

Herring Sorting Grid Annual Report

NEC Development Grant Award # 10-082

Period of project: 6/1/2010 to 6/30/2012

Submitted June 10 2011



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Project objectives and scientific hypotheses:

The Atlantic herring fishery has widespread influence on various stakeholders in the Gulf of Maine, and the herring industry finds itself in the center of controversy over bycatch levels, ecosystem effects, reduced herring quotas, and demand for bait supply. This project proposes to test the performance of flexible sorting grids in herring midwater trawl nets that have the potential to address all the aforementioned concerns. The grid to be tested is designed to remove haddock, dogfish, striped bass and other groundfish from the herring catch. In addition to sampling the catch and documenting the process of using the grid (difficulty of installation, handling on deck etc.), multiple video cameras will be placed opposite the grid and escape panels to observe grid performance and fish behavior, qualitatively estimate loss of target catch, and attempt to quantify escape rates.

Methods and work plan:

A no cost, one year extension has been requested and granted for this project, with a new end date of June 30, 2012. This extra time has been necessary for dealing with the passing of our initial industry partner, Gerry O'Neill, and working with the commercial fishing community to find someone to pick up Gerry's role and responsibilities in the project. Our new industry partner, Peter Mullen, has experience using this type of grid previously on his vessels. A grid, owned by Gerry O'Neill, was lent to Peter for testing. Initial reports from Peter suggested the grid didn't exactly suit his operation, with it being a bit too long, with too shallow an angle, and that the bar spacing was too narrow resulting in fish clogging the grid. A new, adjusted grid with a steeper angle and slightly wider spacing is currently under construction, with an anticipated completion around the middle of June. Specific details of changes made to the grid, and information from trips with the original grid design will be recorded and discussed in future reports. Sampling trips will be scheduled shortly after the grid is completed, dependent on the industry partner's fishing schedule.

Work completed to date:

There have not been any sampling trips conducted as of the date of this report. Work thus far has focused on attracting a new industry partner, and dealing with contracts, insurance, permits and other preparatory details. A sorting grid to be used in field sampling is currently under construction.

Results to date: N/A

Future work: N/A

Impacts and applications: N/A

Related projects: There are not currently any related projects

Partnerships:

A new partnership has been formed with Peter Mullen of the Irish Venture Inc. This collaboration has great promise as Peter brings experience in several fisheries including herring mid-water trawling and herring purse seining. Peter has been supportive of progress in this work, and has stepped forward to see it done amidst uncertainty in much of the industry. Peter has been involved in all aspects of the project from forming contracts, to scheduling and giving feedback on grid methodology. He is currently building a new grid to be used in upcoming fieldwork.

Presentations: There have not been any presentations to date

Published reports and papers: There are no published reports or papers to date

Data: N/A