



## 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, Danvers, MA

January 22, 2015

The Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) met on January 22nd, 2015 in Danvers, Massachusetts to: 1) discuss and recommend Gulf of Maine (GOM) haddock and GOM cod accountability measures (AMs) for FY 2015; 2) to discuss and recommend other related issues to the Groundfish Committee (Committee) as appropriate; 3) initiate discussion of recreational management measure process improvement; 4) hold elections for Chair and Vice Chair of the Recreational Advisory Panel; and 5) discuss other business as necessary.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** Mr. Barry Gibson (Chair), Michael Sosik Jr. (Vice Chair), Mr. Patrick Paquette, Mr. Michael Plaia, Mr. Joseph Huckemeyer, Mr. Jonathan Sterritt, Mr. Kevin Twombly, Mr. Tom DePersia, Mr. Jason Colby, Mr. Richard Bellavance Jr., Mr. Tim Tower, Mr. Donald Swanson, Mr. Peter Gawne, Mr. Frank Blount (Groundfish Committee Chair, NEFMC), Dr. Jamie Cournane, Mr. Jonathon Peros (NEFMC Staff), Mr. Mark Grant (NMFS GARFO), Mr. Scott Steinback (NEFSC/SSB). In addition, approximately 12 members of the public attended.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:** Discussions were aided by: (Document #1) Meeting memo to the Recreational Advisory Panel from Mr. Frank Blount, Groundfish Committee Chairman dated January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015; ( Document #2) Recreational Advisory Panel Meeting Agenda posted on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015; (Document #3) Section 4 (Alternatives) of Draft Framework Adjustment 53, dated January 16<sup>th</sup>; (Document #4) Staff presentation on recreational management measures contained in Draft Framework Adjustment 53; (Document #4b) Recreational catch and effort tables, dated January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015; (Document #5) Presentation on potential Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock proactive accountability measures for FY 2015, (Document #6) discussion document on methods to reduce recreational discard mortality; (Document #7a) presentation on recreational management measures process improvement; (Document #7b) excerpt from Framework Adjustment 48 to the Groundfish FMP; (Document #8) Recreational Advisory Panel meeting summary of September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014 meeting; (Documents #9 & #9a) correspondence and additional correspondence. Mr. Grant handed out correspondence from Mr. John Bullard (GARFO) to Mr. Tom Nies (NEFMC) at the meeting.

**KEY OUTCOMES:**

- The RAP made several motions and consensus statements aimed at reducing noncompliance and discard mortality for GOM cod and GOM haddock in the recreational fishery.
  - These included recommendations on restrictions on the type of hooks that can be used to groundfish in the Gulf of Maine, and the number of hooks that can be fished per line.
- The RAP expressed concern with the accuracy of MRIP catch and effort estimates being used in the bio-economic model.
  - The RAP felt that recreational fishing effort in fishing year 2015 is being overestimated in the bio-economic model. This overestimates catch and underestimates impact on fishing businesses.
  - The RAP expects that fishing behavior will change in response to a zero possession limit for GOM cod, and effort will be redirected to other species and cod mortality will be reduced.
- The RAP recommended exploration of mechanisms for party/charter boats to have a reduced season in exchange for an increased bag limit.
- The RAP began work on improving the recreational management measures improving process, and will continue this discussion at the next RAP meeting.
- The RAP elected Mr. Barry Gibson as Chair, and Mr. Patrick Paquette as Vice Chair.

The meeting began at 10:05 am.

The Chair began the meeting by introducing the day's agenda, and asked the RAP and members of the audience to introduce themselves.

Council staff made general announcements, noting that the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) would be meeting the following week (January 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>) at the Sheraton in Portsmouth, NH. Outcomes of this RAP meeting will be reported to the full Council at their meeting. The Council is seeking applicants for several advisory panels (APs). Applications were provided at the meeting, and are due to the end of the January.

**Overview of the Council's Groundfish Priorities for 2015 (Mr. Blount & Dr. Cournane)**

Council staff reviewed Council priorities for 2015 (see table below from Document #1). Staff explained that there are two different tracks for Groundfish priorities (single year or annual, and multi-year). Both annual and multi-year priorities were presented to the RAP.

<b><u>2015 Groundfish Priorities</u></b>	
<b><u>Annual</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set specifications for all groundfish stocks 2016-2018*</li><li>• Set specifications for United States/Canada stocks for 2016*</li><li>• Recreational measures management process*</li><li>• Staff: Five year sector review</li><li>• Staff: TMGC/TRAC</li><li>• Staff: Operational/update assessments*</li><li>• Staff: Discussion paper on management alternative for windowpane flounder</li><li>• Staff: Coordinate with Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Lobster Technical Committee on lobster trap bycatch of groundfish species*</li></ul>
<b><u>Multi-Year</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to coordinate action on the Habitat Omnibus Amendment 2 to include possible modifications of the Groundfish closed areas*</li><li>• Complete Amendment 18 to consider fleet diversity and accumulations caps</li><li>• Develop alternative strategies for setting catch advice for stability in annual catch limits (ACLs)*</li><li>• Process for review of groundfish catch in other fisheries*</li><li>• Staff: Cod Stock Structure Workshop*</li></ul>
<b><u>Other</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Electronic Monitoring Working Group (reports to the Council)</li></ul>

**Questions on Council Priorities:**

A RAP member stated that they thought that limited access for the party/charter fleet had been identified as a priority for FY 2015. Mr. Blount responded that the Council had not elected to make this a priority, and it is very unlikely that limited entry for party/charter will be addressed this year. Another advisor asked if there was a way that the RAP could stress to the Council that limited entry is a very important issue for the RAP. He went on to say that the RAP would like to see this issue make it into the priorities pipeline. Mr. Blount explained that the best thing for the RAP to do is to continue to recommend limited access for party/charter as a priority to the Committee. Another member wondered if the Council considered the number of participants in the fishery in its priorities discussion, and whether or not there has been growth or contraction to the number of participants? Mr. Blount stated that the Council did not discuss the number of party/charter participants during its priorities discussion. As the discussion continued there was interest expressed by the RAP in seeing a profile of the party/charter fleet over the last ten years. Another member of the RAP noted that the decline in the available resource was a driver of the interest as there is less total resource to go around to all participants. Staff noted that the next RAP meeting will likely be in the spring of 2015, and that there will be another opportunity for advisors to weigh in on RAP priorities at that point.

Mr. Blount pointed out that the Council will be making recommendations on proactive accountability measures (e.g., bag limits, minimum sizes, and seasons) to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) at the Council meeting next week, but cautioned that these will only be recommendations and that NMFS has the final say in setting AMs for FY 2015. Mr. Blount recognized that people may want to comment on

Framework Adjustment 53 (FW53) at this meeting, but noted that the Council had taken final action on FW53 in November 2014. He suggested that the best place to make comments is to NMFS during the public comment period on the proposed rule, particularly because NMFS will respond to comments it receives on the framework.

### **Gulf of Maine Cod and Gulf of Maine Haddock**

#### **Staff presentation: Draft Framework Adjustment 53 Alternatives: Summary of Potential Recreational Measures (Dr. Cournane)**

Council staff provided a description of the measures contained in draft FW53 that were selected as preferred by the Council (document #4). Staff walked through the timeline of the FW53, focusing on key milestones between the Council's final action in November 2014 and NMFS publishing the final rule sometime later in 2015. The alternatives contained in FW53 (see Document #3) include updates 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).

A member of the RAP asked if there should have been another RAP meeting in October of 2014 to provide input on FW53. Staff explained that the September RAP meeting in South Portland, ME was an opportunity for the RAP to comment on FW53. Staff also noted that the RAP chair and vice-chair both participated (i.e., sat at the Committee table) for the Committee's November meeting in Revere, MA. Council staff explained that RAP motions made at the September meeting were forwarded to the Committee.

Council staff provided an overview of the alternatives that the Council selected as preferred in FW53. The Council selected revised annual catch limits as preferred. If approved, ACLs for eight stocks would be updated in FW53, including GOM cod, Gulf of Maine (GOM) haddock, and pollock. These updates would result in a 372 metric ton sub-ACL for the recreational fishery of GOM haddock in fishing year 2015, and a 121 metric ton sub-ACL for GOM cod. The Council's Science and Statistical Committee's (SSC) recommendation for pollock was to keep the acceptable biological catch constant three years at 16,000 metric tons.

Staff presented the Council's preferred alternative for default groundfish specifications (4.2.3.1 Option 2 in document #3). Staff explained that this measure was designed to allow the fishing year to begin on time (May 1<sup>st</sup>) in the event of a delay in rulemaking by setting the ACL at 35% of the prior year's ACL until replaced by new specifications. Staff noted that all 20 groundfish stocks will be assessed in September of 2015, and that this measure would address concerns about implementing a final rule in time for May 1<sup>st</sup> at the start of the FY 2016.

A member of the RAP asked about the interplay of the 2014 interim management measures for GOM cod and default rollover of groundfish specifications. It was clarified that if this provision is approved in the framework, the first year that it would be in effect is fishing year 2016 (May 1). The idea is that the transition from one fishing year to the next would be seamless for harvesters, and new specifications would go into place upon rulemaking. A member of the RAP asked when the recreational fishery would be allowed to begin in 2015, and wanted to know what party/charter operators should be telling their customers.

- Mr. Grant: *The current interim management measures run through May 12<sup>th</sup> unless something new is put into place. If FW53 is approved in time for May 1<sup>st</sup>, the framework would override the interim management measures. Similarly, if we take proactive accountability measures for the recreational fishery in 2015 and we can get them in place*

*by May 1<sup>st</sup>. If we can't do that, the current interim measures would remain in place until May 12<sup>th</sup>.* Mr. Grant remained at the audience table to answer RAP questions.

An advisor asked if there was any reason to think that NMFS would not approve FW53. Mr. Grant explained that the framework had just been submitted and it was too early to know. The advisor asked about the timeline for NMFS to review frameworks. Mr. Grant explained that the preliminary submission was behind schedule, but that the goal remains to have measures in place for May 1<sup>st</sup>. Another advisor sought clarification of Mr. Grant's guidance, asking that if FW53 is not in place for May 1<sup>st</sup>, but that the proactive AMs for the recreational fishery were, could the recreational fishery begin on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Grant indicated that if recreational measures were put into place on May 1<sup>st</sup> ahead of FW53 then the recreational fishery could potentially begin on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Staff continued the presentation by explaining the Council's preferred alternative for GOM cod management measures (see 4.2.1.3.2 Option 2 of Document #3). An advisor asked if Whaleback would be closed to the recreational fishery. Mr. Blount answered that under the Council's preferred GOM cod management measure, there would be no changes to time/area closures that apply to the recreational fishery (for example, recreational fishery would continue to have access to the Western Gulf of Maine Closed Area and the Gulf of Maine Rolling Closures). There was a brief discussion about the management measures that would apply to the commercial fishery, including an overview of the discard rates by Council staff and Mr. Mark Grant. The RAP sought clarification on when it was decided to have a zero possession limit of GOM cod for the recreational fishery. Mr. Blount stated that it was decided at the November 2014 Council meeting, and that he had made a motion that set the recreational possession limit of cod to zero and exempted the recreational fleet from time and area closures that would apply to the commercial fishery. It was explained that the Council's preferred alternative (GOM cod protection measures, 4.2.1.3.2 in Document #3) would prohibit the possession of cod within the GOM Broad Stock Area (BSA), but there are no changes to when and where recreational anglers could fish for other groundfish species.

One member of the RAP felt that the Council's preferred alternative was fair to recreational anglers, noting the closures that the commercial fleet would be subject to. The RAP discussed the trade-offs between possession and closed areas, and recounted earlier discussions when the advisors had preferred access to areas with zero possession of cod over possession of cod while being subject to closed areas.

**Public comment:**

- Roger Brisson, Charter Fisherman from Gloucester, Massachusetts: *Who made the recommendation for zero possession of cod? I've been a fisherman for 40 years rod and reel. Nobody asked my opinion. I've never seen so many codfish in my life. The fish are moving differently, and a lot of times they are not where they used to be. Everything is changing, temperature, bottom structure with all the raking. Zero possession is too far out. Another thing, when we make decisions on cod, it seems to me that over the years that the decisions always favor the fish, never the fishermen and the businesses. We are the ones who will either suffer the most or profit the most, and I don't think that has been considered at all. I have a commercial hand gear permit, so I can always survive. I would like you to think about this and talk to veterans like myself. I made a living for years within 5-6 miles of Gloucester Harbor. I think zero possession of Gulf of Maine cod is the wrong decision.*

A member of the RAP asked if vessels fishing below 42° north can keep cod and transit the GOM cod into the (GOM) broad stock area. Mr. Blount stated the existing transiting provision from Georges Bank stock area through the GOM were not proposed to be changed in FW53.

**Presentation: Gulf of Maine Cod and Haddock: Review of the Recreational Bioeconomic Model and Potential Accountability Measures for Fishing Year 2015 (Mr. Steinback and Mr. Min-Yang Lee, NMFS – NEFSC)**

Mr. Steinback provided a brief overview of the recreational bioeconomic model (see Document #5 and Document #4b). He explained that the SSCs of both the Mid-Atlantic and New England Council reviewed the model in 2012 during a joint meeting. Since 2013, the model has been used to set AMs for the recreational fishery. Center staff examined a range of scenarios (e.g., 50-60) that combine fishing seasons, bag limits, and minimum fish sizes of GOM cod and haddock as proactive AMs for FY 2015. Several scenarios were presented to the advisors.

Mr. Steinback continued by providing an overview of the components of the model (economic/behavioral and biological) and how the model simulates likely angler behavior in response to potential changes in regulations. Mr. Steinback reviewed the performance of the model, noting that the model underestimated recreational mortality by 33% and 25% in FY 2013 and FY 2014, respectively, when compared to Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimates. He went on to explain that in FY 2014, the model began to incorporate non-compliance into the model using MRIP data. Mr. Steinback speculated that this may be a reason that the model output was closer to the actual estimate in 2014. The algorithm for how trips are retained in the simulation was modified because the model was underestimating effort that was occurring according to the MRIP data. The model was also calibrated to estimate effort and mortality that occurred in 2014 within 5%.

Mr. Steinback summarized the uncertainties with the model and the projections. He noted that for the FY 2015 projections, the model did not consider changes in fishing behavior and acknowledged that if anglers are able to avoid cod, discard mortality would likely be lower. Mr. Steinback also acknowledged that non-compliance with regulations is another source of uncertainty. Additionally, the model is sensitive to the number of fish that will be encountered by recreational anglers (e.g., directed angling is assume to end when the bag limit is reached).

Mr. Steinback then explained the results of model runs (see pp. 7 of Document #5). He began with status quo model runs, which estimated cod and haddock mortality to be well in excess of the proposed FW53 recreational fishery sub-ACLs for GOM cod (121 mt) and GOM haddock (372 mt). He presented the median values of 100 model runs. These runs estimated that there would be 195,295 trips under status quo AMs prior to the interim actions (i.e., FY 2014 proactive AMs). A member of the RAP asked what percentage of discards are assumed dead. Mr. Steinback stated that the estimated discard mortality is 50% for haddock, and 30% for cod. Mr. Steinback presented FY 2015 simulation projection results of proactive AMs using a cod discard mortality rate of 30% and a haddock discard mortality rate of 50% (see Slide 8 of Document #5). All projection runs included a zero possession (i.e., zero bag limit) of cod. The seasons used in the model ran from May 1 to August 31 in all models. Four scenarios were brought forward. In the simulation projections, kept cod is the non-compliance captured in the model. None of the scenarios (which varied minimum fish sizes and bag limits for haddock) achieved a mortality estimate for cod less than the proposed GOM cod sub-ACL under FW53 (121 mt). When haddock minimum sizes were set at 17", the model projected that the GOM haddock harvest would be under the FY2015 sub-ACL.

Mr. Steinback noted that he looked at combination bag limits of cod and haddock, as well as slot limits. He presented results from sensitivity runs in which the estimated discard mortality rates of the cod (10%) and haddock (25%) were decreased from the estimates that are used in the stock assessments for those

stocks. In another sensitivity, he presented results in which non-compliance was assumed to be reduced by 50%, along with reduced estimated discard mortality rates.

A RAP member asked if NMFS does the same modeling for commercial fishery. Mr. Steinback explained that a different model is used in the commercial fishery to answer a different set of questions. An advisor wondered rhetorically whether or not using a model to set recreational AMs was working. An advisor asked if the data in the model is split by mode (private anglers v. party v. charter). The recreational model combines charter and head boat modes with private boats. The advisor continued by asking Mr. Steinback to review how MRIP data factors into the model. MRIP data is used in the model, particularly length frequency data, which is used to determine the lengths on cod and haddock anglers are likely to encounter. Mr. Steinback explained that this is a wave by wave model. Another member of the RAP asked if vessel trip reports (VTRs) from the for-hire fleet are used in the model. VTRs are not used in the model. The RAP member inquired about model assumptions when a bag limit is reached, offering a scenario reaching a low bag limit quickly on a full day trip. Mr. Steinback explained that the model assumes the when you hit your bag limit, you stop fishing.

A RAP member recalled a presentation at a previous meeting at which the RAP was discussing closing different waves. They asked if there was any consideration of closing wave 3 in this model. That is to say, if you close Wave 3, are the results are different and would the bag limit change. Mr. Steinback responded in the affirmative, saying that this was looked at. The projection scenarios that were brought forward allowed for the largest overall number of angler trips. He conveyed that by closing waves the bag limit may change, but the overall amount of effort would be reduced. An advisor asked how non-compliance is estimated in the model. Non-compliance was measured using available 2014 MRIP survey data. The data comes from interviews of anglers and measurements of fish. All anglers do not know the regulations, and so there are lengths and weights taken that represent known non-compliance. A RAP member asked Mr. Steinback if he thought that the MRIP figures are correct. Mr. Steinback stated that there is no changing the MRIP estimates, and noted that the MRIP estimates have been improving.

**Public Comment:**

- Mike Pierdinock – *You have my correspondence, I won't get into the details but it points out the flaws in the MRIP program and issues with the statistics, specifically with recreational landings. As we look at it, it just is not in touch with reality, and it is a result of the process and how they go about doing the random phone calls, and how they go about going to the dock and speaking to the individuals that are fishing as recreational anglers, or recreational anglers that go off on charter boats. I'm quite surprised and disappointed that VTRs are not being used in the model. If you are not using VTRs, then a typical six-pack, those individuals come off the boat and are interviewed. I know here in Massachusetts there are Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries personnel interviewing folks at the dock. Maybe [anglers] can accurately report on what they caught, but to be asked to report what they threw back? Somebody from Idaho comes out for the day and maybe they say I threw back 50 – 100, and then that gets reported, and it is just disappointing to see that. I think that the consistency with that is, as you said, you are doing separate modes and separate process, and you made the statement earlier that you continue to underestimate the bag limit based on the MRIP data. I would contend that this is because the MRIP data is skewed and not correct, and I would hope that the RAP would make the point perfectly clear to the Council that this has to change. I was at a training meeting recently, moderating, and that was the Marine Resource Education Program science module where the people from NMFS basically pointed out that the MRIP process is flawed, and that changes are supposed to be made over the next three years to try to address that. My question was what are those changes, when can they be implemented, and how can that help us now? Unfortunately we sit here today using inaccurate data that will put the fleet out of business. I really recommend that you read*

*my correspondence, because the points are in there. The noncompliance – there was noncompliance in 2014. I remember you talking about it Frank. People weren't aware of the changes in state and federal waters. I would expect that noncompliance would go down. I can see how you played with the numbers to show that. I'm concerned about the model. How many vessels did you take into consideration? I indicated that there were 120 active vessels recently. Did you use the 120 vessels or the 200? Because that will skew the data. I hope that the message is sent to the Council that I have no faith in the data. We should be using the VTRs. They are using the recreational data from the interviews to generate VTRs, and it doesn't look right. Unfortunately this puts all of us in a position to make a decision here, I give you credit for doing what you've done, but with these numbers, it is over. This will be the end of the recreational groundfish fleet here in Massachusetts and elsewhere because we can't live with a 3 or 4 haddock bag limit. Thank you.*

- Paul Perra – Sustainable Fisheries Division NMFS. *I want to clarify that the VTRs are looked at. I've had conversations with our assessment scientists that are looking at them, as well as the MRIP scientists. That being said, MRIP data is the primary driver. The VTRs are not discarded, they are used to ground truth data when questions come up. The agency is looking nationwide into the verification of the logbook for-hire fleet. The commercial logbooks are more verifiable because they do sell the fish. That activity does go on at NMFS, we are looking to improve the logbooks so they are more useful.*

The RAP Chair indicated that he had attended a NMFS recreational symposium 15 years ago, and it was stated that recreational VTRs are not used for management purposes because the data was not verifiable. The Chair encouraged NMFS to do whatever can be done to make VTRs from the for-hire fleet more usable and useful for management purposes. The Groundfish Committee Chair stated that when examining the logbook data – the important thing to do is compare trends in the VTR and MRIP data.

The point was made that in the sensitivity run on slide 10 of document #5, the best case scenario of 4 haddock at 17" with four months open would come very close to achieving the recreational sub-ACL for haddock. Therefore, the GOM haddock sub-ACL would be constraining even without cod. From there, you can only go to mode splits or wave splits.

A member of the RAP asked why electronic logbooks were not available for for-hire vessels, noting that he had been filling out the same form since logbooks were put in place. This member went on to ask if there has been any comparison with between the number of VTR trips and MRIP data. Mr. Paul Perra from NMFS indicated that electronic reporting is available for VTRs. NMFS is trying to make it more accessible in the future with the right gear. The RAP went on to discuss electronic reporting, and a member of the RAP provided some clarification for the group stating that there are only two tools that can currently be used for electronic reporting, and that NMFS should look into other tools in development that could be used. The RAP requested a formal presentation on the electronic reporting of VTRs that is available at the next RAP meeting. Mr. Perra felt that a presentation would be timely, continuing to say that NMFS is working with the state of North Carolina on an application for state charter boats.

**Public Comment:**

Mark Godfrey - *I have one question that needs clarification. For trips - are you saying that there were 170,000 trips taken in a four month period? That is about 120 days, so quick math would say that would be 1,400 to 1,500 boats fishing in the Gulf of Maine every day. (Mr. Steinback responded that angler trips refers to the number of anglers, not boats). And cod kept – noncompliance – is just about illegal activity? (Mr. Steinback answered that he was correct).*



Mr. Godfrey and Mr. Steinback talked through assumptions of the model, MRIP data, and discard mortality estimates at the audience table. Mr. Steinback answered questions about the ratio of cod mortality between non-compliance landings and discard mortality. In general, Mr. Godfrey felt that non-compliance estimates were high.

**Public Comment:**

*Thomas Orrell – Yankee fishing fleet, Gloucester, MA. Putting aside the VTRs and the MRIP data. I'm not arguing or debating fleets. It seems to me that there are two important factors here that we've all pretty much agreed on. One is the non-compliance issue, and the other one is the discard mortality rate. Has anyone given any consideration to the different modes with regard to noncompliance? A typical John Doe who goes out fishing but does not know the regulations is more likely to be noncompliant, in my opinion, than the other modes. If they don't know how to handle the fish, then the mortality rate goes up. If you look at the six pack charter, it is less transparent, and more likely to get away with any noncompliance, but would to deal with the mortality rate. If you take a vessel like myself, we have 20 – 50 people on the boat, it is extremely transparent. Anybody can buy a ticket and get on the boat. Once on the boat, anglers police each other. If someone is keeping a small fish, someone else will report it because they can't keep it. If you separate these modes out, you'd be able to collect better data. The larger head boats are totally transparent, will have lower non-compliance, and will handle the fish properly and decrease the mortality rate. My point is that I think in the future you should consider separation of the head boats and the six-pack charters. The Coast Guard does this already with different vessel categories. Thank you.*

Mr. Orrell was asked about the estimated 13% decrease in trips in the Gulf of Maine coming out of the model for fishing year 2015: *In your estimation, with zero possession of cod, a 3 or 4 haddock bag limit, do you think that you will have a 13% decrease in your business next year?* Mr. Orrell stated that he expects his business to be off by more than 13%, but that he thought it would be survivable as opposed to not being able to go fishing.

It was pointed out that if the results of a model run show that a particular bag limit, fish size, season, and discard mortality estimate yields estimates that are close to the recreational sub-ACLs, the RAP should craft justification for NMFS to set proactive AMs with a model output that puts fish on the deck. Given the RAP's and audience's sentiment that the projections were overestimating effort (i.e., underestimating the decline in effort), this information should be forwarded to the Council and conveyed to NMFS. The RAP and members of the audience felt that customer perception is very important, and that a four haddock bag limit would be preferable to three fish.

**Public Comment:**

*Mike Pierdinock – Can you put up table 9 (in Document #4b)? It indicates that there are 78,167 angler trips on charter boats for fishing year 2014. As I pointed out in my correspondence, if there is 78,167 anglers on a charter boat, so if that is a typical six-pack, would result in 72 charter boats fishing every day from April to mid-November. Is that assumption correct? If it is, it is not reality. You have my correspondence, and I hope that someone looks at it and is able to answer some of these questions because there are a lot of issues with the numbers and reality.*

Mr. Steinback responded to Mr. Pierdinock's questions, with some back and forth. Mr. Steinback confirmed that the FY 2014 estimates, and offered to respond to each point in the correspondence directly. Mr. Pierdinock stated that he hoped that NMFS look into the number of the active charter vessels that fished in the GOM and adjust any estimates accordingly. There was a question about Mr. Pierdinock's estimate of the number of active charter vessels in the Gulf of Maine, and the RAP

speculated that the total number of angler trips could have been all charter boats fishing in the Gulf of Maine, not just groundfish trips (using tuna trips as an example).

A member of the RAP stated that non-compliance estimates for haddock in 2014 were driven by one measured fish. This advisor felt that the RAP could beat the data up for days on end, but the RAP should focus on doing their best for the recreational fishery at this meeting. He stated that the RAP meeting is not the place to improve data, though we all want it improved. The RAP began discussing some of the tables presented, focusing on Table 12 of Document #4b. It was pointed out that when the recreational fleet could not catch cod/haddock in the GOM, trips decreased by 85% (i.e., when wave 5 was closed). A member of the RAP asked why the mortality estimates were increased for the model. Mr. Steinback pointed out that the model has underestimated mortality two years in the row. He said that if we keep underestimating, then we'll likely look at building in a buffer into the model.

#### **Presentation: Results of Peer-Reviewed Circle Hook Studies (Mr. Grant)**

Mr. Grant presented a summary of three circle hook studies (See Document #6). He noted that the problem managers are facing is that even with zero possession of GOM cod, discard mortality and non-compliance estimates in the model still exceed the GOM cod sub-ACL for the recreational fishery. Mr. Grant spoke to balancing conservation requirements with economic needs of the fishery. Looking at the recreational model, no scenarios exist in which the haddock fishery can be prosecuted without going over the GOM cod sub-ACL. This led to the additional sensitivity runs in which discard mortality for both cod and haddock were reduced, and a scenario in which non-compliance was reduced by 50%.

Mr. Grant presented peer-reviewed research that looked at discard mortality associated with circle hooks, and began his discussion by requesting the RAP's feedback on the information that was provided. Mr. Grant pointed out that the same studies were used in the southeast region to implement use of circle hooks in the red snapper and red grouper fishery. Mr. Grant was interested in what the recreational community as a whole could do to reduce discard mortality and non-compliance. In general, the Cooke and Suski meta-analysis (see Document #6) found that circle hooks reduced mortality by 50% compared to J-hooks, and that circle hooks do not work the same for all species. Circle hooks are fished differently than J-hooks, as the fish sets the hook itself. To determine the efficacy of circle hooks, it is important to consider the mouth shape and feeding behavior of the animal. Mr. Grant explained that regulations in the commercial groundfish fishery require the use of a number 12 circle hook. The other two studies Mr. Grant presented examined the biology of the animal with respect to the hook shape. As cod are more like suction feeders, circle hooks could further reduce discard mortality. Mr. Grant suggested that the RAP might consider recommending a requirement to use circle hooks in the recreational fishery, similar to those of the commercial longline fishery.

#### ***Questions and Discussion:***

A member of the RAP asked if it would be possible to increase the haddock bag limit by mandating circle hooks. Mr. Grant stated that the process is not that straightforward, and explained that the stock assessment's discard mortality assumption is used for in-year catch accounting. Mr. Grant indicated that if the RAP felt that circle hooks would help reduce discard mortality, then NMFS could start looking at how that information would fit into management.

A member of the RAP stated that they had used only commercial longline circle hooks for the last five years, had not gut hooked a single fish. The RAP noted that there are different types of circle hooks, and the advisors felt that in-line circle hooks should be used because off-set circle hooks (where point of hook does not align with the shank of the hook) will gut hook fish.

The RAP went on to discuss the use of J-hooks on jigs versus treble hooks. Mr. Grant noted that a recent unpublished study by Mandleman et al. looked at discard mortality in the GOM using jigs rigged with J-hooks and treble hooks. The results of this work are still preliminary, were not brought forward for discussion.

A member of the RAP felt that the advisors needed to do the most to get what they could out of the fishery that they do have, and part of this is a need to cut down on illegal fishing and the actual discard mortality, noting that *we need to do something that can move the process forward and make positive improvements to the estimates, and that circle hooks work for both cod and haddock*. This advisor suggested that improving the release of the fish could reduce discard mortality, and that an instruction pamphlet educating the public could be a useful. The RAP felt that if you do use a hook remover, you should not touch the fish. The point was made that how a fish is treated factors into the discard mortality. An advisor agreed that mandating in-line circle hooks and using J-hooks with jigs made sense, but was concerned about the time it would take to implement rules, and notify the public and fishing business like tackle shops. This advisor felt that there should be a sunset on any hook regulations because there are reasons to use treble hooks on a jig, and J-hooks with bait.

An advisor recommended using single point J-hook, as there are J-hooks that have two points. Another advisor felt that the RAP needed to consider how the recreational fleet prosecutes the pollock fishery. They wanted to ensure that the hook regulations would work for the pollock fishery as well because it is going to become a more substantial portion of party/charter businesses.

There was a question from the RAP about how their recommendations would play out in management. Mr. Grant reiterated that to have a bag limit of any haddock, there needs to be a reduction in cod discard mortality. There was some question as to whether or not the economic cost of switching over to new hooks would be worth an increase in a haddock bag limit from 3 to 4 fish. The advisor wondered if the RAP should go to a 1 hook regulation and allow flexibility for rigging with different hooks. In response, Mr. Grant stated that unless we reduce the cod discard mortality rate – none of the options work (with the runs in the model). A RAP member pointed out that the RAP feels that there would be a larger decrease in participation than the model is estimating, which would result in a smaller number of angler trips.

A member of the RAP brought up a Scandinavian study that looked at the mortality associated with J-hooks with automatic de-hookers, reporting that the study found that 100% of the mortality is caused by jaw damage.

The RAP noted that regulations on the number of hooks per line had been in place at one time, and that there was precedent for using this as a management tool in New England.

The RAP chair noted that the State of Maine mandated circle hooks for striped bass back in 2012. The Chair felt that circle hooks seem to work in the striped bass fishery, but when the fish is gut hooked, it can be difficult to remove the hook. Through what was described as a lengthy process, Maine came up with a definition of a circle hook.<sup>1</sup> Maine also modified regulations that would allow single J hooks on lures when it did not make sense to use a circle hook. Maine had a two-year implementation grace period to allow dealers to sell off stock in J-hooks before anglers were required to use circle hooks.

The Groundfish Committee Chair reiterated that the full Council will only make recommendations to NMFS. Mr. Grant reiterated that using the current model runs, none of the scenarios work to keep cod mortality under the FY 2015 quota unless cod discard mortality is reduced or non-compliance is reduced.

The RAP referred to Table 10 in Document #4b, which described directed trips for cod and haddock. The RAP felt that the biggest question mark for FY 2015 is angler participation. Some felt that people are not going to spend \$250 to go fishing for 3 or 4 fish. Advisors felt that this fishery is about bringing fish home to eat – and if the bag limit is low, customers will do something else. An advisor explained that when booking trips, people call up to go “cod fishing” – they don’t call up to go “haddock fishing.” This

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<sup>1</sup> ME DMR regulation Chapter 42.01(1)(C): *For purposes of this chapter the definition of circle hook means a non-offset hook with a point that points 90° back toward the shaft of the hook.*

<http://www.maine.gov/dmr/rulemaking/Chapter42.01stripedbasscirclehookexemptionadoptionweb.pdf>

particular advisor felt that if they book 15 to 20 trips next year with the low bag limits to pay the cost of the boat, it would be a successful year, noting that *Even if we had unlimited haddock, the charter booking will be down because people want to catch cod. No one will pay \$250 dollars a person to go catch four fish.*

The RAP looked at Table 12 in Document #4b, which showed a decline in targeted cod and haddock trips between FY2013 and FY2014. The RAP agreed that this data supports comments made by advisors. Another advisor anticipated that full charter trips would be down by 80%, and head boat trips would be down by 50%.

Before breaking for lunch, Mr. Grant pointed out a letter from Regional Administrator, RA, John Bullard to Mr. Tom Nies, Executive Director of the Council. The letter was in response to the Council's request for NMFS to do more outreach to the recreational fishing community. Mr. Grant stated the NMFS is currently ramping up their outreach on recreational issues.

The RAP broke for lunch at 1:19 pm. The meeting reconvened 2:36 pm.

#### ***Afternoon discussion:***

The RAP began the afternoon with a discussion exploring the potential to adopt different bag limits for the various components of the recreational fishery (charter, party, private angler). The discussion began with an advisor stating that some charter boat business owners felt that they would not be able to book trips with bag limits of zero cod and 3-4 haddock. This advisor suggested that the bag limit be higher for anglers on charter boats, offering 8 fish per angler on charter trips, and two fish per private angler as a potential split. The rationale offered for this split was that anglers who book on charter trips might only fish one time per year, whereas private anglers could fish many more times, and in the end both individuals would retain the same number of fish.

The Groundfish Chair suggested that the RAP look at table 7 in Document #4b, which shows breakdown of GOM haddock average catch by mode. The table shows that charter boat customers are catching twice as much per person. An advisor not in favor of creating different rules for different recreational modes stated that this idea comes up at every meeting and is about taking fish away from private anglers. This advisor noted that private anglers with vessels are invested in the fishery, and represent a much bigger economic unit than someone who goes fishing once a year. This advisor felt that a recreational fisherman is a recreational fisherman, and that all modes should follow the same rules.

The discussion moved to exploring ways to reduce the number of days a recreational vessel could fish in a year in exchange for a higher bag limit. An advisor stated that in the state of Massachusetts, a letter of authorization (LOA) has been used in the black sea bass fishery to allow anglers a higher bag limit in exchange for a fewer number of days to fish. An advisor stated that such an option should be available to all recreational anglers, and suggested that two licenses could be created and allow anglers and businesses to self-select into a particular category. Another advisor felt that for-hire vessels should be treated differently than private anglers because for-hire vessels are businesses.

With regard to bag limits, an advisor noted in the past there were different rules in the GOM. Prior to a court order, charter boats had unlimited bag limits for cod, and the bag limit for private anglers was 10 fish. On Georges Bank, the bag limit for cod is unlimited for charter boats, and is 10 fish for the private angler. The party/charter fleet that targets other species like scup and flounder operate under different rules than private anglers. A member of the RAP argued that those fishing on a for-hire vessel fish comparatively less days a year, while private anglers fish more days in the year such that their individual catches would be equal. Another member of the RAP asked, *Why should I get less fish just so you can sell a trip?* The question was rhetorical.

Another advisor felt that the RAP should request that the Groundfish Committee recommend that a framework adjustment or amendment to the Northeast multispecies FMP be initiated that would split

modes in the recreational fishery. He went on to say that that Magnuson-Stevens Act recognizes three different user groups. As part of this request, the advisor suggested that there be allocations for each mode, and that the RAP should recommend different reporting requirements by mode. He stated that the RAP should suggest that the Council embark on this sort of action so that the three groups can start working together for solutions.

The conversation circled back to the use of LOAs to generate larger bag limits with fewer trips. The point was made that LOAs should be restrictive, and may result in a lower total landings of a species. The upshot, as stated, was that with the quota is so low for GOM cod, this could be a way for charter boats to sell trips and achieve conservation goals (i.e., meet, but not exceed, the recreational sub-ACL).

There was a question of whether or not the RA could develop a program that would increase bag limits while reducing the number of days in the fishery.

Mr. Grant stated that Amendment 16 created separate reactive accountability measures that can be determined for the party/charter fleet and private anglers. That is to say – the accountability measures may be different for these two components. He went on to say that Framework 48, which implemented proactive accountability measures, was silent on this issue.

There was speculation about how a hypothetical split of the recreational sub-ACL would be divided. Some advisors felt that the use of a LOA could be implemented without dividing recreational sub-ACL. The idea is to give up days and effort as a trade-off for a higher bag limit. In this advisor's experience with black sea bass, there were very few days and optioning into the higher bag limit was a major trade-off. Some members of the RAP were skeptical that such a program could be created without a framework. The conversation on developing a program using the LOA to provide flexibility for charter boats continued. One advisor felt that there were multiple instances in which a LOA was been abused in the state waters fishery, and hoped that the RAP would make recommendations that could address past issues in other programs.

The RAP shifted discussion and revisited its earlier discussion of reduced recreational effort in FY 2015 based on zero possession of cod and a bag limit of 3 – 4 haddock. One RAP member suggested that bag limits could vary by MRIP wave, or that the season could be shortened to accommodate a higher bag limit. Another member suggested that limiting recreational fishing to certain days of the week as a way to limit fishing effort. Clarification was provided about the Council's preferred provisions in FW53 that would be apply to the recreational fishery. It was noted that recreational discards for GOM cod and GOM haddock were not part of the original allocation in Amendment 16. The recreational allocation was only based on landings. Including them in the assessment, and in model, has made the recreational allocation artificially low. Additionally, it was discussed that the 7% for recreational management uncertainty buffer could be a place to look at if a particular combination of season, bag limit, and minimum size is close to achieving the recreational sub-ACL.

The Groundfish Committee Chair asked if NMFS can mandate the use of circle hooks in FY2015. Mr. Grant said that NMFS has broad latitude for enacting proactive accountability measures beyond season, minimum size, and bag limit. He went on to say if NMFS made such a requirement, that they would need to quantify the impact in catch accounting.

### **MOTIONS and CONSENSUS STATEMENTS:**

#### **Motion #1: Bellavance/Tower**

The RAP recommends that the outreach component to recreational anglers regarding changes to the Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod and haddock management measures, currently underway by the

Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, continue and its impact on reducing non-compliance be considered when predicting recreational catches for FY 2015.

*Rationale:* NMFS should share in getting the word out – there should be a joint accountability to achieve the mortality targets that are in place.

The motion **passed** by consensus without objection.

Not speaking to the motion, Mr. Grant noted correspondence from Mr. John Bullard to Mr. Tom Nies outlining an expanded outreach program to recreational anglers. A RAP member suggested that NMFS consult with the RAP as the process moving forward.

## **Motion #2: Paquette/Plaia**

For the purposes of reducing discard mortality on GOM cod and haddock, the RAP recommends prohibiting the use of more than two hooks per line while fishing for groundfish in the GOM. Only inline circle hooks may be baited. When using a jig or artificial lure, only single point j-hooks may be used (e.g., no treble hooks). Teasers, feathers, flies etc. may be used but count toward the use of no more than two hooks per line.

*Rationale:* There are currently no regulations in place governing the number of hooks, and this motion is an attempt to capture the RAP's earlier discussion on reducing discard mortality with specific hooks while fishing with bait and jigs.

*Discussion on the motion:* Several members felt that the RAP's recommendation should explicitly ban the use of treble hooks so as to leave no doubt of the RAP's intent. The RAP also wanted to exclude J-hooks with two points. There was concern about the potential economic impact on bait and tackle shops. Others felt that measures are needed now to help ensure that the fishery opens in 2015. There was discussion about whether language for the teasers and flies should be included in the RAP's recommendation.

Mr. Grant – not commenting on the motion – pointed out that NMFS does not define hooks in the federal regulations, and suggested that if the RAP was interested in including or excluding a certain hook, they should be specific as possible.

The Maine state regulations defining an in-line circle hook were read into the record with the intent of defining circle hook in the motion: *"a non-offset hook with a point that points 90° back toward the shaft of the hook"*.

Motion **carried** on a show of hands (12/0/0).

## ***RAP discussion continued:***

The RAP discussed targeting and avoidance behavior under low bag limits. The RAP noted that with a cod possession limit of zero, boats that fished on Stellwagen Bank will be impacted. RAP members expected that boats will be moving away from the locations where they encounter cod, and that boats will be in different areas targeting species like pollock.

## **Public Comment –**

- Roger Grissen – Gloucester. *When I chase haddock, I see very few cod. You occasionally see a cod and cusk, but most of the time I am fishing on Jeffery's you only see haddock. The haddock are full of little star fish. It is a huge difference when you target cod and haddock. You don't use jigs when you target haddock, and the bycatch of the codfish will be very, very minimal.*

**Consensus Statement #1:**

The RAP feels that directed GOM angler trips will decline substantially in FY 2015 under no possession for GOM cod and the anticipated low bag limit for GOM haddock for the recreational fishery. The RAP feels that the change in effort between FY 2014 and FY 2015 would be at least a 50% decline. Data provided in Table 12 (*Document # 4b, NEFSC/SSB, Recreational Catch and Effort Tables, dated January 14, 2015*) supports this concern as declines in effort between FY 2013 to FY 2014 from the GOM cod and GOM haddock wave 5 (September 1 to October 31) closure were estimated to be a 85% decline overall.

*Rationale:* The RAP felt that the estimated reduction of trips was low, and would not match actual effort in the coming fishing year. After reviewing Table 12 of document #4b, the RAP felt that the 13% was a low reduction in angler trips, and that the actual number would range for different modes, but that effort would decline by at least 50%.

**Consensus Statement #2:**

The RAP feels that under no possession of GOM cod that party, charter, and private vessels will be much less likely to fish in areas known to have aggregations of cod and less likely to use equipment to target cod. The ability of anglers to avoid cod is not taken into account in FY 2015 recreational catch projections. Therefore, the RAP feels that cod bycatch would be greatly reduced from what is projected for FY 2015.

*Rationale:* The RAP explained that getting to haddock and pollock grounds is a considerable steam. Private anglers often follow charter boats, and may not be willing to steam offshore, and it is not realistic to assume the same behavior of all recreational modes that are targeting haddock and pollock offshore. When fishing offshore, anglers have an idea of where they are going and what they are targeting. The RAP also noted that there is time and cost built into the decision to fish offshore.

**Consensus Statement #3:**

Recreational discards were not considered in the allocation of GOM cod and haddock. Discard mortality estimates are being used in recreational catch projections to determine potential accountability measures (AMs). The RAP recommends that this concern be considered when implementing AMs.

*Rationale:* The RAP revisited its earlier discussion that articulated how the recreational sub-ACLs for GOM cod and GOM haddock were calculated. The RAP was concerned that NMFS made a decision to increase discard mortality estimates, which now come out of the recreational allocation and not off the top of the overall quota. The RAP discussed sending a letter to NMFS requesting guidance on why the discard estimates used in assessments are not part of the allocation.

**Motion #3: Sterritt/DePersia**

The RAP recommends that based on the consensus statements that the bag limit for GOM haddock be at least 4 fish for fishing year 2015.

*Rationale:* The RAP focused on its earlier discussions as rationale for this motion.

*Discussion on the motion:* There was some question as to what the GOM haddock ABC would be for the following year, and whether or not the RAP should be requesting a higher bag limit based on the result of the most recent assessment. The Groundfish Committee Chair pointed out that irrespective of the sub-ACL for GOM cod, the GOM haddock sub-ACL is 372 metric tons. It is this catch limit that is restricting the bag limit, not just GOM cod. One advisor felt that the motion should reference zero possession of GOM cod.

**Motion #3a as friendly amended:**

The RAP recommends that based on the consensus statements that the bag limit for GOM haddock be at least 4 fish and 17" minimum for fishing year 2015.

It was suggested that the RAP should expect NMFS to implement measures that are designed to achieve the sub-ACLs. One member of the RAP felt that a 17" fish is too small to keep.

**Motion #3b as friendly amended:**

In light of no possession on cod and expected declines in effort (including consideration of Motions 1 and 2 and Consensus Statements 1, 2, and 3), the RAP recommends that proactive AMs for GOM haddock in FY 2015 be a bag limit of at least 4 fish, a 17 inch minimum fish size, and closed seasons during wave 2 (March 1 to April 30) and wave 5 (September 1 to October 31). The motion and discussion was based on earlier statements and motions made by the RAP.

Motion #3 **carried** by a show of hands (11/1/0).

**Motion #4: Depersia/Colby**

The RAP recommends exploration of conservation equivalent proactive AMs to separate party/charter from the private modes in FY 2015 (e.g., Letter of Authorization (LOA) for charter boats to have a reduced season in exchange for an increased bag limit).

*Rationale:* The maker of the motion felt that there needs to be separation between party/charter and private anglers, and sought clarification on what regulations NMFS could enact outside of the Council process.

*Discussion on the motion:* The RAP discussed the need to attract customers with higher bag limits. Another RAP member suggested that this issue could begin as a white paper that would sketch out what a program like this might look like. Several members felt that whatever can be done should be done to allow fishing in 2015. Another RAP member did not support the motion, feeling that could not be in place for FY 2015, and that the RAP needs more time to flesh out this idea. Not knowing what this would do to the allocation gave a member of the RAP pause.

The motion **carried** on a show of hands (6/5/1).

**Motion 5: DePersia/Twombly**

The RAP requests that limited access in the party/charter fleet be addressed in the next available Groundfish action.

*Rationale:* The maker would like the Council to consider limited access in the party/charter fleet.



*Discussion on the motion:* Members of the RAP asked questions about defining the qualification period, using the existing control date, and laying out specifics of a limited access plan, though the RAP Chair advised that those topics could be decided at a later date. Another advisor felt that only a small segment of the fishery wanted this. Another advisor said that based on the rules that are in place, there is no more room in the fishery for more boats. He speculated that if there were fewer boats then maybe the bag limit would go up and the season could be longer. A different advisor stated that all this looks like is folks trying to eliminate competition for their own business, and felt that the recreational fishery should not be treated as the commercial fishery. The Groundfish Committee Chair pointed out that this motion only says that the Council would look at limited access, and that the motion has no parameters on it. This would only start the conversation.

The motion **carried** on a show of hands (9/3/0).

A RAP member asked what the timeline would be for learning what the regulations for FY 2015 would be. Mr. Grant said that the goal is to have a proposed rule out in March, and have regulations in place by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Recreational Accountability Measure Management Process (Dr. Jamine Cournane):**

Staff presented on improving the recreational management measures process. Staff noted that this was the only Council priority in 2015 specific to the recreational fishery. Staff provided text from the Final Rule of FW48, and explained the latitude in setting AMs that was afforded to the RA through that action.

The RAP was asked to participate in an exercise of identifying ways to improve the recreational management process. The question was posed: *Why does the current recreational measures management process need improvement?* RAP members were asked to define what the problem is, and what the problem is not. An example was given, and the RAP took a few minutes to answer the question. Some examples were shared among the RAP at the meeting. A complete list of responses is listed below:

#### **Overarching question:**

Why does the current recreational management process need improvement?

#### **1) What is the problem?**

- Public involvement
- Data (need better data)
- Constant regulatory changes year-to-year makes it difficult to plan and run a business
- The dichotomy between private and for-hire fisheries
- Lack of flexible numbers to adjust regulations in a timely manner
- Wide scope of interests and agendas
- Need more meetings at times when decisions are being made for future fishing years
- More tools available from staff (i.e., models)
- Gives more accountability on future decisions
- No time for the RAP to recommend new ideas or management tools
- NEFMC is always in reaction mode
- Lack of research related to recreational issues
- The biggest problem is unstable regulations
- Not knowing the fishing regulations until the last minute
- No sustainability in the fishery
- Only one recreational member on the Council. Need more seats filled with recreational members.
- Recreational priorities keep being postponed, specifically limited access in the charter/party fleet
- Not enough time for the RAP to address and discuss issues before Council meetings

- Too much delay in setting recreational regulations for the fishing year which leads to not enough time to market trips to customers
- Lack of sufficient data and analysis for RAP meetings
- The recreational sector is not given any validity until there is a crisis
- There is little recreational support since the Council is controlled by commercial representatives
- Suggestions made by the RAP are seldom given consideration
- Timeliness of meetings vis-à-vis Council action
- Lack of a long term focus
- Lack of Council staff and RAP interactions
- Geography of meeting locations
- Regulations come out just before the start of the fishing year
- Lack of recreational fishing/party charter Council members
- RAP advice is rarely taken
- We need flexibility to manage the different sectors in a way that satisfies each of the group's needs
- Recreational data collection used in the process is inaccurate and results in dissatisfaction with regulations
- Lack of NEFMC recreational members
- RAP input is rarely listened to or influential in final decisions

## 2) What isn't the problem?

- The Northeast Fisheries Science Center's ability to analyze ideas
- RAP's willingness to work with staff
- Advice and direction of Council staff
- Recreational management is improving science and data
- Leadership within the RAP
- Respectful discussion surrounding a complex crisis situation
- That there is a RAP at all (having a Recreational Advisory Panel is a good thing)
- Council staff willing and helpful
- Regulations are explained clearly
- Basic information is available
- RAP can meet much further in advance
- We have data but it is not being used
- RAP leadership
- Wide ranging debates
- Selection of meeting facilities
- Staff commitment and accessibility
- The models that are used to manage good, but bad data is imputed

## Elections:

The RAP proceeded with elections of the RAP chair and vice-chair. The Chair pointed out that Mr. Michael Sosik has served as RAP vice-chair for quite some time, and was very grateful for his service. The Chair also noted that he had appointed Mr. Patrick Paquette as the acting vice-chair when Mr. Sosik was unable to attend meetings, felt that and had done a terrific job on behalf of the RAP. Elections proceed with nominations. The RAP Chair, Mr. Barry Gibson, was the only person nominated for Chair.

Mr. Gibson accepted the nomination. There were two nominations for vice-Chair, Mr. Patrick Paquette and Mr. Rick Bellavance. Voting was done by secret ballot, and Mr. Paquette was elected vice-Chair.

**Other Business:**

Before the meeting concluded, members of the RAP suggested that signage is an important part of the communicating with the recreational community, and inquired again about electronic logbooks.

Mr. Paquette mentioned that Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries is making \$500 available through recreational enhancement grants for projects that advance, promote, or enhance recreational fishing with funds generated through saltwater license revenues. The link to this Angler Education Financial Assistance is: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dmf/education/dmf-angler-ed-assistance-application.pdf>

The meeting adjourned at 5:29 pm.