9 18 meeting minutes

In attendance:

Alex Barron Va DEQ
Pat Cunningham RTI
John Cosgrove AXYS Analytical
Connie Brower NC DWQ
Joseph Beaman MDE
Gary Buchanan NJDEP
Elaine Krueger MA DPH
Tony Forti NYDOH
Vera Wang Navy
Ashok Deshpande NMFS
Greg Hellyer USEPA NERL
George Henderson FL Fish and Wildlife Commission
Amund Maage NIFES
Rick Greene De DNREL
Eric Frohmberg Me BOH
Jack Schwartz MA on phone

DATA

Gary Buchanan gave a summary of the data chapter:

Still in draft format, 9 states w/ striped bass data, 6 with bluefish data. A total of 863 vs. 168 data points for striped bass vs. bluefish. Much of this data is from NY.

Eric has new data from Maine he will summarize and provide.

ASIDE: Georgia has new data. It is interesting in that these are big fish, so they are high in Hg, but turn out to be low in PCBs. Randy Manning will supply us with the data, but talking to George Henderson, it would appear that some of these smaller southern populations of striped bass (Savannah River and St. John in Fl, for example) are resident. So if their resident rivers are clean it would appear that these would be clear exceptions to a ”consistent” PCB advisory. I think this is information that would be worthwhile to incorporate into both the data and bio chapters.

There was a brief discussion of the older NOAA bluefish data.

ASIDE: At the poster session Ashok showed us some VERY interesting PCB data in small bluefish. While they are small fish (~12”?), some sort of summary of this data would be very useful for the data chapter. It will depend on data availability through NOAA/Ashok, but if not this version we may be able to include this new data in an update to the data chapter. What is nice is that, like the early 80’s NOAA data, this is data up and down the coast using consistent and comparable methods. While these are

small fish, most states don't have a minimum size for keeping bluefish, so potentially these fish could be relevant from an advisory perspective.

Gary discussed how the levels have dropped over time and we discussed the variability in the data – not so much in terms of concentration, but in terms of collection methods, analysis, etc. Gary also discussed the draft recommendations – namely that it is worthwhile to assess the feasibility of a coastal survey of PCBs in striped bass and bluefish (one can argue that Ashok is doing that for bluefish). There was also a discussion (based on the biology chapter) that one way to measure the PCBs in the mixed migratory striped bass population would be to sample the overwintering location off the coast of North Carolina/Virginia. This may be a way to accomplish a survey for striped bass more cost effectively. Other recommendations discussed included the idea of a searchable data repository, how it was unlikely that the group would recommend consistent analytical methods. Additionally, the group will likely recommend use of some reference materials to ensure data quality. There was a fairly extensive discussion of other contaminants – where the upshot was again, it is likely the group will acknowledge their existence, but not, at least in this iteration, try to summarize that data.

BIOLOGY

Eric gave a summary of the bio chapter. The Bio chapter is posted in draft form, so we are soliciting comments. The chapter discusses the extent of the fishery – measured in terms of the recreational catch from state to state – both as it relates in terms of numbers but also in percent of catch compared to other recreational fish. There then follows a discussion of the recreational fish regulations (not consumption advice) from each state. A description of the biology of striped bass and bluefish follows – where the interesting issues appear to be the fact that there are these spawning locations (Hudson, Delaware Estuary, Chesapeake Bay, Roanoke River/Albermarle Sound) where the males and juveniles hang out, vs a population of large migratory females that move up the coast These migratory females all overwinter off VA and NC. There was a brief discussion of dietary habits, where Eric questioned its relevance. The general feeling was that while it may not have direct relevance to the issue at hand, leaving it out would leave a huge gap.

In terms of recommendations, the big recommendation will be – depending on the goal of the sampling program, to vary the sampling both temporally as well as geographically.

Other issues that were discussed re: the biology chapter included the issue of % lipid. This was brought up by the data workgroup as a possible addition to the biology chapter, but the general feeling among the biologists was that there was not a lot of data about this in striped bass and bluefish. As a matter of fact, the general feeling at this particular meeting was that most of the % lipid data was associated with the PCB data. The feeling was that a more detailed analysis of the % lipid data in hand might be worthwhile for the next iteration of this project.

TOX CHAPTER

Eric summarized the tox chapter. The numbers used by states estimating toxicity for PCBs are old (FDA, EPA's RfD, and Great Lakes Protocol) and that there is new epi data out there that is worth summarizing. EPA's cancer slope factor is more recent and that should be mentioned in the chapter. Elaine has been looking at the PCB epi data and agreed there is a lot of new data out there.

There was an extensive discussion about PCBs vs. TEQ. Since we've already agreed that there will be an acknowledgement of the TEQ issue in the data chapter we agreed that we didn't need to really discuss the TEQ tox data in this chapter.

We then discussed the benefits discussion. It was agreed that this sort of a discussion would likely be placed in a conclusions or discussion chapter rather than a tox chapter, but the upshot was that Deb Rice has been doing some work that questions the quality of the benefits data for the developing fetus.

ASIDE: One full day of the conference was on benefits, and I had fairly extensive conversations with Sue Carlson on this issue. Sue also provided comments on this chapter. The upshot is that there are some new data that should be looked at in terms of this and she felt the quality of the data was significantly better than Deb suggests. This discussion will be revised in some way of if necessary dropped.

ADVISORY CHAPTER

Eric summarized the advisory chapter.

The layout of the advisory chapter is that there is a state by state discussion of what the current advice looks like and what that advice is based on. When the draft chapter gets posted one thing in particular that needs to be addressed is ensuring that each state's advice and procedures are correctly identified.

This lead into a discussion of what "consistent advice" might look like. While it is clear we have a lot more work to do, Eric pointed out that he doesn't think it makes sense based on the data and biology to have consistent advice for striped bass all up and down the coast. It seems clear that there are two general "populations" of bass – namely migratory fish that tend to be large adult females, and then the breeding populations (Chesapeake Bay, Hudson River, Delaware Estr., Albermarle Sound) where the fish are not only different (juveniles and males) but are resident and hence exposed to potential point sources. ASIDE: As discussed above, a "third" population of striped bass may be these southern (GA/FL) non-migratory populations.

Joe mentioned that this made sense in Marylands case, where it would likely be acceptable to buy into consistent advice for the ocean populations of striped bass, but not in the bay (where they have plenty of data supporting their current advice). Additionally Tony identified where a reasonable breakpoint would be between the spawning Hudson River fish vs. the migratory fish.

It was agreed that trying to get everyone together to develop consistent procedures was a fantasy, but getting folks to have consistent end results may not. Again, this will be something that we'll have to discuss in future organizational meetings.

There was an extensive discussion of the age range variability. It was agreed that most states developed these age ranges while thinking about mercury, and their relevance for PCBs is questionable. While there was a fairly extensive conversation about how we might go about defining this population, since these fish also contain mercury, my guess is we will be somehow defining the sensitive population as "women of childbearing age and younger".

Rick brought up the issue of archiving samples – the point would be both to identify historical levels for new contaminants, but also as a QA check. The general feeling was that states should do what they choose to do for their own sampling program, but that should we initiate a special study of striped bass and bluefish PCB levels, this would be a worthwhile objective to include.

With that, the meeting adjourned with a general level of exhaustion. Thanks to all.