

**RI Marine Fisheries Council
Scup/Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel
Meeting Minutes
January 6, 2010, 6:00 PM
URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute**

K. Ketcham, Chairman	M. Bucko*
K. Court ^A	H. Smart
K. Booth ^A	A. Parascondolo, Jr
J. Barker	F. Blount*
E. Cook	C. Forrest
R. Hittinger – Council member	D. Borden
J. Tremblay*	D. Kel
C. Akmakjian	W. Beattie
C. Donilou	D. Petri
R. Chatowski	R. Lufung
M. Ambrosia	A. Silkes
R. Bellavance – Council member	E. Woisinet
P. Stroup	J. Grant*
D. Monti	
G. Allen	D. Costa, DFW staff
S. Lurdbeng	N. Lazar, DFW staff
J. White	J. McNamee, DFW staff

There was 1 attendee whose name I could not read from the sign in sheet
(*primary advisory panel member; ^A alternate member)

K. Ketcham began the meeting. He stated that J. McNamee of the RI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) had a presentation which covered the first 3 agenda topics. He went on to state that after the presentation the panel would move on to discuss any proposals they may have for recreational scup or black sea bass management in 2010.

J. McNamee began with a discussion about recreational fishery performance in 2009. He started by indicating that the data was incomplete for 2009, wave 5 and 6 data were not available. In comparison to summer flounder, waves 5 and 6 are important waves for the recreational scup and black sea bass fisheries in RI, therefore it was going to be difficult to make any determinations about the 2009 fishery at this point, though projections had been made. For scup, RI is grouped in with 4 states referred to as the Northern region (NY, CT, RI, MA). The Northern region had harvested approximately 63% over their 2009 target. The implication for 2010 was that the Northern region, and thereby RI, had to reduce its catch by implementing more restrictive regulations in 2010. For black sea bass, the recreational measures are set on a coastwide basis. The coast had harvested approximately 300% over their 2009 target. The implication for 2010 was that the coast, and thereby RI, had to reduce its catch by implementing more restrictive regulations in 2010. Before moving on to discussing management options in 2010, J. McNamee went over scup and black sea bass stock status. The status of both the scup and black sea bass

stocks was that they are in very good shape, were not overfished, overfishing was not occurring, and both stocks were considered to be rebuilt.

J. McNamee finished by indicating that the DFW supported any measures that met the approved methodology for reduction of catch. However, J. McNamee went on to say that things were still very much in flux at this time. Scup recreational data was currently undergoing a review which may result in a decrease in projected harvest for 2009. As well, black sea bass was being re-discussed by both the Monitoring Committee and the Science and Statistical Committee (SSC), which may or may not result in an increase in TAL for 2010. J. McNamee indicated that the DFW would be fully involved in all of these deliberations.

K. Ketcham wanted to make a comment before moving to a discussion of any proposals that the group may have. He stated that the regional approach for scup had worked to the detriment of RI and he felt that RI had been paying for overages in other states since the very first year of implementation. He stated that they had in essence given up the recreational scup fishery when they moved to the regional approach.

The panel began their discussion on scup. F. Blount stated that the regional approach had terminated the fall fishery for scup in RI, which he felt had been a great fishery. He went on to state that he would really like to see that fall fishery again in RI, even if it meant losing the so called bonus season (the separate season with higher minimum size and higher bag for party and charter modes). He also stated that the DFW should consider removing ourselves from the region.

M. Bucko asked where the overages had come from for scup. J. McNamee stated that the highest landings had come out of the bonus seasons from NY (in the fall) and MA (in the spring). M. Bucko concluded by stating that he would support removing RI from the region, especially if the bonus season were terminated, because he felt one of the biggest reasons for going to the regional approach was to get data that was precise enough to split modes for the bonus season. If the bonus season were ended, the need to be in the region would be less.

J. White stated that these very restrictive seasons were especially difficult on the charter operators with federal permits because they had to decide if they needed to renew their federal permits or not. This created a large burden because there is always the threat that they would not be able to get a permit again if they did not keep it, and this had people hanging on to their federal permit even if it hurt them financially in the short term.

The panel had a discussion on how the region started. During the discussion the panel made the comment that better data was needed for recreational fisheries.

At this point A. Parascondolo gave a brief synopsis of the commercial floating fish trap (FFT) scup proposal that they would like brought forward for the next public hearing (see full proposal attached). The gist of their proposal was that they would like to be unrestricted as far as possession limits in the commercial FFT scup fishery. They felt that

by doing this they would be able to better manage their fishery and would also benefit the resource by decreasing discards. There was a discussion about reporting requirements. J. Tremblay voiced his concerns about the FFTs flooding the market and decreasing the market price. A. Parascondolo stated that it was not in the best interest of the FFTs to do this therefore economics would keep this from occurring. He felt that there was more danger of this under the current management program. J. McNamee stated that they needed to reach some sort of resolution with the remaining two FFT operators who were not signed in to the proposal before anything could move forward, as they could not have two FFT modes or plans moving forward.

The panel then began discussing black sea bass. They began their discussion with a question about the models and why things were so different with scup and black sea bass. J. McNamee stated that while the models are somewhat similar, the uncertainty associated with the black sea bass assessment is far greater than with scup due to the unique life history and large data gaps with that species. This leads to much more statistical uncertainty with the black sea bass modeling approach, and the subsequent constant catch determination by the SSC.

R. Hittinger voiced concerns over the very restrictive management of black sea bass and stated that this would lead to increased discards. He thought a better approach would be to keep the season open but decrease the bag limit dramatically so they aren't targeted, but would allow their capture if they are encountered as by-catch. F. Blount went on to mention that he thinks there is already high non compliance with this species and that getting more restrictive with the regulations would make this worse.

The panel did not make any consensus statements, proposals, or recommendations regarding these species.

K. Ketcham adjourned the meeting.