



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Recreational Advisory Panel

Hilton Garden Inn, Plymouth, MA

October 29, 2018

The Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) met on October 29, 2018 in Plymouth, MA to discuss: 1) recreational fishery data; 2) possible Council priorities for 2019; and 4) other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Frank Blount (Chairman), Barry Gibson (Vice Chair), Tom DePersia, Michael Pierdinock, Michael Plaia, Jonathan Sterritt, Joseph Carpino, and William Tower, Dr. Jamie Cournane (NEFMC staff); Scott Steinback (NEFSC); and Terry Stockwell (Groundfish Committee Chair). In addition, 14 members of the public attended, among them were Mark Grant, Emily Keiley, Moira Kelly, and Billy Duffy (GARFO), Rick Bellavance, Mark Godfroy, and Melanie Griffin (Groundfish Committee/Council members), and Jessica Joyce (Tidal Bay Consulting).

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION: Discussions were aided by the following documents and presentations: (1) Meeting memorandum dated October 22, 2018 and meeting agenda; (2) Presentation: Council staff; (3) Recreational catch statistics, NEFSC staff; (4) DRAFT Council staff memo on planning for listening sessions on limited entry for party/charter; (5) GARFO/Tidal Bay Consulting memo on planning for recreational workshops with attachment; (6a) Recreational Advisory Panel meeting summary, Jan. 24, 2018; (6b) Groundfish Committee meeting summary, Jan. 25, 2018; and (7) Correspondence.

The meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- The RAP recommended to the Groundfish Committee three possible 2019 priorities, in ranked order of highest importance.
- The RAP recommended to the Groundfish Committee to develop options for 2019 management measures, for consideration in January 2019, of separate measures by recreational fishing mode (party, charter, and private) for Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock, while being fair and equitable across modes.

PRESENTATION: RECREATIONAL FISHERY DATA, MR. STEINBACK AND DR. COUNANE

The Chair explained to the advisors that Mr. Steinback's presentation will be a data update and that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the data, rather than make recommendations regarding management measures. He went on to explain that the recreational management measures discussion will be the focus of a future RAP meeting in January 2019.

Mr. Steinback provided an overview of recreational fishery catch and effort data for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod, GOM haddock, and Georges Bank (GB) cod for fishing year 2017 and preliminary fishing year 2018. Mr. Steinback also presented recent changes to Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data with respect to groundfish stocks.

Highlights from the data summary are as follows:

Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock

Fishing Year 2017

- The number of GOM cod and GOM haddock angler trips¹ was 168,000 trips. The bioeconomic model predicted 154,000 angler trips – a difference of 14,000 trips.
- For GOM cod, the total number of fish caught was 814,000 fish, and the vast majority of these fish were released as possession was not permitted. 14,000 fish were kept or discarded dead, and limited possession of cod was allowed in the Massachusetts state fishery that fishing year. The discard mortality rate is 15% for GOM cod. GOM removals were 246mt and the sub-ACL was 157mt, therefore the catch exceeded the sub-ACL by 89mt.
- For GOM haddock, the total number of fish caught was 1.4 million fish, of which 517,000 were kept and 840,000 were released. The discard mortality rate for GOM haddock has four different rates – by season (first half of the year versus second half of the year) and size (smaller versus larger fish). Larger fish have a higher survival rate. Applying these factors results in 953,000 fish or 795mt by weight. The catch underage was 365mt relative to the sub-ACL of 1,160mt.
- Effort was also summarized by mode, GOM cod and GOM haddock angler trips and total angler trips in the Gulf of Maine, and the percent of trips with reliance on cod and haddock:
 - Headboat mode: 45,000 cod/haddock trips out of 76,000 total trips, indicating 60% reliance
 - Charter boat mode: 19,000 cod/haddock trips out of 94,000 total trips, indicating 20% reliance
 - Private boat mode: 103,000 cod/haddock trip out of >1mil total trips, indicating 10% reliance, and
 - Shore mode had no trips.
- Catch by mode was also summarized.

¹ Defined as angler trips that either targeted and/or caught Gulf of Maine cod or Gulf of Maine haddock. Primary or secondary targets were used from MRIP interview results.

Comparison of Fishing Year 2017 and Fishing Year 2018, for Waves 3 (May and June) and 4 (July and August)

- A comparison between FY2017 and FY2018 for Waves 3 and 4 combined data suggests declines in catch and effort.
- Catch and Effort
 - GOM cod and GOM haddock angler trips were down by 28%.
 - GOM cod catch was down by weight by 40%. In FY2017, 97% of catch was in Waves 3 and 4 (238mt out of total 246mt). Catch in Waves 3 and 4 in FY2018 was 142mt. Therefore, if the trend continues, total catch could be under the 220mt sub-ACL for FY2018.
 - GOM haddock catch was down, by number (22%) and by weight (20%). Waves 3 and 4 catch in FY2018 is 607mt versus 756mt in FY2017 over the same waves.
- Effort by mode
 - GOM cod and GOM haddock angler trips were down across the board by mode in Waves 3 and 4 for FY2018, relative to Waves 3 and 4 in FY2017.
 - All angler trips were down in the Gulf of Maine in Waves 3 and 4 for FY2018, relative to Waves 3 and 4 in FY2017.
- Catch by mode
 - GOM cod was down across the board by mode. By numbers of fish: headboat – was down by 11%, charter was down by 78%, and private mode was down by 43%, in Waves 3 and 4 for FY2018, relative to Waves 3 and 4 in FY2017. Cod catch declines could partially be explained by no possession of cod in FY2018 in Massachusetts state waters as well.
 - GOM haddock had mixed results by mode. By numbers of fish: headboat was up by 53%, charter was down by 17%, and private mode was down by 42%, in Waves 3 and Wave 4 for FY2018, relative to Waves 3 and 4 in FY2017.

Georges Bank cod

Fishing Year 2017

- Recreational catches of GB cod in FY2017 were very low relative to FY2016.
- Approximately, 178,000 fish were caught in FY2016 compared to just under 16,000 fish in FY2017, representing an 80% decline.
- By weight, recreational catches were 281mt in FY2016 and 53mt in FY2017.

Comparison of Fishing Year 2017 and Fishing Year 2018 for Waves 3 and 4

- The comparison indicated recreational catches in FY2018 for Waves 3 and 4 were down even further than FY2017 during the same waves.
- Removals by numbers of fish were about 50% lower in FY2018 for Waves 3 and 4 than in FY2017 during the same waves.
- Estimates by weight were not available to compare FY2018 with FY2017, as the Center conducts an analysis to estimate the weights and the analysis was not ready in time for the RAP meeting.

MRIP Data Estimates

Annual trends in the “old” and “new” MRIP data estimates were described for GOM cod, GOM haddock, and GB cod from 1992 to 2017. Briefly, Mr. Steinback explained the MRIP calibration considers the “cell phone effect”. In the mid-2000s, the telephone household survey was not capturing the demographics of the fishery. Effort estimates were lower than they should be, due to fewer people using landlines and those using landlines tend to be older. The new mail survey captures improved demographics of the fishery, and as a result effort estimates are generally higher. As a result, in general, the “new” MRIP data (the effort and catch estimates) increased.

Mr. Steinback also described changes in the methodology of the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) in the early 2000s. These included how interviewers were deployed to reduce bias in the survey. Prior to the change in APAIS, interviewers could switch to a different access point if they did not encounter anglers or sample at times when interviewers knew anglers would be at access points. Since the change in APAIS, interviewers are deployed to an access point for a fixed interval of time and cannot switch to another access point during that time.

The allocation time periods for GOM cod and GOM haddock (i.e., 2001-2006) were identified on the figures presented for numbers of fish landed by year. Mr. Steinback explained that the “old” estimates in certain years are higher than “new” estimates for GOM cod. For GOM haddock, “old” estimates and “new” estimates were similar with some years higher for “new” estimates up until 2006. Mr. Steinback mentioned he contacted MRIP staff regarding the last few years of GOM haddock estimates - which were usually high in the “new” estimates. Mr. Steinback is awaiting a response from MRIP staff.

Preliminary information on allocations, following MRIP

Dr. Cournane explained the Council process for allocating groundfish stocks to the recreational fishery. Amendment 16 (A16) allocated GOM cod and GOM haddock between the recreational and commercial fisheries. The allocation of GOM cod and GOM haddock was based on data from 2001-2006 for numbers of fish landed, resulting in 33.7% and 27.5% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC) to the recreational fishery, respectively.

Briefly, A16 established that when an allocation is made between to commercial and recreational groundfish fisheries:

- An allocation will be made of certain regulated groundfish stocks to the commercial and recreational components of the fishery.
- An allocation will be determined after accounting for state waters catches taken outside of the fishery management plan.
- An allocation will not be made in the case of stocks that are not fully harvesting the annual catch limit (ACL).
- An allocation will also not be made if the recreational harvest, after accounting for state waters catches outside the management plan, is less than five percent of the removals.

The steps for determining an allocation are also outlined in A16, such that:

- A defined time period will be used to calculate the allocation.
- When possible, the shares will be determined by using the numbers of fish in the years caught (as used by the assessment: harvested, landed, or discarded) by each component.

The shares determined in this manner will be applied to the ACL to determine the weight of catch available for each component.

- If the number of fishes caught by each component is not available, the shares will be calculated based on weight.
- The proportion for each year will be calculated, and then the average proportion over the time period will be the share for each component of the fishery.
- The proportions will be reviewed consistent with the periodic assessment cycle, and if determined necessary, changes can be implemented through a framework action.

Dr. Cournane explained that the process outlined in A16 does not allow for an automatic update of allocations, if for example new data is available. Rather, the Council would need to initiate allocation changes as a priority in response to new information being considered, for example through a framework adjustment action.

Mr. Steinback explained, for informational purposes, a preliminary review of possible allocation approaches between the recreational and commercial fisheries, following the same allocation approach (years 2001-2006, number of fish), adding in data revisions in both fisheries (stock assessment data changes to the commercial data since the allocations and preliminary “new” MRIP data), and considering discard data (including discard mortality rates in both fisheries and discards estimates from the most recent stock assessments).

Questions and Comments on the Presentation and Discussion:

Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock

An advisor asked how an angler trip is defined and if it is a fraction of a day. The advisor provided an example of a Western Gulf of Maine type-trip on Stellwagen Bank, the “Grand-Slam”, for about 10 hours per trip that could be targeting sharks, groundfish, striped bass, and bluefin tuna, with some portion of the trip targeting cod/haddock for two hours of the trip. Mr. Steinback explained that all angler trips are defined as 1 day, regardless of the time spent fishing on the trip for a specific species. Mr. Steinback also explained that the MRIP data is not collected in a manner to estimate what fraction of the day was spent fishing for a specific species. The advisor thought the electronic vessel trip reports (eVTRs) being used by much of the for-hire fleet now could be used to examine this issue.

A member of the public, Rich Antomno, wanted to know how many MRIP interviews underly the data being discussed at the meeting. Mr. Steinback explained that he did not have that information in front of him.

An advisor asked if the eVTRs help with the data for FY2018. Mr. Steinback said yes that the information is incorporated earlier within the preliminary effort estimates by wave rather than waiting for the final.

The Chair wondered if the interactions between cod and haddock (i.e., for a certain number of haddock you could be expected to catch a certain number of cod) were different than expected or if for example the headboats were better at avoiding catching cod and targeting haddock in FY2018, than in FY2017. One advisor added that in Massachusetts that the headboats this past

year did not have to go far offshore, as in previous years, to catch haddock, as the haddock were more inshore in FY2018. He further suggested that, in these areas, there could be lots of haddock with very little cod mixed in. The advisor felt across the headboat and charter modes are doing better at avoiding cod.

Georges Bank cod

One advisor asked why there was such a dramatic change in GB cod catch between FY2017 and FY2018. The Chair offered that he thought the FY2016 estimate was wrong (i.e., estimated to be too high). Mr. Steinback offered that it appeared the estimates for FY2016 were high relative to FY2017 and preliminary FY2018. The Chair explained that FY2016 estimates south from Rhode Island to New York for a number of species for a couple of waves were extremely high, and way off the charts compared to any other year. The Chair further explained that he felt GB cod is one of the worst estimates, because in some years catch was estimated to be zero, when in fact catches occurred that year in his own logbook data, with one year indicating he caught more than what was in for the entire coast. He thought the estimates are now probably closer to what it has been. Mr. Steinback offered that it does not appear the fishery will approach the FY2016 estimates in FY2018.

One advisor stated, from his understanding, no MRIP data are collected in Wave 1 (January and February), but he questioned as to why this is the case since the GB cod fishery is active, with much fishing during that time. Mr. Steinback explained that north of North Carolina there is no sampling in Wave 1. Another advisor said he used to fish off Block Island as a young man in the winter months. The Chair offered that the logbook data is still being collected and could be used. Mr. Steinback explained the logbook data is not being used in Wave 1 – adding that there are no estimates of any species in the North Atlantic by MRIP in Wave 1, as the MRIP survey does not cover January and February.

One advisor had a question as to why Wave 1 is not covered by MRIP and explained fishing in Stellwagen Bank previously was year-round. Mr. Steinback speculated that this could be driven by cost, but he did not know for certain. The advisor raised the concern that the “false numbers” are putting the charter boat operators out of business and that is the real cost.

The Chair commented the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) used Wave 1 data for headboat and charter boats in the sea bass fishery in the development of a special access program with the states.

Mr. Steinback explained that vessel trip reports (VTR) data is used by MRIP for effort data. The Vice Chair felt the VTR data for catches should be used. Mr. Steinback offered that a validation process would be needed. The Vice Chair expressed concern that VTRs should be used more broadly and could be some of the best data, adding that the fact it is not being used, and rather poor sampling and extrapolation is in its place, is frustrating to him. Mr. Steinback explained there are pilot studies that are hopefully moving in that direction.

Mr. Steinback also offered to answer questions anyone has later – after the meeting – and to contact him via email or call with any questions.

MRIP Data

One advisor asked if differences in minimum sizes would be incorporated in the data for the recreational and commercial fisheries. Mr. Steinback explained that all management changes were incorporated in the data.

Another advisor asked what happened with the change in commercial discards. Mr. Steinback explained that a new approach was used to calculate discards in more recent stock assessments, as the old method relied on a time period when more regulatory discards occurred and was inconsistent with the fishery's discards since that time.

PRESENTATION: GARFO's UPCOMING RECREATIONAL WORKSHOPS, MS. KELLY AND MS. JOYCE

Ms. Kelly and Ms. Joyce provided an overview of planning for GARFO's future recreational workshops in New England building on the outcomes of the 2017 GARFO workshop. They requested feedback from the advisors regarding the draft workshop plan.

Discussion:

First, the RAP discussed the goal of the workshops. One advisor wanted to know if participation/topics would be limited to New England recreational fishery or could they include issues from other Councils/regions. Ms. Kelly explained that they are focusing the workshops on New England topics and will coordinate separately with MAFMC and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The Vice Chair mentioned that each time there is a new Regional Administrator that there is an outreach initiative, back to when Dick Rowe was the director. He felt that it would be good for something concrete to come out of the workshops rather than just another workshop. He also took exception to the term 'enhancing recreational opportunities' – vs terms/metrics used for the commercial fishery, like catch and ex-vessel value. He felt the recreational fishery needs fish (i.e., not opportunities, but rather increased catch/fish) and suggested revising the goal to include the following "... balance the need to maintain robust catches that will encourage people to go fishing and keep the party/charter fleet in a profitable mode". The Chair added that recreational measures are designed to achieve but not exceed the recreational quota (not to constrain catch), so the goal of the workshops should consider the appropriate terminology (i.e., not discuss constraining catch). Dr. Cournane added that there are management measures that require ACL overages in one year to be addressed the following year, which could constrain catch. Another advisor wondered "where's the light at the end of the tunnel? When do we hit a point where we can fish for them [cod and haddock] in a meaningful way?" In general, comments from the for-hire advisors recognized the importance of being able to stay in business.

The RAP also discussed the workshop objectives. The Vice Chair commented that these issues have been addressed by the RAP for the last 18-19 years with "road blocks". He is hoping GARFO can do more. Ms. Joyce offered to synthesize some of the discussions,

recommendations, and studies to date from previous RAP meetings. Several advisors suggested adding an objective around assessing and evaluating various needs and methods to reduce mortality (e.g., approaches to release fish alive, treble hook use, and calculation of dead discards). Mr. Matt Ayer (Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, MA DMF) mentioned MA DMF is working on studies with seven different terminal tackles. However, they will not have results until at least this coming spring. Another advisor commented that the workshops should recognize the mindset of the recreational angler and that the regulations could be far less stringent if we know how we got where we are. The Vice Chair commented that the RAP has been bringing forward items to NMFS and the Council and were told, in the past, why the measures could not be implemented. He felt any ideas should be run through NMFS and the Council to determine their feasibility.

With respect to the outcomes and workshop dates, the RAP had no comments. One advisor did mention that the time of day for the workshop is less of an issue than getting private anglers to attend. In a discussion of how to approach private anglers, one advisor suggested that it could be difficult to get private anglers and hard to get everyone to attend the planned “data primer”, so he recommended providing a synopsis of the data at the beginning of each meeting instead of a workshop focused on data. Further, an advisor explained finding anglers will be the hard part and he suggested advertising at some trade shows, acknowledging those do not start until mid-January. Ms. Kelly responded that they plan on outreach to recreational sport fishing groups.

PRESENTATION: COUNCIL’S PUBLIC LISTENING SESSIONS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF LIMITED ENTRY IN THE GROUND FISH PARTY AND CHARTER FISHERY, DR. COUNANE

Dr. Cournane provided an overview of planning for the Council’s public listening sessions on the possibility of limited entry in the recreational groundfish party and charter fishery. Dr. Cournane explained the Council could create an opportunity to gather public comments to help determine the Council’s next steps – which may include a limited entry amendment. The results of the public comment period would be summarized for the Council to consider at a future meeting, most likely in early 2019. A draft outline of the overview document for the listening session and some initial listening session planning ideas (i.e., logistics and possible meeting locations) were presented, and she asked for feedback from the advisors on the draft.

Dr. Cournane also explained that she formed a sub-group of the Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) to focus on recreational issues, that would report out to the PDT at an upcoming meeting. The sub-group includes Council, state and federal agency staff. To date, the sub-group worked on several topics, including: 1) planning for listening sessions for possible limited entry for party and charter in the recreational groundfish fishery, 2) reviewing final 2017 and in-season 2018 catch and effort statistics for GOM cod, GOM haddock, and GB cod, and 3) examining calibrated Marine MRIP data.

Discussion:

The advisors discussed their perspectives on what could be asked in the public listening sessions and in the development of limited entry options, including:

- What would happen to the permits? Would the permits have value or no value when sold? Would there be any restrictions placed on permits? Background on the development of commercial limited-entry could be informative.
- What range of measures would be considered for limited entry? Would the range include catch shares?
- How will history be used – would it be simple or complex?
- Would limited entry apply to all or a portion of the fleet? How would groundfish for-hire be defined?

With respect to the locations for the listening sessions, one advisor recommended sessions on the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. The Chair felt that River Head might be a better location than Montauk. The Vice Chair commented that the limited entry discussion has gone on for 20 years and it would be good to put it to rest. He commented that many additional locations (e.g., up to 12) may be necessary for the public listening sessions to be considered complete. Another advisor suggested holding a listening session in conjunction with the MAFMC's February 2019 meeting. Another advisor felt the Council should be spending its resources on other activities such as allocation and data issues, rather than limited entry.

AGENDA ITEM #1: POSSIBLE PRIORITIES FOR 2019

Council staff provided an overview of past RAP discussions with respect to priorities. Then, the advisors developed initial recommendations to the Groundfish Committee regarding priorities for 2019. The advisors were informed by discussions earlier in the day, as well, leading to three possible priorities: reviewing allocations, developing a Recreational Committee/Working Group, and progress on limited entry for the party/charter groundfish fishery. The advisors made two consensus statements, a failed motion, and a final consensus statement to articulate their recommendations on priorities to the Groundfish Committee.

Consensus Statement #1

The Recreational Advisory Panel recommends to the Groundfish Committee for 2019 priorities that the most important priority would be to review the recreational allocations for Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock using the most recent information from the 2019 assessments, and if determined necessary, make changes through the annual framework action with 2020-2022 specifications.

Consensus Statement #2

The Recreational Advisory Panel recommends to the Groundfish Committee for 2019 priorities to develop a Recreational Committee/Working Group to focus on groundfish and non-groundfish recreational management issues.

Motion #1: Plaia/Sterritt

The Recreational Advisory Panel recommends to the Groundfish Committee to remove from consideration for 2019 priorities the listening sessions for possible limited entry for party and charter in the recreational Northeast Multispecies (groundfish) fishery.

Discussion on the Motion: The maker and seconder of the motion explained that reviewing allocations was most important to the recreational fishery and wanted to send a strong message to the Groundfish Committee by limiting the priorities. Other advisors felt strongly that the Council should consider limited entry and, at the very least, commit to holding the listening sessions to help the Council determine next steps.

Motion #1 failed on a show of hands (3/4/0).

The advisors then developed a final consensus statement on priorities for 2019.

Consensus Statement #3

The Recreational Advisory Panel recommends to the Groundfish Committee for 2019 priorities, in ranked order of highest importance:

1. Review the recreational allocations for Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock using the most recent information from the 2019 assessments, and if determined necessary, make changes through the annual framework action with 2020-2022 specifications.
2. Develop a Recreational Committee/Working Group to focus on groundfish and non-groundfish recreational management issues.
3. Continue to hold listening sessions for possible limited entry for party and charter in the recreational Northeast Multispecies (groundfish) fishery to help the Council determine next steps.

AGENDA ITEM #2: OTHER BUSINESS**Consideration of Possible Management Measures for 2019**

Under other business, Dr. Cournane asked the advisors if they had any recommendations on options for Mr. Steinback to explore for 2019 management measures. The RAP expected to see the usual range of options that would modify seasons, the minimum fish size limit, and the bag limits for all anglers. The RAP also developed a consensus statement, noting their recommendation was only on developing options to consider – rather than an endorsement of any particular option.

Consensus Statement #4

The Recreational Advisory Panel recommends to the Groundfish Committee to develop options for 2019 management measures, for consideration in January 2019, of separate measures by recreational fishing mode (party, charter, and private) for Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock, while being fair and equitable across modes.

The RAP meeting adjourned at approximately 1:45 p.m.