

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

Held June 11, 2013 at ~7:15 PM
URI/GSO Narragansett Bay Campus, Coastal Institute Building, Hazard Room B

<u>There were approximately 12-14 people present for most of the meeting, of which 6 signed in and 1 was an AP member (*).</u>	
Participants noted on sign-in sheet	Participants listed on Winter flounder AP sign-in sheet that did not sign Groundfish AP signing-in sheet but are to be believed to have stayed and participated in part of this AP meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ken Booth, Chair (RIMFC) • Terence Mulvey • Carl Granquist* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (alternate for the “Trawl-Inshore, State permitted Only”) • Joel Hovanesian • Rick Bellavance (RIMFC) • Eric Schneider, RI F&W 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mike Bucko • George Allen • Stephen Parente • Ben Piquette • Bob Cherenze • Peter D’Ambra • Ben Murphy • Tina Jackson

Groundfish Members Absent: Jerry Tremblay, Douglas Kissick, Paul Westcott, Richard Fuka, Luke Wheeler, Aaron Gewirtz, Ted Platz, Al Conti, Michael Marchetti, John Troiano III, Frank Blount, Jr., Jim White, John Gadzik, Stephen A. Arnold, Stephen Parente, and William Bento.

Handouts: Agenda

Presentation: (see attached presentation)

This meeting immediately followed the Winter Flounder AP Meeting. Although the majority of participants from the Winter Flounder AP meeting stayed for the Groundfish meeting, some participants did leave prior to the beginning of the Groundfish AP meeting. Since not everyone signed in at the beginning of the Groundfish AP the exact attendees are in question.

There was only one Groundfish AP member in attendance, therefore there was not a quorum, and the meeting was informational only.

K. Booth (Chair) called the meeting to order at approximately 7:15pm. He noted that E. Schneider (RI F&W) had a presentation prepared and would lead a discussion seeking input on (1) possession limits and transiting provisions as they relate to federally permitted vessels in state waters, (2) potential liberation of minimum sizes for several species of Groundfish, (3) updating the monkfish commercial possession limit. He turned the meeting over to E. Schneider (RI F&W).

E. Schneider went through a power point presentation that corresponded to the Agenda. For each Agenda Item E. Schneider created an Action Item identifying specific areas that the Division is requesting input. The meeting will be summarized by each of these Action Items.

Action Item 1.

- Seek input on the following topics as they relate to federally permitted vessels
 - a. possession limits when fishing in state waters
 - b. transiting provisions

E. Schneider explained the current regulations regarding possession limits and transiting provisions for vessels with federal permits in state waters. He noted that the current language in the Cod Section specifically referenced Days At Sea (DAS) and explained that the language wasn't consistent with the current fishery that contains both common pool vessels still fishing on DAS and the Sector Program that is fishing on a allocation and is not bound by possession limits. E. Schneider stated the Division is specifically seeking comment on items (a) and (b) noted above and opened the discussion:

T. Mulvey suggested that there should be a weekly aggregate limit for Cod (7,000 lbs./wk). He stated that although we haven't seen large numbers of Cod in 3 or 4 years, it would be a shame to discard 3,000 to 4,000 lbs of Cod (a day), if you encountered them due to the current 1,000 lb a day possession limit. An aggregate program would let you increase landings, reduce discards, and reduce you carbon foot print.

- There was not a consensus, but as with the Winter Flounder AP meeting there was a general theme of equality.
- Terry Mulvey and others proposed that
 - federal permitted vessels should be bound by state possession limit when in state waters
 - This would suggest that Sector boats would be bound by 1,000lbs/day and not provided an exception under (future) regulations
 - The state should create an aggregate program for cod (7,000wk).
- There were no specific comments on transiting, other than federal boats should be allowed to transit and RI should not inhibit their ability to land their catch and bring money to RI.

Action Item2.

- Seek input on commercial & recreational minimum sizes for species managed under the federal Multispecies FMP
 - a. Should RI liberalize minimum sizes and "mirror" federal FMPs?

E. Schneider explained that the state and federal water minimum size for several species managed under the federal Northeast Multispecies FMP will be inconsistent starting July1, 2013 because of provisions in Framework 48 (to the Northeast Multispecies FMP). In most cases RI has attempted to satisfy state and federal statutory requirements to compliment and not undermine Federal FMPs, while not unduly restricting access of RI fishers to resources in state waters. Presently, RI has an opportunity to reduce the minimum size for several species. Thus, the Division is specifically seeking input on:

- a. whether or not to liberalize the minimum size for:

- i. commercial cod, haddock, witch flounder (gray sole), yellowtail flounder, American plaice (dab), windowpane flounder,
 - ii. recreational haddock,
- b. and whether there should be complimentary state-water restrictions (protections) on windowpane flounder, ocean pout, and Atlantic wolfish as there is currently in federal waters where possession of these species is prohibited in both the commercial or recreational fisheries.

T. Jackson asked what other states were planning to do.

E. Schneider said that he was told by NOAA Fisheries that CT and NH planned to conform, but he had not heard whether MA would also conform. He has read a memo from MA to NOAA Fisheries questioning the lack of analysis regarding (a) possible changes in selectivity and/or fishing effort and (b) potential affects on future SSB from harvest of (i.e. increased fishing mortality on) younger fish.

J. Hovanesian said that the pending (as of July 1) reductions in minimum sizes by NOAA Fisheries is one of the biggest mistakes he's ever seen. He suggested to leave them alone until they've had a chance to spawn and that this tactic seems to be an appeasement for the Catch Share program and does nothing but harm the resource. He would like to see NOAA revisit this and return the minimum sizes to the previous levels.

- There was much discussion back and forth, and at times the group suggested that we should simply mirror the federal minimum sizes and at other times they suggested the state should stay status quo on minimum sizes.
- In the end the group did agree that the reduction of minimum sizes in the federal plan are inappropriate and that the state should stay status quo, except for commercial cod which should be reduced to 19", providing that having inconsistencies between the state and federal plans will not hinder federal vessels from off loading or landing catch (i.e. will not hurt, hinder, reduce landings).
- The group also felt no need to prohibit ocean out, wolfish, or windowpane flounder because (1) we should reduce regulatory discards, and (2) very few if any are being landed because at least one federal dealer won't let you land them anyway. If there is an influx of landings, then revisit and address it then.

Action Item3.

- The current RI commercial and recreational monkfish possession limit is not consistent with the federal FMP, should we update our regulations?

E. Schneider reviewed the stock status, recent state water landings, and briefly discussed the history regarding the current state-water quota. He then explained that the federal conversion factor for estimating whole weight was updated in Amendment 5 to the Monkfish FMP because no one lands "in the round" and all fish are landed as either "tails", "heads", or "gutted, head-on, tail-on". The updated conversion factor resulted in the federal daily possession limit being reduced from 550 tails/1826 whole fish to 550 tails/1601 whole fish (gutted, head-on, tail-on). He went on to explain that at minimum, the language defining "whole weight" needs to be addressed because if someone has 1826 lbs of gutted fish

on board, that would be in excess of the current possession limit that work off of whole weight (a true whole weight).

T. Mulvey suggested that since the quota is not presently in danger of being harvested, we should stay status quo on the possession limit and redefine “whole fish” as gutted, head-on, tail-on (consistent with the federal plan).

- There was discussion regarding whether or not in this case specifically there should be consistency between state and federal possession limits because it’s not “required” and would result in the state possibly loosing landings and likely in increasing discards.
- The group agreed that RI should redefine “whole fish” as gutted, head-on, tail-on, but leave possession limit the same, at least for the commercial sector.

E. Schneider concluded his presentation and discussion points.

K. Booth (Chair) said if there is no further business then the meeting is adjourned. Hearing none, the meeting was adjourned.