

RHODE ISLAND MARINE FISHERIES COUNCIL

Summary of Meeting Minutes

May 2, 2011 – 6:00PM

URI Narragansett Bay Campus

Corless Auditorium

South Ferry Road, Narragansett, RI

RIMFC Members Present: C. Anderson, R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, R. Bellavance, S. Parente, and K Ketcham
RIMFC Members Absent: S. Macinko
Chairperson: B. Ballou
RIDEM DFW Staff: N. Scarduzio and M. Gibson
RIDEM Staff: G. Powers and L. Mouradjian
DEM Law Enforcement: F. Ethier

Public: Approximately 30 people attended

B. Ballou called the meeting to order. He asked if there were any modifications to the agenda. He noted he had one suggested change, to add item (g) under new business, approval of two Shellfish AP agendas. He asked if there were any other recommended changes or modifications to the agenda. M. Gibson asked that item #7 (ASMFC-NEFMC Updates) be deleted and deferred to the next Council meeting. **Ballou asked if there were any objections from the Council to approving the agenda as amended. Hearing no objections, the amended May 2, 2011 agenda was approved.**

The next agenda item was the approval of the Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council (Council or RIMFC) meeting minutes from the March 7, 2011, Council meeting. B. Ballou asked if there were any objections to approving the minutes as written. **R. Hittinger made a motion to approve the March 7, Council meeting minutes as written. S. Medeiros seconded the motion. The minutes from the March 7, 2011 Council meeting were approved.**

Public Comments

G. Tremblay wanted to know if the new Director would initiate any changes regarding vessels transiting the corridor between the main land and Block Island. He wanted to know if they would be able to take fluke back and forth from Block Island to the main land.

B. Ballou stated he was not aware of any changes in the transiting issue it was a federal issue that the state was interested in pursuing. Ballou stated he would brief the new Director on the issue.

F. Blount mentioned at the NEFMC meeting there was some discussion about interstate cod issues, which may be coming from the state of New York. Nothing was confirmed yet but just to keep it on the radar screen.

Advisory Panel Reports:

IAC (/28/2011) – R. Bellavance:

B. Ballou summarized that the IAC met to review the Goerner aquaculture lease application. The IAC recommended approval of the application. The Council had no objections therefore the Division had forward that recommendation to CRMC.

Shellfish (3/15/2011) – R. Hittinger:

R. Hittinger summarized the meeting by stating they began with a discussion on stock assessment and management objectives for the whelk fishery. The group had a general opposition to increasing the current 2 ½-inch diameter minimum size limit, and establishing a season. They were in support of establishing a 250-pot limit with trap tags, use of logbooks, and recommended limiting harvest to PEL's with a Quahaug endorsement. The group felt setting a possession limit needed further review.

R. Hittinger stated they discussed shore digging in winter shellfish management areas where the Division outlined inconsistencies between "boat harvest" (limited to Monday, Wednesday, and Friday December to April) and "shore digging", which allowed commercial shore digging (sunrise to sunset, 7 days per week, 365 days per year) both with 3 bushels per day possession limits. The loophole conflicts with sustainability and the intent was to allow recreational shore digging only outside of the winter season with a "peck" daily possession limit. Hittinger indicated the group was generally opposed to the Division's proposal to make these amendments to fix current regulations.

Hittinger reported the group discussed the new SAFIS reporting requirement and associated tagging map. The SAP's voiced opposition to Western Greenwich Bay being broken into two areas on the map since they eventually wanted this area to be recombined for SAFIS reporting.

There was also a discussion on soft-shell clam undersize tolerance and the need for proposed legislative change. The SAP's recommended developing legislation with a tolerance of one quart per bushel of soft-shell clams; and for hard-shell clams they recommended a change to 15-count per 1,000 clam possession.

B. Ballou stated these issues warranted further discussion. They would be added to the SAP agenda, which would be before the Council for approval later this evening.

Scup/Black Sea Bass (4/12/2011) – K. Ketcham:

K. Ketcham summarized the meeting first indicating there was no quorum but the panel offered consensus advice. There was discussion about the 2011 recreational black seas bass fishing season with the panel offering a consensus option for a 13-inch fish/ season from July 11 through December 31/ 20 fish bag limit. The panel also discussed the possession limits for commercial scup since this was being revisited due to the increase in quota. The panel asked the Division to come up with an option that would render the highest possession limits based on 2010 information on catch rates without closing the fishery.

New Business

Council recommendations on April 18, 2011 Public hearing items – B. Ballou:

Proposed changes to the General Category Commercial Scup Management Plan:

M. Gibson stated the Division supported option 4, to increase the starting possession limits up to 3,500 pounds per vessel per week, due to the increase in scup quota. He also stated there was a good chance that the fish traps would not catch their quota in a timely fashion, which would leave even more fish available. He did not think there would be a likelihood of an in season closure at that amount.

K Ketcham made a motion to recommend that the Director adopt option #4, which would amend the starting weekly possession limits for the general category commercial scup

management plan up to 3,500 pounds per vessel per week, throughout all the sub periods (May/July/Sept.) for consistency. S. Parente seconded the motion.

S. Parente wanted to clarify that the Division had the authority to reduce that limit if we were getting into trouble at the 3,500-pound possession limit. B. Ballou acknowledged that the Division had the authority to increase or decrease a possession limit as needed.

K Ketcham explained this year we have a big increase in quota from last year and last year even at the lower level we had many fish left over at the end of the season. He felt this was a good starting possession limit and allowed the Division to make adjustments midseason if they needed to do so.

Members of the audience voiced support for the Council motion recommending option #4.

B. Smith stated he wanted the Division to make sure that the scup fishery did not close in September or October at that possession limit.

The Council voted unanimously to recommend that the Director adopt option #4, and amend the starting weekly possession limits for the 2011 general category commercial scup management plan up to 3,500 pounds per vessel per week, throughout all the sub periods (May/July/Sept.). The Council vote was (6) in support (C. Anderson, R. Bellavance, R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham) (6/0). The motion passed.

Proposed changes to the Recreational Black Sea Bass Management Plan:

M. Gibson stated the Division recommended proposal #3; 13-inch fish/July 11 through December 31/ 10 fish bag limit. He also noted that the preferred option from the advisory panel (option #2) with a 20 fish bag limit had been considered risk prone by the Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission (ASMFC). He stated option #2, with the higher bag limit, was not a viable option by the ASMFC. If the Council recommended this option, RI could be found out of compliance.

R. Bellavance made a couple of points; he stated he understood the risk prone as labeled by ASMFC since he took part in the conference call with the Division, and suggested a bag limit of 15 fish instead of the 20 fish option as an alternative. He noted the stock was rebuilt and felt the Technical Committee was being a little harsh on this fishery. The lower bag limit would have economic implication on the party/charter boat industry.

In accordance with ASMFC guidelines to develop a state-specific management plan for recreational black sea bass, R. Bellavance made a motion to recommend that the Director adopt a minimum size limit of 13 inches/season from July 11 through December 31/ 15 fish bag limit. R. Hittinger seconded the motion.

R. Hittinger stated he supported all the items R. Bellavance mentioned. S. Parente stated he agreed with both R. Bellavance and R. Hittinger and felt the Director would most likely accept the 15 fish limit instead of the 20 fish limit and concurred that there were a lot of black sea bass out there.

There were some general questions and discussion from the audience about the stock status of black seas bass, which M. Gibson addressed. There was some support for the Council motion.

S. Medeiros stated that his group (RISAA) was going to present an option at the public hearing but no one was available to read it into the record so he presented it to the Council, which was the same proposal as the Council motion; 13 inches/season from July 11 through December 31/ 15 fish bag limit.

The Council voted unanimously to recommend that the Director adopt a minimum size limit of 13 inches/season from July 11 through December 31/ 15 fish bag limit for the 2011 recreational black sea bass fishery. The Council vote was (6) in support (C. Anderson, R. Bellavance, R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham) (6/0). The motion passed.

Adoption of regulations governing the Commercial taking of Skate:

M. Gibson stated the Division had concluded that it was not time to move forward with a recommendation on skates. He felt the Division had more work to do at the state level. M. Gibson also stated the Division recommended that the Council not make any recommendations for the skate fishery at this time.

B. Ballou indicated if the Council did not want to take any action at this time there was no need for any Council action.

S. Medeiros made a motion to remain at status quo with the commercial skate fishery, the Council did not wish to take any action at this time. S. Parente seconded the motion.

There was no discussion by the Council on this item.

There were no comments from the audience.

The Council voted unanimously to recommend that the Director remain at status quo with the commercial skate fishery. The Council vote was (6) in support (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance) (6/0).

M. Gibson commented that this would not make the issue go away we have restrictive federal management on skates right now, which would not apply to fishermen in state waters and there is a possibility for state water landings of skate to cause problems in federal management. Pointing out this was an issue that would have to be watched.

Proposed changes to the regulations governing the taking of Whelk/Conch:

M. Gibson summarized that industry was not supportive of the bulk of these options so the Division would continue to work with industry to develop additional information when it was available for the whelk fishery to extend the process out for further collaboration.

B. Ballou noted that later in the agenda the Council would be taking up a Shellfish AP meeting agenda for approval, which would include continued discussions on whelk with a workshop type format.

There was no interest from the Council to take any action on the whelk proposals at this time.

There were no comments from the audience. **The Council took no action on the whelk items.**

Proposed Regulations Implementing the RI Recreational Saltwater Fishing License:

B. Ballou noted some recommended changes that the Division was offering in response to comments made at the public hearing: delete squid from subsections (a) and (b), modify (d) to read that reciprocal states are listed at saltwater.ri.gov, and delete the photo ID requirement.

He also noted these were intended to be regulations implementing provisions of the statute, which warranted clarification. These were intended to fill in a couple of holes and smooth out some issues.

S. Medeiros stated he received a lot of email traffic over this proposal. He was glad to see the photo ID requirement removed. He suggested making the license like the fresh water license by putting in the fields for height, weight, eye/hair color. He stated that now that you have gotten rid of squid, and the photo ID, you removed the things that were contentious you really do not need this whole thing. The law was already in place, this was not stating anything new that was not already law. He felt these provisions were not needed.

B. Ballou pointed out that the statute does not actually state that you need to have your license on your person and he felt this was an important concern from an enforcement perspective.

There were some comments from the audience about their concerns to remove squid from the provision. There were comments made in support of keeping squid in the provision. There was discussion between the Council and audience members to iron out which provisions should stay and which should be removed.

B. Ballou recommended the Council break down each motion separately so all provisions were addressed.

K. Ketcham made a motion to recommend that the Director include squid in the RI Recreational Saltwater Fishing License regulations. S. Parente seconded the motion.

The Council voted 5 to 1 in favor to recommend that the Director include squid in the RI Recreational Saltwater Fishing License regulations. The Council vote was (5) in support (S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance); (1) abstained (R. Hittinger); the motion passed.

S. Medeiros made a motion to recommend that the Director remove all references requiring a photo ID from the RI Recreational Saltwater Fishing License regulations. R. Bellavance seconded the motion.

The Council voted 5 to 1 in favor to recommend that the Director remove all references requiring a photo ID from the RI Recreational Saltwater Fishing License regulations. The Council vote was (5) in support (S. Medeiros, S. Parente, R. Hittinger, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance); (1) abstained (K Ketcham); the motion passed.

K. Ketcham made a motion to recommend that the Director include the following corrections in the RI Recreational Saltwater Fishing License regulations: include in 6.12-1(e) “shore-based anglers”, and insert throughout the proposed language where appropriate; in 6.12-1(d) reword to state the following “Reciprocal states are listed at saltwater.ri.gov”; and adopt the remaining provisions. C. Anderson seconded the motion.

The Council voted unanimously to recommend that the Director include the following corrections in the RI Recreational Saltwater Fishing License regulations: include in 6.12-1(e) “shore-based anglers”, and insert throughout the proposed language where appropriate; in 6.12-1(d) reword to state the following “Reciprocal states are listed at

saltwater.ri.gov”; and adopt the remaining provisions. The Council vote was (6) in support (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance) (6/0).

Proposed Vessel-Based Regulations:

B. Ballou recommended the Council break down each motion separately by section so all provisions were addressed.

S. Medeiros stated if these regulations were necessary he would make a motion to recommend that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-1, as written, regarding vessels fishing recreationally. K Ketcham seconded the motion.

There was no discussion from the Council and no comments from the audience.

The Council voted unanimously to recommend that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-1, as written, regarding vessels fishing recreationally. The Council vote was (6) in support (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance) (6/0).

R. Bellavance made a motion to recommend that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-2, as written, regarding party/charter vessels. R. Hittinger seconded the motion.

There was no discussion from the Council. F. Blount wanted to make sure this was ok when tuna fishing. R. Bellavance noted he thought the federal regulations would be in effect.

The Council voted unanimously to recommend that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-2, as written, regarding party/charter vessels. The Council vote was (6) in support (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance) (6/0).

C. Anderson asked about sub-section 6.13-3 (d) the definition of a 24-hour period rather than a day. B. Ballou stated it was intended to mean from 12:01 AM to 11:59 PM. A point was made that the Division usually used per calendar day. B. Ballou indicated this would be amended to reflect per calendar day

There was discussion from the audience about logbooks.

S. Medeiros made a motion to recommend that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-3 vessels fishing commercially, as amended; using “per calendar day” instead of 24-hour period. K Ketcham seconded the motion.

There was no discussion from the Council and no comments from the audience.

The Council voted unanimously to recommend that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-3 vessels fishing commercially, as amended; using “per calendar day” instead of 24-hour period The Council vote was (6) in support (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance) (6/0).

Moving on to the next item, S. Parente stated he recommended eliminating sub-section (c) from section 6.13-4 (Vessels Fishing Commercially Using Rod and Reel).

S. Parente made a motion to recommend that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-4 (vessels fishing commercially using rod and reel), with the following exceptions; the word “licensed” be deleted from (b), and eliminate all of (c). S. Medeiros seconded the motion.

B. Ballou pointed out that the motion on the table may be in conflict with statutory interpretation. Current statutory interpretation was that there was a prohibition on the number of unlicensed individuals who could assist with rod and reel operations. Therefore, the Department may not be in a position to adopt a regulation that would be inconsistent with statute.

B. Ballou handed out a draft copy of a legislative bill to Council members and the audience that would need to go before the legislation to make the needed statutory change. He indicated that Senator J. Sheehan was interested in sponsoring the bill.

There was further Council discussion on this issue and how best to overcome these obstacles.

S. Parente discussed the second part of his motion that he wished to entertain. He made a recommendation to amend his original motion to include the following in the motion. That both the Council and the Division make a recommendation to the Director to go forward with, and support, legislative action to make a statutory change to applicable RI General Law to convey the following; “there is no prohibition on the use of unlicensed crew to assist with commercial rod and reel operations provided said crew is operating under the direct supervision of a properly licensed individual in command of a commercially declared vessel.” (RIGL 20-4-1.4 and 20-4-1).

There was further Council discussion on which path to take to move this issue forward. The Council decided to vote down the current motion before them in order to entertain the original motion for a cleaner directive.

B. Ballou asked for a Council vote on the amended motion. The Council voted unanimously to oppose the amended motion. The Council vote was (0) in support; (6) opposed (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance); the motion failed.

G. Powers stated that the action the Council wished to take tonight with respect to the statutory amendment was not on the agenda or listed as an action item and therefore could not be acted on by the Council this evening.

There was Council discussion as to how to best expedite a statutory change. There was discussion on passing S. Parente’s original motion then work with legislators to move on the needed statutory change. There was consensus from Council members to move forward in that direction.

B. Ballou clarified the motion before the Council; they would be recommending that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-4 (vessels fishing commercially using rod and reel), with the following exceptions; the word “licensed” be deleted from (b), and eliminate all of (c). There was also a friendly amendment to the motion to include a recommendation that the Director take necessary action to resolve the conflict between regulatory and statutory issues.

B. Ballou asked for a Council vote. The Council voted unanimously to recommend that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-4 (vessels fishing commercially using rod and reel), with the following exceptions; the word “licensed” be deleted from (b), and eliminate all of (c); including a friendly amendment to call upon the Director to take necessary action to resolve the conflict between regulatory and statutory issues. The Council vote was (6) in support (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance) (6/0). The motion passed.

The Council addressed the last item, which was section 6.13-5 (vessels fishing in more than one mode). B. Ballou indicated that in sub-section (b) which referenced a recreational logbook this should probably not be included since the Department does not have a recreational logbook at this time. He recommended adoption of this section without including this requirement.

There was Council discussion about potential conflicts with this sub-section such as, if a commercial fisher wanted to tend his recreational lobster pots. There was discussion that there should be language included about being able to fish in more than one mode but not for the same species. R. Bellavance noted his concern about this sub-section being unfair for party/charter boats. He gave the example of fishing recreationally on a charter where he should also be allowed to sell his fish commercially, if he had a commercial license.

There was discussion from the audience about limiting the number of recreational fish a commercial fisher could catch while fishing commercially.

S. Medeiros suggested a one-person recreational limit per vessel be allowed when fishing commercially.

R. Bellavance pointed out the inequity with that proposal for party/charter boats, stating that a recreational fisher should then be able to have a commercial limit. He felt it would have to be one or the other but not both.

Council members and the audience both agreed that the discussion was where it started two years ago with no consensus of how to resolve these issues.

S. Medeiros made a motion to recommend that the Director adopt sub-section 6.13-5 (vessels fishing in more than one mode) with an amendment to reflect an allowance for a single person recreational limit per species per vessel. S. Parente seconded the motion.

B. Ballou asked S. Medeiros if he would accept a friendly amendment by striking out the second sentence in (b) which referenced the requirement for a recreational logbook. Both S. Medeiros and S. Parente agreed to the friendly amendment.

R. Bellavance voiced objection to the motion pointing out this was not reasonable since it does not allow a recreational (party/chartered boat) the same opportunity to take a commercial limit. He stated it had to go both ways you cannot have only one group of people benefiting over another group.

Council members were sensitive to R. Bellavance’s objections and point of view. K. Ketcham suggested not moving forward on the item and suggested further discussions would be necessary. He stated he was uncomfortable voting on this item this evening.

The Council decided to dispense with the motion before them then consider alternative actions.

C. Anderson made a motion to postpone the issue to the next Council meeting.

B. Ballou clarified for the record that the Council does not wish to have the Director act on this issue until the Council has had a chance to revisit it.

B. Ballou asked for a Council vote on the motion to postpone. The Council voted unanimously to postpone any recommendations to the Director on sub-section 6.13-5 (vessels fishing in more than one mode) until the next Council meeting. The Council vote was (6) in support (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance) (6/0).

Legislative House bill 2011-H5693 amends penalties for possession of striped bass – S. Medeiros: S. Medeiros stated he would like a letter from the RIMFC sent to the general assembly in support of this legislation. He reported that all recreational groups are in support of the bill, which would increase the fines for illegal possession of striped bass. He indicated that Senator Sosnowski thought it would be great to have a letter from the RIMFC also expressing support.

S. Medeiros made a motion to recommend that the Division draft a letter on behalf of the RIMFC expressing the Council's support for the bill and send the letter to the general assembly. R. Hittinger seconded the motion. The Council voted unanimously in favor to send a letter of support for House bill 2011-H5693 to the general assembly; (6) in support (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance) (6/0). The motion passed.

Discussion on Friday/Saturday summer flounder fishery closure –S. Parente:

S. Parente summarized the issue by stating that the Friday/Saturday summer flounder closure needed to be readdressed because the previous Director did not objectively assess the situation. He proposed that the issue be referred back to committee and or approach the current Director for reconsideration.

S. Medeiros stated this was a hot issue for recreational fishermen who only fish on weekends and feel that the fish have been wiped out by time the weekend rolls around. He suggested that a concession would be to keep Saturday and Sunday closed instead.

S. Parent stated the reason for the Friday/Saturday closure was never based on competition from the user groups it was based on the fact that our quota was so low, four or five years ago, when we initiated this because we wanted to keep the commercial fishery open all year. It was based on quota management. Now we are basing it on other aspects.

R. Hittinger stated he had a problem with this because this had already been put into regulation. He wanted to know if this would mean that every time the Council passed something into regulation we could go back and reopen it if somebody does not like what the regulation was. He felt this was a tough precedent to be setting as a Council because everything we do we could be doing over twice.

S. Parent made a motion to send the summer flounder Friday/Saturday closure issue back to committee. There was no second to the motion. The motion failed for lack of support.

Discussion about implementing a fillet law in RI – B. Ballou:

B. Ballou indicated that F. Blount raised this issue at the last Council meeting and it was now before the Council for discussion.

S. Medeiros stated he was the chair for the enforcement AP and this had come before that AP twice with the AP opposing a fillet law each time. He also noted that the Council had been opposed to a fillet law as well. He did not see any immediate need to bring it up all over again.

F. Blount state he thought there was a lot of cheating going on especially in the for-hire industry with a tremendous amount of small fish being filleted and felt something should be done about it. He stated that for years he had been on the other side and objected to a fillet law but he felt it was now time to do something about it. He stated his major concern was for cod right now.

R. Bellavance stated he did not mind having a discussion about a fillet law or sending it to an AP for discussion.

S. Medeiros indicated it falls back to enforcement to go and catch the poachers who are doing the cheating as opposed to punishing thousands who have to deal with all new laws. He expressed concern that it did not pass through the Enforcement AP the last couple of times and felt it still would not pass.

F. Blount stated we would then need enforcement at sea which was impossible to do. He even mentioned that it could be just for for-hire boats only because he felt it was that big of a concern.

There was a discussion about the law being species specific for cod.

B. Ballou asked if the Council was interested in having the Enforcement AP reconsider a fillet law again.

R. Hittinger made a recommendation that the Council have the Enforcement AP review a specific size limit for fillets of cod. C. Anderson seconded the motion. The Council voted unanimously in favor to have the Enforcement AP review this proposal; (6) in support (R. Hittinger, S. Medeiros, S. Parente, K Ketcham, C. Anderson, R. Bellavance) (6/0). The motion passed.

Recreational Saltwater Fishing License – Accountability and Oversight- B. Ballou:

B. Ballou wanted to bring this to the attend of the Council that the statute governing the recreational saltwater fishing license calls upon the Department to prepare an annual report that addresses the amount of revenue received, expenditures made, and how the Department plans to allocate the use of fee revenues. B. Ballou wanted to find out how the Council would like to proceed. He suggested reconvening the recreational saltwater fishing license task force to review the recreational program with regard to investing the funds.

S. Medeiros suggested presenting the final report at a Council meeting to satisfy both reporting requirements, to the Council and to the public. He also noted that the task force could come up with recommendations on how to spend the funds and report to the Council. The Council would then work with the Department to determine if we were in agreement with how to spend the funds.

B. Ballou agreed that the task force would convene at an ad-hoc meeting to review on how to move forward with expenditures. The task force would then submit a report to the Council for review and public input.

Approval of IAC agendas for July and August – R. Bellavance:

The Council approved both draft agendas for July 19, 2011, and if necessary, a second meeting on August 10, 2011.

Approval of two Shellfish AP agendas:

B. Ballou indicated there were two draft SAP agendas for approval. One agenda was for further discussions on the whelk fishery, the second agenda included: development of 2011-2012 winter shellfish management area schedules, transplant summary, discussion on harvest methods, and aquaculture lease review. He also added shore digging as an additional item. Ballou indicated this item was discussed at the last SAP meeting but he thought it needed further discussion. B. Ballou asked if R. Hittinger might be available to act as chair for these meetings. Dates had not been determined yet but staff would work with R. Hittinger to set dates accordingly.

B. Ballou asked if there were any objections from the Council to approving these agendas. Hearing no objections both agendas were approval.

Old Business

Continued discussion about future review procedures and appropriate advisory panel for aquaculture lease applications – B. Ballou:

S. Medeiros stated there were at least a couple applications every month, they steadily keep coming. He suggested a new advisory panel be established just to review these applications.

M. Gibson stated he agreed with the suggestion and offered that the Division could come back with a straw man proposal for Council consideration.

R. Rheault indicated there was already a process set up whereby there was a pre application review and he thought that phase was the time to give remarks and was opposed to adding another layer of bureaucracy.

There was further discussion about how best to move forward. There was a suggestion from the audience to just add a recreational component to the IAC and not construct a completely new panel.

B. Ballou suggested that the Council have the Division come back with some suggestions at the next Council meeting.

ASMFC – NEFMC Updates

ASMFC and NEFMC meeting summaries – M. Gibson:

B. Ballou indicated there were no new updates available so this item was deleted from the agenda and would be reported on at the next Council meeting.

FYI

Letter received from J. Harsch R: shore digging in Shellfish Management Areas – B. Ballou:

B. Ballou stated the letter had been forwarded to enforcement.

B. Ballou updated the Council on the status of new Council members indicating there were a good number of folks who had indicated an interest in sitting on the Council. Interviews had been scheduled with the Director. He hoped that recommendations would be forwarded to the Governor with appointments made by the general assembly before they adjourned in June.

B. Ballou asked if there was any other business to come before the Council. Hearing none, the Council made a motion to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned.

Nancy E. Scarduzio, Recording Secretary