

**Scup/Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel
Meeting Minutes
September 29, 2008
Division of Fish and Wildlife, Fort Wetherill
Jamestown, RI**

There were 8 people present: (*primary advisory panel member; ^A alternate member)

Kenneth Ketcham - Chairman

Jerry Tremblay* -- Commercial Hook and Line

Bill Cote

Stephen Parente

Robert Smith

Jeff Grant

Steve Crandall

Jason McNamee - RIDFW

Pre-Agenda Discussion

Chairman K. Ketcham stated that there were two membership list changes that would be sent to the Council for approval. The first was to appoint S. Arnold to replace J. O'Grady as an alternate to C. Brown (Trawl-Offshore). The second was to appoint J. Grant as an alternate to E. Baker (Pots). J. Grant stated that he would fill the primary position if E. Baker were not still the primary on the panel, this was unclear at the time of the meeting. S. Parente stated that E. Baker was still interested in serving on the panel. No one present had any objections to forwarding those names to the Council.

K. Ketcham went on to state that there obviously was not a quorum present but felt he should go on with the meeting because this particular panel rarely had a quorum present and they needed to develop recommendations for the issues before them in a timely manner. He indicated that the group would not vote on anything, however all proposals and comments would be forwarded to the Council.

Review of 2008 scup and black sea bass commercial fishery performance and Review of proposed commercial quotas for scup and black sea bass

K. Ketcham stated that J. McNamee had a slide presentation (see attached) that covered the first two agenda items. He asked J. McNamee to proceed with the presentation.

J. McNamee stated that the slide presentation went through the scup information first and then the black sea bass information. For the scup fishery, this was the first year of the summer aggregate program in the state. There were two closure periods, but J. McNamee felt that this was more indicative of the extremely low quota rather than the management plan. J. McNamee stated that Division staff had also analyzed SAFIS data to determine the level of compliance with the aggregate limits and found that there were some violations (averaging about 7 per week most of which were small overages), many of them were repeat offenders week to week, and the resulting extra pounds were only around 1,000 pounds per week. He felt that this was fairly good compliance with the

program overall, while not minimizing the problem of the violations. J. McNamee went on to state that, given current catch rates, he thought that the fishery would close early again, sometime in early October. The floating fish trap sector harvested its allocation almost fully in 2008. The management plan for this sector seemed to work well. J. McNamee then went on to discuss the recommendations that came out of the science and statistical committee (SSC) and the monitoring committee (MC). He stated that the recommendations were exactly that, but it was the most up to date information he could provide to the panel and he felt it gave them a good sense of where the quotas may go for 2009, while not being able to give them an exact number. For scup, the SSC and MC recommended going with a small increase in quota for 2009. All other recommendations including gear restrictions, minimum sizes, and possession limits (for the federal fishery period) should remain at status quo. The scup section of the presentation concluded with recommendations for scup management from the Division. There were no major recommendations from the Division, however they did recommend that the industry representatives consider the weekly limit for the May 1 sub period, as this portion of the fishery closed very rapidly in 2008.

For the black sea bass fishery there were no closed periods, but J. McNamee stated that there had been several downward possession limit adjustments to keep the fishery open. The management plan for this fishery had not been changed much over the past few years despite the downward trend in quota. J. McNamee then went on to discuss the recommendations that came out of the science and statistical committee (SSC) and the monitoring committee (MC). For black sea bass, the SSC and MC recommended going with a drastic decrease in quota for 2009. All other recommendations including gear restrictions and minimum sizes should remain at status quo. The black sea bass section of the presentation concluded with recommendations for management from the Division. There were no major recommendations from the Division, however they did recommend that the industry representatives consider prorating the starting possession limits down according to the decrease in quota as well as consider a possible aggregate program analogous to the 2008 scup program. This concluded the slide presentation.

Presentation and discussion of commercial quota management proposals for 2009

K. Ketcham began discussion on proposals for 2009 management from the attendees. J. Grant submitted a written proposal for black sea bass (see attached) so the group began with that. J. Grant stated his proposal dealt with the summer period. He had submitted two but wished to withdraw the one with the daily possession limits and move forward with the one with the aggregate program. He originally was not sure how the DEM would respond to an aggregate program for black sea bass, therefore the second proposal with the daily limits was a default proposal, which he did not prefer. The program had a weekly possession limit of 300 pounds with 3 closure days noted as Friday, Saturday, and Monday. The argument for his proposal was that because of the reduced quota an aggregate limit was the only way to remain profitable and the closure days would decrease landings from those not targeting the species, thereby spreading the impact of the quota decrease to all user groups. The attendees discussed the proposal and J. Grant agreed to some changes. **The finalized proposal from J. Grant was:**

- **Maintain current sub period allocations**

- **May 1 – July 31 at 250 lbs/week**
- **August 1 – October 31 at 250 lbs/week**
- **Landing closures on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday throughout these two periods**

S. Parente felt that the closure days were a deal breaker from his perspective. He felt that this would completely shut certain people out of the black sea bass fishery, which was not fair.

The J. Grant proposal did not make recommendations for the winter sub periods, therefore **K. Ketcham proposed:**

- **Remain at status quo for January 1 – April 30**
- **Develop an aggregate limit for the November 1 – December 31 period at 250 lbs/week**

S. Crandall made a proposal that he thought could work concurrently with the J. Grant proposal. **His proposal was:**

- **Enact a 1 month closure during the month of August**
- **Maintain all other aspects of the J. Grant proposal including weekly possession limits and closure days**

G. Tremblay made a final proposal for black sea bass. **His proposal was:**

- **Maintain status quo for 2009**

K. Ketcham then asked for any proposals for scup. He went on to state that even though the May 1 sub period shut down after only 9 days, this allowed federally permitted boats who are active during that period to get a fair share of the scup from that period as they (federally permitted vessels) were closed down by the federal government shortly after the state fishery closed and were not able to participate during any of the other sub periods.

The group as a whole supported status quo for scup management in 2009.

K. Ketcham adjourned the meeting.