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Mr. Alan Desbonnet
Interim Director, Rhode Island Sea Grant

Dear Mr. Desbonnet,

Re. SNECRI final report – large mesh whiting trawl

We would like to thank you and the reviewers for providing reviews and comments on our recent final report "Design and Test of an Innovative Large Mesh Whiting Trawl to Reduce Spiny Dogfish Bycatch in the Southern New England Whiting Fishery" submitted to the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation. We are very encouraged that reviews are generally very positive therefore no substantial rebuttals or additions are needed. We have however updated our final report to provide further clarification of our methods, primarily in respect to the use of sea days (i.e., the number of days used for tuning the net versus comparative fishing) and why camera observation was not materialized. In addition, we have included more details about the costs of the new trawl system and our choice of statistics. The temperature log was damaged and data was not retrievable. As the analysis of catch was based on parallel tows, it can thus be assumed that bottom temperatures encountered by trawls during each paired tow were the same.

One of the reviewers commented about the size of whiting caught by the experimental trawl: "One perhaps unexpected outcome is that the experimental net appeared to catch smaller fish than the control net … could replace one conservation issue (bycatch) with another (discards of undersized target species)." As stated in the Result section, the plot of length frequencies seems to indicate that the new trawl caught more small whiting (Figure 8), but GLMM analysis did not support the conclusion. None of the GLMM models fit the data with statistical significance. This could have been resulted from a couple of experimental tows with large catch and relatively small whiting. However, further monitoring of size selection may be required if the new trawl is to be used in the commercial fishing.

Sincerely,

Pingguo He (PhD)
Associate Professor – Fisheries