

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

April 15, 2014 at 6:00pm

URI/GSO Narragansett Bay Campus, Coastal Institute Building, Hazard Room

The following people attended this meeting, including 1 AP member (*).	
1. Aaron Gewirtz* (served as chair for this meeting) 2. Terence Mulvey 3. Greg Duckworth 4. Patrick Duckworth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eric Schneider, RI F&W• Tom Rosa, RI F&W

Groundfish Members Absent: Ken Booth (Chair), Jerry Tremblay, Douglas Kissick, Paul Westcott, Richard Fuka, Luke Wheeler, Ted Platz, Al Conti, Michael Marchetti, John Troiano III, Frank Blount, Jr., Jim White.

Handouts: Agenda

Presentation: (see attached presentation)

Appointment for member to serve as Chair for the meeting

Due to an unforeseen event, the AP Chair (K. Booth) was not able to make this meeting and did not have time to find an alternate RIMFC member to serve as chair. K. Booth and E. Schneider discussed the situation via phone at the scheduled start of the meeting (~6pm) and agreed that (1) since the group had already assembled and (2) given there was not a quorum that K. Booth should ask the only AP member in attendance (A. Gewirtz) if he would be willing to chair the meeting.

- Via phone K. Booth asked A. Gewirtz if he would be willing to serve as chair so that the meeting can be held.
- A. Gewirtz accepted.
- E. Schneider then explained the situation and asked the 3 remaining meeting participants if they were comfortable with A. Gewirtz serving as chair for this meeting.
- There was unanimous agreement that A. Gewirtz should serve as chair so that the meeting could be held.

A. Gewirtz (acting Chair) called the meeting to order at approximately 6:15pm. He noted that he E. Schneider (RI F&W) had a presentation prepared and would lead a discussion on each of the agenda items. He then turned the meeting over to E. Schneider.

E. Schneider noted for the record that K. Booth was not able to attend and that the group had agreed that A. Gewirtz was to serve as Chair for this meeting. He also noted that there was not a quorum, and thus the meeting was informational only.

E. Schneider then welcomed everyone, and began a power point presentation that corresponded to the Agenda. The meeting will be summarized by each Agenda Item.

Agenda Item 1: RI commercial and recreational coastal sharks fisheries

E. Schneider summarized the requirements for compliance ASMFC Addendum III to the Coastal Sharks FMP, which results in a re-grouping of the commercial shark species groups and an increase in the minimum recreational size limit (to 78 inches) for all hammerhead shark species. He noted that this has gone to public hearing and has been discussed at the April RIMFC meeting.

- The group discussed the purpose for the species re-grouping, as well as quotas, possession limits, and fishing season for each (*new*) species group.
- Overall, the group had no objection to the proposed changes.

Agenda Item 2: RI commercial monkfish fishery

E. Schneider suggested the group review the commercial monkfish fishery, including commercial landings data, and discuss a proposal that addresses industry's needs.

- E. Schneider began by reviewing the commercial federal and state-water landings from 2009-2013. The group discussed the state-water regulations that were in place in given year and how they may have affected annual catch.
- There was much attention brought to the fact that in the last 3 fishing years state-water landings equated to 24-31% of the State-water quota or 37-42% of the State-water possession limit trigger.
- Also there was good discussion regarding a table in the presentation that summarized the number of landings at various landing levels (see slide 9 of presentation). E. Schneider pointed out that only 14% of all landings were above 500 lbs and thus, he needed more information to understand how the current possession limit was restricting harvest and causing discard issues.
 - P. Duckworth suggested that much of the landings showed in that table represent non-monkfish trips, where monkfish was bycatch and not targeted.
 - It was also pointed out that the table is showing the “% of landings” represents trips, not pounds.
 - E. Schneider said he could look closer at the landings to address these concerns.
 - Someone noted that they aren't landing the full possession limit because they don't want to go over the possession limit.
 - For example, sometimes after hauling the second of three strings they'll have 1,500 lbs on board and hauling the third string would cause them to go over the (monkfish) daily possession limit, so they don't haul that third string to avoid being over the possession limit and having to discard fish. That said, they try to haul every day, but there can be circumstances beyond your control (weather, too much fish, etc.).
- The problem identified by the group is that they are only achieving ~ 1/3 of the quota, while discarding and wasting fish. The group offered the following possible solutions (calling in a double possession limit or aggregate program) is to increase landings and overall efficiency, while reducing regulatory discards.
 - *Calling in a double limit:*
 - G. Duckworth and T. Mulvey suggested having a call-in line where they could report a double limit on a given day.
 - Essentially this implies doubling the possession on an as needed basis.
 - After some discussion, G. Duckworth suggested putting a cap on the number of double-limits in a given year so that you simply could not call in a double every day.
 - *Weekly aggregate program:*

- After some discussion, the group proposed creating an aggregate program that would allow a given participant to operate on a weekly 25,000 lb/vessel/week possession limit, rather than current daily possession limit. This basically equates to doubling the current possession limit of 1,826 lbs/vessel/day.
 - To reduce an influx of effort and cheating, the group suggested the following conditions be consider for participants:
 - Participants may not possess a federal monkfish permit, and
 - Must have landed 1,000 lbs in at least 1 of the 2 previous fishing years to ensure that only legitimate fishers participate
 - The group believes that an aggregate program would provide more flexibly in fishing practices and
 - In circumstances where there's bad weather or an influx of fish, gear could be hauled and fish landed, rather than either hauling gear and discarding or not hauling gear, which increases the likelihood of bycatch of additional discards and fish being eaten out of the nets.
 - To ensure that the proposed aggregate doesn't result in overfishing the group proposed ending the weekly aggregate program when 66% of the quota (2% of SMA TAL) is harvested. At that point the possession limit would revert to the by-catch possession limit of 50lbs/vessel/day.
- The group agreed that the Aggregate Program would be the best option. P. Duckworth said that he would email E. Schneider a copy of the proposal discussed during this meeting and will request E. Schneider to submit this proposal to the Division for consideration.
 - Note: E. Schneider received an email from P. Duckworth on 4/15/14 (see attached).

Agenda Item 3: RI recreational Atlantic cod fishery

E. Schneider briefly reviewed the recreational cod fishery and summarized the expired recreational cod fillet law.

- The group discussed the possession limit and minimum size for the recreational fishery.
- After some discussion, E. Schneider later refocused the group to the agenda item regarding the "recreational cod fillet law".
- The group said that they have no comment because this pertains to the recreational fishery.
- E. Schneider noted that this was specifically added to afford recreational participants an opportunity to discuss this item; however, no one from the Recreational Sector attended this meeting or offered a comment otherwise (e.g. no email or phone comments).

Agenda Item 4: Other Business

E Schneider asked if there was any other business.

4.A Summer Flounder

T. Mulvey said that he wanted to suggest that RI mirror the feds and allow 1,000 lbs of fluke per week for all vessels.

- E. Schneider noted that this topic would be better suited for the Fluke AP. He also noted that the Fluke aggregate permit already affords this weekly possession limit, but you need an aggregate permit.
- The group discussed the aggregate program and then agreed to table the discussion of fluke.

4.B Spiny Dogfish

A. Gewritz asked for an update on spiny dogfish.

E. Schneider provided a brief summary of two differing federal possession limit recommendations offered to NOAA by NEFMC and MAMFC. He then explained the process that NOAA will pursue to develop a final rule.

- He also explained that at the next ASMFC Spiny Dogfish Management Board meeting (mid-May) there will be discussion of a proposal by RI Commissioners to revisit the ASMFC spiny dogfish possession limit of 4,000 lbs per vessel per day.
 - In short, given the large underage in harvest of the quota (est. to harvest < ½ quota) RI is requesting the Commission consider increasing the possession limit from 4,000 to 5,000 lbs per vessel per day,
 - They are also requesting permission from the board to pursue a Conservation Equivalency that would initiate a weekly aggregate program in RI state waters with the goal of allowing more flexibility in fishing practices, and in turn reducing discards and increasing landings.

A. Gewritz noted that the problem with the market is that there is basically no market.

T. Mulvey noted that a possible way to increase the market is to increase product availability, which requires increasing landings.

E. Schneider noted that was exactly the premise for the proposed incremental increase in the possession limit.

- The group discussed possible outcomes regarding potential decrease in price, increasing processing capacity, etc.

A. Gewritz asked E. Schneider if there were any updates about PCB's and is that what's holding back the market.

E. Schneider said he had heard that the European market has reacted to PCB concerns and that there may also be concerns over mercury levels. Although the latter is still under review, but he expects there to be publication of this information soon.

A. Gewritz said if there is no market, the possession limit doesn't matter b/c folks won't bother to retain and land them.

- One participant said they simply throw them away b/c for the price it's not worth their trouble.

G. Duckworth asked what happens if they don't comment.

E. Schneider said they don't have to comment, but are welcome to provide feedback if they want.

- The group briefly discussed where they were last year at this time; trying to get a Regional agreement for an aggregate program or bifurcated season.
- The group said that seemed like ages ago, and since the market has essentially collapsed some fishers that were "dog fisherman" have simply stopped fishing for them.

- In short, the group offered no comment on the proposal other than, please don't do anything that will make it less profitable to land dogfish.

E. Schneider stated that was the last agenda item and suggested A. Gewritz adjourn the meeting.

A. Gewritz said if there is no further business that the meeting is adjourned (~8:15pm).