canadian survey was done on a new vessel, the *CCGS* *Jacques Cartier*. More than the minimum number of stations were visited, but the *CCGS Needler* was not available for a comparative survey due to mechanical issues. There is a plan to carry out comparative fishing this coming summer and next winter, enabling the use of the 2022 DFO survey retroactively. The U.S. fishery data and survey data were also discussed. The goal for post survey Quality Assurance/Quality Control is June 15th but the fishery data is uncertain. This uncertainty in dates constrains the time for working papers in advance of the TRAC meeting (since it is only one month away, not leaving much time to review). TRAC members started to discuss approaches to deal with this constraint. They considered delaying the TRAC meeting into July or even just one or two weeks later in future years. They also considered a change in the surveys used in assessments. Ms. McIntyre mentioned that discussions about this topic have occurred in previous years, so the TRAC can look back at past notes. TRAC co-chairs will work with TMGC co-chairs to see what is possible to adjust and to develop an options paper to consider at the next TMGC meeting to address this tight timeline.

Ms. Talya tenBrink summarized the research track peer review discussion. The peer review meeting took place in March of this year. The outcome of the review was summarized in a review panel summary report. Individual reports from each of the reviewers will be published. All the terms of reference (TORs) were met and both the Georges Bank (GB) and Eastern Georges Bank (EGB) haddock models were approved. It was recommended by the review panel that DFO and NOAA Fisheries work to harmonize the assessments for GB and EGB haddock. TRAC proposed to use the EGB model for catch advice, but a long term approach for models needs to be identified. There was a discussion during and after the intersessional about F-refs. Other work is needed for TRAC to provide guidance to TMGC on selecting an appropriate F-ref.

Mr. Alain d’Entremont reiterated that the tradeoffs in timing is something that was discussed by TRAC in the past. He stressed that the group has to think about what information they are we willing to not have, what amount of time is needed for each step, and what data need to be approved when to fit management cycles. He noted the group will continue to discuss options that will meet management needs of both countries. He added that it is not just a question of science, but how to operationalize products as well.

*TMGC*

Ms. Elizabeth Etrie summarized the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 TMGC intersessional meetings. There was a lengthy discussion on the DLM tool and its application for EGB cod. The U.S. proposed the addition of a Management Procedure (MP), the 50% decrease option, to the range used in the DLM tool, but could not come to a consensus with DFO, who wanted to keep the lower end of the range at the 20% decrease MP. Canada has offered another proposal which would eliminate the range of MPs used in favor of selecting a single MP, the 20% decrease option. DFO will summarize this proposal in greater detail in writing. There is a shared concern about using DLM tool for longer than originally intended, and it remains unclear how each countries domestic process will feed into the TRAC. During the TMGC Intersessional, the U.S. delegation sought further assurance that the Georges Bank Cod Research Track assessment would be considered by TRAC when it is available. TMGC will continue to discuss how to better incorporate the research track and the timing of outcomes into the TRAC and TMGC process.

Dr. Mike Simpkins added that the cod research track is underway with limited Canadian participation. He shared his understanding that DFO is exploring what additional work might be needed on the Canadian side to meet domestic needs. He added that clarification is needed on what that additional work would be needed in order to help the TRAC and TMGC in terms of thinking through what cod science and management looks like in the future, considering separate domestic needs, potentially met through separate domestic processes.

Mr. d’Entremont added that DFO is exploring the timing of the research track and additionally does not have the joint management area as a stock that will be modelled in line with the management area. Canada is responsible for management of EGB cod so if this stock is listed under Canada’s newly enacted Fish Stock Provisions then DFO will be required to meet the requirements of these regulations. If that stock is listed under the Fish Stock Provisions, then Canada is required to report on the status of Eastern Georges Bank cod, and this could be sooner than the outcome of the research track, based on how long the haddock research track took. Additionally, there are elements that the U.S. research track does not accomplish for Canadian stocks that are required domestically – including status determination and biomass reference points for EGB cod.

For yellowtail flounder, the U.S. came to the intersessional prepared with discussion points on the limiter and a proposed approach if the estimated survey biomass for the stock goes below the agreed upon 1000 metric tons (mt). The linear quota approach (drop to 0 or 350 mt) may not be in line with Canadian rebuilding plan requirements. The other options, which were a default reduction to a 7% exploitation rate and a linear exploitation rate reduction may be more in line with both US/NMFS and DFO requirements. Mr. d’Entremont thanked the U.S. for their proactive approach.

Mr. d'Entremont also mentioned the haddock F-ref discussion and noted that there was some back and forth between authors at the haddock research track on this topic and that some of the discussion needs to be reviewed prior to adoption of an F-ref. There are some differences in weight at age between the two models, but in general, there has been progress on the F-ref discussions and hopefully TRAC can come up an F-ref recommendation, or a range of F-ref candidates. He applauded the positive discussion through the long intersessional and acknowledged there was lots of detail discussed. He looks forward to potentially meeting in person in the fall to formally resolve the issues at hand.

Ms. Etrie acknowledged that the different approaches to the yellowtail flounder limiter under the lower bound for survey biomass were put forward by the U.S. just prior to the intersessional, so the U.S. will circle back with the Canadian delegation over email to keep the conversation moving forward.

Mr. Wentzell then stressed that cod is not in a healthy zone according to DFO’s precautionary approach and that it requires a dedicated focus on rebuilding, harvest control rules, and science to support that process. In 2019, the Amendment to the *Fisheries Act* provided more legislative rigor and requirements for rebuilding plans as well as timeframes for rebuilding. This means that DFO needs to be sure they are able to support the science and planning needs of the rebuilding process. Given those domestic requirements, DFO is looking at proceeding with a domestic EGB cod assessment on a parallel track. He added that DFO is happy to share the results of the Canadian assessment and include them in the TRAC process and any discussions at the TMGC table.

Mr. d’Entremont added that it is an issue of resource allocation. Lots of resources were allocated to haddock, and were able to be allocated to haddock for participation in the Haddock Research Track. Canadian participation and resources is not the same in the Cod Research Track. To meet Canadian (domestic) needs the timing and allocation of resources around cod needs to be discussed, given the complicated domestic assessment needs for meeting the rebuilding plan requirements. Therefore, DFO is discussing options to meet the domestic requirements for future cod assessment within the necessary time frame that the new regularity requirement may bring. U.S. colleagues are welcome to participate when Canada has decided on the approach. He added that there are some candidate modeling frameworks and benchmarks for reference points. There is a possibility they could build on previous models.

Dr. Simpkins appreciated learning that there is a Canadian domestic cod assessment being planned. He noted that it complicates the TRAC and TMGC process, so he asked for clarification about what information from that assessment would go forth to TRAC, particularly if U.S. and Canadian modeling efforts are out of sync in terms of time or results. He also wondered what would happen if the U.S. cod research track goes forward next spring. He was concerned whether or not it would inform next summer’s TRAC given the tight timing.

Mr. Wentzell replied that DFO is finalizing domestic cod assessment plans, and that they would let the U.S. know as soon as they can provide those details.

Ms. McIntyre reiterated that DFO is still working out details, and she would connect with Dr. Simpkins once they are complete. Mr. Tom Nies asked if there could be any U.S. participants in the Canadian cod assessment, and Ms. McIntyre replied that DFO was open to collaboration.

Mr. d’Entremont pointed out that in terms of timing for cod, even if the assessment was in the spring, it is a point of how each nation looks at stock units. He does not believe that the current GB cod research track has EGB specific assessment or reference points, and that only the GB stock is recognized in the management structure of the model. On the other hand, Canada sees the cod stock as multiple units and would like to see the EGB stock addressed in the assessment.

Mr. Nies asked how that assessment would interface with TRAC since it does not match with the stock structure on U.S. side. He noted that the U.S. would have to give some serious thought to the matter given that there are two different assessments at the moment dealing with different versions of the stock structure.

Mr. d’Entremont noted that the same issue about differing biological stock definitions is emerging in haddock as well, and it is a conversation that has been discussed in the past. Mr. Nies replied that both countries participated in and agreed upon the peer review of haddock that was used for this year of TRAC but the same will not be true for cod.

Ms. Kathy Cooper-MacDonald added that while two models have come out with an EGB haddock portion that helps parse out quotas, it is not possible to parse out the different stock units based on the stock areas being discussed for the Cod Research Track. There will be no model coming out of that process that looks specifically at the joint management area. DFO has their own domestic requirements for haddock that were not fulfilled by the research track assessment specifically around reference points and status determination, these would also be lacking regarding the research track for cod as well. Additionally, Canada does not have a modelling team in the Cod Research Track like it does for Haddock. This is why Canada may need to do their own work for cod.

Dr. Simpkins added that the initial development of the research track was part of a bilateral conversation where DFO and NOAA Fisheries tried to map out these things and that there was potential to have Canadian engagement, but this did not occur. He also noted that to the haddock point, he wanted to acknowledge a lot of the hard work that has gone into the haddock research track. Staff worked through a lot of issues and came together with good models. He explained that there is still work to be done to make sure the two models are harmonized and the nested approach makes sense, and that the models need to be monitored in case they start to diverge. He noted that there is still work to do to facilitate and harmonize the process. On cod he wanted to make sure the two countries are on the same page in terms of assessments. He understood that the Steering Committee viewed the cod plans as development of two domestic models, a U.S. domestic model and a Canadian domestic model, both of which will need to be harmonized and somehow inform TRAC. He asked the Steering Committee to confirm that neither of the proposed cod assessments are viewed as a TRAC model.

Mr. Wentzell confirmed that articulation was fair.

Ms. Etrie reiterated that domestically each country is pursuing their own GB cod assessments and they eventually need to be reconciled at the TRAC and TMGC levels. She reminded the group both countries had participated in the haddock assessment and peer review of two different models, which is different than what will occur with Cod. She flagged the need to be proactive and continue discussions on how to use the two domestic products.

**Species at Risk (SAR)**

Heidi Schaefer shared updates on transboundary species and information about a new national framework, as well as DFO’s Right whale management measures for the year. For SAR listings, there are upcoming public consultations on shortfin mako (endangered) and lumpfish (threatened) planned for fall/winter 2022/23. The management scenario development is underway for sei whales (endangered) with public consultations to come at a later date. The decision on whether or not to list the nine populations of Atlantic salmon is anticipated no earlier than the fall of 2022. Three of these populations are found in DFO Maritimes Region. Other species of interest that are also being assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada include the harbour porpoise (Northwest Atlantic population) and the Atlantic population of the grey whale. Leatherback and Loggerhead sea turtles will be assessed in November 2022.

For recovery planning and reporting, work continues on amended the Leatherback sea turtle Recovery Strategy which includes the identification of critical habitat. Public consultations will occur this fall/winter 2022/23. A Progress Report covering 2013-2019 was published in March 2022. Work on the Loggerhead sea turtle Action Plan continues. External consultations are anticipated later in 2022. There will also be a white shark proposed recovery strategy out for public comment later in 2022, and work continues on the development of the action plan. For right whales, work continues on the progress report covering 2015-2020 and planning is underway to amend their recovery strategy.

There is also a new national initiative underway to develop a Framework for Aquatic Species at Risk Conservation. The framework will serve as a policy guide for applying multi-species approaches to conserve and recover Canada’s aquatic biodiversity. It identifies opportunities for collaboration and shared interests across Canada. It will enhance Indigenous involvement, as well as that of partners, stakeholders, territories, and provinces. External engagement of the framework will occur this spring.

For right whale measures, there are no changes from DFO’s [fishery management measures](https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/commercial-commerciale/atl-arc/narw-bnan/management-gestion-eng.html) for the conservation and protection of North Atlantic right whales presented to the Steering Committee last year. Additional information on the 2022 vessel traffic management measures by Transport Canada can be found [online](https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/navigation-marine-conditions/protecting-north-atlantic-right-whales-collisions-vessels-gulf-st-lawrence#toc_1). More information about this initiative can be found on DFO’s Talk fish Habitat website: <https://www.talkfishhabitat.ca/>.

Ms. Jean Higgins followed with an update on the Species at Risk Working Group (SARWG). Since the finalization of the Terms of Reference last fall, the SARWG core team members met twice to plan upcoming meetings, including outlining presentations for the initial meeting and brainstorming on the meeting to follow. The spring meeting was recently rescheduled from April to June 24th to accommodate scheduling conflicts. She offered to share the draft agenda and meeting invite information with the Steering Committee. This meeting will focus on sharing information about the laws that guide protections, how science feeds into determinations for providing protective measures, and scientific coordination that is happening between the two countries that helps the U.S. and Canada learn more about our protected species and the ecosystems that support them.

Ms. Higgins shared that the U.S. identified 15 mother/calf pairs during this year’s calving season in the Southeastern portion of the Right whale’s range. Many of these pairs have already been re-sighted in northern U.S. waters in and around Cape Cod Bay, and in the past few weeks around 100 animals were sighted in these areas as they moved north. While the large numbers are encouraging, among those re-sighted are whales that are known to be entangled and the stranding and response team and partners continue to work hard to monitor the health of these individuals while looking for opportunities to successfully intervene and enhance their recovery.

Next, she noted that [the North Atlantic Right Whale Northeast Implementation](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/endangered-species-conservation/north-atlantic-right-whale-recovery-plan-northeast-us-implementation-team#:~:text=The%20NEIT%20is%20a%20recovery,require%20Endangered%20Species%20Act%20protections.) Team (NEIT) met last fall to provide recommendations on vessel strike reduction and monitoring measures to the Greater Atlantic regional office. The team will be reconvening in July and will provide NMFS status updates on NEIT’s recommendations. The Population Evaluation Tool subgroup is planning a Center for Independent Experts review of the draft Population Viability Analysis this summer before finalizing it. NMFS is also continuing to work with the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team to identify measures that will reduce the likelihood of entanglement of North Atlantic right whales in U.S. gear. This past fall, Phase 1 finalized and included measures to reduce entanglement in the Northeast Lobster/Jonah Crab Trap/Pot Fisheries – [implementation](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/leadership-message/compliance-assistance-place-support-fishermen-changing-gear-protect-right-whales) of those measures is ongoing. In the spring NOAA Fisheries also introduced an [emergency restriction](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/emergency-closure-lobster-and-jonah-crab-trap-pot-fishery-area-between-massachusetts) to prohibit trap/pot fishery buoy lines between federal and state waters within the Massachusetts Restricted Area during the month of April. These measures were introduced to address a critical gap in an area with a particularly high chance of entanglement that was not addressed in the fall 2021 modifications to the plan. Ms. Higgins shared that the team is meeting the week of May 9th to review information and make recommendations for [phase 2](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/marine-mammal-protection/planning-future-atlantic-large-whale-take-reduction-plan-modifications), which will focus on measures to reduce the risk of entanglement to right, humpback, and fin whales in the U.S. East Coast gillnet, Atlantic mixed species trap/pot fisheries, and the Mid-Atlantic lobster and Jonah crab trap/pot fisheries. Ms. Higgins added that efforts continue to review information surrounding the effectiveness of [U.S. speed reduction measures](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/endangered-species-conservation/reducing-vessel-strikes-north-atlantic-right-whales) that support the reduction of ship strike to North Atlantic right whales, and that proposed changes to these measures will potentially be introduced in the coming months.

In other protected species updates, NOAA Fisheries released the[5-Year Reviews](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMjAyMTcuNTM1ODIzMDEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5maXNoZXJpZXMubm9hYS5nb3YvYWN0aW9uLzUteWVhci1yZXZpZXctbmV3LXlvcmstYmlnaHQtY2hlc2FwZWFrZS1iYXktYW5kLWd1bGYtbWFpbmUtZGlzdGluY3QtcG9wdWxhdGlvbi1zZWdtZW50cz91dG1fbWVkaXVtPWVtYWlsJnV0bV9zb3VyY2U9Z292ZGVsaXZlcnkifQ.8ybc0PDsa4G8irIwmhFUmV70YE9LwYn6xncHBop8Ys0/s/857776909/br/126800068418-l) for the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments (DPS) of Atlantic sturgeon. Each DPS continues to be at a low level of abundance, and stressors including bycatch, vessel strikes, habitat loss and alteration, and global climate change lead NOAA Fisheries to recommend that the Gulf of Maine DPS remain listed as threatened, and the New York Bight and Chesapeake Bay DPSs remain listed as endangered.

**TRAC and TMGC Follow-up**

Ms. Cooper-McDonald noted that there are different briefing requirements on both sides on changing how we are to move forward on advice. She stated if we are looking to change Cod DLMTool management procedures, these need to be worked out sooner rather than later, and approved prior to TRAC because the management tool we pick dictates the advice given, and as a result, positions on the topic need to be solidified.

Mr. d’Entremont added that the TMGC has been going back and forth due to uncertainty on surveys and functions need to be reevaluated. The TMGC had agreed to these management procedures after working groups for TMGC and TRAC were developed, and the point of having such approaches was to not chase uncertainty in surveys for stocks where we know productivity is low. The decision to use approaches such as DLM or limiter was made because traditional assessment frameworks have failed. There are limitations of such approaches when compared to an analytical stock assessment.

**Closing Remarks**

Ms. Jennifer Ford provided closing remarks for Mr. Wentzell. She thanked everyone for attending and noted there is a lot to continue talking about through the TMGC and TRAC process through the rest of the year.

Mr. Pentony thanked staff for the support. He noted that there were opportunities and challenges to addressing TMGC and TRAC issues through the Steering Committee. He acknowledged that there are different perspectives and reasons why we come into these meetings with different points of view and mandates that both countries need to work through. He added that there are challenges to be resolved this summer, but he is optimistic they can be resolved for the long term continued success of the transboundary management system. He is looking forward to reconciling differences and moving forward in a positive way and hearing updates from staff at the Steering Committee meeting in the fall. He was happy to say the U.S. has the approval to host the fall meeting in person, and he is looking forward to getting together with everyone in Boston to move this process forward.

Ms. Marianne Ferguson reminded the group that the summer TRAC meeting is July 12-14. She stated that the U.S. is working to confirm a location for the fall TMGC and Steering Committee meetings. She also mentioned those meetings are currently scheduled for September 13-15, but to account for a travel conflict, she proposed September 12-14as a formal shift in the dates. There were no issues moving the dates and they were formally accepted as the new meeting dates. As a result, the meetings will be held on September 12-14.