

**RI Marine Fisheries Council
Scup/Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel
Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2010, 6:00 PM
URI Bay Campus, Narragansett, RI**

S. Parente, Chairman	A. Glidden
K. Booth ^A – to J. Tremblay	T. Baker
J. Tremblay*	A. Parascondolo
J. Grant*	T. Hoxsie ^A
	J. McNamee, DFW staff

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

S. Parente, substitute Chair for K. Ketcham, called the meeting to order. He stated that J. McNamee had a presentation (see attached) that would cover the first few agenda items including fishery performance and Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) recommendations for 2010 commercial measures. J. McNamee started with scup. He discussed stock status, the main point of which was that the stock was no longer overfished and overfishing was not occurring. As a result of the improvement in stock status, the quota for scup was increasing in 2011. He stated that the commercial fishery performed fairly well in 2010, and was currently looking like the entire period would remain open. A number of adjustments were needed to fully utilize the states allocation. He also presented a slide on landings that exceeded the per week aggregate amount and clarified that these were not legal actions that took place. The rate and magnitude was low, only 1% of the overall summer period quota was in excess of what could have been landed by those vessels.

The DFW recommended a few changes in scup management for 2011. S. Parente wanted to go through the proposals one by one to receive comment from the panel. He stated that they did not have a quorum and therefore would not be voting, but still wanted the group to provide the Council with some advice. Prior to beginning this discussion, the panel voiced its support for going to a swipe card system to monitor quotas as this would prevent some of the cheating that was occurring in the scup aggregate programs.

The first DFW proposal was to increase the starting possession limits for the sub periods to keep up with the increasing quota. **The group did not raise any objections to this proposal**, though T. Baker stated that he thought the amounts should be higher given the inadequate catch rates in 2010 coupled with the increasing quota. He thought the DFW should look at this a little more before committing to the amounts as noted in the presentation.

The next proposal was to remove the permitting requirement for the winter scup aggregate program. **The group did not raise any objections to this.** They thought the less paperwork the better for everyone.

The third proposal was to change the sub period language from hard dates to more flexible language to accommodate the aggregate programs. **The panel did not object to this recommendation.** T. Baker stated, however that this was another reason the DFW should look at raising the starting possession limits. The way things worked in 2010 with the sub periods changing in the middle of the week, fishermen were able to take an additional possession limit, thereby getting an additional week of landings. Because this would be fixed, they would be landing about 2 weeks less quota than in 2010.

The fourth proposal was to reestablish the DFWs authority to move allocation from the floating fish trap (FFT) sector in to the general category sector. **The group did not object to this proposal,** however, the floating fish trap operators wanted to make sure a consultation was made with them prior to rolling quota. J. McNamee stated that the way this could be accomplished would be by requiring a letter be issued with the rollover amount, thereby creating a record of the consultation. The floating fish trap operators agreed that this was a good plan.

The final proposal was to repeal or modify the existing logbook requirement to allow for fishermen to avail themselves of electronic reporting. **The group did not object to this proposal as long as it wasn't a requirement.**

Before moving on to the black sea bass discussion, T. Baker thanked the FFT operators for rolling quota in to the general category when they did. He stated that this helped many fishermen during a time when they really needed the increased scup possession limits to get by. He thought this all worked out perfectly.

J. McNamee went on to discuss black sea bass. He began with a discussion about stock status. The stock status for black sea bass was that overfishing was no longer occurring and the stock was no longer overfished. Despite this improvement in stock status, the management board did not vote to increase the quota in 2011, citing major uncertainty in the assessment. In fact the Board did not have a choice due to the categorizing of the black sea bass assessment in to a low level by the SSC, thereby requiring a finding of status quo until the uncertainty in the assessment improves. The board approved remaining at a status quo quota in 2011. Due to the extremely low commercial quota in 2010, even with the addition of quota, the fishery did not perform very well and had frequent and long closures. The sub period allocations were met relatively closely. J. McNamee also included a slide explaining how the black sea bass quota increased in 2010 late in the year due to a reconsideration of the status quo finding. The Board found that status quo should refer to the quota levels in 2008 rather than in 2009, therefore the quota roughly doubled than what was originally anticipated for 2010. Commercial quotas in RI were adjusted and the recreational fishery was also adjusted.

S. Parente wanted to take comments from the panel on black sea bass and the DFW recommendations. The DFW did not make any specific recommendations for black sea bass management; however they suggested considering an aggregate program similar to scup rather than staying with daily limits as a way for fishermen to get a decent possession limit, even if it was only for a day or two a week. S. Parente stated that, just as

a point of discussion, aggregate limits made enforcement in a fishery very difficult. **J. Grant stated that if the DFW kept the possession limit at 50 pounds per day, he would support an aggregate limit.** He felt that 50 pounds per day was not an adequate amount for a commercial fishery. He also requested that the DFW look at catch rates in the fishery during the period of time that the fishery was at 100 pounds per day and when it was at 50 pounds per day. He did not think they would find a difference in catch rates and if that was the case, he recommended raising the daily limit to 100 pounds as it would not affect catch rates. J. McNamee stated that he could do this analysis and report it to the Council.

The next DFW suggestion was that, barring the recommendation for the aggregate limits, the panel should consider putting an allocation of fish in to the September period of time. The current summer 2 sub period structure was not adequate to get fish later in to the year, therefore if the panel felt this was important, they should allocate fish there. **K. Booth stated that the rod and reel fishermen would not support a reallocation** because it could cause them to miss the fish entirely if the first period was exhausted before the fish moved in and then reopened after the fish moved back offshore. He thought another way of achieving this same goal would be to push the August closure earlier into July. He requested that the DFW look at how far back the closure would have to be pushed to get a decent amount of fish in September, acknowledging this would be based on 2010 catch rates, which might change in 2011. J. McNamee stated that he would do this analysis and report the findings at the Council meeting.

T. Baker made a comment about the data being used in the assessment. He did not think that using trawl survey data was an accurate reflection of biomass. He thought using some research set aside to conduct a pot study on this species was a better way to monitor this species. J. McNamee stated that a ventless trap survey was currently underway.

S. Parente asked if there were any items for the other business agenda item. J. McNamee made a request to the panel members to provide some advice to the DFW regarding the November 1 opening of the black sea bass fishery. **J. Grant recommended opening at 250 – 200 pounds and letting the fishery close when it was gone. J. Grant also added a recommendation for T. Baker to serve as his alternate on the advisory panel;** the alternate position was currently vacant. **The group had no objections to either of these recommendations.**

S. Parente asked if there were any additional proposals from the group. There were none so he adjourned the meeting.

**Summary of Rhode Island Scup
and Black Sea Bass Stock
Status, 2010 Commercial Scup
and Black Sea Bass Fishery
Performance, and Division of
Fish and Wildlife
Recommendations for 2011**



Scup Stock Status

•Stock Status:

•Relative to the DPSWG biological reference points, the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

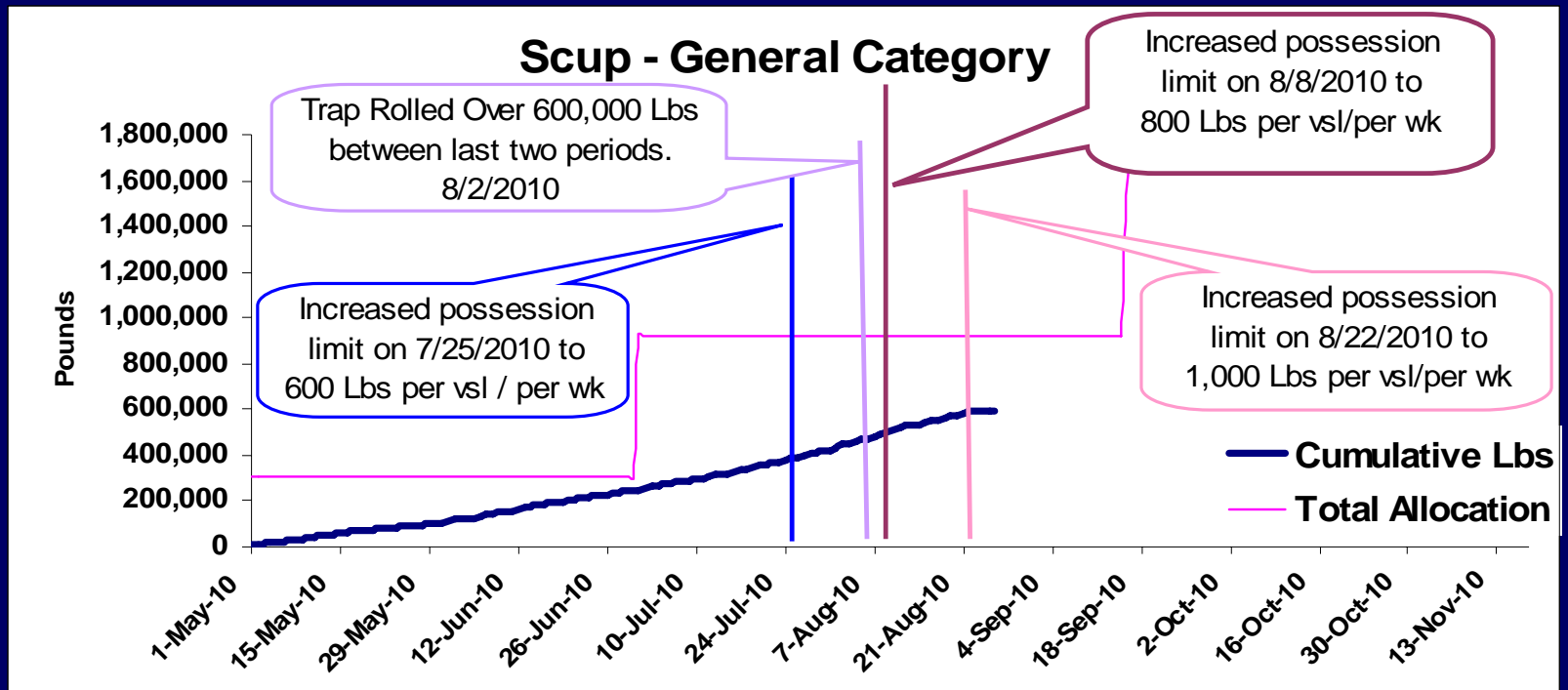
•Fishing mortality varied between $F = 0.1$ and $F = 0.3$ during the 1960s and 1970s. Fishing mortality increased steadily during the 1980s and early 1990s, peaking at $F = 1.0$ in 1994. Fishing mortality decreased after 1994, falling to less than $F = 0.1$ since 2003, with F in 2009 = 0.043. There is a 50% chance that F in 2009 was between 0.033 and 0.058. The fishing mortality threshold is $FMSY = 0.177$.

•Spawning stock biomass (SSB) decreased from about 220 m lbs in 1963 to about 110 m lbs in 1969, then increased to about 165 m lbs during the mid 1970s. SSB declined through the 1980s and early 1990s to less than 11 m lbs in the mid-1990s. With greatly improved recruitment and low fishing mortality rates since 1998, SSB has steadily increased to about 341.7 m lbs in 2009 (slightly down from 2008) . The SSB reference point is $SSBMSY = 202.9$ m lbs. The minimum stock size threshold, one-half $SSBMSY$, is estimated to be 101.5 m lbs.

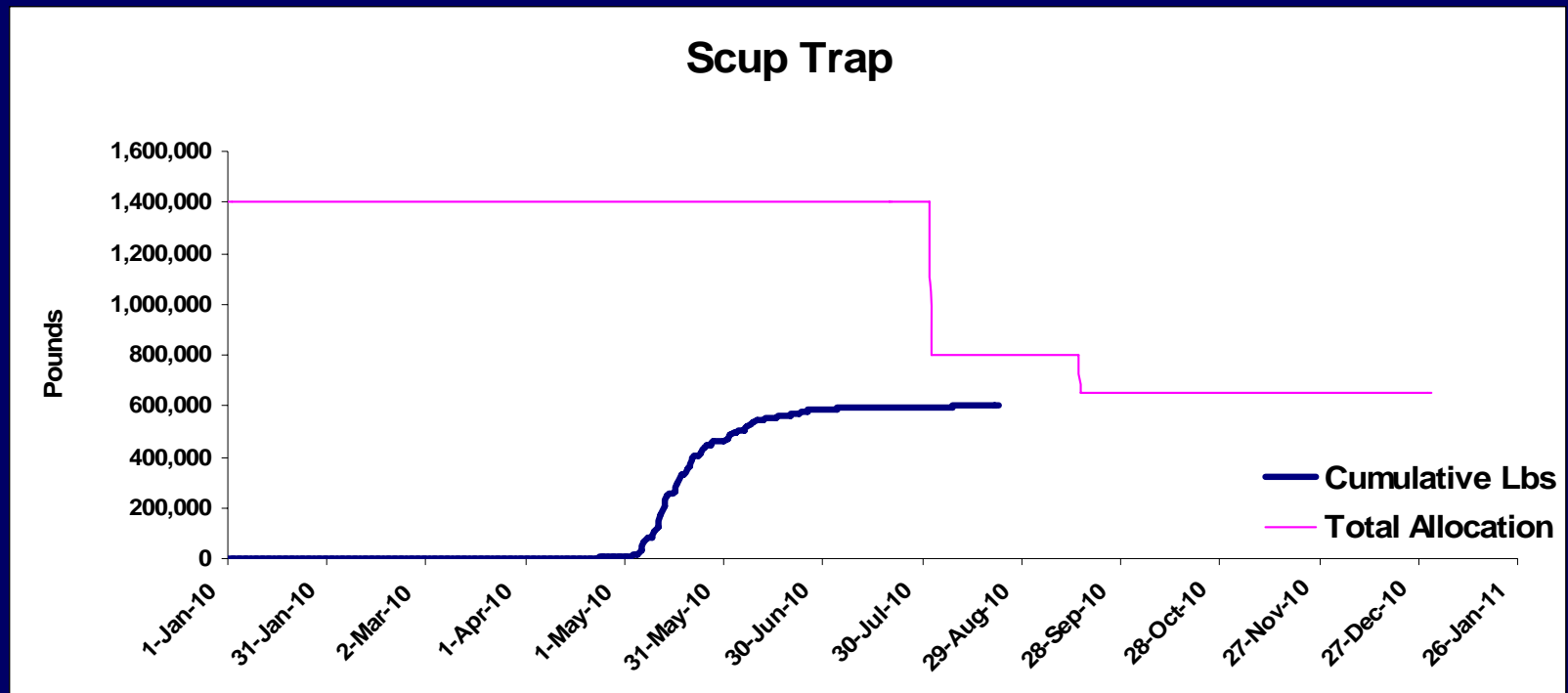
•Recruitment has exceeded the 1984-2009 average of 104 million in 2001, 2004-2009.



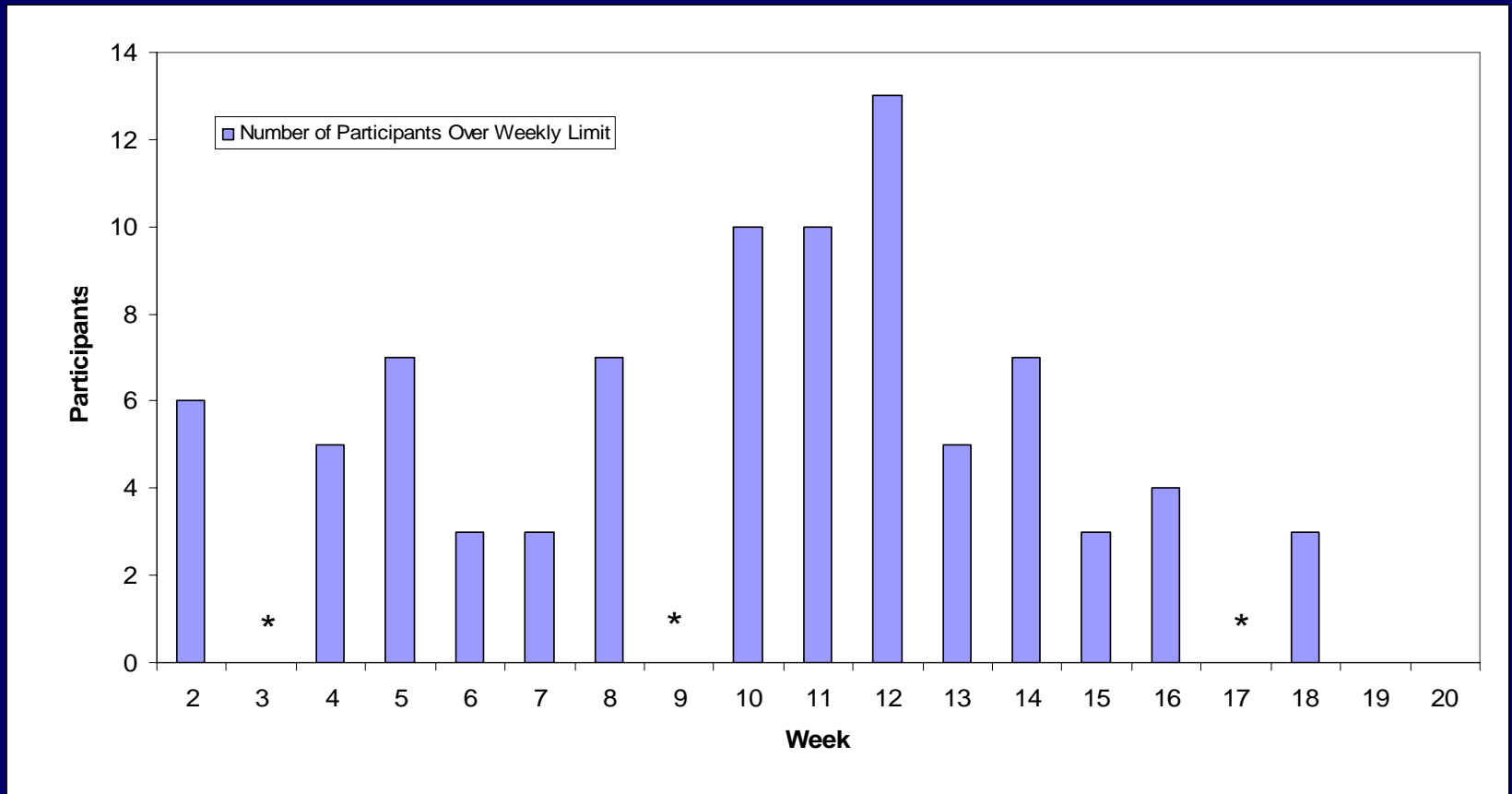
Commercial Landings – Scup General Category



Commercial Landings – Scup Floating Fish Traps



Commercial Landings – Compliance with the Aggregate program



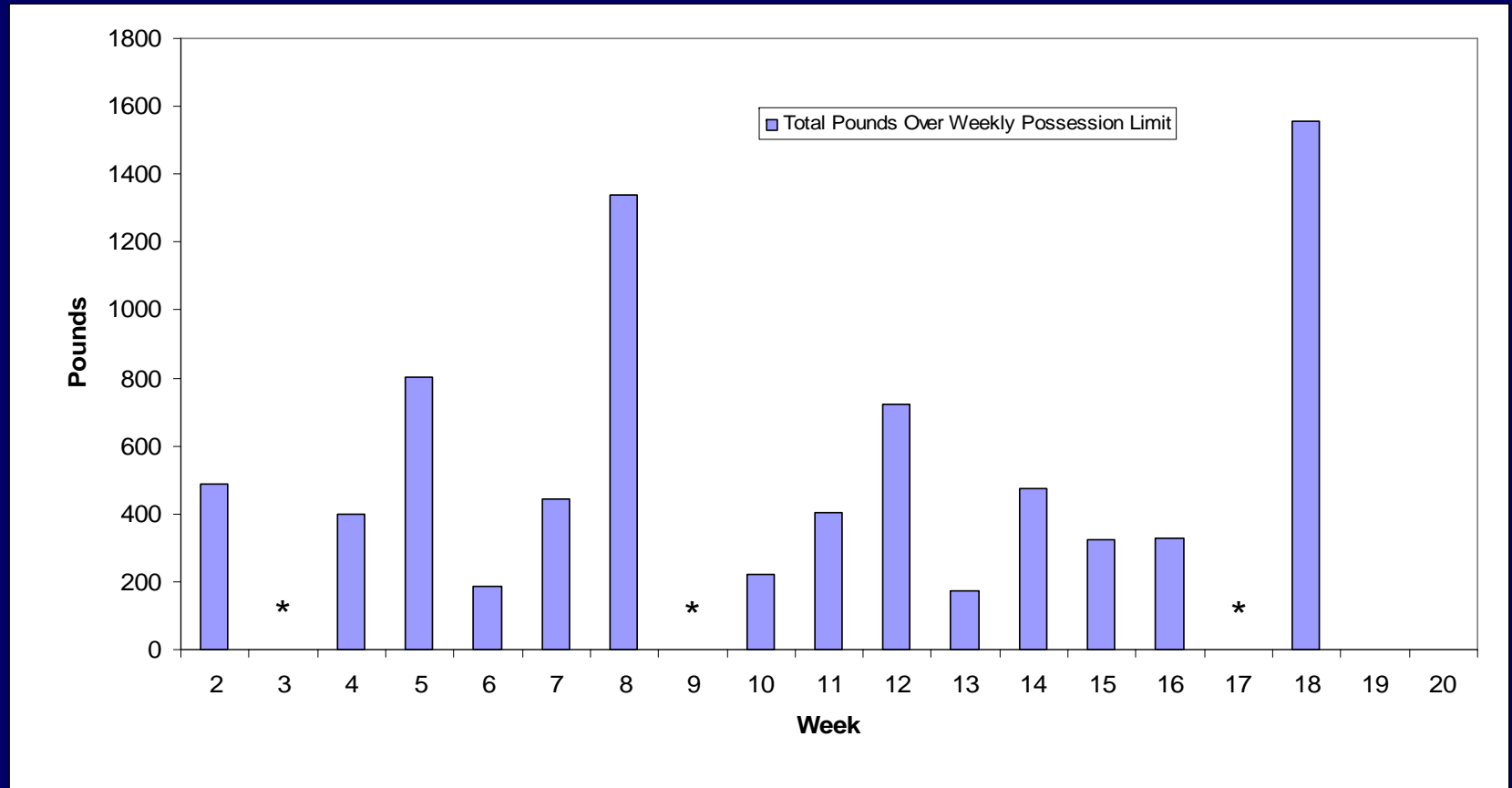
♦ Total Participation was 257 vessels to date (w/o unknown or from shore)

♦ Total times participants landed over the weekly aggregate amount were 90 to date

♦ * = less than 3 participants



Commercial Landings – Compliance with the Aggregate program



♦ Max over the weekly limit was 1,555 lbs

♦ The total additional pounds landed for entire state period (to date) was 8,076 lbs (less than 1% of gen cat allocation)

♦ * = less than 3 participants



Scup Management Measure Recommendations 2011

- **MAFMC and ASMFC Management Board Recommendations for 2011:**
 - A TAL of 20 m lbs (equivalent to ABC)
 - A commercial quota of 15.6 m lbs.
 - A recreational harvest limit of 4.4 m lbs.
 - Maintain current possession limits. (Winter I: 30,000 lbs per wk (changed from 2 weeks)/1,000 lbs at 80% quota; Winter II: 2,000 lbs/1,000 lbs at 80% quota, unless trip limits increased by Winter I rollovers)
 - Maintain current minimum fish size and net mesh requirements. (9 inch-TL; 5 inch mesh at trigger)
 - Maintain current GRAs.
 - Maintain current escape vent requirements in scup pots.
- The Board continued to take a precautionary approach per the MC and SSC's advice in light of the scientific uncertainty surrounding the new scup assessment model. Specifically citing the:
 - sensitivity and reliability of the new model is not fully understood
 - uncertainty about the dynamics of older fish in the stock, and
 - poorly estimated discards, which are a significant component of fishing mortality.



Preliminary 2011 Commercial Allocations

- Coastwide Commercial TAL = 15,600,000 lbs
- Coastwide Summer Allocation (38.95% of TAL, RSA not removed) = 6,076,200 lbs
- RSA assumed to be roughly 3% of quota
- Coastwide Summer Allocation (assumed RSA removed) = 5,893,914 lbs
- RI 2011 Commercial Quota (56.19%, estimated RSA removed) = 3,311,790 lbs (29% incr from 2010 quota)
- 2011 Floating Fish Trap allocation = 1,987,074 lbs
- 2011 General Category = 1,324,716 lbs
 - May 1 – June 30 = 441,572 lbs
 - July 1 – Sept 15 = 441,572 lbs
 - Sept 16 – Oct 31 = 441,572 lbs



Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

•The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife proposes increasing the starting aggregate limits in an effort to keep up with the increasing quota. The Division recommends the following:

- May – June 30 = 700/wk
- July 1 – Sept 15 = 500/wk lbs
- Sept 16 – Oct 31 = 500/wk lbs

•The DFW also recommends extricating the winter 1 scup aggregate program from the permitting process.

•The DFW recommends modifying the sub period language from a hard date to more flexible language to accommodate the aggregate program.

•The DFW recommends reestablishing its authority to move quota from the floating fish trap allocation in to the general category fishery.

•Finally the DFW recommends repealing or modifying the current logbook requirement in the scup aggregate plans as an effort to allow fishermen to avail themselves of electronic logbook reporting.



Black Sea Bass Stock Status

•Stock Status:

•Relative to the DPSWG biological reference points, the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

•Fishing mortality varied between $F = 0.20$ and $F = 0.74$ during the 1960s and 1970s. Fishing mortality increased steadily during the 1980s and early 1990s, peaking at $F = 1.26$ in 1986. Fishing mortality remained high until after 2001 ($F=1.17$), falling steadily to $F = 0.29$ in 2009, less than the threshold $F = 0.42$.

•Spawning stock biomass (SSB) decreased from about 27.0 million lbs in 1975 to about 18.1 million lbs in 1979, then increased to about 25.4 million lbs during the mid 1980s. SSB declined through the 1980s and early 1990s to only 13.6 million lbs in 1996. With improved recruitment and low fishing mortality rates since 2001, SSB has steadily increased to about 28.6 million lbs in 2009. The SSB reference point is $SSB_{MSY} = 27.6$ million lbs. The minimum stock size threshold, one-half SSB_{MSY} , is estimated to be 13.8 million lbs.

•Although 2004 recruitment was the lowest in the time series, recent years have been near average.

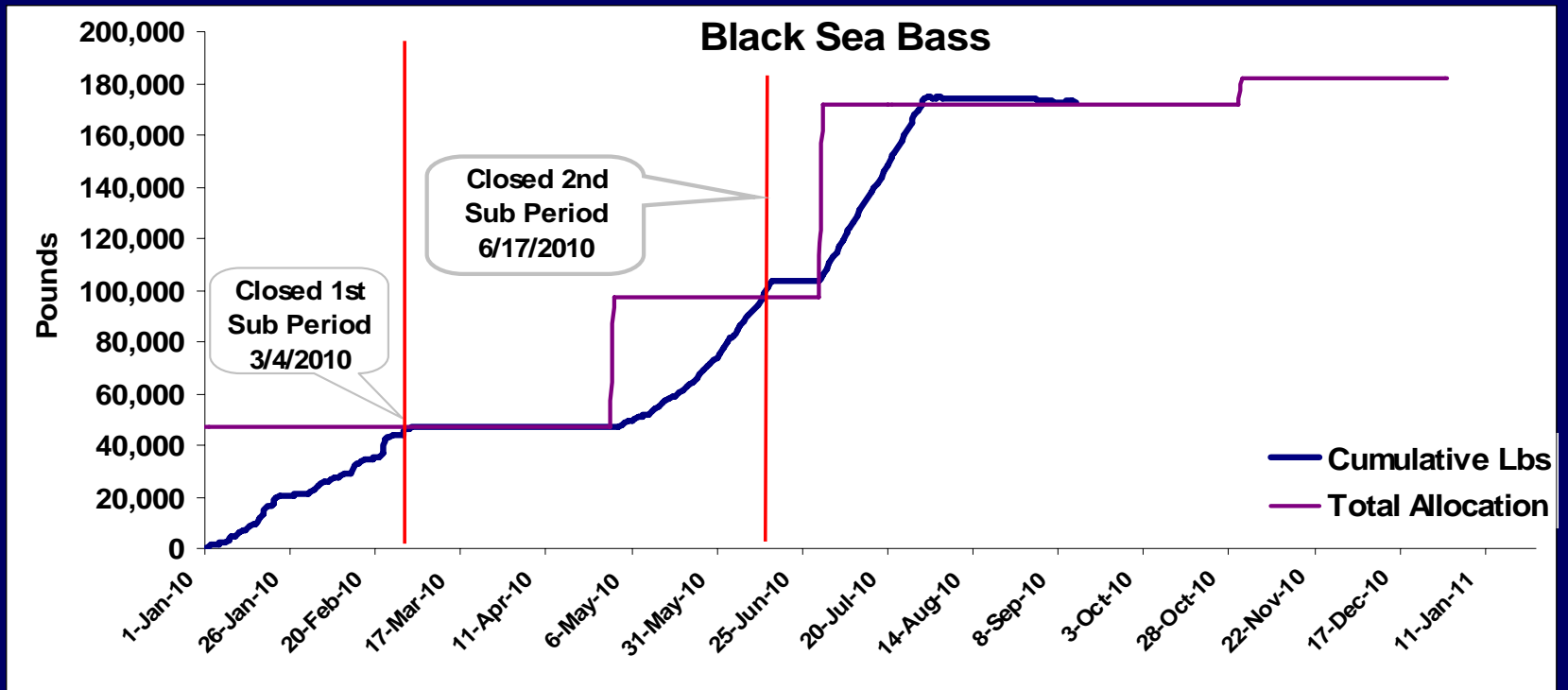


Recreational Management 2010 – Black Sea Bass

- Due to a reinterpretation of what “status quo” meant, the SSC modified its 2010 TAL recommendation from 2.3 m lbs to 3.6 m lbs
- The change was finalized late in the spring of 2010
- The commercial quotas were adjusted upward to account for the change, but recreational specs had been set
- The increased TAL coupled with a lower than projected recreational harvest from 2009 allowed the recreational restrictions that had been set to be liberalized. The recreational fishery was modified to the following specifications for 2010:
 - Open Jan 1 – Oct 11
 - Reopen Nov 1 – Dec 31
 - Remain at 25 fish/person/day
 - Remain at 12.5” minimum size
- These regs were implemented in RI on August 20 and took effect on Sept 9, 2010



Commercial Landings – Black Sea Bass



Black Sea Bass Management Measure Recommendations 2011

Monitoring and SSC Recommendations for 2011:

- The SSC recommended remaining at status quo for 2011, citing significant uncertainty in the stock assessment.

- The monitoring committee did not agree with the SSC recommendation. The MC did not withhold support as they did previously, but rather recommended that a clear process be indicated that would help to remove the black sea bass assessment from the low tier that it currently falls in to.

Management Board made the following decisions:

- TAL = 3.6 m lbs

- Commercial quota of 1.76 m lbs

- Maintain all other specifications status quo

The Boards were bound by the SSC recommendations, which were made due to:

- sensitivity and reliability of the new model,

- the uncertainty inherent in assessing a species with an unusual life history,

- the presence of a retrospective pattern (overestimates stock size), and

- the adequacy of fishery-independent surveys in sampling this species.



Preliminary 2011 Commercial Allocations

- Coastwide TAL = 3,600,000 lbs
- Coastwide Commercial Quota = 1,760,000 lbs
- Estimated RSA in 2010 = 108,000 lbs
- Coastwide Commercial Quota (assumed RSA removed) = 1,652,000 lbs
- RI 2011 Commercial Quota (11%, estimated RSA removed) = 181,720 lbs
- 2011 Sub Period Allocations:
 - Jan 1 – April 30 (25%) = 45,430 lbs
 - May 1 – July 31 (25%) = 45,430 lbs
 - Aug 1 – Oct 31 (39%) = 70,871 lbs
 - Nov 1 – Dec 31(11%) = 19,989 lbs



Division of Fish and Wildlife Proposed Changes

- The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife proposes no changes to the black sea bass commercial fishery in 2010 with the following recommendation caveats:
 - Representatives may want to consider developing an aggregate landing program similar to that enacted for scup in 2008, using weekly possession limits.
 - Barring this recommendation, the DFW suggests that the AP reconsider their advice for the summer 2 sub period. Due to the low quota amounts, the DFW does not believe the quota will last beyond the August closure, therefore if the AP wishes to have quota during September, an allocation of fish should be moved there.

