

**RI Marine Fisheries Council
Scup/Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel
Meeting Minutes
April 12, 2011, 6:00 PM
URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute**

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| K. Ketcham, Chairman | G. Tremblay* |
| M. Ambrosia | K. Court |
| F. Blount* | P. Johnson |
| T. Baker | J. Barker |
| C. Donilon | |
| J. Grant* | J. McNamee, DFW staff |

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

K. Ketcham began the meeting. He stated that the meeting would be focused on the recreational black sea bass fishery and that J. McNamee of the RI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW or Division) had a presentation which covered the first 2 agenda topics. He stated that after the presentation the panel would discuss any proposals they may have for recreational management for black sea bass in 2011. He noted that there was not a quorum present therefore no votes would be taken, but it still would be useful to get some advice from the panel out to the RI Marine Fisheries Council (RIMFC) and the Director of the Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

J. McNamee began with a discussion about the process leading up to this late meeting of the advisory panel. He stated that he did not intend to discuss stock status or things of that nature because they had already met on those topics earlier in the year; however he stated he would answer any questions anyone may have on those items. One final comment was made prior to starting the presentation. There was an agenda item for other business and J. McNamee stated that he thought some of the commercial representatives present may wish to comment on the scup commercial possession limits which were back out for public hearing. With that, J. McNamee began the presentation with a brief description of the management process up to this point. The ASMFC Black Sea Bass Management Board met in August 2010 to approve the black sea bass total allowable landings (TAL) for 2011. They approved a TAL of 3.6 million pounds. The Board then met again in January of 2011 and approved the black sea bass recreational measures. At that time the Board approved a coastwide measure to meet the necessary reduction due to overharvest in the recreational sector in 2010. Addendum XXI was then drafted in February 2011 and sent out to the states for public hearing. RI's hearing was on March 14. On March 24, 2011 the Board approved a set of options from addendum XXI, the main one was the establishment of state conservation equivalency for black sea bass, specifically for 2011. For RI this means the need to reduce harvest by 37% in 2011. On April 12, 2011, the ASMFC black sea bass technical committee approved RI's proposed methodology for calculating reductions. Finally these options go to public hearing on April 18, 2011, will be brought before the RIMFC on May 2, 2011, and will hopefully be promulgated shortly thereafter.

J. McNamee finished by indicating that the DFW supported any measures that stayed within the bounds of the approved methodology for reduction. He went on to state that the DFW preferred an option that did not dramatically increase the minimum size as the main effort to achieve the reduction and the DFW also preferred an option that achieved some reduction from a bag limit decrease. He brought up a spreadsheet where the AP members could adjust dates, minimum sizes, and bag limits and see the reductions achieved from those measures. F. Blount asked a question about the years affected by the addendum. J. McNamee stated that the addendum was for 2011 only. The discussion went in to detail and J. McNamee stated that there was one of two ways he predicted the process would proceed over the coming year. The first would be for a follow up addendum to take place which would put state by state conservational equivalency in to place on a longer term basis. The second possibility was dependent on the out come of the benchmark stock assessment that was planned for the fall. If the assessment was accepted and not placed in a low tier, the quota would probably go up to some degree, potentially fairly dramatically, and this would remedy some of the issues being faced by the states with black sea bass fisheries. F. Blount stated that the AP should consider this when developing their options.

C. Donilon asked about the October closure from 2010. J. McNamee stated that his configuration accounts for reopening closed days, so the scenarios presented all reopened the closed days from 2010. C. Donilon stated that he would be happy at the very least to get those days in October reopened at some reasonable bag limit. F. Blount cautioned about large drops in bag limit because he felt they would never get the lost bag limit amount back. He stated that he would be happy with a later start and keeping the bag limit as high as possible.

M. Ambrosia stated that the late start was preferable for the charter guys because they have other options in the early season. Keeping the season open later in the year, specifically the period in October before tautog opens up at a higher bag limit, was most important to the charter industry. Keeping the bag limit as high as possible was also important to the party and charter industry.

The group discussed some alternative configurations including larger minimum sizes, various bag limit amounts, and then an early opened season and a late opened season. K. Ketcham began to take comments on the presented options or any options that anyone else wanted to bring up. After more discussion, the panel consensus option was the following:

- 1. A season from July 11 through December 31**
- 2. A bag limit of 20 fish**
- 3. A minimum size of 13"**

The panel stated that the date should be set at the earliest day possible and the DFW should not try to pick a date that perhaps made more sense (i.e. opening on a weekend rather than a weekday) if it meant opening any later. F. Blount stated that even though he agreed with the present consensus proposal, the party boat industry was losing the whole month of June which was a big month for that industry.

The panel had a discussion about the commercial scup possession limits under the “other business” agenda item. This item was going to public hearing on the 18th of April as well. J. McNamee briefly went over the background of why this was being revisited, the main point being that the quota increased dramatically from the preliminary quota amount the advisory panel used as their guide when setting the 2011 commercial management plan. J. Grant stated that front loading the quota in to the early season would be the best approach so that they don’t end up with the situation seen in 2010 where the quota was pushed in to the end of the season with huge increases in possession limit at the end of the season. He asked J. McNamee whether the DFW could analyze what the best possession limit would be based on 2010 information on catch rates. J. McNamee stated that he would try to do this analysis prior to the RIMFC meeting on May 2.

The panel asked a number of questions and had further discussion with J. McNamee, but this was unrelated to the agenda.

K. Ketcham adjourned the meeting.