

**RI Marine Fisheries Council
Tautog Advisory Panel
Meeting Minutes
December 29, 2009 - 6:00 PM
URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute**

R. Hittinger, Chair	F. Blount ^A
J. Rainone*	D. Tyrell
E. Cook *	G. Latos *
M. Ambrosia	J. Barker
S. Parente – Council member	C. Donilou
R. Chatowsky	M. Bucko*
R. Bellavance – Council member	Jason McNamee, RIDFW

(*primary advisory panel member; ^A alternate member)

R. Hittinger 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 either commercial or recreational tautog management in 2010.

J. McNamee began his presentation with a review of the 2009 commercial fishery. The fishery had a major overage in the spring sub period which almost completely exhausted another full sub periods allocation. Luckily the summer period did not harvest its entire allocation and the spring overage was mitigated. There was a small overage in the fall sub period. The result was approximately an 8,000 pound overage for the year, this was about the same as 2008. The overage will be deducted off the top in 2010 and the quota will then be allocated 1/3 to each sub period.

J. McNamee went on to discuss the recreational fishery performance in 2009. He started by indicating that the data was incomplete for 2009, wave 5 and 6 data were not available. However, he felt it was worth reviewing the past several years to look at trends in the recreational fishery. What he indicated was that in 2007 there was an anomalously high harvest number which had detrimental impacts to local stock status. Despite the high landings in 2007, the harvest in 2008 went down, fishery independent indices increased, and because the regional stock was analyzed with both RI and MA data, the fact the MA landings had remained low during this time frame kept the regional stock status from decreasing dramatically. J. McNamee also showed the panel information from a RI only biomass dynamic model (BDM) that had been developed by M. Gibson. When you look at information within state waters only, the picture becomes a little more troubling, and he cautioned that these trends would need to change if they persisted as they would be a detriment to stock status.

J. McNamee finished by indicating that the DFW did not propose any changes to the commercial or recreational fisheries in 2010, as long as the situation did not change dramatically with the inclusion of wave 5 and 6 data. If harvest spiked in 2009 as had happened in 2007, the DFW might be compelled to act, but a spike in harvest was not

expected and he stated that he did not anticipate having to do anything for 2010. In conclusion J. McNamee stated that the stock will be reassessed on both the regional and coastwide level in 2010.

The panel began a discussion about changing from a per fish possession limit in the tautog fishery, to a poundage per vessel possession limit. S. Parente stated that he felt going to a poundage possession limit may decrease the incentive to high-grade in the commercial fishery. However, another participant stated that he did not feel high-grading was a very big issue in the tautog fishery due to the hardiness of the species. The two participants who commented stated some support for going to a weight based possession limit, however it was hoped that they could raise the possession limit for the commercial fishery to make it worth while. J. McNamee stated that simply going to a weight based possession limit would probably not lead to an increased possession limit and in fact might decrease what they were able to harvest during a given trip.

R. Hittinger asked if there were any proposals from the meeting participants to change tautog management in either the commercial or recreational fishery in 2010. The meeting participants all supported status quo in 2010.

F. Blount wanted to point out that they had discussed what would happen if the harvest numbers are high when the 2009 final data is in, but he wondered if there was any plan for what they would do if harvest were low. Was liberalizing in 2010 an option? J. McNamee stated that the DFW had not considered any liberalizing proposals, and would caution against doing so at this point due to the information being produced by the RI BDM.

R. Hittinger requested that the DFW send out the wave 5 and 6 data to the panel, perhaps by using the listserv, when it was available so they would be fully informed by the time tautog management moved forward in to the public hearing process. J. McNamee agreed to do this.

R. Hittinger adjourned the meeting.