

Northeast Regional Cod Tagging Program



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Bi-monthly Update – November 2004.

I. Overview

Tagging trips have continued sporadically throughout October and November, taking advantage of small weather windows when possible (see Updates by Tagging Organizations); the total number of cod tagged by the end of November is ~97,000.

The focus of the last two months has been 1) data management and hiring a new Data Technician, 2) preparations for and reaction to the regional Mark-Recapture Workshop, and 3) preparations for the End of Year 2 Meeting in November.

Tag returns were lower in October (n=~150), but increased again in November (n=>250) and are summarized in total in Table I.

Table I: The overall tag reporting rate to date is ~3.0%. Of the tags reported, 2,092 physical tags have been returned to GMRI; recaptured double-tagged fish amount to 277; and recaptures which were re-released total 120. The number of high-reward tags returned to date is 50.

	CF	RF	F	P	O	Totals	% of releases
DFO	205	2	3	340	16	566	9.7%
Isl. Inst.	5	25	4	7	2	43	2.6%
DMR	322	88	14	61	63	548	3.2%
CCCHFA	604	127	19	45	58	853	1.9%
SMAST	375	8	6	178	26	593	3.2%
	1,511	250	46	631	165	2,603	3.0%

CF = Commercial fishermen, RF = Recreational fishermen, F=Fishermen - unspecified, P=Processors & O=Observers

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

Oct – 04

- **Northeast Region Mark-recapture Workshop:** This first regional fish tagging workshop took place in Kennebunkport (19-21st October) and was the focus of Shelly and Togue's efforts during October. An organizing committee (personnel from both GMRI and the NEFSC), worked together to plan and coordinate this three-day meeting. The meeting was highly collaborative and considerable feedback was offered for each regional tagging program presented. GMRI began collating the workshop proceedings the next week; these will be publicly available upon completion. Certain recommendations for the NRCTP were made during the course of the workshop steps have been taken to implement these where possible during this tagging season:
 - For the remainder of the tagging trips, 100% of cod tagged and released will be double-tagged in order to maximize the information yielded from recaptures; it should particularly improve our assessment of shedding rates or tagger effects.
 - Tagged cod which are recaptured and re-released should now be entered in the database with the tag status noted via a drop-down menu in the "fish fate" field, rather than just noting this in the "fish comments" field.
 - Glove usage will now always be described in haul comments for each tagging trip.
 - A general recommendation was made for a regional tagging page which links to all Northeast tagging programs; such a page has been added to the NRCTP website at: http://www.codresearch.org/Tagging_programs_various.htm.
 - Plans for assessing the efficiency of our outreach have begun; the focus will be on the high-reward tagging study and people's awareness of this. This will likely take place in December 2004.
 - Shelly is beginning to look into gaining access to historical cod tagging data held by the NEFSC; this could prove particularly useful during the upcoming months as data analysis and synthesis begins.
- GMRI received over 70 resumes for the Data Technician position (quality control and approval of the cod tagging data). A total of six individuals were short listed by Shelly, Pat and Laura and interviews began in late October.

Database:

- Pat has continued to process tag returns and mail out rewards.
- Year 3 enhancements to the database became live in late September and have been working well.

Outreach:

- Fish Expo was the key outreach focus for October with poster presentations on the NRCTP at the GMRI booth; From SMAST Rodney Rountree, Darin Jones and David Martin also presented.
- Five new winners were drawn for the October 2004 lottery.

Tagging:

Tagging was carried out by DMR, CCCHFA, SMAST, DFO and the Island Institute.

- GMRI is pleased to welcome Sarah Whitford as the new Data Technician for the NRCTP. Sarah began on 15th November and has made a promising start with the backlog of tag release data. The focus during November will be on approving tag releases; attention to recaptures will be held off until December.
- Much of GMRI's focus in November centered around preparations for the End of Year 2 Meeting.
- Shelly has continued to work on the proceedings of the regional fish tagging workshop. The workshop organizing committee and attendees have continued to deliver and offer feedback in a timely manner to maximize the chances of having the final draft available for distribution to program partners at the upcoming End of Year 2 meeting.

Database:

- Discussions with Northern Geomatics this month have focused on predicting the GIS/database needs for future months, particularly in light of the upcoming Northeast Consortium Cooperative Haddock Tagging Program, since GMRI will manage this data in a parallel database and mapping site.

Outreach:

- The key outreach effort this month was the article written by Bill Duffy (Northern Geomatics) which was published in the Fall 2004 edition of *ESRI ArcNews*. This article imparted a wealth of information about the program and was well received by the less typical audience than normally targeted in our outreach efforts. The article is available electronically at: <http://www.esri.com/news/arcnews/fall04/articles/monitoring-cod.html>.
- November 2004's lottery was drawn.

Tagging:

- Tagging was undertaken by the DMR, Island Institute, CCCHFA and SMAST.

3. Program Update by Tagging Organization

3.1 Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)

- DFO's October trip yielded 626 tagged cod; 61 high-reward tags were released during this trip.
- No tagging trips took place in November.

3.2 Island Institute

- Small boat fishing along the Maine coast ended with particularly bad early November weather, but all the contracted days were completed.
- Fishing in the mid-coast area was notably bad nearshore, but some good days with the day-boat fleet out of South Portland helped raise the total number of fish tagged.
- Due to some remaining money, the Island Institute may continue tagging into next year with ~12 days possible for the spring.

3.3 Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR)

- DMR has tagged 8,130 cod to date in 2004. The September-November contribution to that total is summarized in Table 2.

- Cod catches have been very spotty this fall. Trips have found little to tag in the Fippennies and Cashes Ledge areas and have had to settle for slightly better catches in areas like Sagadahoc Ridge or Platts Bank. Cod were very scarce downeast, both in the more offshore, Hague line areas and the more nearshore, Mt. Desert Rock grounds. Scheduling and duration of trips were also hampered by stormy fall weather.
- The October 6-8 trip to Jeffreys Ledge is notable for the large number of recaptures (n=25). Of these 25, apparently 10 were tagged by DMR in late November 2003 and 7 were tagged on different trips in March-September 2004, all in the same general area.
- Susan Haley, Area Cod Tagging Coordinator based in Portland, left her position in early November and is now working in the NMFS/REMSA commercial catch sampling program at the Portland Fish Exchange.

Table 2: Tagging summary for the period of September - November, 2004.

Area	Vessel	Date(s)	Days	Tagged	Recaps
Schoodic Ridges	Northern Edge	Sep 14-15	2	0	0
Schoodic Ridges	Northern Edge	Sep 21-22	2	3	0
The Corner	Titan	Sep 16-19	3	32	0
Sagadahoc, Platts Bank, Doggett's, Tanta Ground	Titan	Sep 21-22	2	137	3
Sagadahoc Ridge	Leslie Ann	Sep 27-28	2	156	0
Jeffreys Ledge	Adventurer	Sep 27-29	3	305	2
Jeffreys Ledge	Adventurer	Oct 6-8	3	766	25
Sigsbees, Fippennies, Platts Bank	Jocka	Oct 13-15	3	108	5
Fippennies Ledge	Adventurer	Oct 13-14	2	39	0
Platts, Fippennies Ledge	Theresa & Allyson	Oct 18-21	3	377	3
Sigsbees Ridge	Adventurer	Nov 10-11	2	26	0
Jeffreys Ledge	Elizabeth	Nov 17-19	3	361	5

3.4 School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST)

- SMAST was looking forward to returning to action in October and November following the break in activity during August and September. The plan was to complete one trip in October and two trips in November. As always, "mãe natureza" or Mother Nature, had other plans in store!
- The October trip was delayed for seven days due to steady northeasterly winds that just would not quit. SMAST barely made it out the last week of the month during a slight break in the weather, even though the winds and seas had not really subsided that much, (seas mostly 5 to 7 feet, wind speed 25 knots, wind direction NE). The captain commented that the wind direction had been from the Northeast for 2 weeks straight and that was not a common occurrence for October! The vessel left New Bedford in the morning, and the net was set the following morning – approximately 22 hrs later for the first haul of the trip. It's a long way to eastern Georges Bank.
- Tagging activity on day one took place twelve miles outside of Closed Area II near Georges Shoal. A total of nine tows were conducted and fifty cod were caught and tagged. On day two, another nine tows were made, this time inside Closed Area II. Production increased slightly to 105 fish tagged. Day three was dedicated to exploring for

cod in Closed Area I. Once again, the presence of cod there was scant; only 40 fish were tagged despite the best efforts. Closed Area I is gaining a curious track record for producing low catches of cod during the tagging cruises.

- Plans for conducting two trips in November was hampered first by poor weather in the beginning of the month, then by the fishing fleet activity, who left en masse for the fishing grounds just prior to Thanksgiving. Thus, the only November trip to take place was on the F/V Northern Crusader, after Thanksgiving.

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

- With the drop in water temperatures this fall the number of dedicated CCCHFA trips rose again. The CCCHFA efforts concentrated on staffing these trips with technicians to deploy high reward tags, and seeking fish in the deeper water of the Great South Channel. Catches were spotty, with both good days and bad days. Deployments of high reward tags to date are ~350.
- In total, 6,322 fish were tagged from September 23 through November 23. Distribution was fairly good, with higher numbers in the Great South Channel, but tags were deployed in all areas, including Coxes Ledge and The Gulf of Maine.