

RHODE ISLAND MARINE FISHERIES COUNCIL
Minutes of Shellfish Advisory Panel
September 12 2007 4:30 PM
Ft. Wetherill Marine Laboratory
Jamestown, RI

SAP Members Present: S. Parente (Acting Chair), R. Bercaw, D. Brayton, J. Clemente, W. Cote, S. DiPetrillo, J. Grant, O. Kelly, P. Kennedy, M. McGiveney, L. Ricciarelli, G. Schey

SAP Members Absent: J. King (Chair), J. Boland (3+), J. Gardner, J. Migliore, J. Mullen (A)

Scientific Advisor: D. Leavitt

DEM Marine Fisheries: D. Erkan, N. Scarduzio

Public Present: J. Marmaris, J. Vivari

New Business

- 1) Discussion about High Banks and Greenwich Bay Shellfish Management Area openings.

N. Scarduzio noted that the MFC approved Joe Clemente as an alternate for Russell Vaughn and would be a voting member in Vaughn's absence.

McGiveney outlined considered winter openings for both Greenwich Bay Management Area and those Management Areas having received transplanted quahaugs (High Banks, Bissel/Fox Island, and Bristol). He offered a conceptual 2 – hour or 3 – hour per day proposal.

Erkan noted that DFW is concerned about the likelihood of exceeding the daily possession limit during the 4-hour Monday, Wednesday, Friday Management Area openings because of the higher number of transplanted quahaugs present. Allen Harbor Damage Moneys were used to increase the annual transplant budget from \$50K to \$100K for 2007 with a corresponding increase in available shellfish. It was also noted that DFW has been made aware that some shellfishermen are exceeding the daily 3 - bushel possession limit by taking advantage of enforcement demands due to the number of vessels/individuals fishing in the management areas. DFW has suggested a shorter fishing period (2 - 3 hours per day rather than 4 hours).

Erkan reminded the SAP that the DEM will not endorse seasons/openings that may be interpreted as manipulation of supply or price.

Schey and others were opposed to reducing the daily fishing period.

Bercaw noted that some dealers closed in response to the February shellfish glut and suggested considering a 2 – hour opening.

DiPetrillo suggested that the industry needs to take responsibility by recognizing and addressing the violators.

Vivari suggested that the shellfishermen should turn in their licenses to an on-site DEM Enforcement vessel. After confirming that only 3 bushels were harvested, the license would then be returned.

The general discussion was to increase enforcement efforts rather than reduce the fishing period. It was noted that while Enforcement Officers are occupied with one violator, the other take the opportunity to leave with in excess of 3 – bushels.

The SAP unanimously voted to keep the keep the fishing period “the Status Quo”. High Banks, Bissel/Fox Island, and Bristol Shellfish Management Areas will open the second Wednesday in December, with Monday, Wednesday, and Friday openings from 8:00 AM to Noon (4 hours per day). This includes a request for DEM Enforcement to increase their efforts to find individuals exceeding the 3 – bushel possession limit.

Erkan noted a request from shellfish dealers to avoid holding transplants during the last week of May due to increased holiday demand. To address this will require holding one of the five transplants during the last week of April, with a corresponding closure of the Shellfish Management Areas.

Schey suggested a harvest period modification for Greenwich Bay Management Area to offset this change. Allow Greenwich Bay to be fished Monday May 26th, Wednesday May 28th, and Friday May 30th from 8:30AM to Noon.

The SAP voted to continue the discussion so McGiveney and Schey could better develop the proposal *in writing* for the February Greenwich Bay Management Area opening, and place the issue on the next SAP Agenda. *Note: DEM Water Resources has closed Greenwich Bay to shellfishing during December and January due to high fecal bacteria levels.*

Adjourn: 5:30 PM.

Minutes prepared by D. Erkan