

FUMBLING NUMBERS (from page 9)

They noticed that the spawning stock is generally a very poor predictor of recruitment (recruitment being independent of parental abundance) except at relatively low parental stock sizes...”

Which suggests that the “SSB recruitment strength” or “reproductive strength” variable created by Mr. Smith is a meaningless figure.

That general comment by Walters and Martell is reinforced by research specifically addressing the relationship between summer flounder spawning stock biomass and recruitment.

In a paper entitled “Larval abundance of summer flounder (*Paralichthys dentatus*) as a measure of recruitment and stock status,” a team of biologists from Rhode Island, New Jersey and North Carolina stated that “For summer flounder there appears to be no direct relationship between larval supply [which does seem to be related to the size of the spawning stock] and recruitment at Beaufort Inlet or Little Egg Inlet [the two study sites]. This finding implies that recruitment strength may be determined by factors later in the life cycle, likely during the estuarine juvenile stage. [emphasis added]”

Once again, we find that “recruitment strength” is not determined by the size of the spawning stock, but “by factors later in the life cycle, likely during the estuarine juvenile stage.” So clearly, Mr. Smith’s calculation of the so-called “reproductive strength” variable an exercise in futility.

More to the point, the entire argument that high size limits hinder recruitment by removing too many large females from the population is shown to be absolute bunk.

But we already knew that.

A while ago, I wrote about the concept of “steepness,” which

is the right way to calculate the impact a reduction in the spawning stock has on recruitment. Steepness is calculated by dividing the recruitment when the stock is reduced to just 20% of its spawning potential, and comparing that to the recruitment that would be expected from an unfished stock.

The less difference there is between the two values, the higher the steepness. High steepness indicates a low correlation between recruitment and the size of the stock.

The steepness calculation for summer flounder was discussed in the last benchmark stock assessment. Although biologists disagree on just what the precise value is, all agree that such value is high, meaning that it doesn’t take very many females, relatively speaking, to produce an average year class.

Which again means that the argument presented in Mr. Smith’s article just doesn’t fly.

That’s hardly surprising, given that he got the whole process backwards.

To make sense of the numbers, you first have to learn a little about the science, and how the biology of a particular species actually works. Then you look at the data, and relate it to the biology of the relevant species. Only after you can do that are you ready to try to make sense of the numbers, and use them to formulate a policy that can be used to sensibly manage the stock.

Do it the other way around, setting the policy first and then looking for data to support your conclusions, and you can come up with some strange ideas, the kind of mistaken notions that can give fisheries managers unneeded headaches, even if they do take off their shoes before going to sleep for the night.

TOURNAMENTS (from page 17)

- Any fish entered in any tournament may **not be sold**.
- Fish may be landed in other states, but must be weighed at a **RISAA CERTIFIED SCALE** (see list on page 18)
- Any member may dispute the results of a tournament, but the dispute must be filed with the Tournaments Committee within five (5) days of the end of the tournament. All decisions of the Tournaments Committee are final.
- A fish caught in Connecticut, Massachusetts or Montauk coastal waters, caught by a RISAA member in good standing, may be entered in a RISAA tournament, as long as the fish is legal in Rhode Island at that time, according to Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing Regulations, and is weighed at one of the RISAA-approved Weigh-In Stations.
- *Example: A tautog, legally caught in Massachusetts, may not be entered in RISAA if the tautog season in RI is closed at the time.*

TIE-BREAKER RULES

- In the case of two or more anglers who enter a fish with the exact same weight, the **first angler to achieve the points** is the winner.
- The “first” angler shall be determined by the **date and time the fish is weighed** as written on the original weigh-in slip and signed by the weigh-in location employee.

- Example: Two anglers weigh-in a top striper of 50.25 lbs. The first one who entered it (day/time weighed) would get 1st place; the other angler would be 2nd place.

THE TOURNAMENTS

THE YEARLONG TOURNAMENT

- The Yearlong Tournament commences at 12:00 AM on January 1 and ends at 11:59 PM on December 31 annually.
- Pre-registration is not required. All members *in good standing* are automatically entered.
- Call-in and mail-in requirements as noted above shall apply.
- Awards for the Yearlong Tournament are presented in each category as follows:
 - Boat Division: 1st, 2nd, 3rd place
 - Shore Division: 1st, 2nd, 3rd place
- Minimum sizes apply for all ADULT entries ([see below](#))
- The minimum sizes for JUNIOR members is the current Rhode Island legal minimums

SPECIAL TOURNAMENTS

- **Special Tournaments** commence on Friday at 5:00 PM and ends on the last day of the tournament at 7:00 PM, unless otherwise noted.
- All fish must be **weighed in by 7:00 PM** on the final day of the tournament. (**to page 37**)