

**RI Marine Fisheries Council
 Summer Flounder Advisory Panel
 Meeting Minutes
 January 31, 2012, 6:00 PM
 URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute**

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| D. Monti, Chairman | M Bucko* |
| K. Court ^A | R. Tellier |
| J. Barker | T. Hogan |
| H. Loftes | E. Cook* |
| T. Cathers | J. McNamee, DFW staff |

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

D. Monti 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. D. Monti stated that after the presentation the panel would discuss any proposals they may have for recreational management for recreational summer flounder in 2012. He noted that he had received two proposals prior to the meeting which he would bring forward at that time. He also noted that there was not a quorum present therefore no votes would be taken, but it still would be useful to get some advice from the panel out to the RI Marine Fisheries Council (RIMFC) and the Director of the Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

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 2011. The fishery went well in 2011 and RI came in under their harvest target, thus allowing for a small liberalization in 2012 (11-12%). One important piece of information the he wanted to discuss with the group was the rollout of the new Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) recreational harvest information. Very briefly, the MRIP information simply took the existing data and used improved statistical techniques to reanalyze the recreational catch data. The program would have elements added to it over the coming years (i.e. the recreational registry information) and its use would continue to evolve in the coming seasons. The important consideration at this point was whether to use the old MRFSS harvest information for setting targets or to use the new MRIP harvest numbers. The way this shakes out for RI with regard to summer flounder was not a large difference between the two numbers, so there were no dramatic shifts in what RI could or could not do with regard to 2012 recreation specs. Other states were in a much tougher situation. J. McNamee concluded by stating that the DFW would approve any option that remained within the liberalization strategy as developed by ASMFC. He went on to outline a few of the potential options, which are noted in the slideshow (attached). The advice from the DFW regarding recreational specifications was to proceed with caution.

D. Monti stated that they would now go to the group for any questions or proposals, but he first wanted to bring forward two proposals that had come forward prior to the meeting. The first was from the RI Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA), and they

preferred increasing the bag limit by one fish (from 7 to 8). They recommended keeping all other specifications the same as 2011. The second proposal was from the RI Party and Charter Boat Association. They stated that they preferred going up by two fish in the bag limit (from 7 to 9). They went on to state, though, that they would support a single fish increase as well.

M. Bucko spoke first and stated that he preferred status quo. He had some concerns about potential year class strength that may be available to the fishery in the coming year, and with this increased availability, he felt that raising the bag limit further could lead to a larger than expected increase in harvest. He concluded by noting, as J. McNamee had during the presentation, that the PSE for the estimate was larger than the actual liberalization, so he felt this imprecision was another reason to remain at status quo in 2012.

K. court spoke next and stated that the bag limit was a perception issue and was important to the party and charter industry. He noted that most fishermen harvest less than 3 fish per trip, therefore increasing the bag would do little to impact harvest numbers. Because of this, he supported the 9 fish bag limit.

J. Barker stated that he did not have a strong opinion about which way to go, but he thought that M. Bucko made some good points. His main concern was to not exceed the harvest target in 2012 and have to reduce in subsequent years. To this point, M. Bucko stated that accountability measures would be used moving forward and if harvest targets were exceeded, the repercussions could be more severe than they have been in the past.

The group then had a varied discussion. They first discussed where the discard mortality was from. J. McNamee noted that it comes from a few different published research studies and depended upon gear type. The group then discussed what to do about the consistently low turnout at the advisory panels. K. Court suggested that they stop worrying about quorums and just seek to build consensus with the group. J. McNamee agreed that this could be useful for providing advice, but there was a concern as voiced by the RIMFC in the past that the representation of that advice was important. J. Barker agreed with this and stated that they needed to make sure they were achieving a good, diverse group of fishery representatives when developing advice. The final discussion from one of the attendees was whether there was a way to allow for one or two of the fish in the bag limit to be smaller than 18.5 inches. He suggested allowing a 16 inch fish or two in the bag and stated that this would increase access to the fish for both shore and boat fishermen. J. McNamee brought up the fact that this could potentially increase harvest significantly so if they wanted to take an approach like this, they would have to compensate in other areas, like decreasing the season length or dropping the bag limit, potentially to a very low level. Other attendees mentioned the issues of increased complexity in the regulations leading to enforcement difficulties.

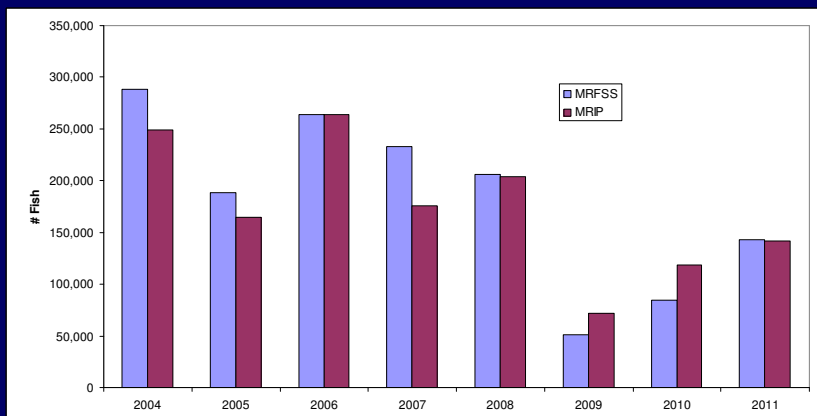
D. Monti adjourned the meeting.

Summary of Rhode Island Recreational Summer Flounder Fishery

2011

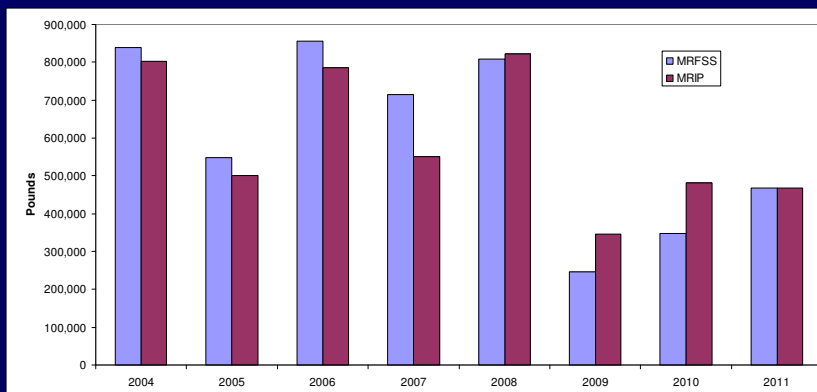


Recreational Landings



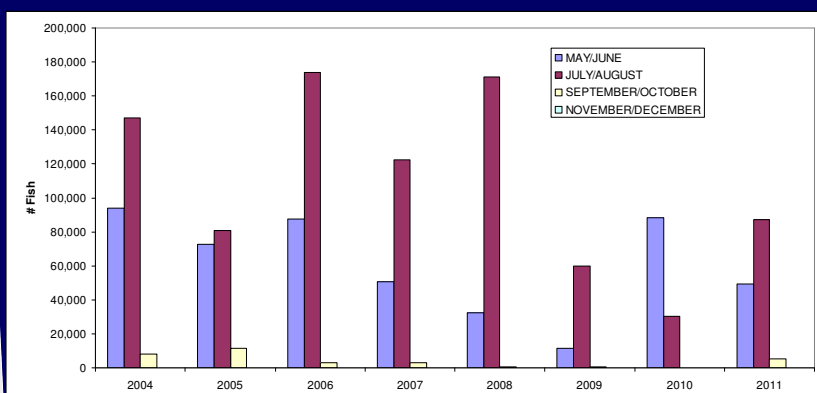
*Note: 2011 data is preliminary and is missing wave 6

Recreational Landings



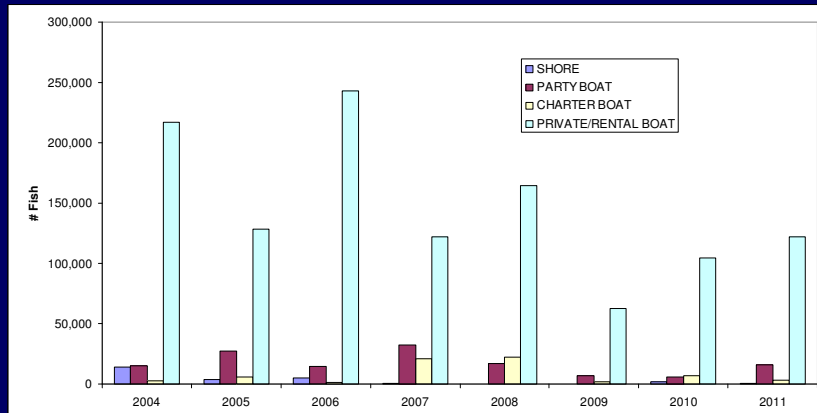
*Note: 2011 data is preliminary and is missing wave 6

Recreational Landings – Harvest by Waves



*Note: 2011 data is preliminary and is missing wave 6

Recreational Landings – Harvest by Mode



*Note: 2011 data is preliminary and is missing wave 6

RI Recreational Fishery Performance

- ◆ The landings target for 2012 for RI is 157,885 fish
- ◆ The landings in 2011 are 142,887 fish (projected wave 6 approximately equal)
- ◆ This is approximately a 11% underage



RI Recreational Fishery Performance

- ◆ Using the new MRIP information, harvest is 141,312 fish
- ◆ This is approximately a 12% underage



RI Recreational Fishery Performance

- ◆ RI could take a small liberalization in 2012
- ◆ Caution should be exercised given the small underage relative to the precision of the estimate (PSE=24.6)
- ◆ Note: Original targets and proposals were developed using MRFSS estimates
 - ◆ MRIP methodology will be used to calculate the new harvest numbers
 - ◆ In RI's case, not a big difference, but was significant switch for other states



MRIP vs MRFSS

| Year | MRFSS | MRIP | Difference : MRIP - MRFSS | % Change | PSE for MRIP |
|-------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| 2004 | 288,428 | 248,988 | -39,440 | -13.70% | 14.3 |
| 2005 | 187,983 | 164,909 | -23,074 | -12.30% | 16.6 |
| 2006 | 263,716 | 264,142 | 426 | 0.16% | 23.6 |
| 2007 | 232,495 | 175,778 | -56,717 | -24.40% | 15.7 |
| 2008 | 206,501 | 203,745 | -2,756 | -1.33% | 25.9 |
| 2009 | 51,293 | 71,739 | 20,446 | 39.90% | 34.2 |
| 2010 | 84,525 | 118,455 | 33,930 | 40.10% | 33 |
| 2011* | 142,877 | 141,312 | -1,565 | -1.10% | 24.6 |



Summer Flounder Stock Status

- 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.



Summer Flounder Stock Status

- Fishing mortality (F) ranged between 1.0 and 2.0 during 1982-1996
- The fishing mortality rate estimated at 0.216 in 2010
- Below the threshold fishing mortality reference point $FMSY = F35\% = 0.310$



Summer Flounder Stock Status

- 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 60,238 mt in 2010
- About 100.2% of the $SSBMSY = SSB35\%$ reference point = 60,074 mt .



Summer Flounder Stock Status

- The arithmetic average recruitment 1982 to 2010: 43 million fish at age 0
- The 2009 year class currently estimated at 60 million fish
- 40% above average, largest in assessment since 1986.



Summer Flounder Stock Status

- The original 2010 assessment update indicated recruitment at 80 million fish
- This decreased upon full updated assessment to 60 million fish
- Reason quota decreased for 2012.



Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

• The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife approves of any option within the liberalization of 12%.

• Given that:

- no minimum size decrease would be within the bounds of the reduction

Table 1a. The effects of various size limits on the 2011 summer flounder recreational landings in the state of RI, calculated as percent increase from current management configuration. Based on data from RI trawl survey.

| Possession Limit | 18" | 18.5" |
|------------------|-----|-------|
| 7 fish | 13% | 0% |

Table 1b. The effects of various size limits on the 2011 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" |
|------------------|-----|-------|
| 7 fish | 27% | 0% |



Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

• And Given that:

- we currently have a completely open season

• Small bag limit increases would be the only viable options to change

• The following options meet all these criteria and have been approved by the ASMFC technical committee:



Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

Table 3. Management options to meet ASMFC target (#s fish; 157,887) and percent liberalization (maximum of 11%) specifications for the 2012 summer flounder recreational fishery in RI

| | Open Season | Bag Limit | Bag Limit % Increase | Size Limit | Size Limit % Increase | Total % Liberalization ¹ |
|----------|-------------|-----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Option 1 | 5/1 – 12/31 | 7 | 0 | 18.5" | 0 | 0 |
| Option 2 | 5/1 – 12/31 | 8 | 2 | 18.5" | 0 | 2 |
| Option 3 | 5/1 – 12/31 | 9 | 6 | 18.5" | 0 | 6 |



Historical Perspective

- There is no particular pattern with RIs performance relative to certain management measures.
- When viewed historically RI averages roughly 200,000 fish
- RI's 2012 target is below this range (target = 157,887 fish), therefore caution is urged



Historical Perspective

Table 4. Management measures in place for the summer flounder recreational fishery in RI, 2001 - 2011

| Year | Min Size | Bag | Season | Performance Relative to Target (%) | Harvest (# fish) | Target (# fish) |
|-------|----------|-----|--------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 2001 | 17.5" | 6 | 5/26 - 9/3 | 19 | 268,244 | 225,000 |
| 2002 | 18" | 5 | 5/25 - 9/20 | -23 | 190,741 | 249,000 |
| 2003 | 17.5" | 5 | 5/1 - 9/20 | -12 | 205,435 | 233,000 |
| 2004 | 17.5" | 7 | 4/1 - 12/31 | 15 | 288,428 | 251,000 |
| 2005 | 17.5" | 7 | 4/1 - 12/31 | -31 | 187,983 | 271,000 |
| 2006 | 17.5" | 7 | 4/1 - 12/31 | 26 | 263,716 | 209,000 |
| 2007 | 19" | 7 | 5/18 - 9/16 | 68 | 232,495 | 138,000 |
| 2008 | 20" | 7 | 1/1 - 12/31 | 78 | 206,501 | 116,043 |
| 2009 | 21" | 6 | 6/16 - 12/31 | -56 | 51,293 | 117,000 |
| 2010 | 19.5" | 6 | 5/1 - 12/31 | -41 | 84,525 | 144,000 |
| 2011* | 18.5" | 7 | 5/1 - 12/31 | -11 | 142,877 | 157,885 |



Additional Info

- Recreational eRec logbook information was used during the analysis of 2011 summer flounder fishery
- The sample size was much better than in 2010, but did not capture any shore mode fishing
 - 1817 fish recorded
 - 372 trips recorded
- There was inadequate data for use in a split shore mode analysis



Additional Info

Table 2. The potential effect of various possession limits on 2011 summer flounder recreational landings in the state of RI. The tables contain the proportional increase in number of summer flounder landed based on 2011 eRec data.

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Bag Limit Increase | 18.5" |
| 8 | 2% |
| 9 | 6% |
| 10 | 7% |

