

RI Marine Fisheries Council
Summer Flounder Advisory Panel
Meeting Minutes
January 30, 2013, 6:00PM
URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute

R. Hittinger, Chairman	M Bucko*
K. Court ^A	L. Jordan*
M. Ambrosia	R. Chatowski
D. Fox*	E. Cook*
P. Johnson	D. Monti
J. Tremblay*	
R. Ballou – RIDEM	J. McNamee, DFW staff

(*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 or Division) had a presentation which covered the first 3 agenda topics. R. Hittinger stated that after the presentation the panel would discuss any proposals they may have for recreational management for summer flounder in 2013. He also noted that there was a quorum present therefore the group could vote to develop the advisory panel preferred option.

J. McNamee began with a discussion about stock status for summer flounder. The stock was rebuilt and overfishing was not occurring. He then went over the fishery performance in RI in 2012. The fishery went well in 2012 and RI came in under their harvest target, thus allowing for a small liberalization in 2013 (~36%). J. McNamee concluded by stating that the DFW would approve any option that remained within the liberalization strategy as developed by ASMFC. The DFW analyzed one option as the most viable as RI currently has a wide open season and a relatively liberal bag limit, so the DFW’s analysis focused on decreasing the minimum size. There was a number of reasons for focusing on this including re-enfranchising the shore mode fishery. The analysis is noted in the slideshow (attached). The advice from the DFW regarding recreational specifications was to proceed with caution.

R. Hittinger stated that they would now go to the group for any questions or proposals. The discussion began with comments on the shore mode fishery. The group did feel it was a shame that there used to be a good shore fishery in RI for summer flounder, but this had been gone for quite some time. The group did feel that as the size limit began to decrease this would help, but many question whether it could ever get back to how it used to be. After this discussion R. Hittinger asked for any proposals.

There were no new proposals brought forward by the group. **K. Court preferred the option put forward and analyzed by the DFW. He made a motion to approve this option as the advisory panel preferred option (18” minimum size, 8 fish bag limit, season from May 1 – December 31). M. Bucko seconded the motion. The vote was to unanimously approve the motion.**

The group then had a discussion about what the bag limit does as far as liberalizing or achieving reductions. J. McNamee explained that, at least according to the data, the majority of fishermen do not catch high bag limits, most catch less than three fish during any given trip. What this meant is that to achieve any sort of reduction via a bag limit decrease, the bag limit would have to go very low, to 3 or less fish. The group concurred that this was their experience as well; most of their trips did not achieve a full bag limit.

M. Bucko brought up a question about the shore mode fishery. He wanted to discuss the CT program where the shore mode fishery for summer flounder at certain areas on the CT coast has a decreased bag limit. He felt that this was a good program and he would like RI to develop a program like this for 2014. There was discussion on the logistics of the CT shore mode fishery. They have designated fishing areas, these areas can not have boat ramps near them to help with enforceability of the regulations, but the minimum size is 16” and the bag limit is the same as the rest of the fishery. J. McNamee stated that the DFW likes this approach and thinks it is a good initiative; however the one missing element, that continues to remain un supported, is actually collecting data to see what the effect is of this split mode special program in CT. RI is also lacking the proper information at this point to make an informed decision on what the split mode regulations could or should be, and some projection as to the effect that this may have on harvest. With monies from the recreational license, intercepts had been increased, but the data still were not to the level needed to make a solid analysis on this sort of program. There was further discussion on the enforceability of a split mode option, many in attendance were leery about how enforceable this program would be, and thought that it would allow for cheating. That being said most thought the idea was a good one. **M. Bucko agreed with the discussion to that point, but still thought it would be a good idea to look in to a special shore mode program for 2014, therefore he made the motion that the DFW should look in to and develop a special shore mode program for summer flounder and bring it forward for 2014. E. Cook seconded the motion. The vote was to unanimously approve the motion.**

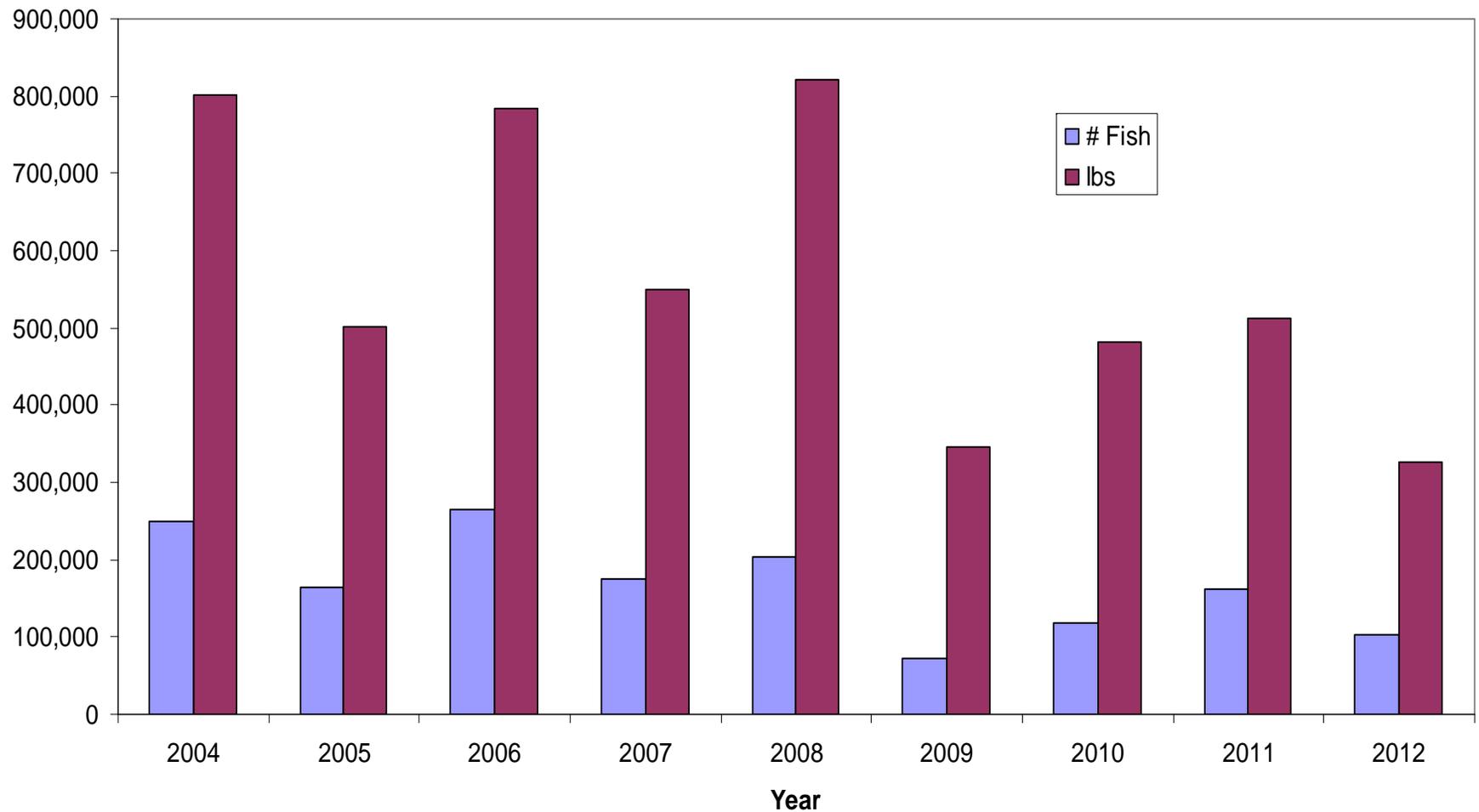
R. Hittinger adjourned the meeting

Summary of the Rhode Island Recreational Summer Flounder Fishery



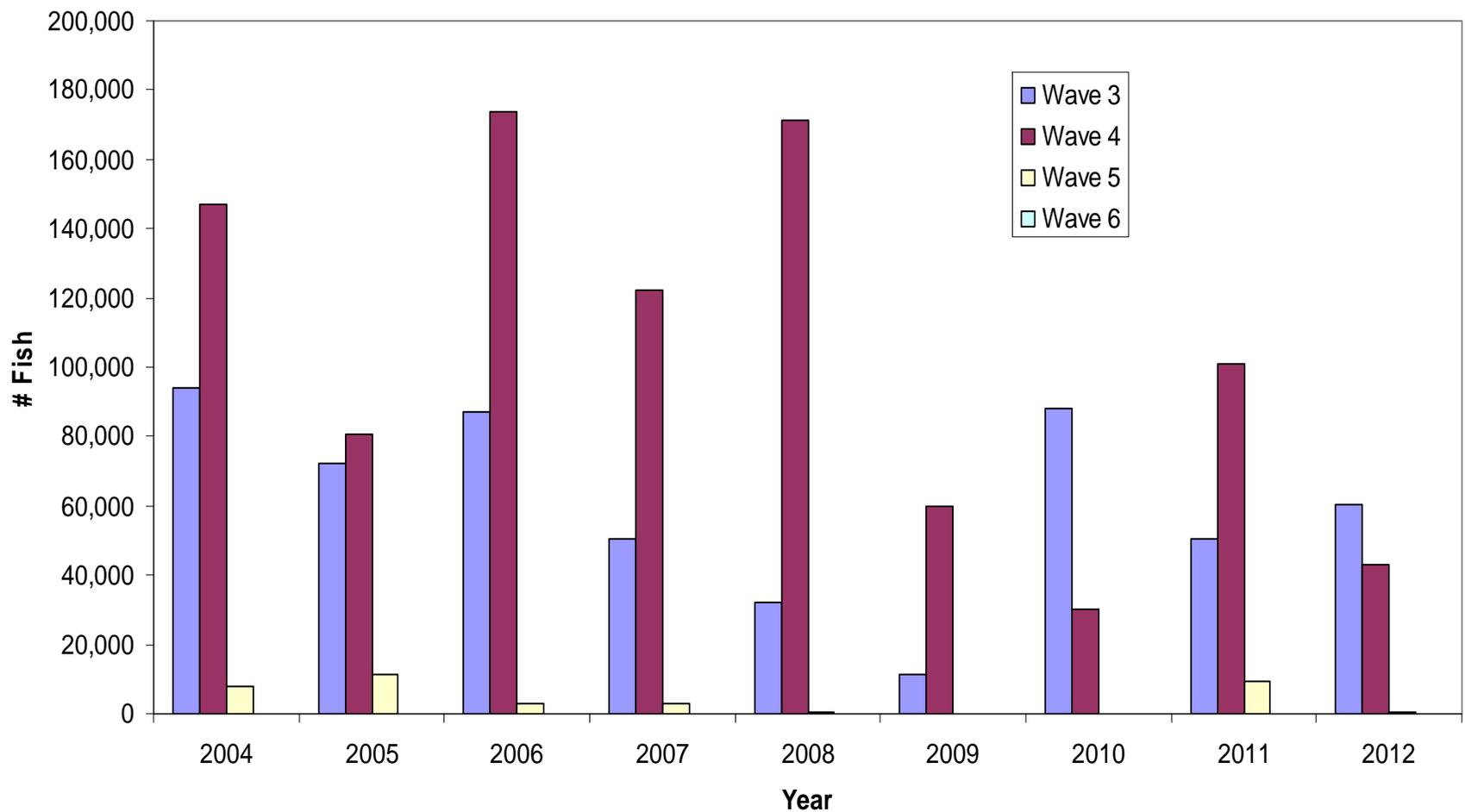
Recreational Harvest - Summer Flounder

*Note: 2012 data preliminary, no wave 6 data



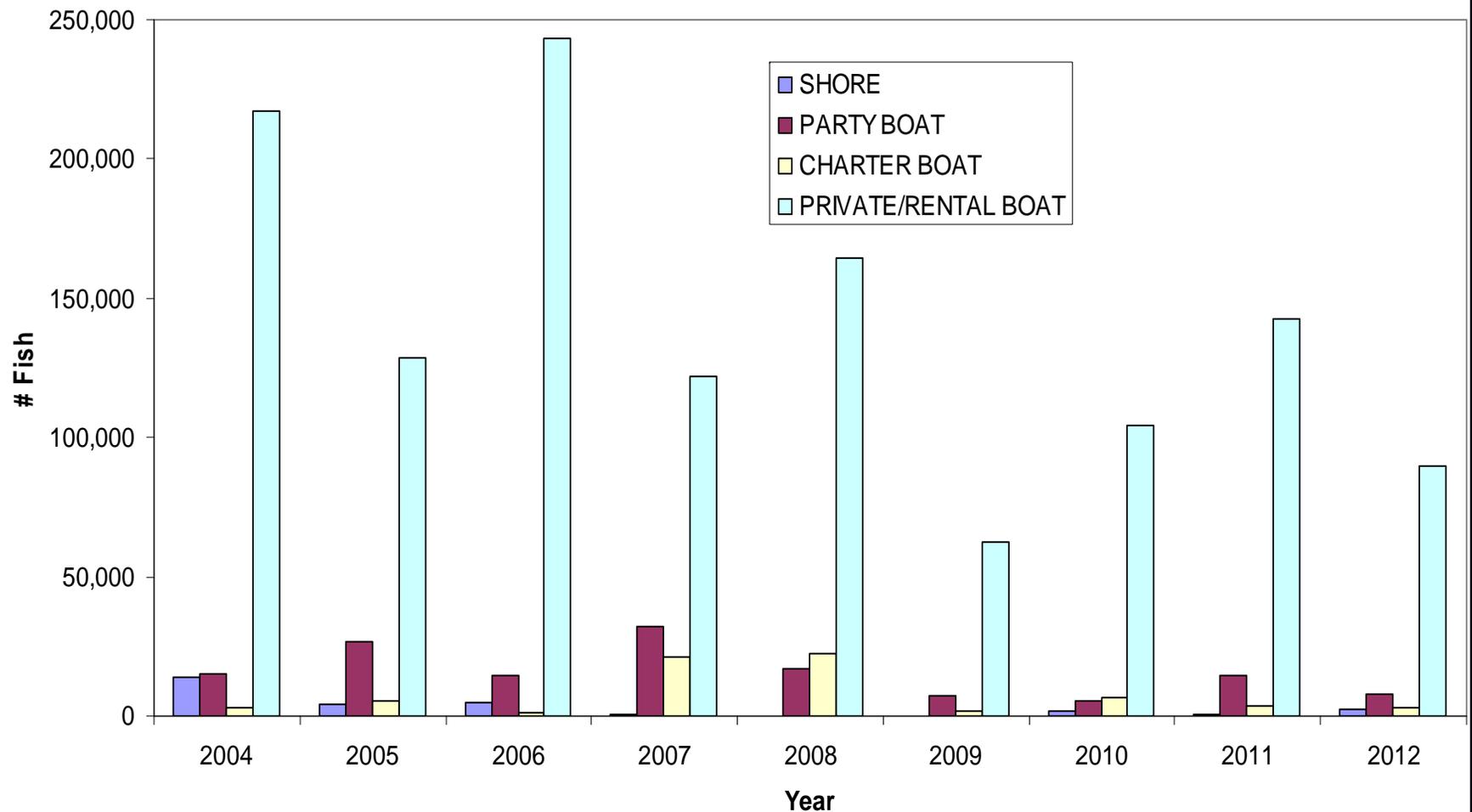
Recreational Harvest By Wave – Summer Flounder

*Note: 2012 data preliminary, no wave 6 data



Recreational Harvest By Mode – Summer Flounder

*Note: 2012 data preliminary, no wave 6 data



Rhode Island Recreational Fishery Performance – Summer Flounder

- ◆ Landings and targets are analyzed on a state by state basis in the summer flounder fishery
- ◆ The landings target for 2012 for RI was 157,885 fish
- ◆ The projected landings in 2012 for RI 103,669 fish
- ◆ This is approximately a 36.6% underage



Stock Status – Summer Flounder

- ◆ The summer flounder stock: not overfished, overfishing not occurring according to output of 2011 stock assessment update and relative to SAW 47 biological reference points
- ◆ According to 2011 stock assessment update, stock considered rebuilt, ahead of scheduled deadline.
- ◆ Fishing mortality (F) ranged between 1.0 and 2.0 during 1982-1996
- ◆ F estimated at 0.241 in 2011; below the threshold fishing mortality reference point $F_{MSY} = F_{35\%} = 0.310$
- ◆ Spawning stock biomass (SSB) decreased from 25,000 mt in the early 1980s to 7,000 in 1989, increased above 40,000 mt by 2002
- ◆ SSB estimated at 57,020 mt in 2011; about 95% of the $SSB_{MSY} = SSB_{35\%}$ reference point = 60,074 mt



Stock Status – Summer Flounder

- ◆ The arithmetic average recruitment 1982 to 2011: 42 mil fish at age 0
- ◆ The 2009 year class currently estimated at 47 million fish; 10% above average
- ◆ This is 50% below the original estimate
- ◆ Current recruitment is estimated to be slightly below average
- ◆ This “retrospective pattern” in each subsequent stock assessment update is the reason for the decreasing quotas



2012 Rhode Island Summer Flounder Recreational Measures

- ◆ **All Modes:**
 - ◆ **Minimum size = 18.5"**
 - ◆ **Season: May 1 – December 31 at 8 fish**



Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife will recommend an option that will be approved by ASMFC.

Preliminary discussions are centered around decreasing the minimum size

A drop of 1/2" was examined, see the tables below

Table 1a. The projected effects of various size limits on the 2013 summer flounder recreational landings in the state of RI, calculated as percent increase from current management configuration. Based on data from RI trawl survey data.

Possession Limit	18"	18.5"
8 fish	28%	0%

Table 1b. The projected effects of various size limits on the 2013 summer flounder recreational landings in the state of RI, calculated as percent increase from current management configuration. Based on harvest records from RI eRec logbook

Possession Limit	18"	18.5"
8 fish	9%	0%

