

**RI Marine Fisheries Council**  
 Scup/Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel  
 Meeting Minutes  
 January 30, 2013, 7:30 PM  
 URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute

W. Macintosh, Chairman	G. Tremblay*
K. Court <sup>A</sup>	M. Bucko*
M. Ambrosia	D. Monti
J. Tremblay	P. Johnson
D. Fox	R. Hittinger
R. Chatowski	J. McNamee, DFW staff
R. Ballou, RIDEM	T. Rovinelli, Brown University

(\*primary advisory panel member; <sup>A</sup> alternate member)

W. Macintosh began the meeting. He stated that J. McNamee of the RI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW or Division) had a presentation which covered the first 7 agenda topics and was broken in to a scup section followed by a black sea bass section. He stated that after each section of the presentation the panel would discuss any proposals they may have for recreational management for scup or black sea bass in 2013. He noted that there was a quorum present therefore they could vote on any proposals that came forward. Prior to beginning with the DFW presentation, however, there was a student from Brown University, T. Rovinelli, who had done some work on the scup recreational fishery in 2012, and he would give the group a brief presentation (see attached).

T. Rovinelli went over his research with the group (see attached). The basis of his work was to do a socio-economic analysis on the scup recreational fishery to see whether there was a difference in the group that fished for scup, i.e. they are predominately a food fishery and fish to secure protein for their diets, rather than a sport fishery. His work indicated that, while this element does exist in the scup fishery, this fishery was still predominately people enjoying a recreational activity. There were also some economic indicators that showed there were more economically efficient ways to acquire scup aside from fishing for them, i.e. purchasing them from a seafood market. After T. Rovinelli's presentation, the group asked a number of questions.

J. McNamee began the DFW presentation with a discussion about stock status for scup. The stock was rebuilt and overfishing was not occurring. He then went over the fishery performance in RI in 2012. The fishery went well in 2012. Given the high coastwide quota and harvest targets for scup in 2012, and the fact that the preliminary indications were that the recreational fishery would have an underage, managers from the northern region (scup is managed through a regional approach for the recreational fishery rather than state by state) decided to look at a set of liberalization options for 2013. J. McNamee concluded by stating that the DFW would approve any option that remained within the liberalization strategy as developed by ASMFC and the northern region partners; as a side note, a conference call for the northern regional partners would be occurring at the end of the week. He went on to outline a few of the potential options, which are noted in the slideshow (attached).

W. Mackintosh asked the group if they had any questions or if the group wanted to make any proposals. K. Court wanted to make a recommendation. He suggested the fishery either stay at status quo, or if a liberalization were possible, increase the bag limit during the bonus season to 45 fish. He went on to state that the bonus season was important for the head boats as they had “bus charters” that they catered to, and these groups were attracted to the high bag limits.

M. Bucko also made a recommendation. He stated that the group should recommend that the non party and charter modes (general category) have their minimum size lowered to 10”. There was further discussion on how to liberalize. **The consensus of the group was as follows:**

**Party and charter should maintain all other elements the same as status quo, but increase the bonus season bag limit to 45 fish.**

**The general category should maintain all other elements the same as status quo but decrease the minimum size to 10”.**

W. Mackintosh noted that since there were no solid options to vote on at this point, they should simply forward this advice as a consensus statement from the panel.

K. Court asked a question about the conference call. He wondered if they would allow public participation. We went on to state that he preferred when they had convened a meeting in the past, this allowed the public to fully participate in the process. R. ballou stated that he would check in to this and get back to K. Court with the information.

J. McNamee then went through a discussion about the black sea bass fishery. The stock was rebuilt and overfishing was not occurring according to the only peer reviewed stock assessment available, but J. McNamee then went on to describe the situation that recently occurred with the benchmark assessment, the result of which was the assessment was rejected. One final note however, was that a recent meeting of the Mid Atlantic SSC resulted in an increase in the allowable catch for black sea bass in 2013 and potentially 2014 as well. He then went over the fishery performance in RI in 2012. The fishery went way over the harvest target in 2012, and this was a year where RI was operating under Addendum XXII, which implemented a regional management plan. The fishery exceeded the target by roughly 51%, and therefore this was the potential reduction that would be needed. It was important to keep in mind though that the SSC had increased the allowable catch, therefore if this increase were approved by the Mid Atlantic Council and the ASMFC, the magnitude of the reduction would decrease, though given how far over the harvest target the state went, it was certain that reductions to some level would still be needed. J. McNamee stated that there was currently an Addendum out for public comment and this Addendum (XXIII) was looking to set up either a state by state or regional option for black sea bass management in 2013, similar to what was in place for 2012. J. McNamee concluded by stating that the DFW would approve any option that remained within the reduction strategy as developed by ASMFC, but depended on the approach taken by the management board, i.e. regional or state by state. He concluded by asking for the advisory panel advice on how best to take reductions in this fishery.

W. Mackintosh went to the group for discussion. The group began with some clarifying questions on the present situation with black sea bass which was a very confusing situation. Once most of the group was somewhat comfortable with what was going on they began to

discuss their advice on how best to reduce. M. bucko stated that he felt the best strategy was to start early and then go as long as possible until the season needed to close. This was discussed but many in the group felt that it was difficult to make recommendations, because much would depend on the outcome of the February board meeting of the ASMFC and the outcome of the addendum. Until that was resolved the group felt there was too much uncertainty in the process and its effects on RI.

K. Court stated that however things worked out, having mid season closures would not be preferable. R. Hittinger agreed with K. Court, but he felt that this may be the only way to accommodate both the early season and the late season fishermen.

K. Court then went on to state that he felt people should make it a point to attend the Friday public hearing on the addendum to voice their choices on the management strategy that should be employed. He stated that his preference, and the best strategy for the state, was to go with a state by state management scenario, as doing this would allow them to adjust the management in the best interest of the state, and to not be coupled with other states that had much higher capacity to harvest black sea bass and therefore had a greater chance to exceed the harvest target again.

A. Ambrosia and D. Monti both stated that they wouldn't mind dropping the bag limit and having a longer season, but they understood that others did not prefer this for various reasons.

W. Mackintosh adjourned the meeting.