

**RI Marine Fisheries Council
 Summer Flounder Advisory Panel
 Meeting Minutes
 January 6, 2010, 6:00 PM
 URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute**

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| R. Hittinger, Chairman | M. Bucko* |
| K. Court ^A | H. Smart |
| K. Booth ^A | A. Parascondolo, Jr |
| J. Barker | F. Blount* |
| E. Cook* | C. Forrest |
| K. Ketcham – Council member | D. Borden |
| J. Tremblay* | D. Kel |
| C. Akmakjian ^A | W. Beattie |
| C. Donilou | D. Petri |
| R. Chatowski | R. Lufung |
| M. Ambrosia | A. Silkes |
| R. Bellavance – Council member | E. Woisinet |
| P. Stroup | J. Grant |
| D. Monti | R. Murray |
| G. Allen | D. Costa, DFW staff |
| S. Lurdbeng | N. Lazar, DFW staff |
| J. White | J. McNamee, DFW staff |

There was 1 attendee whose names I could not read from the sign in sheet
 (*primary advisory panel member; ^A alternate member)

R. Hittinger began the meeting. He stated that J. McNamee of the RI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) had a presentation which covered the first 3 agenda topics. He went on to state that after the presentation the panel would move on to discuss any proposals they may have for recreational summer flounder management in 2010.

J. McNamee began with a discussion about recreational fishery performance in 2009. He started by indicating that the data was incomplete for 2009, wave 5 and 6 data were not available. However, RI historically did not have very high landings in wave 5 or 6 and he felt confident in the projections that had been made for landings in those waves. What he indicated was that RI had come in under their harvest target by approximately 60% in 2009. The implication for 2010 was that RI could liberalize its regulations by 194% in 2010. Before moving on to discussing management options in 2010, J. McNamee went over summer flounder stock status. The status of the summer flounder stock was in very good shape, was not overfished, overfishing was not occurring; however the stock was not yet rebuilt.

J. McNamee finished by indicating that the DFW supported any measures that stayed within the bounds of the approved methodology for liberalizing. The DFW went on to caution, however that the RI performance over time had lead to harvests that averaged 200,000 fish per year, under many different management configurations. J. McNamee

stated that this would be a good time to implement some more progressive management measures such as slot limits or to enact a seasonal closure perhaps during a period of time when there were other species available to harvest. This would all be an effort to constrain landings and protect against overharvest in 2010.

R. Hittinger wanted to add some words of caution before moving to a discussion of the options available to the group. He stated that he encouraged the group to not open up to the most liberal possible measures, citing the struggle that they went through in 2009 to meet reduction measures from the overage in 2008. He then asked if there were any proposals from the meeting participants to change summer flounder management in the recreational fishery in 2010.

F. Blount reiterated the words of caution about liberalizing too much; indicating that going below a 20" fish was risky due to past performance.

A panel member asked about closing in September, while another panel member asked about dropping to a 5 fish bag. J. McNamee indicated that in the same way that the bag limits are more or less ineffective until you get to very low bags (i.e. 1 or 2 fish) because most fishermen do not reach a full bag limit, closing late or early in the season does not afford you very much conservation because landings are low during these time periods. At this point the panel had a brief discussion on both the MRFSS and new MRIP programs, and how these would affect the process in the future. Questions were answered by N. Lazar and D. Costa of the DFW, the point of which was that the new program would need to be in place for several years before it is fully integrated.

Several panel members and audience members voiced support for the 19" – 6 fish bag – season from 5/1 – 12/31 proposal, which seemed to be a consensus from the panel. G. Allen on behalf of the West Bay Anglers also voiced support for this option.

F. Blount asked how accountability would be managed under the new Magnusson Stevens mandates. He thought that there were payback provisions that would need to be rectified if the recreational fishery exceeded its TAC. J. McNamee agreed with F. Blount on this but stated that he did not know how this would trickle down from the federal level to the state level as far as accounting for overages. He took F. Blount's point to be another word of caution to the group, as there could be unforeseen problems associated with states going over their targets.

A panel member brought up a point about getting away from the larger sized fish as these were the largest and best breeders, and tended to have a high percentage of females. J. McNamee agreed and stated that this was one of the reasons the DFW wanted to move forward with a lowered minimum size, but went on to caution that he felt there would need to be additional conservation measures enacted to protect against large overages.

F. Blount stated that getting the early season back was important to the party and charter fishermen as there had been nothing to fish for in the early season of 2009 and they had to remain tied up to the docks until June 16th. This was a great hardship to the party and

charter fleet. Other party and charter boat operators who were in attendance supported these comments.

R. Hittinger adjourned the meeting.