

Meeting Minutes for the RIMFC Groundfish & Federally Managed Species Advisory Panel Meeting

March 20, 2012 – 6:00 PM

URI/GSO Narragansett Bay Campus, Coastal Institute Building, Large Conference Room

There were 8 people present (¹AP member)

- Ken Booth, Chair (RIMFC)
- Jerry Tremblay (RICRRA)
- Dean Pesante
- Aaron Gewirtz
- John Gadzik¹ (RICRRA)
- Richard Fuka¹ (RIFA)
- Bill Mackintos (RIMFC)
- Eric Schneider, RI F&W

Groundfish Members Absent: Douglas Kissick, Paul Westcott, Luke Wheeler, Al Conti, Michael Marchetti, John Troiano III, Frank Blount, Jr., Jim White, Carl Granquist, Stephen A. Arnold, Stephen Parente, and William Bento.

Handouts:

- Agenda
- Untitled Handout produced by RI F&W summarizing: ASMFC & proposed NMFS 2012-FY specifications and ASMFC Northern Region landings by state from 2006 – 2011
- Written Proposal submitted by Michael Marchetti
- ASMFC Spiny Dogfish Stock Status summary
- ASMFC New Release, “ASMFC Sets Spiny Dogfish 2012/2013 ... Quota at 30 Million Pounds”
- Federal Register: NMFS - Proposed 2012 Spiny Dogfish Fishery Specifications

There were only two Groundfish AP members in attendance, therefore there was not a quorum, and the meeting was informational only.

K. Booth (Chair) called the meeting to order at approximately 6:05 PM. He noted that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the current spiny dogfish fishery and seek input, and hopefully some proposals, regarding possible measures that could extend the duration of the fishery. He turned the meeting over to E. Schneider (RI FW) to address Agenda Item 1.

Agenda Item: 1. Discuss current spiny dogfish fishery

E. Schneider provided an overview of the handouts, summarized the current stock status, and management of spiny dogfish at both the state (ASMFC) and federal (MAFMC/NEFMC) level. Some items of interest were:

- Currently ASMFC has approved a 30 million lb quota; whereas NMFS has proposed a 35 million lb quota (as proposed by both the MAFMC and NEFMC) for the 2012 fishing year (FY).
- At the ASMFC winter meeting a motion to increase the quota to 35 million lbs did not receive the required 2/3 vote in favor.

A. Gewirtz asked if this could be revisited at the next ASMFC meeting in May? Considering the status of the stock and that there were overages related to the 2011-FY N. Region quota, it seems only logical to raise the quota to match the federal quota.

Consensus Agreement from the Group: Request that at the next ASMFC meeting in May, a RI Representative make a motion to revisit the Spiny Dogfish quota and increase the quota to match the federally proposed quota of 35.694 million lbs.

E. Schneider concluded the overview of spiny dogfish management (Agenda Item 1). The only other issue receiving comment was regarding how the state-water management of spiny dogfish has changed over time:

- i.e., from 2 periods, to a Northern and Southern Region, to N. Region and state shares for the S. Region.

B. Mackintosh stated that prior to splitting the state-water management into 2 Regions, RI always considered itself to be in the winter fishery. When RI was placed in the N. Region, RI lost its winter fishery and could no longer fish for spiny dogfish in Nov. and Dec. when they were inshore and right on the beach.

- “We’d like to figure out how to catch fish during our traditional winter months. Under the current management there’s no way to have a fall/winter fishery in the N. Region unless we convince other N. Region states to alter management and create a spring and fall fishery” (see Proposal 2 below).
 - Note that in the winter RI fishers travel < 3 miles to catch dogfish and can get 5 cents more a pound compared to the summer when you may have to travel 12 miles to catch dogfish and they’re worth less money.
 - Given the current market (no guarantee on future prices), there appears to be an opportunity to increase value to the fishery while reducing costs to harvest, as well as increasing safety for winter fishers since there would be an additional inshore fishery open during the winter.
- The other problem is that you can’t get away from Dogfish in the fall/winter, especially this year. So you’re catching them anyway and discarding all of them since the fishery is closed.

K. Booth asked about the current number of participants in the fishery, for two reasons.

- First, are there so many participants that RI DEM would incur significant costs and/or logistical hurdles to administer Proposal 2?
- Do you expect there to be enough interest in the Fall fishery for this to be worth the effort?

B. Mackintosh thought that there would be enough interest in the Fall fishery, especially in RI to be worth it.

E. Schneider noted that the discussion was moving into Agenda Item 2 and that he wanted to provide a little background regarding what the Division is seeking from industry during this meeting.

Agenda Item: 2. Discuss possible modifications to seasons and/or possession limits to prolong season

E. Schneider then stated the Division is seeking both:

- Long-term options that can be discussed at ASMFC and possibly NEFMC with hopes of implementation for the 2013-FY, as well as
- Short-term options that could be discussed with other N. Region states for the 2012-FY.
 - Note that possible management options for the 2012-FY are limited given that the FY begins on May 1.
 - E. Schneider added that the short-term option(s) is in response to a petition submitted by D. Pesante. The Division has made contact with other N. Region states to see if there is any

interest in possibly entering into a regional agreement to alter seasons or possession limits to prolong the 2012-FY.

- He was hopeful this meeting would result in some short-term proposals that could be shared with other states and brought to public hearing and the RIMFC.

The remainder of the meeting was dedicated to formulating and discussing the proposed options detailed below.

In summary:

1. The group did not specifically comment on proposal 1.
2. There was consensus agreement from the group to pursue proposal 2 for the 2013-FY.
 - E. Schneider explained that it's logistically impossible for proposal 2 to be enacted in time for the 2012-FY. Thus, this is a long-term proposal.
3. There was consensus agreement that proposals 3, 4, 5, & 6 *may be acceptable*, but the group would like more details prior to offering full support for a given proposal.
 - The group requested that:
 - The Division contact other N. Region states to see if any of the short-term proposals (4, 5, & 6) are viewed as potentially viable.
 - If any proposals are view as potentially viable, the group would like the Division to analyze landings data to estimate if the 2012-FY would be extended by altering possession limits and what type of extension could be obtained (1 week, 1 month, etc).
4. There was much discussion regarding whether a possession limit < 3,000 was acceptable.
 - At times there was a majority agreeing that a possession limit < 3,000 lbs/day really wouldn't provide enough incentive to make it worth fishing for dogfish.
 - At other times there was consensus to consider a possession limit reduction (< 3,000 lbs/day) if it would prolong the fishery into the fall and if it appeared the price would stay up.
 - Bottom line: see No. 3 above (i.e. bounce proposals off other states and reconvene as needed)
5. There was consensus agreement that the present single-species management approach for both spiny dogfish and skate is not working and new management approaches are needed.
 - It's widely believed that other species, such as cod, can not and will not rebuild until new management approaches of spiny dogfish and skate are implemented.
 - It seems that ecosystem based management (EBM) may offer a viable alternative management approach.

PROPOSALS

Long-term options:

Proposal 1 – offered by Michael Marchetti via email prior to meeting

- See attached proposal
 - In short, suggests to increase the quota to conceivably last through most of the year.

Proposal 2 – offered by Bill Mackintosh

- Establish a spring and fall fishery in the N. Region by creating 2 seasons or sub-periods:
 - Spring: May – Oct
 - Fall: July – April
- The overlap in sub-periods is designed to
 - allow both spring and fall fishers to participate during the summer (July-Oct) and
 - hopefully keep the fishery open into the fall, benefiting processors and local fishers alike
- Each participant must enroll in one, and only one sub-period
- Quota for each sub-period is calculated by multiplying the N. Region quota by the percentage of total participants enrolled in a given sub-period
 - e.g., If 400 of 1,000 N. Region participants enrolled in the spring sub-period, then 40% of the N. Region quota would go to the spring and 60% to the fall.
- This would require all N. Region states and NEFMC to establish a management program that could issue “permits” (or endorsements) for each sub-period, as well as manage quota for each sub-period.

Proposal 3 – offered by A. Gewirtz

- Pursue state shares for the N. Region or RI succeed from the N. Region in order to have more control over its fishery.
 - This was considered less favorable than proposal 2, given that
 - this could result in a RI state quota that is < recent landings and
 - would not afford RI the opportunity to increase its future share of the regional fishery

Short-term options to be considered for regional agreement with other states for the 2012-FY:

Proposal 4 – offered by A. Gewirtz

- Via a regional agreement, reduce the daily possession limit to 2,000 lbs for the first 2 months of the season (May and June) to slow landings and hopefully prolong the fishery into the fall.
 - Would look like:
 - May-June: 2,000 lbs/day
 - July-April: 3,000 lbs/day
- This would not introduce a closure and should provide a steady supply to processors.
- If deemed potentially viable by other N. Region states, would like the Division to estimate how much longer the season may be prolonged by reducing possession limit.

Proposal 5 – offered by Dean Pesante

- Via a regional agreement, create 4 sub-periods each of which would receive ¼ of the regional quota.
- The possession limit for each sub-period would start at 2,000 lbs and then increase to 3,000 lbs if it was determined that the quota would not be harvested by the end of the sub-period.
- If the quota for a given sub-period is reached, the possession limit would be reduced to 2,000 lbs until the start of the next sub-period.

Proposal 6 – offered by Dean Pesante

- Via a regional agreement, create 4 sub-periods each of which would receive ¼ of the regional quota.
- The possession limit for each sub-period would start at 3,000 lbs and then decrease to 2,000 lbs if/when a given percent (e.g. 90%) of the quota is reached.
- Possession limit remains at 2,000 lbs until the start of the next sub-period.

K. Booth declared the meeting was recessed due to time constraints. He stated that the meeting may reconvene if any proposals are viewed as potentially viable by other N. Region states so that the group could review Division estimates regarding whether the 2012-FY would be extended by altering possession limits and what type of extension could be obtained (1 week, 1 month, etc).