

# Finally Fishing for Just Whiting

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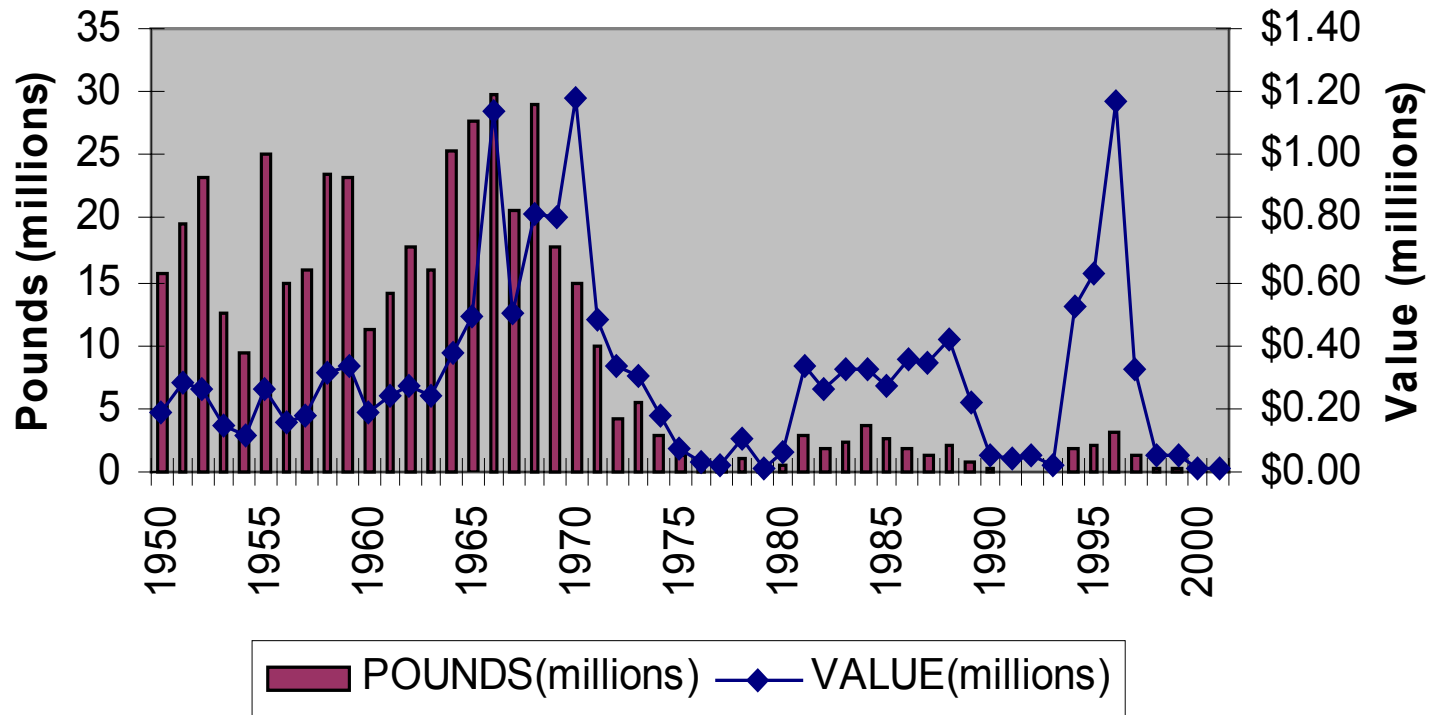
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# Introduction

- An outline of the progressive, cooperative gear research efforts to date in creating a low bycatch whiting fishery in the Gulf of Maine.
- Dan Schick: shrimp gear research since the late 1980's, whiting in 90's. Mike Brown shrimp and whiting gear in 90's, Les White for last two years.

## Maine Silver Hake Landings in Pounds and Value



# Gear Type Divisions

- The initial shrimp fishery export was the Nordmore grate, a hard, sloping panel of parallel bars mounted in the extension that sort by size.
- Various pairs of bar spacing and cod end mesh have been tested to adjust size selectivity.
- Raised footrope with or without a roller frame added to reduce bycatch of flatfish.

# Nordmore Grate

- The Nordmore grate has been tested with 40, 50, 63 and 70mm bar spacing.
- Tests were conducted pairing the grate against control nets with small mesh and no grate, or with 40mm grate.
- The larger the bar spacing, the more regulated species pass through. Best bar space so far is 50mm, but 45mm may be better.

# Cod End Mesh

- Meshes of 1.75", 2.25", 2.5" diamond and 2.2" square have been tested.
- 1.75" coupled with 40mm grate produced low % bycatch. 2.5" coupled with 50mm grate did also.
- The 1.75"/40mm net targeted whiting that were too small. Whiting selectivity profile for 2.5"/50mm net is much better re: Whiting FMP.

# Raised Footrope

- Raised footrope with 30", 42" droppers with roller frame and 30" without frame were tested.
- 42" droppers with frame produced best results until net without frame tested this fall.
- The raised footrope trawl with no roller frame fished well, produced low bycatch and was nicknamed the 'bottom friendly' net for low bottom contact. 2.5% reg.sp.

# What We Know

- Bottom friendly net with 50mm bar spacing and 2.5” diamond mesh cod end meets dual criteria of size selectivity for whiting and low bycatch of regulated species.
- Creating a fishery utilizing this gear will require a framework adjustment to the small mesh multispecies FMP.

# Next Steps

- Framework adjustment 38 is in progress and will require much work in the near future.
- A market for the product must be created. Low volume, unreliable product and low product recognition must be overcome.
- Northern stock of whiting is in great shape. A whiting fishery will relieve economic hardship in fleet.

# Work Done in 2002.

- 10 Days, 2 boats testing the bottom friendly net over more area in the GOM.
- 3" diamond cod end has been tested with a grate as 3" is the default mesh size in the FMP.
- 62 tows have been completed this fall and averaged 3.6% bycatch. 2 days left.
- 3" mesh was tested over 4 days of paired towing. Results are pending.