

RIMFC Summer Flounder Advisory Panel

RI Summer Flounder Exemption Certificate Discussion



Introduction

- ♦ DFW has decided to not advocate strongly for a complete removal of exemption cert program at this time
- ♦ Instead will present a number of analyses and provide fishing community with the information for consideration and advice
- ♦ Current meeting is to:
 - ♦ follow through on an item from November 2011 public hearing
 - ♦ RIMFC requested a meeting to discuss this topic
 - ♦ There was a proposal that came forward during hearing that needed to be vetted



Background - Program

- ♦ Vessels were permitted to apply for a “RI Summer Flounder Exemption Certificate” with a moratorium on new permits as of 1/1/97
- ♦ Exemption certificates were granted based on the following criteria:
 - ♦ Vessel had an operator with a valid RI commercial license
 - ♦ Had at least one pound of summer flounder landings history in RI between 1987 - 1992
- ♦ RI Summer Flounder Exemption Certificates are allowed to be transferred with the following caveats:
 - ♦ Vessel permits (state and federal), Certificates of Exemption, and fishing history cannot be split
 - ♦ Certificates of Exemption may not be combined to create larger replacement vessels
 - ♦ The replacement vessel may not exceed a 10% increase in LOA, 10% increase in GRT or NT, or a 20% increase in horsepower
- ♦ There are both resident and nonresident permit holders



Background – Current Permit Status

- **Current Permit Information:**
 - **Permits issued - 173**
 - **Transfer actions - 90+**
 - **Inactive permits - 25**
 - **Invalid - 21**
 - **Nonresident permit holders - 56**



Background– Licenses and Activity

License Category	# of Licenses	# Landing Fluke	% Active in Fishery
MPL (Resident Only)	862	353	41%
PEL w/RFF Residents Non-Residents	263	149 99 50	57%
CFL w/RFF (Residents)	18	9	50%
Resident Landing Permits	43	13	30%
Non-Res Landing Permits	7	6	86%
Totals Residents Non-Residents	1175	521 465 56	44%



Background– Gear Activity

- Gear info for 2009 – 2011, state logbook and vtr
- Filtered for summer months (May – October)

Gear Type	Pounds Landed	% of Total Landings
RR	718338.01	27.91046252
OTHER	1855385.05	72.08953748



Summer Flounder Landings Impact Analysis - Introduction

- ♦ DFW will focus the following analyses on summer period
 - ♦ It is assumed that this period would have the largest impact from a change in the exemption certificate program
- ♦ The DFW has developed a number of different projections to analyze impacts under various assumptions:
 - ♦ One that simply looks at landings levels and projects potential impacts
 - ♦ One that looks at landings while accounting for the different gear types operating in the state
 - ♦ One looking at existing information to see the influence of increasing possession limits
 - ♦ One looking at the number of exemption certificates while accounting for landings and gear types
 - ♦ And a final analysis looking at licensing information
- ♦ All of the analyses were conducted to view the issue from multiple angles and using the information available at the present time



Summer Flounder Landings Impact Analysis

- ♦ Analysis accounting for landings
- ♦ Assumptions:
 - ♦ All trips that landed approx 100 lbs (95 – 105 lbs, 26% of all events) could land a full aggregate amount if able
 - ♦ All fishers would decrease trips to 1 per week at max aggregate amount
 - ♦ Currently only land ½ weekly limit
- ♦ This could potentially result in an increase of 50% more landings
- ♦ Likely would result in remaining at low poss lim or early closure in 2010
- ♦ Likely no closure in 2011, but would prevent any poss limit increase
- ♦ Likely create either a drop in possession limit or early closure in 2012



Summer Flounder Landings Impact Analysis

- Analysis accounting for landings and gear
- Assumptions:
 - Summertime gear stratification would remain at 3 year average of 28% rod and reel and 72% other gears
 - All fishers using non rod and reel gear would decrease trips to 1 per week at max aggregate amount
 - Currently only land ½ weekly limit
 - Non rod and reel participants would increase landings through joining aggregate
- This could potentially result in an increase of 17% more landings
- Likely would result in remaining at low poss lim in 2010
- Likely no closure in 2011, but potentially prevent any poss limit increase
- Likely create a drop in possession limit in 2012



Summer Flounder Landings Impact Analysis

- ♦ Analysis accounting for new participants and possession limit changes
- ♦ Do new vessels enter the fluke fishery when the possession limit goes up
- ♦ 2010 data (May – October) was analyzed to see if new participants become active when the possession limit goes to both 300 and 600
 - ♦ In each case no more than 3 new vessels entered fishery after the possession went up
- ♦ 2011 data (May – October) was analyzed to see if new participants become active when the possession limit goes to both 300 and 600
 - ♦ In each case no more than 5 new vessels entered fishery after the possession went up
- ♦ Conclusion – To date, increased possession limits do not entice new vessels in to the fishery
 - ♦ May be because constrained by exemption cert
 - ♦ Does not account for RSA



Summer Flounder Landings Impact Analysis

- Analysis accounting for exemption certificates, gear, and landings
- 287 separate participants in summer (max 2010 – 2011)
- 127 active exemption certificates
- Assume they all land in the summer at average rates
- Results in 160 fishers without permits fishing in summer
- Based on gear ratios, applying those ratios to the 160 non permitted fishers, could result in 115 new fishers able to participate in and maximize the aggregate program
- Conclusions:
 - This could potentially result in an increase of 40% more landings
 - Likely would result in remaining at low poss lim or early closure in 2010
 - Likely no closure in 2011, but would prevent any poss limit increase
 - Likely create either a drop in possession limit or early closure in 2012



Summer Flounder Landings Impact Analysis

- ♦ Analysis accounting for licenses
- ♦ As noted in earlier table, only 44% of eligible licenses actively participate in fluke fishery
- ♦ If all of these licenses became active, would increase landings by 66%
 - ♦ Assumption – all would enter fishery at same levels as current fishery
 - ♦ Likely would have resulted in remaining at low poss lim or an early closure in 2010
 - ♦ Likely would not have closed the fishery early in 2011, but may have prevented any possession limit increase
 - ♦ Likely would create either a drop in possession limit or early closure in 2012
- ♦ If only ½ of these licenses became active, increase would be more modest, 33%



Conclusions

- ♦ Main impacts would arise during the summer months
- ♦ Likely would increase landings in summer, magnitude can range from 17% to 66%
- ♦ Given current possession limits, the main issue would arise from the summer aggregate
- ♦ Potentially ways to mitigate impact:
 - ♦ Continue to not allow participation in both summer and winter programs
 - ♦ Adjust weekly limit amount to a level that would protect against large increases in landings and effort
 - ♦ Protect inshore harvest areas with gear restrictions
 - ♦ Others?



Proposal Submitted by the RIFA

- ♦ The RIFA brought forward a proposal for the RI Summer Flounder Exemption Certificate Program at the Nov. 9, 2011 public hearing
- ♦ Listed below is a summary of what the proposed changes would accomplish according to the authors:
 - The exemption certificate program for summer flounder will be eliminated for commercially licensed RI residents. All qualified RI resident licensed holders will be held to the same standard and possession limits for summer flounder.

Non-resident restricted finfish license holders will retain the two hundred pound (200 lb) daily possession limit.

Non-resident summer flounder exemption certificate holders will retain their exemption from the two hundred pound daily possession limit. Non-resident exemption certificates cannot be transferred or sold and are applicable only to the individual presently issued the certificate and the named vessel. Non-resident exemption certificate holders may upgrade or replace the named vessel with restrictions.

