

**RI Marine Fisheries Council
 Summer Flounder Advisory Panel
 Meeting Minutes
 March 17, 2009, 6:00 PM
 3 Fort Wetherill, Jamestown, RI**

David Preble, Chairman	M. Bucko*
K. Court ^A	B. Moshimer
D. Smith	R. Hittinger – Council member
D. MacPherson*	F. Blount*
E. Cook*	T. Terranova
E. Conti	J. McNamee, DFW staff

There were 5 attendees whose names I could not read from the sign in sheet
 (*primary advisory panel member; ^A alternate member)

D. Preble, Chair, called the meeting to order. He stated that J. McNamee had a presentation (see attached) that would cover the first few agenda items including fishery performance and options for the 2009 recreational measures. J. McNamee stated that the recreational fishery had gone over its target in 2008; therefore RI had to take a reduction in their 2009 recreational fishery. The reduction would have been in the vicinity of 54%, however due to an improved stock assessment model and improved stock status, RI only had to take a 41% reduction. J. McNamee briefly went over the new modeling approach as well as some of the changes that had taken place with regard to stock status. He finished the presentation by opening a spreadsheet that was configured to look at different options that would meet the reduction requirement for 2009.

D. Preble turned the meeting over to taking comments on proposals for 2009. The group began this discussion by talking about the effectiveness of different management strategies such as changing seasons, bag limits, and minimum sizes. J. McNamee stated that there was now research that indicated that, in general, seasonal closures were most effective in obtaining management goals.

T. Terranova, a charter captain from Westerly, stated that for his area of the state the large minimum size limits were extremely difficult and were severely hurting the charter industry in that area. He felt there was a need to get back to more reasonable minimum sizes even if it meant shortening the season. He also stated that the higher bag limits were important for the charter industry.

K. Court made a proposal. His was a split mode proposal. His reasoning behind his proposal was that the charter and party industry had major difficulty running their businesses when there was a mid season closure. These types of closures also affect the charitable programs that they run such as “Take a Kid Fishing Day” as well. His proposal was as follows:

Party Mode – 21” minimum size, season from 5/1 through 12/31
All other modes – 20” minimum size, 4 fish bag limit, season from 7/1 through 12/31

F. Blount made a proposal, also a split mode option. He handed in a written paper with a justification for his proposal (see attached). The proposal was:

Party mode – 21” minimum size, 6 fish bag limit, a season of 5/16 – 12/31 with a 14 day closure at the end of August if needed. F. Blount did not indicate an option for the non-party modes.

M. Bucko made the following proposal for all modes:

20” minimum size and a season from 6/1 through 7/21

A few other proposals came forward during discussion. They were:

a. **21” minimum size and a season 6/13 through 12/31**

b. **20” minimum size and a season 7/4 through 12/31**

c. **20” minimum size and a season 7/1 through 8/31**

There was further discussion about the various proposals. During this discussion the panel attendees stated that they wanted this deliberation to happen earlier in the year. J. McNamee stated that he wished it had happened earlier in the year as well but the scheduling of when the data becomes available as well as the specifications from ASMFC coupled with the RIMFC process was why it had occurred so late in the season. There was one final request to look at what the season would be if they dropped the size limit back down to 19”.

D. Preble stated that he would not attempt to come up with a consensus proposal from the group as he did not think a consensus would be reached. He requested that all of the proposals go forward to public hearing. J. McNamee stated that he would bring all six proposals forward for comment, and would look in to which ones would be approvable through the ASMFC conservation equivalency process, information he would have available for the follow up Council meeting.

D. Preble adjourned the meeting.