

Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council

2017 Annual Report



Approved by the Council on March 5, 2017

Introduction

In accordance with RIGL Section 20-3-2(b), the Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council (hereafter, RIMFC or Council) is charged with reporting annually, by March 1, to the Governor and the RI General Assembly for the preceding calendar year, with regard to: the advice it has given to state agencies, particularly the RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM), on marine fisheries issues; the response it has received to such advice; any findings or position it may have with regard to the status and/or condition of marine fisheries; and any recommendations it may have for maintaining, improving, or changing laws, regulations, or management programs for marine fisheries.

This is the Council's report for calendar year 2017.

Council Responsibility

The Council is established in accordance with RIGL Section 20-3-1 to serve in an advisory capacity to the DEM Director and/or other state agencies on marine fisheries issues pertaining to the State of Rhode Island, particularly those involving the planning, management, and regulation of the State's marine fisheries.

In accordance with RIGL Sections 20-10-5(d), the Council is also responsible for the review of aquaculture lease applications submitted to the RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) for the purpose of formulating recommendations to the CRMC as to whether the aquaculture activities proposed in each application are consistent with competing uses engaged in the exploitation of the marine fisheries.

In accordance with RIGL Section 20-2.1-10, the Council is also responsible for advising DEM concerning the development of annual plans for the allocation and use of the funds made available to the department from commercial fishing license fees, tags, permits, and vessel fees as provided in RIGL Section 20-2-28.2.

In accordance with RIGL section 20-2.2-10, the Council is also responsible for reviewing DEM's annual report on the RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing License Program, and rendering its opinion as to whether the program is continuing to meet its intended purpose.

Council Membership

Council members are appointed by the RI Governor, and subject to advice and consent by the RI Senate. Members serve four-year terms, and are eligible for reappointment once. The DEM Director or his or her designee serves as the Council Chair.

Three members serve as representatives of the commercial fishing industry; three serve as representatives of the recreational fishing industry; and two members have skill, knowledge, and experience in the conservation and management of fisheries resources and/or marine biology.

In 2017, the Council membership was as follows:

Robert Ballou, Assistant to the Director, DEM – Chair
David Monti – Vice-Chair
Travis Barao
Andrew Dangelo
Jeff Grant
William Mackintosh III
Christopher Rein
Dr. Michael Rice
Michael Roderick

Council Meetings

In 2017, the Council met on four occasions: February 28, June 26, October 2, and December 4.

Additionally, the Council's Industry Advisory Committee met once, on August 10, and the Council's Shellfish Advisory Panel met on four occasions: January 11, February 2, July 26, and October 11.

The minutes for all of the above-referenced meetings are posted on the Council's website at:
<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/fish-wildlife/marine-fisheries/rimfc/index.php>

Council Advice – Regulatory Proposals

In 2017 the Council provided recommendations to DEM Director Coit on a total of 44 regulatory issues pertaining to:

- Recreational Summer Flounder management
- Recreational Tautog management
- Commercial Tautog management
- Recreational Scup management
- Recreational Black Sea Bass management
- Recreational Striped Bass management
- Commercial Striped Bass management
- Commercial Menhaden management
- Recreational Menhaden management
- Commercial Monkfish management
- Proposed new Shellfish Management Areas
- Revised boundary for the Bristol harbor Shellfish Management Area
- Block Island gill net regulations
- Gill net tagging regulations
- Fyke net registration requirements
- Use of seine nets in coastal ponds
- Seafood dealer regulations
- Seafood dealer's record of sales/transactions
- Dealer transaction recordkeeping

- Dealer wet storage of shellfish
- Consistency between DEM Seafood dealer regulations and Dept. of Health Shellfish regulations
- Commercial Licensing
- Commercial Summer Flounder management
- Commercial Scup management
- Commercial Black Sea Bass management
- Commercial Spiny Dogfish management
- Definition of “resident”
- Regulations Governing Education Certification for Commercial Shellfish Harvesters
- Shellfish Management Areas – Harvest Schedules

The Director concurred with the Council’s recommendations on all but five issues, those being:

- Commercial monkfish aggregate program
- Gill net tagging location requirements

The Director’s rationale for not following the Council’s recommendations on those five issues are set forth in decision memos, provided to the Council, and posted on the Council’s website at: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/fish-wildlife/marine-fisheries/rimfc/dirdecsn.php>

Council Advice – Aquaculture Lease Proposals

The Council provided recommendations to the CRMC on a total of seven aquaculture lease applications. In the opinion of the Council, all but one of the seven applications were found to be consistent with competing uses engaged in the exploitation of marine fisheries in the respective areas.

Council Advice -- RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing License Program

At their February meeting, the Council reviewed the Annual Report for the RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing Program for Fiscal Year 2016, and found that the program is continuing to meet its intended purposes. The Report, which includes an Addendum addressing the Council’s review, is posted on the DEM website at:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/rlcrep16.pdf>

Other Major Activities Undertaken by the Council

- Advisory Panel (Shellfish Advisory Panel and Industry Advisory Committee) membership: Comprehensive review of membership, solicitation of new membership, removal of delinquent members
- Aquaculture: Recommendation to the CRMC to develop updated use maps of Narragansett Bay and coastal ponds as part of the CRMC’s Narragansett Bay Special Area Management Plan (SMAP), in order to assist in the proper siting and review of aquaculture leases