

3rd Annual Yellowtail Tagging Meeting

United Fishermen's Club

New Bedford, MA

March 1, 2006

Attendees

Fishing Industry Partners

Carlos Ageuas – F/V *Victory*

Bill Amaru – F/V *Joanne-A III*

Bruce Bannick – F/V *Sarah Beth*

Ed Barrett – F/V *Phoenix*

Antonio Barroqueiro – F/V *Lady of Grace*

Tom Bell – F/V *Karoline Marie*

Antonio Borges – F/V *São Paulo*

Ron Borjeson – F/V *Angenette*

Carl Bouchard – F/V *Stormy Weather*

Ray Canastra – Whaling City Auction

Richard Canastra – Whaling City Auction

Luis Fidalgo – F/V *Vila De Ilhavo*

Jim Ford – F/V *Lisa Ann II*

David Goethel – F/V *Ellen Diane*

Paul Harvey – F/V *Ing Toffer II*

Manny Marquintos – F/V *Victory*

Luis Martins – F/V *Victory* and Lou-Joes Seafood

Fred Mattera – F/V Travis and Natalie

Dennis Robillard Jr. – F/V *Julie Ann II*

Jaime Santos – F/V *Lady of Grace*

Tracy Stubbs – F/V *Ing Toffer II*

Scientistific Partners

Frank Almeida - NEFSC

Talia Bigelow - NEFSC

Steve Cadrin - NOAA/UMass CMER

Jonathan Duquette - NEFSC

John Hoey - NEFSC

Jeremy King – MA DMF

Jon Loehrke – NMFS Fisheries Observer

David Martins – SMAST

Adam Barkely - SMAST

Josh Moser - NEFSC

Paul Rago - NEFSC

Fred Serchuk - NEFSC

Azure Westwood - NEFSC

Meeting Summary

A welcome address was delivered by Frank Almeida, Deputy Director of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants then went around and gave a brief introduction of name and affiliation/vessel. The Schedule of the day was discussed. Each participant received a “Welcome Packet” with an agenda, Table of Contents for the packet, presentation slides, RAFOS proposal, Cage Study Annual Report Summary to the Northeast Consortium, yellowtail tagging ‘REWARD’ poster, Cooperative Research pamphlet from the NEFSC, and a Tag Drop Box poster.

- Azure Westwood summarized the tagging project’s design, technical objectives, history, and field work for 2003-2004. Details of each 2005 tagging trip were discussed. Dave Goethel spoke in detail about the cage experiment performed in Area 513 on his vessel, the Ellen Diane. Dave was particularly impressed at the elevated O₂ levels recorded during a day trip after a significant storm. Bill Amaru suggested that we start a general dialogue about other factors that influence fish mortality that differ from fishing-related activities (i.e. environmental factors etc.) Bill’s comment was later re-iterated and supported by Dave Goethel.
- Tony Borges spoke about the trip aboard his vessel in July 2005. He highlighted the lack of line for the cage experiment and suggested that in 2006 cage studies, we use 4 to 1 line and more weight on the traps. Paul Harvey suggested the use of two floats per cage instead on one.
- Jonathan Duquette discussed the 2006 offshore trip aboard the Trident in August. He emphasized the large amount of area covered (7 Statistical Areas) in seven days.
- Azure, John Hoey and Steve Cadrin discussed the Mark-Recapture database being designed and being enhanced by the NEFSC. John mentioned that the database might include cod tagging data in the future. Steve offered that he was initially skeptical about the design, but the database had proven an invaluable asset to the project. It has given a way to audit the tagging data and perform routine statistics.
- Steve Cadrin discussed data storage tags, returns and geolocation modeling. Fred Serchuk suggested that using survey data to research diel patterns would be helpful in determining what factors influenced off-bottom activity. He also suggested, in conjunction with Steve and others, that there be a catchability experiment performed in day vs. night time, a study of food habits and moon phase catchability.
- Josh Moser gave an extended review of the problems the project has experienced with data tags and lessons learned, including lost tags, battery and other failures.
- Steve Cadrin then walked us through the yellowtail stock assessment for each stock area. Several comments were offered during this discussion on all stock areas. Some comments are listed below after the particular stock they were regarding. Carl Bouchard noted that the fishery in southern New England switched to a seven inch mesh, which explain why we are seeing few recaptures in the area. Several participants were skeptical whether Canadians are telling us the truth with respect to their effort on Georges Bank yellowtail. Fred Serchuk reported that the Canadians are saying that they are having trouble catching fish

and are more insistent than the US that there is a problem with Georges Bank yellowtail. Fred Mattera added that there is little fishing effort in southern New England, not even a mixed fishery (no squid, whiting etc).

Lunch

We held a lottery drawing for \$1000. The winning tag was picked by Luis Fidalgo. The winner was John Machie, F/V Hen Lee, tag no. 03978. We drew 2 more tags that will receive yellowtail hats. The winners were Phil Rhule, F/V Sea Breeze and Florindo Amorim, F/V Lutador.

Post-Lunch Presentations

Steve Cadrin gave a summary of the preliminary tagging results to date. The low recaptures in southern New England were discussed. Dave Goethel and Fred Mattera suggested that fishermen from other fisheries (i.e. whiting) who catch a tagged yellowtail might be reluctant to return the tag for fear their fishery will be punished. Steve suggested more outreach to these fishermen might be necessary, but with caution taken to deliver accurate enforcement-related advice. Dave Goethel suggested that possession of an illegal species only pertains when the fish is in the basket, and suggests it only takes a moment to clip a tag off and release a fish. The group agreed that alternative outreach approaches should target fisheries that incidentally catch yellowtail in southern New England.

Azure discussed the 2006 tagging schedule. Steve explained in detail about the RAFOS proposal and the tagging-related aspect that we will be doing on GB this summer. Fred Mattera also reminded the group that many releases in the southern New England area were sublegal-sized and wouldn't be as vulnerable to large-mesh fishing.

Azure walked through the days available for inshore and offshore trips by each Statistical Area. Fred Mattera suggested that due to elevated fuel prices, it would be most advantageous to minimize steaming during each trip. Azure and Steve emphasized that vessels should bid on all line items that pertains to their desired tagging area. We also discussed the \$1M per scientist insurance that is required. It is difficult for smaller inshore vessels to afford the cost.

Steve facilitated a detailed discussion of 2007 possible tagging and future directions. The initial consensus was that one of three options would be best with regard to 2007 proposal planning:

1. Submit a proposal to the NEC for the same amount of tagging effort as this year
2. Submit a proposal to the NEC for half the amount of tagging effort as this year
3. Submit a 'bare-bones' proposal for tagging with possible ancillary studies identified.
 - Bill Amaru suggested that we should get the most 'bang for our buck' by continuing the study and ground-truthing our preliminary results. He also suggested that we have time for another study before the 2008 Benchmark Assessments and those we should look at different ancillary studies.

- Paul Rago suggested a ‘Mission-Focused’ proposal that would test ideas and issues generated from the preliminary results.
- The consensus was to put in a proposal and let the NEC decide whether to accept or reject.
- Fred Mattera expressed concern over the future of tagging support personnel if a 2007 proposal was not submitted. John Hoey clarified that cooperative research staff are funded separately.
- Carl Bouchard thought that the maximum or more requested funding for 2007 would be appropriate to ask for.
- Bruce Bannick suggested tagging should continue as it has, with separate ancillary studies.
- Dave Goethel suggested looking at it from a management perspective. Yellowtail is ‘wagging the dog’ in management’. Maybe we should focus on finding a way to answer why the biomass is overestimated and the mortality is underestimated. We should try to answer what happened to these fish? Was it recruitment failure? Should we tag more than just adults? Suggested we should gather as much info as possible while we are on the water.
- Fred Serchuk suggested that retrospectives are not an YT problem exclusively, but occurs in many stocks around the world. We should collect info on the water that pertains to our hypothesis. We should maximize our efficiency on the water within the bounds of our project design; otherwise the data is just data and not information.
- Steve suggested that Chris Legault might have more ideas and we will confer with him.
- Steve Cadrin suggested a hybrid proposal which was endorsed by the group that included 1 day tagging in each area to continue with the tagging phase of the projects, with ancillary studies to address technical problems with results to date (e.g., few returns from southern New England).
- Details of the proposal will have to be flushed out and determined soon, before the April 11 NEC proposal deadline. Steve felt it would not be difficult to justify such a proposal.

Wrap-up

After thank you’s and further wrap-up, the meeting concluded at 4pm.