

RHODE ISLAND MARINE FISHERIES COUNCIL
Minutes of Monthly Meeting
April 1, 2003
URI Narragansett Bay Campus
Corless Auditorium
South Ferry Road
Narragansett, RI

RIMFC Members: R. Boragine, S. Medieros, D. Preble, G. Allen, and S. Cobb

Chairperson: J. Reitsma

RIDEM F&W Staff: N. Lazar, B. Murphy, T. Angell, and J. McNamee

DEM: B. Ballou and D. Borden

Legal Counsel: G. Powers

Public: 6 people attended

J. Reitsma called the meeting to order. He asked whether there were any additions or corrections to the agenda. Under new business R. Boragine wanted to revisit a meeting schedule. Comments about the March 11 meeting minutes were then solicited from the Council. A comment was put forward by R. Boragine regarding the March 11, 2003 meeting minutes. R. Boragine put forward two changes to the March 11 meeting minutes, one regarding a comment he made about the public hearing process and one regarding the commercial summer flounder advisory panel options. The Council asked DFW staff to alter meeting minutes. **Minutes of the March 11, 2003 Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council (Council) meeting were unanimously approved with the two corrections mentioned above. The agenda was unanimously approved.**

Advisory Panel Reports

Shellfish: R. Boragine stated that the shellfish advisory panel minutes were passed out prior to the meeting. Shellfish transplant discussions would be carried on at the next meeting of the advisory panel. He stated that there were no actions proposed by the advisory panel.

Weakfish: R. Boragine stated that the weakfish panel looked at the nine proposals put forward by DEM and came up with two more options for the commercial weakfish regulations. The preferred option was to have no closed season by raising the minimum size from 16 inches to 20 inches if this was allowed by ASMFC. Barring this, the second suggestion was an open season from June 1 to June 30, closed in July, and then open again from August 7 through November 8. These suggestions were unanimously approved by the weakfish advisory panel.

Old Business

Update on lobster issues: T. Angell stated that RI is currently dealing with the two gauge increases which had been put into effect on March 15, 2003. He stated that the lobster LCMT has been charged to meet and come up with an effort reduction proposal by June, no meeting date was set. The Lobster Advisory panel is going to meet April 14. There are a lot of issues going on with the lobster fishery, the most pertinent to the RIMFC is the lobster gauge increase being a possession limit. This fact upsets many lobster fishermen and dealers because they are not allowed to bring in smaller lobsters even though they may be fishing in an area which allows a smaller gauge size. J. Reitsma asked if there had been any discussion about a buy-out program. T. Angell answered that a buy-out program had been discussed as a way to reduce effort in the fishery. Several lobster industry organizations have met with federal entities to discuss how a program like this would work. Nothing has been set for this year as far as a buy-out program is concerned. S. Cobb asked if there has been any discussion on quantifying what sort of reduction would be needed to help the resource. T. Angell said this has not been done but it is being worked on. J. Reitsma made some comments on how to quantify this reduction in effort and asked D. Borden to comment further. D. Borden commented that a program was being put together regarding a buy-out program and this issue of quantifying the reduction was being taken into account. J. Reitsma commented on a meeting he attended at the Office of Small Business Administration regarding the lobster fishery problems, nothing concrete was decided on at this meeting. R. Boragine who also attended this meeting commented that a discussion about v-notching money brought up by J. Reitsma is a short term solution to a long term problem. R. Boragine also commented on a proposal to design an exemption permit program for interstate lobster dealers. M. Marchetti made a comment on the possession regulation in Rhode Island. He stated it was creating a problem in the already overburdened commercial lobster industry by discriminating against area 3 lobstermen. There was a discussion about whether the lobster gauge increase was filed as an emergency and would therefore have to go back through the public hearing process. G. Powers commented that the public hearing on the issue was held therefore the regulation was filed as having a truncated effective date (less than 20 days effective), not an emergency filing.

Other Business

Tabled proposals from March 11 RIMFC meeting: B. Murphy commented on the spiny dogfish management plan. He passed the discussion over to D. Borden. D. Borden discussed the debate at the ASMFC level and what came of this was for Rhode Island to implement the federal guidelines that had been originally presented at the public hearing. He also stated that this was still being debated and if any changes occurred it would be brought back to the Council. **S. Medieros moved to adopt the federal guidelines with regard to the commercial spiny dogfish fishery. D. Preble seconded the motion. R. Boragine wanted to clarify the federal guidelines and what the Council was agreeing to, this was done. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved by the Council.**

B. Murphy commented on the weakfish proposal which had been discussed earlier during the weakfish advisory panel discussion. The preferred option was to increase the size limit to 20 inches if this would allow for no seasonal closures. The fall back option, if ASMFC did not agree to the above option, would be an open period with unlimited possession in the month of June and again in August through November with all other time periods being closed with a 300 pound bycatch possession limit. D. Borden suggested tabling action again until the next meeting. **R. Boragine made a motion to accept the preferred advisory panel option and if this is rejected by ASMFC he made a motion to approve the fall back option. S. Medieros seconded the motion.** G. Allen clarified the motion with R. Boragine. There was additional discussion about the options. **The motion was voted on and unanimously approved by the Council.**

The commercial tautog fishery was discussed next. D. Borden made a statement that the Division of Fish and Wildlife recommendation on this subject was to decrease the bag limit to 10 fish per day and to remove the 2002 overage from each sub period equally, therefore the allocation for 2003 would have the overage deducted from it and then would be divided equally into the three subperiods. G. Allen asked about G. Carvalho's recommendation which had to do with a spawning closure in the upper bay. D. Borden stated that the Division does support this proposal but this issue was not addressed in the public hearing summary document, therefore it could not be voted on that evening, it would have to be addressed at a future public hearing. G. Allen agreed but stated that this was something that should be looked at in the future. **R. Boragine made a motion to accept the Divisions proposal as stated above. G. Allen seconded the motion.** S. Medieros wanted to make sure this proposal regarding a spawning closure in the upper bay, was not forgotten. D. Borden stated that a formal proposal would be brought forward by the Division within the next two months. D. Wood from the tautog advisory panel made a statement that the overage occurred in the first subperiod and should be removed from that subperiod and the management plan should remain at status quo as was decided by the advisory panel. R. Boragine stated that he disagreed with D. Wood's comments. **The motion was voted on and unanimously approved by the Council.**

J. Reitsma asked to revisit a summer flounder discussion. D. Borden discussed the events that took place and why the Division changed its position. J. Reitsma stated that he brought this issue up to make sure that the issue was publicly disclosed and he felt D. Borden's comments were adequate.

The next Council meeting was scheduled for May 12, 2003. The meeting location was hopefully going to be moved to the Narragansett Community Center, this was going to be looked in to. The meeting dates were moved to the first Monday of each month except for May and September which will be the second Monday of the month. Meeting time was decided on as remaining at 6:00 PM.

Post Agenda Discussion

B. Ballou commented that K. Ketchum and J. King will be the recommended appointees to fill the existing Council vacancies. J. Reitsma made a statement that S. Cobb will be

stepping down from his Council position therefore more council nominations need to be solicited.

B. Ballou commented on the issue of the dockside sale of lobster and finfish. Meetings were held between interested parties and it was decided that some statutory changes could be made to allow for the dockside sale of lobsters due to the fact that they are sold as a live product. Dockside sale of other species still needed to be discussed. Several subcommittees were set up to represent the different entities with stakes in this issue. R. Boragine suggested having a representative from the FDA as a representative at the subcommittee discussion on the dockside sale of marine species. The meeting was adjourned.

Jason E. McNamee
Recording Secretary