

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

1. Overview

As winter approaches, the Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program continues its tagging efforts and the total number of Atlantic cod tagged through this program is around 46,000. Tagging trips are likely to continue throughout December 2003.

With tagging underway, other key areas of focus for October and November 2003 have included catching up with data entry and continuing to iron out database issues, in addition to preparing for the End of Year 1 Meeting.

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

GMRI will facilitate the End of Year 1 Meeting in early December. The discussions and decisions made will be summarized and distributed to all attendees and other related parties.

GMRI's task of approving the data entered will continue throughout December and January. The main task will then be to send out tagged cod recapture reports to all individuals who have reported tagged cod. Table 1 shows the recapture progress to date; the total number of recaptures reported is 589; this does not include those recaptured during tagging trips.

Table 1: The recaptured tagged cod reported to date; recaptured double-tagged fish amount to n=47 and the number of recaptures which have been re-released is n=42.

	NE Tags (this program)		DFO/Canadian Tags		SMAST/DMF Tags		Total
	F*	P**	F	P	F	P	
DFO	34	70	14	13	-	-	131
Isl. Inst.	9	1	-	-	-	-	10
DMR	110	19	12	-	-	-	141
CCCHFA	132	23	-	-	-	-	155
SMAST	101	43	-	-	8	-	152
Sub-Total	386	156	26	13	8	0	589
Total	542		39		8		589

* F=Fishermen ** P=Processors/observers

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

Date	Progress
Oct - 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention to budget projections for Year 2.• In the absence of Amy Winkle, Shelly has been assisting DMR with coordination of tagging trips in Area 2. <p>Database:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pat and Shelly assisted with data entry for Cape Cod. Two temporary data enterers were also hired to catch up on the backlog of un-entered data. <p>Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Five new winners were drawn for October 2003's lottery. The list of winners thus far can be seen online at http://www.codresearch.org/Winners_to_date.htm. <p>Tagging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tagging was carried out by DFO, DMR, CCCHFA and SMAST.
Nov - 03	<p>Database:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pat and Shelly persevered with trip approval and data entry – this will continue to be a focus for December and January at least!• Shelly and Pat have been working with Northern Geomatics (NGI) to modify the data entry procedure for recaptured tagged cod. The inability to allow non-chronological entry of these fish was compromising GMRI's ability to approve data for tagging trips. Though there are still many submitted trips which have yet to be approved, with this modification to the database, it will now be possible to make more headway. <p>Outreach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An article in <i>Fishermen's Magazine</i> will feature in the near future. This was written by Captain Al Anderson, and is geared towards raising recreational fishermen's awareness of tagging programs in the Gulf of Maine. The article incorporates considerable information about the Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program.• Five new winners have been drawn for November 2003's lottery.• Initial preparations have been made to work with Amy Sinclair of WGME Channel 13. Filming will likely take place during Spring 2004 and footage on the Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program will be incorporated into the "Where's Amy?" series. <p>Tagging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• During November, tagging was undertaken by DMR, CCCHFA and SMAST.

4. Program Update by Tagging Organization

4.1 Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)

- DFO has entered all the data from trips to date on the database and has finally caught up with their backlog of release data.
- Tagging trips were conducted in September and October. In 2 days in September, 210 fish were tagged near the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. In 10 days of tagging in October, 700 fish were tagged around the Wolves and Grand Manan on the west side of the Bay of Fundy. Problems with weather and sporadic fish catches led to these disappointing totals.
- Tag returns continue to come in. DFO has received roughly 200 returns from the tagging done in May of 2003. This is a higher rate of returns than we have had in previous years. There is some indication that the more generous reward program in place for the current study is leading more people to return tags. Some of these, however, appear to have imprecise return information (fish apparently recaptured in areas which were closed to fishing, or having moved over 100 nm in a single day following release). Careful scrutiny of surprising results is essential.
- We also continue to get Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program tags from Canadian fishermen which were tagged outside Canadian waters, primarily from those fishing on Georges Bank, and we forward them to GMRI. We have passed along about 55-60 of these since early summer.

4.2 Island Institute

- Tagging inshore in Maine waters has been spotty at best over the summer and fall, with a number of fishermen reporting less inshore cod than they remember seeing last year; their view is that this is related to the colder water.
- **Mid-coast:** Lobstermen on Monhegan Island will be tagging through the winter, which is their season (unique in New England), and it is hoped that some spawning cod might be seen during this time.
- **South:** A volunteer sport charter boat, fishing out of York, tagged just under 200 fish for the season; this is the best single boat result out of the volunteer fleet. The result is particularly pleasing as this number includes only small and discarded fish, and is for a part-time vessel.
- 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)

- Fall tagging got off to a promising start in mid-September when a trip to Cashes, Fippennies and Platts yielded 602 cod over 3.5 days. Following this, however, weather conditions began to deteriorate and fish became difficult to find. Late September through mid-November were marked by storms, rough sea conditions and relatively little sign of cod. We had a total of only 5 trips over the report period, yielding 952 cod (Table 2).
- Amy Winkle, Area 2 tagging coordinator, left her position in early October. Area 1 coordinator Susan Hann assumed most of her duties. We expect to re-fill the position early next year.

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

Tagging Locations	Vessel	Trip #	Date(s)	# Days	# Fish	Temp Range (°C)
Area 1:						
Cashes & Fippennies Ledges, Platts Bank	<i>FV Elizabeth</i>	6	9/30 – 10/03	2.5	103	15.0 – 16.0
Cashes, Platts & Inshore	<i>FV Robert Michael</i>	1	10/21 – 10/24	3.0	88	10.0
Area 1 Total				5.5	192	
Area 2:						
Offshore - Downeast	<i>FV Elizabeth</i>	1	9/22 – 9/26	3.5	328	8.0 – 12.0
Offshore - Downeast	<i>FV Theresa & Allyson</i>	2	10/01 – 10/05	4	332	11.0 – 15.0
Grand Manan, Platts	<i>FV Adventurer</i>	2	10/13 – 10/19	4	101	10.0 – 11.0
Area 2 Total				11.5	761	

4.4 School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST)

- SMAST's most recent trip, aboard the *FV Northern Crusader*, resulted in Darin and Dave tagging exactly 1000 fish. SMAST's yearly total is now at 8,299 cod tagged, which is just shy of their annual goal of 10,000 fish.
- With three trips planned before the end of the year, SMAST feels confident that they will easily reach their goal of 10,000 tagged cod. Two trips will be going out on the Monday following Thanksgiving. Unfortunately, this means that Ross and Darin will no longer be able to make the End of Year 1 Meeting.
- SMAST recaptured one fish tagged by UNH this trip and another from this program. The tag from this program was deeply embedded in the fish's flesh with an apparent sore/festering wound. The tag also had a fair amount of growth on it.

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

- CCCHFA's non-dedicated tagging effort continued through the fall, mainly by *FV Susan Lee*, *FV Glory K*, *FV Sadie*, and *FV Sea Win*. 584 tags were deployed in September, 83 in October, and 301 to date in November. This work showed good geographical distribution with 398 tags being released East of Chatham, 239 on Nantucket Shoals, and 331 in the Great South Channel. CCCHFA's tagging total to date is 21,506, with 18,979 on dedicated trips and 2527 on non-dedicated trips.
- Water temperatures have dropped below fifty degrees and as such CCCHFA has begun gearing up to resume dedicated tagging. Preliminary planning meetings have been held, the application process for new vessels is underway, and a search for four qualified fishermen to serve as tagging technicians has begun.
- With some much appreciated help from Pat, Shelly and their staff at GMRI, CCCHFA has managed to tackle the bulk of the past winter and spring's data entry (approximately 85% complete).
- Coxes Ledge has not seen any decent cod fishing since August, but the Frances Fleet was able to tag 17 more fish on their last summer trip. The deployments happen slowly down there, but everything counts and we have to start somewhere. CCCHFA is also hearing reports that fish are around and so is hoping for a good, early winter season. The Frances Fleet starts cod operations just after Thanksgiving and they are willing and eager to tag some fish.