

Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program: Bi-monthly Update – September 2003.

1. Overview

As we head into the fall, the Northeast Regional Cod tagging Program has just begun its second major tagging season. By the end of our first season of cod tagging we had tagged just over 38,000 Atlantic cod, *Gadus morhua*.

The main achievements of this time period have been electronic. The database, data entry tool and online mapping tool are up and running and GMRI is pleased to announce the launch of the Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program's web site – www.codresearch.org.

2. GMRI's priority tasks for the next two months

GMRI will begin coordinating the program's next update meeting. This is likely to be a very thorough two-day event. The venue has yet to be decided, but it is hoped that this will take place during December. An Agenda will be drawn up over the next few weeks, with the input of all area managers involved.

Table 1 shows the recapture progress to date. GMRI is pleased to convey that the general feedback from individuals calling in tags is enthusiastic and appreciative of being greeted by a real person. Pat Foote (GMRI Research Administrative Assistant) is doing a good job at fielding these calls. Tag return information is now also arriving on a regular basis via email from individuals visiting the web site. Furthermore, now that the online GIS site is now live, we have also received tag information through the tag locator tool.

GMRI's major task over the next few weeks will be approving the data already entered. This has been delayed thus far by the hiccups in the database. Once all trips are approved, GMRI will be focusing on supplying release location reports to those individuals who have reported tagged cod recaptures.

Table 1: The recaptured tagged cod reported to date; recaptured double-tagged fish amount to n=31 and the number of recaptures which have been re-released is n=35.

	NE Tags (this program)		DFO/Canadian Tags		SMAST/DMF Tags		Total
	F	P	F	P	F	P	
DFO	17	30	9	13	-	-	69
Isl. Inst.	6	1	-	-	-	-	7
DMR	78	6	8	-	-	-	92
CCCHFA	106	19	-	-	-	-	125
SMAST	74	22	-	-	7	-	103
Sub-Total	281	78	17	13	7	0	396
Total	359		30		7		396

3. Program Update Overall – Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI)

Date	Progress
Aug - 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Shelly introduced the Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program to the most recent intake of NMFS observer trainees at Woods Hole. The NMFS Individual Animal Log will allow for tagged fish to be noted within their routine sampling.Shelly was able to undertake some opportunistic cod tagging with MANOMET, during a gear trial fishing trip. Focusing on waters about 15 miles out of Portland, a total of 67 cod were tagged.Shelly attended the Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Association in Quebec City, CA (10th – 14th August).Shelly joined DMR on their experimental gillnet cod tagging trip (see DMR's update for more detail). Of key importance was observing the condition of the cod captured using this fishing method with regard to the aims of this program where fish survivability is key. <p>Database:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The database working protocol went live in late July, though various glitches became apparent. Therefore, GMRI continued to work with NGI to fine tune the database, online GIS mapping tool and online data entry tool.During August, Shelly produced a data entry procedures manual and focused on training individuals who would be entering data. The only organization which has not received face-to-face database training is DFO.Recaptured tagged cod returns: these continue to be called in at a steady pace (see Table 1). The mini-datasheets which were distributed are being well used. <p>Outreach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Maine Public Broadcasting – <i>Quest</i> filming: Shelly was joined by a videographer from Maine Public Broadcasting (MPB) on a cod-tagging trip. MPB needed to shoot this film during a time when very little tagging was underway. Therefore, a specific trip was arranged to serve this purpose. Unfortunately, the timing coincided with very low catches of cod in the Gulf of Maine area; the predominant catch was dogfish. MPB were nonetheless pleased with the footage and feel it is adequate for their needs. The <i>Quest</i> series will be aired during the winter months (probably January 2004). <p>Tagging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Tagging was carried out by CCCHFA, DMR, Island Institute and MANOMET. SMAST and DFO are on hold until the fall.

Sep - 03

- Shelly undertook tagging trips with DMR and the Island Institute during September.

Database:

- The database is functioning, though the data-entry process has often been interrupted as a result of a faulty network card, in addition to a “fish swapping” problem deriving from data entry taking place by multiple users at the same time. Essentially, fish entered have sometimes showed up within other trips which were being entered at the same time.
- NGI is working hard to correct this problem. No tag data has been “lost”, but the process has been frustrating to all involved. Hang in there data enterers – thanks for your patience!

Outreach:

- The design of the Northeast Regional Cod tagging web site was completed in late August and the site went live in early September, 2003; the feedback so far has been good and this site will be updated regularly, at least once a month.
- Based on the outcome of the Outreach conference call (held on July 15th), GMRI has held the program’s first Cash Lottery. Originally planned for August, at the last minute, an investigation into the legalities of executing such a lottery was necessary. This pushed the drawing into September. For a full explanation on how GMRI generates the lottery winners, see Annex 1. Each month’s lottery winners are listed on the website at http://www.codresearch.org/Rewards_&_Lottery/Winners_to_date.htm. Press releases will also broadcast this information.
- As a result of the delay with data entry, GMRI has a long list of individuals who are still awaiting information on tag recaptures. GMRI has therefore completed a second round of communication with these people, to let them know we haven’t forgotten them. Their tag-return rewards have been sent and as soon as the data is fully entered from the first tagging season, Pat and Shelly will begin distributing release location reports.

Recruitment:

- Recruitment of four additional field technicians (taggers) to add to the pool of individuals currently trained to tag cod on vessels contracted to perform dedicated tagging trips with DMR. This periodic recruitment is likely to continue throughout the program.
- DMR’s Area 2 Coordinator, Amy Winkle, will be leaving the program in early October, 2003. DMR and GMRI are taking the necessary steps to re-fill this position. In the meantime, Susan Hann (Area 1 Coordinator) will take on this area – thank you Susan.

Training:

- A tagging training day was held (8th September) to train field technicians for DMR in the procedures of tagging and conduct at sea (safety, attitude, behavior etc.).

Tagging:

- During September, tagging has been undertaken by DMR, Island Institute, DFO and SMAST.

4. Program Update by Tagging Organization

4.1 Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)

- Early September saw the first trip of the fall for DFO; the catch of cod was low resulting in approximately 200 cod being tagged.

4.2 Island Institute

- Tagging inshore in Maine waters has continued and is still underway.
- **Downeast:** Tagging cod in Cobscook Bay has continued through the summer, albeit in reduced form. The community-based taggers (mainly handliners) were pleasantly surprised to find fish still present for capture in August; they hope to continue into September. The fish in this area are typically under the legal size limit, although more large fish were seen in mid-late August.
- **Mid-coast:** Lobstermen have tagged fish off of Isle au Haut, which may be one of the spots along the nearshore that has kept a small but viable population. A recent jigging trip was successfully conducted around Monhegan Island.
- **South:** this region has seen some success with sport fishermen; tagging took place throughout the summer.
- To date, around 800 fish have been tagged out of the Island Institute's annual goal of 2500.

4.3 Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR)

- A large part of the summer has been involved with outreach activities, including visits with headboat and charterboat captains and commercial fishing establishments such as lobster dealers and fish piers, as well as informing both recreational and commercial fishing individuals and groups about the cod tagging program.
- DMR has also posted publicity materials at marinas, fuel docks, tackle shops and boat launches where recreational fishermen are likely to be landing groundfish.
- DMR has also put articles in the Maine Sunday Telegram and the CCA newsletter.
- NOAA weather radio began a public service broadcast in early August alerting fishermen to look for tagged cod.

4.3.1 Area 1 - Cashes/Fippennies Ledges

- There was no tagging done in Area 1 (Cashes/Fippennies Ledges) until mid-September, due to warming of surface waters and fishing becoming less productive. Three trips were made during between September 9th and September 17th, yielding 819 tagged cod. Our total to date for Area 1 is 7,415 tagged fish.

4.3.2 Area 2 - Downeast ME, inshore and offshore

- DMR's efforts during July and August period were focused in Area 2 (eastern Gulf of Maine to Canadian border) where cod have historically been caught in summer and cooler water temperatures prevail.
- Tagging success in Area 2 was very low. There were 8 directed tagging trips during July and August in the downeast area: 1 offshore dragger trip (shortened), 3 day-trips by an inshore hook vessel, 3 day-trips by an inshore dragger, and 1 trip by a gillnet vessel (primarily offshore). All of this effort combined produced only 128 tagged cod (see Table 2). Of these vessels, the inshore dragger had the best success, but this was only an average of 18.5 fish/day. More recently, a 4-day offshore trip was made resulting in around 1,400 tagged cod.

- Use of a gillnet vessel was not in our original plans, but discussions with fishermen and ex-fishermen prompted us to try a gillnetter as some thought there may be cod in areas of bottom more amenable to gillnets than otter trawls. Gillnet sets in some of the more historically productive cod grounds downeast led to large catches of dogfish and pollock, but few cod.

Table 2: Summary of the DMR tagging from July thru September, 2003.

Tagging Locations	Vessel	Trip #	Date(s)	# Days	# Fish	Temp Range (°C)
Area 1:						
Cashes & Fippenies Ledges, Platts Bank	FV Titan	6	9/9 – 9/13	3.5	602	12.0 – 19.0
Platts & Jeffreys Bank	FV Titan	7	9/15 – 9/17	2.5	125	-
Platts, Kettle & Tantas	FV Leslie Ann	4	9/15 – 9/17	2.5	92	12.0 – 19.0
Area 1 Total				8.5	819	
Area 2:						
I/O Outer Falls, Jeffreys Bank, Matinicus	F/V Jocka	1	7/17 – 7/18	1.3	22	11.0 - 14.0
Winter Harbor area, inshore DE	<i>F/V Perseverance</i>	1	7/26	1	0	11.0
Winter Harbor area, inshore DE	<i>F/V Perseverance</i>	2	7/28	1	0	11.0
Winter Harbor area, inshore DE	<i>F/V Perseverance</i>	3	7/29	1	0	11.0 - 13.0
east of MDR	<i>F/V Lady Luck</i>	2	7/30	1	2	11.0 - 13.0
north of MDR	<i>F/V Lady Luck</i>	3	8/12	1	28	11.0 - 13.0
Schoodic Ridges	<i>F/V Lady Luck</i>	4	8/14	1	44	12.0 - 15.0
I/O Downeast, Cashes	<i>F/V Rachel T</i>	1	8/18 – 8/22	4	32	10.0 - 21.0
Grand Manan	<i>F/V Theresa & Allyson</i>	1	9/9 – 9/13	4	~1,400	-
Area 2 Total				11.3	~1,528	

4.4 School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST)

- **SMAST update** - With the web based data entry system now up and running, SMAST has entered all the tagging information from its first five trips, which were conducted during the spring/early summer.
- SMAST has continued its effort on outreach activities by hanging signs in ports like Scituate and Plymouth MA, with plans to visit Boston Fish Pier and Marshfield/Green Harbor in the near future.
- SMAST is now attaching cod tagging notices in English and Portuguese, to light posts at the docks in New Bedford and elsewhere, having previously blanketed the NB Seafood Display Auction, settlement houses, fishing supply stores, cafes, and bars. The lack of suitable structures at the piers has been overcome by attaching plywood boards to metal light posts using large 34" cable ties. The flyers are then stapled to the board. The results have been positive.
- SMAST is in the process of gearing up for fall and winter tagging. Four trips are planned, each lasting four days; one trip in October, two in November and another in December to close out the year. During these trips, only 3,114 more cod must be tagged to reach SMAST's annual target of 10,000.
- Finally, **congratulations** to Dave Martins who recently tied the knot (!) and took a break in the Bahamas to adjust to and celebrate the new lifestyle!

4.5 Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association (CCCHFA)

- The total number of cod tagged by CCCHFA to date is 20,248. This number reflects a modest non-dedicated effort which has been taking place throughout the summer and has yielded about 500 tagged cod. This tagging was fairly well split up chronologically and geographically, which satisfies CCCHFA's interest in having some deployments in each calendar month, in all areas if possible, yet backing off the effort due to the warm water temperatures.
- In light of the surface water temperature, which has ranged from the upper 40s in early July to low 60s in August, CCCHFA discontinued the use of live wells for extended tanking until the colder water returns in the fall. This was an easy transition for two main reasons: 1) the tagging is essentially limited to 20 fish a day, which is easily attainable by one person and can be done on the fly with minimal interruption to vessel operations; and 2) the effort this summer was heavily weighted towards longline vessels, where 20 cod could typically be tagged on the first set. This allowed the crew to tag and record while the captain hauled the gear, and to finish tagging for the day before concentrating on dressing. The fish were carefully unhooked by hand, and the guys were using a fish tote with water in it for very short term storage in cases where they get backed up by a fish or two. They reported excellent results regarding fish condition.
- There are finally developments on Coxes Ledge. Although the tagged cod numbers remain low, the ice has been broken, and CCCHFA has high hopes for the fall. By July 30th, 36 fish had been tagged and a total of four fishermen had been trained (on three vessels). CCCHFA has also involved recreational fishermen through the Frances Fleet head boats, and looks forward to expanding this component of the program. With the infrastructure now in place, CCCHFA will be ready to take advantage of any large bodies of fish which move through the area.

Annex 1: The Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program Cash Lottery Procedure.

Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program



Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program: Cash Lottery Procedure September 22nd 2003.

- The Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Lottery is **open to the general public***. Anyone who reports a tagged cod and provides us with the Essential Tag Recapture Information will be entered into the lottery.
- The **Essential Tag Recapture Information** (ETRI) includes the following four criteria: tag number, date, location, and fish length.
- There will be **one entry for each tag returned with all ETRI** (i.e. an individual who supplies the ETRI for two tags in a given month, will be entered into the lottery twice that month).
- The lottery will take place **monthly**. Each drawing will result in awards being given in five "categories." These categories reflect the recapture location for the tag, and are as follows:

1)	Northern Gulf of Maine and Canada,
2)	Georges Bank,
3)	Cape Cod area,
4)	NH/Mass inshore (e.g. Gloucester, Stellwagen, Jeffreys),
5)	Processors and observers.

- The award amount will be **\$200 per category per month**.
- The lottery is executed by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI). GMRI will sort the eligible entrants by recapture category (1-5) and draw one winner for each category. Winners will be contacted by telephone, email or mail.
- Each lottery drawing will include names from the previous month (i.e. a drawing for November 2003 would include all tag reporters from October, 2003).
- **Each month's winners** will be posted on the Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program's website: <http://www.codresearch.org>.
- A **list of winners** is available from the Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program, at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. To obtain this list, please call us using our toll-free number, **1-866-447-2111**.

* Employees of the GMRI and the Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program are not eligible to participate.