

**Winter Flounder Lesion Identification Protocol Development Meeting**  
**Hosted by MA Division of Marine Fisheries, Gloucester**  
**Tuesday, November 18, 2003**

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Attendance**

Mike Armstrong, MA Division of Marine Fisheries; Cathy Coniaris, MA Department of Environmental Protection (MADEP); George Gardner, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Narragansett Lab; Maury Hall, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA); Carlton Hunt, Battelle; Ken Keay, MWRA; Michael Moore, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI); Jack Schwartz, MA Division of Marine Fisheries; and John Ziskowski, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

**Purpose**

As requested by the Outfall Monitoring Science Advisory Panel (OMSAP), J. Schwartz organized a meeting of those involved with winter flounder sampling to investigate the development of a lesion identification protocol for future studies of blind side winter flounder lesions in Boston Harbor and western Massachusetts Bay.

**Action Items**

- As part of the review and evaluation requested by OMSAP, MWRA will:
  - Develop a protocol/guide that specifically addresses how to discern flounder lesions from other skin conditions (net trauma, viral lymphocystis, fin erosion, and other skin ulcerations/lesions). The protocol/guide will distinguish varying degrees of severity of the skin conditions using representative photographs. This guide will be finalized by January/February 2004.
  - Work on developing a survey plan for spring 2004. They will evaluate options for better determining the spatial prevalence of lesions. Potential options include adding stations for trawling and external lesion identification to MWRA's April 2004 flounder survey or making available a scientist (e.g. M. Moore) for the Marine Fisheries surveys in May to assist in the identification of external lesions (if present).
  - Modify their field sheet for flounder sampling to include space to log any lesion observations.
  - Identify, in advance of the spring 2004 survey, the appropriate laboratory and investigator(s) to assist in the further evaluation of lesions if any are observed.
  - Report to OMSAP at the first meeting in 2004 on a proposed design for the special study.
- J. Ziskowski will provide the Field Guide of Fish Diseases published in the 1970's by Carl Sindermann, John Ziskowski, and Valentine Anderson (Technical Series Report of the NMFS lab at Sandy Hook) to the group for review.
- Marine Fisheries will attempt to conduct more histopathology sampling during their spring 2004 fish recruitment survey.
- The NMFS manual and MWRA protocol/guide will be distributed to those who sample flounder to ensure consistency in reporting.

## **Summary**

The first step in investigating the distribution, occurrence, and severity of the flounder lesions is to develop a standard shipboard protocol that is used by everyone who samples flounder. A reporting scheme needs to be in place by the next sampling season (spring 2004) so that consistent data are collected by the various agencies that routinely sample flounder (Marine Fisheries, MWRA, and NMFS) as well as universities that trawl for educational purposes (e.g. U. Mass Boston and Northeastern University) in Boston Harbor, Massachusetts Bay, and Cape Cod Bay.

J. Ziskowski offered to provide the group copies of the Field Guide of Fish Diseases published in the 1970's by Carl Sindermann, John Ziskowski, and Valentine Anderson (Technical Series Report of the NMFS lab at Sandy Hook). M. Moore will develop a protocol/guide to the reported flounder lesions and include photographs to aid in the identification and classification of severity of the lesions. After review by this group, the NMFS manual and flounder lesion protocol/guide will be distributed to those who sample flounder.

M. Armstrong and J. Ziskowski discussed recent observations of flounder on the Marine Fisheries and NMFS fish surveys. Marine Fisheries has fish recruitment surveys in May and September and NMFS samples in April and October. MWRA samples flounder in April. No flounder lesions were observed by Marine Fisheries or NMFS during their fall 2003 surveys. For more prevalence information, go to MWRA's report entitled "Winter flounder ulcer final report for fish and shellfish monitoring" located at: <http://www.mwra.state.ma.us/harbor/enquad/>.

The group then discussed sampling locations. M. Armstrong noted that Marine Fisheries has difficulty trawling from Hull to Plymouth due to large amounts of lobster gear. M. Moore thinks it would be helpful to have three stations added east-northeast of the outfall and three stations south of the outfall on the MWRA survey. M. Moore offered to either help out on the Marine Fisheries spring survey or work with MWRA to add several stations on the MWRA survey. J. Ziskowski asked if MWRA intends to trawl in Boston Harbor. M. Moore said that the fisherman he works with will not trawl in Boston Harbor unless the survey is budgeted for a new fishing net. Nets often get caught on the bottom in the harbor and are either severely damaged or lost. K. Keay noted that U. Mass Boston has Envirolab which takes students out to sample near Thompson's Island. Perhaps they would be willing to collect some flounder for analysis. C. Coniaris added that Sal Genovese (Northeastern University Marine Science Center) takes students out to sample in Broad Sound and he offered to help out with flounder sampling.

## **Adjourned**

Summary prepared by C. Coniaris.