



New England Fishery Management Council

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E.F. “Terry” Stockwell III, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEETING SUMMARY

Recreational Advisory Panel

DoubleTree by Hilton, Portland, ME

September 16, 2014

The Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) met on September 16th, 2014 in South Portland, ME to: 1) discuss Amendment 18 (A18), 2) to discuss Framework Adjustment 53 (FW53), and 3) discuss other business.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Mr. Barry Gibson (Chair), Mr. Patrick Paquette, Mr. Jonathan Sterritt, Mr. Kevin Twombly, Mr. Tom DePersia, Mr. Jason Colby, Mr. Richard Bellavance Jr., Mr. Tim Tower, Mr. Donald Swanson, Mr. Frank Blount (Groundfish Committee Chair, NEFMC), Dr. Jamie Cournane, Ms. Rachel Feeney, Mr. Jonathon Peros (NEFMC Staff), Willie Whitmore (NMFS GARFO). In addition, approximately 5 members of the public attended. Michael Sosik Jr. (Vice Chair) and Michael Plaia could not attend.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION: Discussions were aided by: Amendment 18 Action Plan dated July 28th, 2014; Plan Development Team (PDT) memo to the Groundfish Committee re: Amendment 18 dated September 5th, 2014; Amendment 18 discussion document dated September 5th, 2014; an Amendment 18 Discussion Guide for the September 18th Groundfish Committee meeting dated September 5th, 2014; Framework Adjustment 53 Action Plan, dated September 12th, 2014; PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re: FW53 dated September 12th, 2014; PDT white paper entitled, “Development of Rollover Provisions in the Groundfish Fishery” dated September 4th, 2014; Groundfish Committee meeting summary of August 4th meeting; RAP meeting summary from February 19th, 2014 meeting; and staff presentations on Amendment 18 and Framework Adjustment 53.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- Through discussion, the Recreational Advisory Panel identified several measures that could be used to reduce the mortality of Gulf of Maine cod in the recreational fishery. Measures included the use of in-line circle hooks, combined bag limits with trip termination, and targeted fishing on other species.
- The Recreational Advisory Panel passed multiple recommendations pertaining to Amendment 18 – and does not support the demarcation of an inshore/offshore line for the recreational fishery.

- The Recreational Advisory Panel expressed interest in seeing a range of bag limits for Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock that may include low or zero possession of Gulf of Maine cod.
- The Recreational Advisory Panel requested that the Groundfish Committee revisit the allocation for Gulf of Maine haddock.

The meeting began at 8:08am.

FRAMEWORK 53

Staff presentation: Framework 53 (Dr. Jamie Cournane)

Council staff directed the Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) to documents 8, 9a, and 9b for reference during the presentation on Framework Adjustment 53 (FW53). Staff presented the timeline of FW53 and the likely range of alternatives. The framework was initiated at the June Council meeting (June 17th – 19th, 2014), and staff is expecting the full Council to vote on measures that will be evaluated in FW53 at its September meeting in Hyannis, MA (September 30th & October 1st – 2nd, 2014), with final action scheduled for the November meeting in Newport, RI (November 17th – 20th, 2014).

The likely range of alternatives under consideration in FW53 (also see Document 9a) include updated to status determination criteria, and annual catch limits (Section 4.1), as well as a suite of commercial and recreational fishery measures (Section 4.2). Given time constraints, the PDT is recommending that section 4.2.5, changes to trawl gear regulations, and section 4.2.6, recreational management measures process not move forward with FW53 and be part of a priorities discussion later in the year.

Council staff presented a summary of New England Fishery Management Council's Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations from 2014 meetings, and noted that the SSC will meet next month to make recommendations Gulf of Maine (GOM) winter flounder, Georges Bank (GB) winter flounder, and pollock. In August, the SSC recommended overfishing limits (OFLs) and acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for GOM haddock based on results from the Northeast Fishery Science Center's Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) and Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) 59. This was a benchmark assessment, which determined that GOM haddock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Recreational discards were included in this assessment, and were accounted for at a rate of 50% mortality. Recent year classes have been driving increases seen in this stock. The SSC developed ABCs and OFLs for GOM haddock using the 75% F_{MSY} control rule.

In September, the SSC met to discuss OFLs and ABCs for GOM cod. The most recent assessment found that the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring, spawning stock biomass (SSB) is low, fishing mortality is high, and recruitment is poor. Overall the stock is in very poor condition, and survey indices are at time series lows. The SSC recommended an OFL of 514mt, and a provisional ABC of 200mt. At its September meeting, the SSC expressed interest in input from Advisory Panels on the estimated level on incidental, non-target GOM cod catch that the industry can achieve. The SSC plans to further discuss and potential revise the

GOM cod ABC at its next meeting. All of the groundfish stocks (20 stocks) will be assessed in 2015.

Questions and Comments on the Presentation:

A RAP member asked how the 50% mortality estimate for recreational haddock discards was arrived at, and if the Council was involved in that decision. Staff explained that this was determined in the assessment process (SAW/SARC, see above) by reviewing mortality studies. Change in mortality estimates impacts how annual catch limits (ACLs) are calculated. Another member of the RAP asked why the advisors were not involved in this decision stated that it is troublesome that this (mortality estimate) decision was made unilaterally by NMFS. Staff pointed out that the SARC is an open process, and acknowledged that the RAP had not been asked directly to weigh in on discard mortality of haddock. A fellow RAP member also responded to the question about recreational advisors being involved in the assessment process, stating that the mortality assumption was something that the SSC reviewed. Another RAP member stated that fishing for haddock with baited circle hooks seems to reduce mortality of haddock. The same RAP member believed that results from a recent study on cod which found that mortality around 20% would/should be presented to the Council in the future. Staff stated that the assessment noted that more information is needed on this topic. A RAP member asked about the original allocation of GOM haddock to the recreational fishery in Amendment 16, and if the allocation was made with the assumption of 0% mortality for recreational discards, and asked if the recreational allocation would need to increase if we are assuming a 50% mortality.

Staff Presentation on Framework 53 Continued (Dr. Jamie Cournane)

Staff explained that alternatives under consideration in FW53 include spawning closure areas for GOM cod. The PDT brought forward a range of options (six in total) for GOM cod inshore spawning closures (See document 9a, PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re: FW53, dated September 12th, 2014, pp. 4-6 & Appendix I of that document). Staff walked through the six alternatives, some of which were based on the work of the Groundfish/Habitat Committee's Closed Area Technical Team (CATT). Other spawning closure alternatives were developed using the CATT analyses in combination with the commercial fishery's existing GOM rolling closure areas for sector and common-pool vessels. Another approach suggested closing the western GOM from 70.00 degrees W to the west during unspecified winter months. The PDT also introduced closing these spawning areas to both commercial and recreational fishermen. These options were brought forward for discussion, and that the intent is for managers to weigh in on the proposed areas.

Questions on the FW53 Presentation:

A RAP member asked about what exceptions might be made to these closures. Another RAP member asked whether or not limited access permit holders on a party charter trip would be exempt from fishing in the WGOM rolling closure areas. A RAP member stated that the recreational fleet is already limited to 4 months of fishing in the GOM.

Staff Presentation on Framework 53 Continued (Dr. Jamie Cournane)

To address the issue of beginning a fishing year without specifications, FW53 includes an alternative that would allow a percentage of the prior year's ACL to be rolled forward into the next fishing year similar to provisions that have been adopted in other Fishery Management

Plans (FMPs) (see Document 9b) of the New England Fishery Management Council and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Such provisions would remain in effect until new specifications are implemented. Having specifications in place for May 1st is essential for the fishing year to start on time. The PDT discussed trade-offs of these alternatives with respect to specific groundfish stocks, noting major swing in ACLs from year to year (e.g. GOM cod) and changes to stock status.

Recreational catch data from Waves 3 and 4 was presented, and staff noted that there was an error in labeling the one of the tables (Note: This error has since been corrected). The RAP was asked to weigh in on the measures currently in FW53, and to discuss measures for GOM cod that could be implemented in the following fishing year that could assist in controlling catches to at or below the ACL, protecting spawning cod, and minimize discards.

Continued Discussion on Framework 53:

A member of the RAP asked Council Staff for clarification on measures under consideration in FW53, specifically which measures would impact the recreational fishery – staff referred back to the FW53 presentation. A RAP member asked which alternatives the PDT was suggesting be dropped out of the FW53 (Section 4.2.5 and 4.2.6 from the list). Council staff explained that the Council had given the PDT a prioritized list of measures to work on, and that recreational measures would likely be brought up during the 2015 priorities discussion by the full Council in November. A RAP member asked about RAP recommendation to give the Regional Administrator authority to make in-season changes to recreational measures. Staff confirmed that such authority is currently in place. Continuing on the thread of management measures, a RAP member made the point that the Council could change who is subject to closed areas (commercial and recreational). Another RAP member asked staff to confirm that 2013 GOM cod recreational catch data was not available or presented. Council staff explained that final fishing year 2013 catch data was not yet available. One RAP member stated that if GOM cod is at 3% of spawning stock biomass, all gears capable of catching cod should be subject to a closure.

A point was made about the geographically disparate impacts of closures on fishermen. They went on to say that it is difficult to answer how the recreational fleet can cut catch without more data, noting that it should be criminal to fish on spawning cod.

The RAP discussed tools that would be needed to reduce catch of GOM cod. The idea of a slot limit was raised, and the RAP discussed this could address perception issue of not being able to keep cod. Full retention for recreational anglers was also raised as a possibility. Another RAP member suggested that a combined bag limit for GOM haddock and GOM cod could be an option. The RAP discussed the merits of moving away from a minimum size limit, allowing anglers to bring home what they catch. There was a lengthy discussion about how the recreational fleet can fish on GOM haddock and GOM cod now that the status of GOM haddock has changed. As the discussion progressed, there was concern that GOM cod will become a choke species for GOM haddock, and that the recreational fleet may have trouble prosecuting the haddock fishery while staying within the GOM cod ACL. A RAP member noted that there is a chance an angler will catch cod when targeting other species (e.g., haddock, pollock, redfish). The group discussed the idea of having a low or zero possession bag limit of GOM cod in order to have a higher bag limit on GOM haddock.

A RAP member asked if there are any gear modifications that the recreational fishery can use to reduce cod discard mortality. The RAP discussed merits of in-line circle hooks as compared to offset circle hooks with respect to discard mortality of cod to be able to access the haddock fishery. Some members stated that offset circle hooks are gutting fish, which in turn can lead to discard mortality. A RAP member stated that if the RAP is going to make a recommendation on circle hooks, that they would only support the use of an in-line circle hook. Another member stated that treble hooks increase the mortality of young cod. A point was made that the state of Maine mandates the use of in-line circle hooks when fishing for striped bass and bluefish when fishing with bait.

Public comment:

- Capt. Michael Pierdinock, Green Harbor, MA and Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association, Massachusetts Chairman of the Recreational Fishing Alliance: There was a study done at the University of New England that is going to be presented to a committee of the Council. The study is consistent with the RAP has said. The vast majority of mortality comes from the use of treble hooks. We pointed out that we don't use the treble hooks, we use a single hook on our jigs. This would minimize the mortality from cod getting hooked in the side. When the dogfish arrive we typically switch over to jigs because fishing with bait while dogfish are around is a mess. When jigging, we are using circle hooks. On our trips we basically don't handle the fish – we do our best not to touch the fish and have any impact on it. A lot of this could be educational to the recreational fishing community. A lot of charter boat captains are already doing this, and that is not being taken into consideration. Ultimately, the study had a range of estimated mortality that was as low as 4%, all the way to 20%. We are looking forward to the study getting published.

Continued discussion on FW53:

The RAP noted that public education is important, and hopes that NMFS will consult the recreational advisors when developing educational materials.

One RAP member pointed out that the discard mortality information being discussed by the RAP has to be looked at as part of the stock assessment process to have an effect on the perceived state of the resource. The RAP continued its discussion on measures that could reduce the bycatch of cod.

The RAP discussed avoiding areas where there are known concentrations of cod as a way to reduce catch and discard mortality. Some members felt that there are certain areas in the GOM where cod are concentrated in the spring, but the recreational fishery does not see a lot fish in the summer. RAP members noted that they have seen a lot of 10 inch cod in the inshore GOM. One member of the RAP suggested that draggers be removed from the fishery as a way to protect 10 inch codfish.

After healthy discussion, one advisor stated they felt the recommendations that the RAP had worked to develop were ignored last year.

Another member of the RAP suggested that there be a moratorium on cod, and that there should be zero fishing on the stock while it is at 3% of the spawning stock biomass. The member noted that the fishery should still try to get catch haddock, and that a bag limit could work. An advisor suggested exploring the concept of full retention with a trip termination based on the number of fish that are caught. An example was given of six fish, irrespective of the species, with full retention (i.e. keep what you catch), then trip termination.

In response to this suggestion, some members of the RAP expressed concern that limiting the number fish per angler to 6 fish, and a zero possession limit on cod would have a major economic impact on party/charter businesses, and lead to a huge reduction in the number of trips that are booked. Some members of the RAP felt that there should be separate rules and regulations for private anglers and party/charter for hire fleet because of differences in fishing behavior, and data collected by each fleet (Party/Charter fleet completes a vessel trip report). The RAP expressed concern the MRIP estimates for private anglers are not representative of the behavior of the party/charter for-hire fleet.

A private angler on the RAP stated that it is difficult for private anglers to stay away from cod. Many private anglers end up fishing in the general area of for-hire vessels. This member was upset by an earlier comment that private anglers don't care about the resource, and personally felt that the panel (RAP) has never gone for conservation. Another member of the RAP said they saw no reason for having different regulations for the party/charter and private anglers.

There was a brief discussion of using a tag system for cod in which Party/Charter boats could receive a set number of codfish tags for the year. One member pointed out that "salmon tags are used in Alaska, and that there are other ways to address catch. It is up to the industry – there is a lot of fish out there to catch (just not cod). How do we continue to operate despite severe constraints?" The RAP Chair questioned whether or not tagging, in and of itself, would reduce the bycatch of cod.

As the conversation progressed, several members of the RAP said that anglers should either use an inline circle hook, or a single hook on the end of a lure.

The RAP discussed whether or not anglers could change their targeting behavior. Party boat operators felt that they could change behavior to target individual species – but questioned how this could be proved to the Council.

Some members of the RAP believe that the MRIP numbers are totally off-base, and that the recreational fleet's catch is overestimated. There was a sentiment that catch estimates are driven by private angler harvests.

Another advisor questioned, "how would tags work for private anglers?" This question was not specifically answered in the RAP's discussion.

One advisor noted that times and areas where they used to see big (large) cod are now full of small haddock, with an occasional cod. This person said they don't see how you avoid cod while targeting haddock.

A RAP member suggested that they eliminate all of the people that don't belong in the fishery. The advisor suggested that in the striped bass fishery 50% of the commercial quota gets filled up by people who they (said RAP member) think don't really belong in the fishery. This RAP member said these anglers are not full time commercial fishermen - mostly teachers, cops, and firemen. That's great that they can get some extra money, but they don't need the fishery to survive. The RAP member explained that if you eliminate those individuals from the industry, you could cut catch by the percentage that you need to without reducing catch for full-time commercial fishermen. If you take that same thought process and apply it to GOM cod, and eliminate private anglers from the fishery and kept the party/charter boats in it, then you can achieve the recreational quota, and the party/charter boats would be able to survive because they need to. The advisor suggested that recreational fishermen could fish for other species.

A RAP member inquired about the control date that was put in place several years earlier (March 30th, 2006). The RAP discussed that the control date may not separate party charter from private anglers. Some members of the RAP felt that everyone in the recreational fleet is a private angler – and just because someone pays to get on a party/charter boat does not mean that they are more important than someone who wants to take their own boat out.

The discussion turned to the control date itself, and what has changed in the recreational fishery since 2006. Some RAP members thought that people with party/charter licenses are getting out rather than getting in. The Groundfish Committee Chair advised the RAP that it is difficult to know where the control date conversation will go until it takes place, and that it might end up not doing what members of the RAP think it will do. Another RAP member said that sector separation doesn't work, and thought that the RAP was trying to take fish away from each other. This member of the RAP suggested that all limited entry programs should mandate tax forms as proof of party/charter businesses.

The RAP circled back to the discussion on how to minimize catch of cod while catching haddock? Research completed by the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association (now Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance) that sought to target haddock but avoid cod on Georges Bank using different bait. The Groundfish Committee chair explained that the researchers and fishermen applied for an experimental fishing permit to target haddock and avoid cod for that study.

There was an idea that a group of charter boats could explore an experimental fishery if they want to explore targeting haddock and reducing cod catch. This was followed up by a member of the RAP indicating that he would like to learn more about research dollars that are available for the recreational community. Another RAP member asked his peers if they would be willing to make a recommendation that NMFS provide more information on how to get research underway in the recreational fishery.

AMENDMENT 18

Staff presentation: Amendment 18 update (Rachel Feeney)

In June, the Council passed a motion that would add measures to Amendment 18 that pertain to the recreational fishery. Staff provided an overview of this action, focusing on the measures that

would draw an inshore/offshore boundary line in the Gulf of Maine, divide the existing commercial and recreational GOM cod ACLs into inshore and offshore sub-ACLs, expand the existing gear restricted area in the inshore GOM, and create time periods for declaring in and out of the new inshore and offshore GOM areas. Staff provided the RAP with several questions that the Groundfish Committee (at its August 4th, 2014 meeting) asked that the RAP address to better understand the nature of the recreational fishery. These include understanding the proportion of private anglers and party/charter fishermen that fish either exclusively east or west of two boundary lines considered (70°W and 70°15'W longitude) in Amendment 18 alternatives, as well as the proportion of fleets that fish on both sides of the line on a given trip. The Committee also asked the RAP to give input on how the measures might be adapted for the recreational fleet, such that they could be monitored and enforced.

Discussion of the Presentation:

There were no questions on the presentation.

RAP Recommendations:

Chairman Gibson focused the discussion on the questions provided by the Committee. Several RAP members expressed that many private anglers and party/charter vessels can fish on both sides of either 70°W or 70°15'W longitude on a given trip. RAP members discussed how the near shore area off the coast of Maine, east of Cape Elizabeth, would be considered offshore under the alternatives, and suggested that, if a boundary line is drawn, that it be a consistent distance from shore (12-15 mi. from the shoreline), rather than the options currently being considered. To overcome data limitations, RAP members suggested that anecdotal spatial data on where recreational fishermen fish could be gathered through interviews or focus group meetings, such as was recently done by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council, in partnership with George Lapointe and the Island Institute.

Public comment:

- Capt. Michael Pierdinock, Green Harbor, MA and Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association: We fish both inside and outside of 70°W or 70°15'W, but my understanding of the purpose of these measures is to prevent large draggers from fishing inshore, which would help the cod rebuild.

Continued discussion on Amendment 18:

Overall, RAP members were concerned with the challenges associated with implementing these measures for the recreational fishery. Basing the sub-ACL on fishing locations would be very problematic given the lack of data on recreational fishing locations. It would be difficult to report, monitor and enforce the measures, given the lack of electronic systems (e.g., Vessel Monitoring System) in the recreational fishery. The infrastructure and mechanisms currently do not exist. Beyond more fine-scale catch attribution; a RAP member was unsure of the conservation benefit of the measures. On the declaration time periods, a RAP member was concerned about committing to fish offshore if the weather is bad. To make charter fishing work as a business, the RAP member explained that they have to go fishing every day, unlike the commercial vessels that can get by with fishing just during certain windows of time. There was concern that the Council is making management more and more complicated, and these measures

would not be effective at keeping large vessels from fishing on Stellwagen Bank. Another RAP member expressed safety concerns about incentivizing small vessels to fish offshore.

MOTIONS:

Motion #1: (J. Sterritt/T. Tower)

The RAP does not support the demarcation of an inshore/offshore line for the recreational fishery due to lack of benefit, impracticality, data limitations, and enforcement and safety concerns and the RAP requests that this is not implemented for the recreational fleet.

Rationale: The maker of the motion cited many of the points already articulated by RAP members, and stated that the recreational fishery (private and party/charter) should not be subject to these rules.

Discussion on the motion: No further discussion on the motion.

Motion # 1 carried on a show of hands (8/0/0).

The RAP Chair asked whether the RAP would like to weigh in on the application of these measures to the commercial fishery.

Motion #2: (J. Colby)

The RAP recommends that there be no fishing with otter trawls west of 70°W.

The motion failed for lack of a second.

Motion #3: (T. DePersia/R. Bellevance)

The RAP supports the development of an inshore/offshore line for the commercial fleet based on historical access by that component of the fishery.

Rationale: The intent of these measures should be to limit inshore fishing by larger trawl vessels, though the maker of the motion was unsure whether this would achieve that.

Discussion on the motion: Though a RAP member was concerned about large vessels fishing inshore, he was concerned that the measures may impact small vessels the same way as the recreational vessels that the RAP was concerned about. Allowing ACE trading would not constrain large vessels from fishing inshore. Another RAP member disagreed with this approach entirely, that there are better ways to achieve cod mortality reductions.

Public comment:

- Capt. Michael Pierdinock: The charter boats are limited by the distance that customers want to steam to fishing grounds. The small commercial draggers on the South Shore are promoting this, because they are limited in how far they can go. They are looking for restrictions that would prevent the larger vessels from fishing inshore.

Discussion continued: RAP members felt that since the measures currently do not include measures that limit larger vessels from fishing inshore or leasing quota from smaller vessels, it could not be supported. Another RAP member felt that the sector system ruined the cod fishery, and these measures cloud the situation. RAP members expressed support for the 70°W, but also felt that the RAP should not be involved in the details of the commercial fishery.

Motion #3 as friendly amended:

The RAP supports the development of an inshore/offshore line at 70°W for the commercial fleet based on historical access by that component of the fishery.

Discussion continued: A RAP member felt that these measures should not apply to the commercial rod and reel vessels (e.g., Handgear A), though another RAP member felt that the small vessels support this concept. Staff clarified that there currently are not measures that would restrict fishing inshore by vessel size.

Motion #3 failed on a show of hands (3/5/0).

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF THE FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 53:

Motion #4: (P. Paquette/D. Swanson)

The RAP supports the concept that any GOM cod spawning closures be closed to all gears capable of catching GOM cod.

Rationale: This would include recreational fishing gears, herring mid-water trawl, any gear capable of catching cod. The maker noted that there is an existing definition of gears that are capable of catching cod. The maker indicated that tuna and shark fishing would be allowed in the GOM cod closure areas. This motion is not based on geography – but on the premise that if cod are spawning that they need to be protected from all gears.

Discussion on the motion: The RAP discussed looking at the definition of gears capable of catching cod before voting on this motion. There was concern that groundfish closures are encroaching on areas that are important to other fisheries. Tuna fishing is allowed in the existing Whaleback cod spawning closure area. Many members on the RAP felt that the proposal was too broad without knowing where the closed areas would be.

Motion #4 failed on a show of hands 1/6/1.

Motion #5: (T. DePersia/ J. Colby)

The RAP would support for analysis purposes a small or no possession of GOM cod if it means continued prosecution of other recreational fisheries (e.g., haddock, pollock, etc.). The RAP reserves its judgment on haddock bag limits, size limits, seasons, etc for FY 2015 until such data is provided.

Discussion on the motion: The RAP expressed concern over being able to book trips without information on what the possession limits will be for the coming fishing year. A member of the RAP asked that NMFS provide information as soon as possible to the party/charter fleet. Members of the RAP suggested that a large haddock bag limit would help sell trips, and the more haddock the better. There was discussion about whether or not to recommend a specific bag limit and minimum fish size, but after discussion the RAP felt it needed more information to suggest a number to the Council. One member of the RAP felt that this motion would result in higher mortality on GOM cod. Some members of the RAP said they would support a zero possession of cod if it applied to both the commercial and recreational fleets. Most members of the RAP would not support an unlimited bag limit for haddock. There was concern about when the recreational data becomes available.

Motion #5 as friendly amended:

The RAP would support for analysis purposes a small or no possession of GOM cod if it means continued prosecution of other recreational fisheries (e.g., haddock, pollock, etc.). The RAP reserves its judgment on haddock bag limits, size limits, seasons, etc for FY 2015 until such data is provided. The RAP requests this information be provided in a timely manner.

Continued discussion: There was discussion on whether or not to ask for the recreational catch estimates by a certain date.

Public comment:

- Willie Whitmore, Greater Atlantic Regional Office: The RAP may be overthinking this motion. All I am reading on this motion is that the RAP is willing to see what an option looks like if we have a zero possession limit. Last year we came up with several different options presented them to the RAP. If we see something like this, we'll repeat our process from last year. We'll look at a zero possession of cod, and see what we think you would get for a bag limit for haddock. One thing to realize is that even if you have zero possession of cod, the model assumes some cod catch because the two species are caught together. The RAP is not pinning yourselves to anything. You are asking us to run the model with zero possession of cod. NMFS needs to know what the quota and catch limits will be before taking this recommendation further.

Continued Discussion: A RAP member indicated that this has implications for state waters fisheries as well, which has broad implications.

Motion #5 carried on a show of hands (7/1/0).

OTHER BUSINESS:

Motion #6: (R. Bellevance/ T. DePersia)

The RAP requests that the Committee revisit the allocation of GOM haddock, due to the recalculation of recreational discard mortality in the recent assessment, in the next available action.

Rationale: Allocations reflect assumed discard mortality. By changing the discard mortality estimates for GOM haddock in the latest assessment, the recreational allocation should be higher than what it currently is.

Discussion on the motion: A RAP member asked how many years that the recreational discard mortality estimates were at zero. There was also concern expressed around the overall impact of revisiting allocations based on discard mortality assumptions.

Motion #6 passed on a show of hands (5/0/3).

A RAP member requested that the RAP Chair work with Council staff to identify questions that the RAP might have in advance of the meeting so that staff can bring additional data to RAP meetings.

Another RAP member asked about looking into limited access for the Party/Charter component of the recreational fishery. Several avenues for pursuing this idea were identified, including individually addressing the GF Committee or the full Council, or making a motion at the RAP to request the Committee to identify this as a priority. There was interest in revisiting this discussion at the next RAP meeting. The RAP Chair indicated interest in seeing the overall history of control dates, as well as the current number of party/charter permits.

Another member requested that the RAP discuss SNE winter flounder at its next meeting, particular the impact that commercial trip limits may be having on the state waters recreational fishery.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:23pm.