

RI Marine Fisheries Council
Tautog Advisory Panel
Meeting Minutes
January 30, 2013 - 4:30 PM
URI Bay Campus, Hazard Room

R. Hittinger, Chairman	M Bucko*
G. Oakley*	E. Cook ^A
J. Tremblay	P. Karcz*
M. Lanni*	J. Rainone*
D. Pascale	P. Johnson
G. Latos*	
R. Ballou, RIDEM	J. McNamee, DFW staff

(*primary advisory panel member; ^A alternate member)

R. Hittinger began the meeting. He stated that J. McNamee from the Division of Fish and Wildlife (Division or DFW) had a presentation (see attached) which covered the first 4 agenda topics. He went on to state that after the presentation the panel would move on to discuss any proposals they may have for either commercial or recreational tautog management in 2013.

J. McNamee began his presentation with a review of the 2012 commercial fishery. The fishery had a small overage in the spring sub period but the fishery came in under the quota for the year by approximately 1,330 lbs. He stated that dealer reporting seemed to be improving, certainly in the tautog fishery. The summer sub period catch rates were relatively high but slowed down and did not close prematurely. The fall fishery was on par with recent history and for the year. The fishery did close prior to the end of the period, but this was due to a technical reporting issue. Once the final pounds were in, it did not appear as if an opening could be accomplished in a reasonable manner. J. McNamee stated that the DFW was not proposing any changes to the commercial fishery.

J. McNamee went on to discuss recreational fishery performance in 2012 as well as recent history. He gave some perspective on the fishery by breaking the data down to wave specific and mode specific data. The summary of this information is that the large harvest spikes are occurring in the later waves, 5 and 6, and that the majority of the landings are occurring in the private/rental boat mode. As far as stock status was concerned, there was no new information at this point in time. The reason was because tautog was going to a benchmark assessment in 2013, therefore none of the assessments (regional or coastwide) were run so that the technical committee members could concentrate on the assessment needs. J. McNamee finished by indicating that the DFW was not proposing any changes to the recreational regulations for the 2013 season.

R. Hittinger asked if there were any comments, questions, or alternate proposals from the meeting participants to change tautog management in the tautog fishery in 2013. The group began with some comments. BM stated that the discards that are occurring in the commercial fishery should be studied.

D. Pascal stated that he felt the commercial fishery should entertain increasing the daily bag limit for the commercial sector. He thought ten fish was too low. R. Hittinger asked if he was making a formal proposal, but D. Pascal stated that he wanted to bring it up for discussion but thought he might make the proposal at public hearing.

M. Bucko brought up the written proposal that he had submitted (attached). The main point of his proposal was to open the recreational fishery earlier than April 15. He felt this would re-enfranchise the recreational shore fishermen who fish in the Bay and it would also provide bait shops an earlier opportunity to sell some tackle and bait. There was discussion on this proposal. Some of the comments were relating to the effects on the spawning population that was entering the Bay. M. Bucko stated that it would take some time before there was any noticeable shift in effort given that most people were used to the current opening date of April 15, therefore he felt the DFW would be able to track it before it became a problem large enough to effect the population. BM stated that he saw shore access dwindling and he didn't feel there would be any noticeable impact; therefore he felt it was a good proposal. The group discussed the idea that the DFW should focus much of its energy on making sure the data being collected was of better quality than it currently was. M. Lanni stated that they should open earlier as this won't have much of an effect. He noted that perhaps a compromise would be to open on March 15 rather than going all the way to March 1. R. Ballou wondered what the group thought about making the earlier opening for shore mode only. The group discussed this a bit but seemed to generate the consensus thought that this would complicate the regulations, therefore they did not support this idea. J. Rainone stated that he agreed with all of the arguments being made for the earlier opening, with the exception of the idea of throwing the bait shops a bone. He didn't think this should be one of their considerations as this isn't something these panels normally consider as it was very focused on one particular stakeholder rather than on the fishery at large.

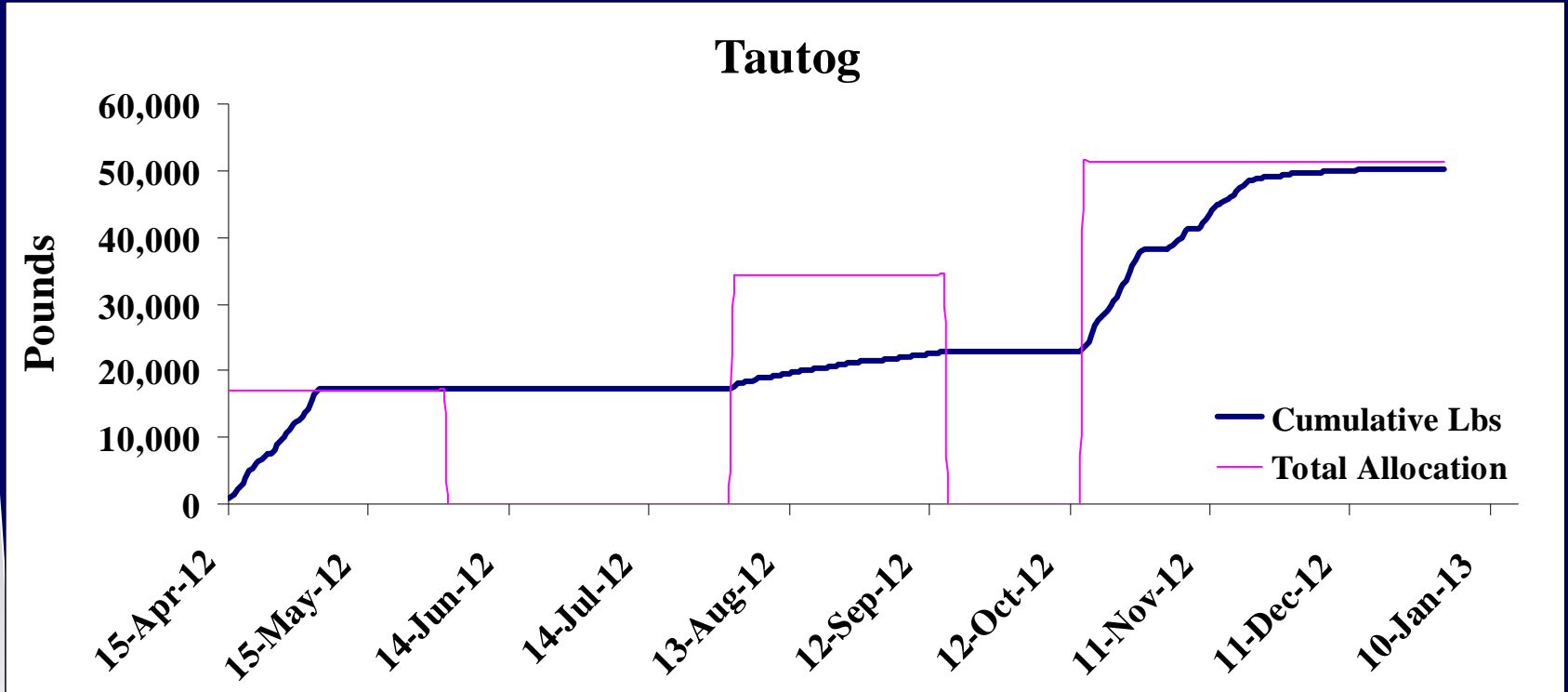
M. Bucko made his proposal in the form of a motion. M. Lanni seconded the motion. The group voted on the motion: four to approve and two opposed (G. Oakley and J. Rainone).

R. Hittinger adjourned the meeting at this point.

Summary of the Rhode Island Commercial and Recreational Tautog Fishery



Commercial Landings



- Overage in Spring of 172 lbs
- Underage of 1,330 lbs for year

Commercial Quota

Period	Period Allocation	Quota Allocation
Year 2012		51,348 lbs
Apr 15 – May 31	33.3%	17,116 lbs
Jul 15 – Aug 29	33.3%	17,116 lbs
Oct 15 – Dec 31	33.3%	17,116 lbs
2012 Total Landings		50,018 lbs



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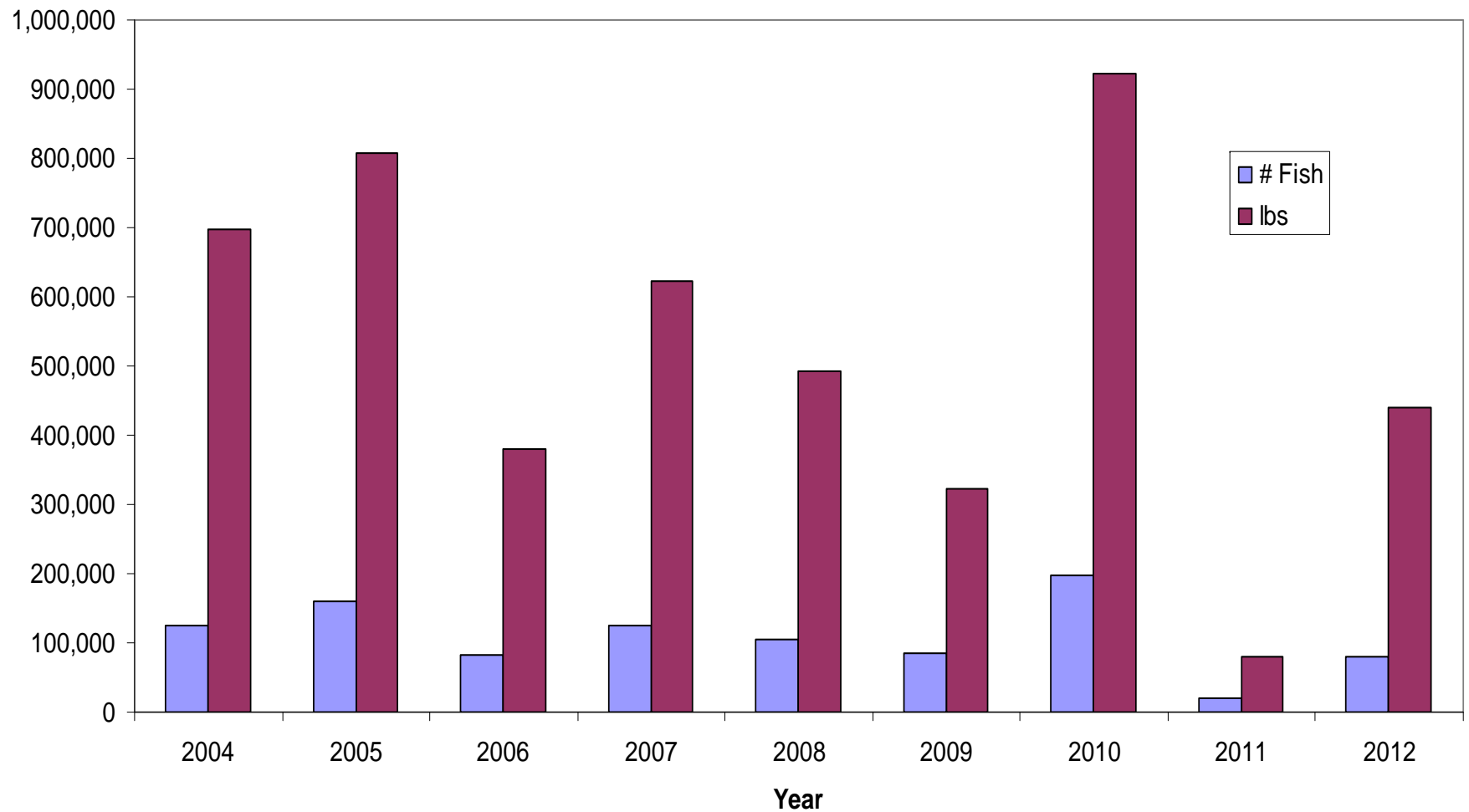
Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

- ♦ The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife proposes no changes to the commercial fishery in 2013
 - ♦ Commercial landings are constrained by a quota
 - ♦ Only represents approximately 9% of the total state harvest of tautog



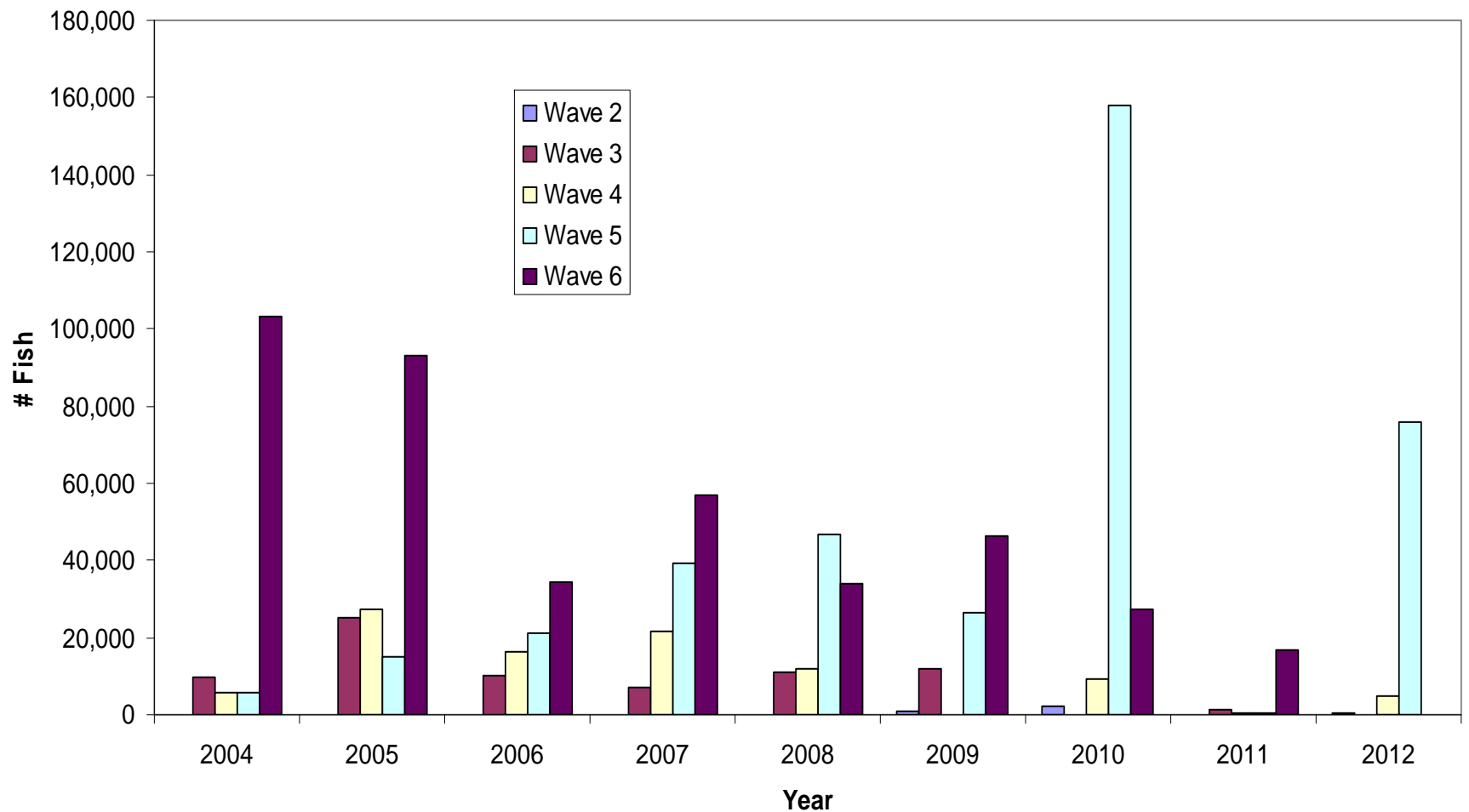
Recreational Harvest - Tautog

*Note: 2012 data preliminary, no wave 6 data



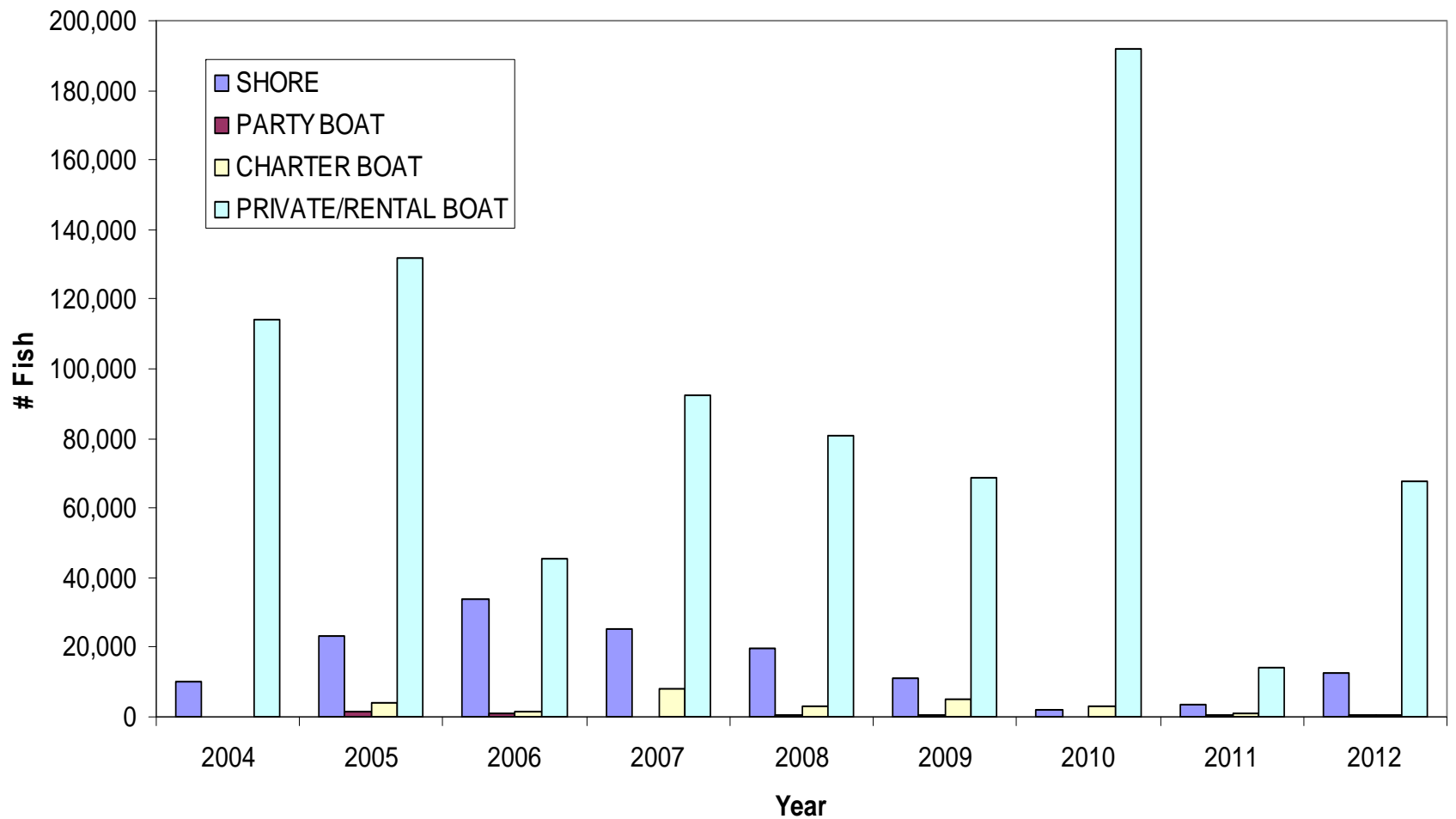
Recreational Harvest By Wave – Tautog

*Note: 2012 data preliminary, no wave 6 data



Recreational Harvest By Mode – Tautog

*Note: 2012 data preliminary, no wave 6 data



Stock Status – Tautog

- ◆ **The tautog stock coastwide: overfished, overfishing occurring according to output of 2011 stock assessment update**
- ◆ **The tautog stock regional: overfished, overfishing not occurring according to output of 2011 regional stock assessment update**
- ◆ **A benchmark assessment is scheduled for tautog beginning in 2013, therefore no assessment updates were performed in 2012**
- ◆ **Alternative models will be tested in this benchmark**



2012 Rhode Island Tautog Recreational Measures

- ◆ **All Modes:**
 - ◆ **Minimum size = 16"**
 - ◆ **Season: April 15 – May 31 at 3 fish**
 - ◆ **Season: June 1 – July 31 CLOSED**
 - ◆ **Season: August 1 – October 19 at 3 fish**
 - ◆ **Season: October 20 – December 15 at 6 fish**
 - ◆ **A vessel max of 10 fish in place for all open periods**
 - ◆ **P+C sector does not have a vessel limit but must report to eLogbook**



Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife does not recommend any changes at this time

