



New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chair* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEETING SUMMARY

Recreational Advisory Panel

Webinar
June 1, 2022

The Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) met on June 1, 2022, via webinar to discuss: 1) Framework Adjustment 65/Specifications and Management Measures; 2) Atlantic Cod Management; 3) Council Research Priorities; and 4) other businesses, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Frank Blount (Chair), Barry Gibson (Vice Chair), Rip Cunningham, Tom DePersia, Patrick Paquette, Michael Plaia, and Tim Tower; Dr. Jamie Cournane, Robin Frede, and Angela Forristall (NEFMC staff); Kyle Molton (Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO)); Paul Nitschke (Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC)); Rick Bellavance (Groundfish Committee chair); Libby Etrie (Groundfish Committee vice-chair); Michael Pierdinock and Daniel Salerno (Groundfish Committee); Matt Ayer (Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries); and Tracey Bauer (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission)

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION: Discussions were aided by the following documents and presentations: (1) Meeting overview memo from Groundfish Committee Chair and agenda; 2) Presentation, Council staff; 3a) Framework Adjustment 65 draft alternatives outline; 3b) Groundfish PDT memo to Committee re FW65, August 3, 2021; 3c) Groundfish PDT memo to committee re SNE/MA winter flounder and other fisheries, April 1, 2022; 4a) Presentation: Council Research Priorities update process; 4b) 2021-2025 Council Research Priorities; 4c) Groundfish PDT to Groundfish Committee re Council Research Priorities 2022-2026, May 27, 2022, 5a) Meeting Summary: Recreational Advisory Panel, January 18, 2022; 5b) Meeting Summary: Groundfish Committee, January 20, 2022; 5c) Meeting Summary: Groundfish Plan Development Team, March 9, 2022; 5d) Meeting Summary: Groundfish Committee, March 16, 2022; 5e) Council Meeting Motions, April 12-14, 2022; and 6) Correspondence

The meeting began at 9:34 am.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- The RAP discussed the possible 2022-2026 Council research priorities but did not make specific motions.

OPENING REMARKS:

Mr. Kyle Molton (GARFO) provided an update on the implementation of the recreational measures included in Framework 63 (FW63). The final rule for the Georges Bank (GB) recreational cod measures is under development. The proposed rule for the Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod and GOM haddock

recreational measures recommended by the Council is under development and should be out later in June. Advisors raised concerns that the GOM measures included increased haddock limits, and if the measures are not implemented until August these increases will not provide any benefits. Most haddock charter fishing occurs May-July. Mr. Molton stated that the staff at GARFO are moving as quickly as they can but multiple groundfish actions with a May 1 deadline resulted in a need to prioritize actions. He noted the public comment period will be 15 days instead of 30 days and that measures will likely be made effective as soon as a final rule is published. Advisors expressed concern that recreational measures were not considered a priority.

AGENDA ITEM #1: FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 65/SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES, DR. COURNANE (NEFMC)

Dr. Cournane shared the scope and objectives for Framework 65 (FW65). She noted the alternatives in the framework that are most relevant to the RAP include updates to annual catch limits for GOM cod and GOM haddock, recreational catch targets for GB cod, and revisions to the formal rebuilding plans and additional measures to promote stock rebuilding for GOM cod and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) winter flounder. By request from the Groundfish Committee, the Groundfish PDT conducted a preliminary analysis of other federal fisheries catches of SNE/MA winter flounder and found that the scallop and squid fisheries have caught more than five percent of the SNE/MA winter flounder total catch in recent years. Dr. Cournane explained that Amendment 16 included a provision that if any non-groundfish federal fishery's catch raises above five percent, accountability measures (AMs) can be developed to prevent the overall ACL from being exceeded. Staff asked the RAP for input on any management measures that should be examined for GOM cod and SNE/MA winter flounder to promote stock rebuilding.

Questions and Comments on the Presentation:

One advisor asked if 100 percent of commercial groundfish trips are being monitored. Staff explained that the current target is 99 percent, but once Amendment 23 (A23) is implemented the coverage target will be 100 percent. The advisor suggested that the commercial fishery land all catch and have all catch count against a quota or alternatively the fishery should be shut down for a period of years. The advisor clarified to another advisor that landing all catch would help the cod population because observers would be able to determine exactly how many cod are being caught. The advisor stated when observer coverage was lower smaller cod were tossed off the boats. The advisor also noted that more work needs to be done on excluder grates to minimize the catch of fecund cod.

Different experiences on catch of cod during charter trips were discussed. One advisor noted they have not been catching cod in areas of Maine where they historically have and there has been little recruitment in seven years. A different advisor stated charter trips along Stellwagen Bank that are targeting haddock are having a difficult time avoiding cod and that the cod they are catching are of a large size distribution.

An advisor asked for clarification on whether accountability measures are already in place for fisheries that catch more than five percent of the SNE/MA winter flounder sub-ACL. Staff clarified catch by other fisheries has been monitored to determine what their percentage of the total catch is, but presently there are no AMs in place. The Council could explore implementing AMs like gear modifications/restrictions or closed areas. The advisor asked if any specific time/area closures have been suggested by the PDT. Staff noted the discussion has been high level, but when considering measures to promote stock rebuilding the PDT discussed promoting spawning as a possible priority.

Staff noted the Groundfish Committee will be discussing this at their meeting on June 14th and encouraged RAP members to bring any specific ideas to the next RAP meeting.

AGENDA ITEM #2: ATLANTIC COD MANAGEMENT, DR. COURNANE (NEFMC)

Dr. Cournane provided an update of the ongoing Atlantic cod management work. The Atlantic Cod Research Track Working Group presented on Atlantic cod stock structure to the Council in February 2022 and proposed a new management paradigm of four management units. In April 2022, the Council made a motion to change the 2022 priorities to add a transition plan for Atlantic cod management from two management units to up to five management units. The motion included a white paper on potential approaches to allocate “Georges Bank” cod to the recreational fishery as part of the transition plan. In the motion, Georges Bank cod is surrounded by parenthesis to indicate cod currently considered to be in the Georges Bank management unit might be considered Southern New England or Gulf of Maine cod in a future management system. Dr. Cournane asked the RAP for input on what information the PDT should investigate in the white paper.

Questions and Comments on the Presentation:

One advisor asked for clarification on what a white paper is. Staff explained it is a document that includes background information and it not necessarily an action. Another advisor asked for clarification on how the cod stock structure work interacts with the Georges Bank Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) process underway. Staff noted that the stock structure work is currently being done in the context of a single species with multiple stock units in both United States and Canadian waters.

An advisor asked if the impacts of recreational catch coming from a new Southern New England management unit instead of the current Georges Bank unit would impact the stock assessments. Staff noted an important aspect of developing the white paper will be using Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data to explore where recreational catch is coming from in the context of the new biological or management areas and how a Georges Bank recreational allocation would be done. They noted that the issues associated with MRIP data will also need to be taken into consideration. The advisor asked if the splitting of the stock will have implications for Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC) negotiations and if recreational catch would still be considered in those negotiations. Staff explained that it depends on what comes out of the peer review and Council but there are no current plans to revise the US/CA management area on Eastern Georges Bank. Another advisor stated the white paper needs to focus on historic recreational catch and if the percentage of recreational catch meets the requirements for an allocation.

Staff noted they wanted to ensure the RAP was made aware of the development of this white paper and noted the Atlantic cod Research Track Working Group meets about once a month. The coming meetings will include work on recreational issues and RAP members may be interested in listening and providing comment.

AGENDA ITEM #3: COUNCIL RESEARCH PRIORITIES, DR. COURNANE (NEFMC)

Dr. Cournane explained the process for setting Council research priorities and explained priorities are reviewed each year. She shared the Groundfish PDT's recommendations to the Groundfish Committee on priorities that should be deleted and additions to be made. She asked the RAP if there were any other research priorities the Groundfish Committee should add or remove.

Questions and Comments on the Presentation:

One advisor asked about research priority #58 (*Investigate groundfish discard mortality rate estimates across gear types*) and asked what is currently underway for GB recreational cod. Staff clarified that the

‘underway’ status referred to work on other species, but staff could get clarification on the status of any GB cod related work. The advisor noted that they did not want this priority to get lost as it has implications for recreational management measures. Another advisor asked if the list was ordered by priority. Staff clarified it is not, but that the ‘Rating’ column provided information on the level of importance of the priority.

Staff asked if the RAP had any interest in adding a priority on researching different hook types used in the fishery. Matt Ayer (MASS DMF) noted that there was recently a hook study regarding release mortality rates for cod and haddock in the Gulf of Maine and the study can be shared with the RAP. Another advisor noted they would be interested in seeing a priority about gear modifications included on the list. One advisor asked about a previous list that showed GOM haddock mortality by size and time of year. Mr. Ayer added that the discard mortality rates for GOM haddock came from a study conducted by MASS DMF, and Council staff noted that these discard mortality rates are included in the stock assessment. Council staff reminded the RAP of its prior discussion to consider an ex-pilot data program to compile MRIP data from the first four months of the year for certain stocks like cod.

AGENDA ITEM #4: OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Mike Pierdnock informed RAP members of an ongoing study by Dr. Dave Richardson (NEFSC) on egg bearing mackerel. If individuals would like to participate they can reach out to himself or Dr. Richardson at david.richardson@noaa.gov. Participating individuals will put egg bearing mackerel in zip lock bags and note the date and location of collection. Mr. Pierdnock noted that it is not possible to know if a mackerel is egg bearing unless it is cut open.

Mr. Pierdnock also stated that there will be ongoing EBFM outreach over the summer and fall. He encouraged individuals to participate in meetings and watch the informational video available on the Council website¹.

Mr. Mike Plaia shared he has recently become a member of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel. The SAFMC is currently discussing modifying the bag and vessel limits for dolphin. There was a discussion among advisors if there currently were any size restrictions north of South Carolina. Mr. Rick Bellavance clarified that a recently approved amendment reduced the daily bag limit to 10 dolphins per person and 54 per vessel (whichever is less) but there still are no size limits in place. He also clarified the daily bag limit does apply to New England waters. An action currently under development is considering a range of geographic areas to implement a size limit in federal waters and further reductions in bag limits for private, charter, and head boat vessels. Mr. Plaia stated if RAP members want to provide input on this action, they should write to the SAFMC.

The RAP meeting adjourned at approximately 11:45 a.m.

¹ <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/EBFM-Outreach-Ramping-Up-%E2%80%93-Watch-the-Five-Minute-Video-View-the-Infographics-Check-out-the-Brochures.pdf>