



## New England Fishery Management Council

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### MEETING SUMMARY

#### Groundfish Oversight Committee

Sheraton Harborside, Portsmouth, NH

June 15, 2017

The Groundfish Committee (Committee) met on June 15, 2017 in Portsmouth, NH to discuss and make recommendations on: 1) Amendment 23/Groundfish Monitoring Action – including the scope, purpose and need and range of alternatives; 2) progress on the Council’s 2017 priorities; 3) MRIP Strategic Plan for 2017-2022; 4) the Interim Final Rule for 2017 and 2018 Sector Operations Plans and Sector IX; and 5) other business, as necessary.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** Terry Stockwell (Chairman), Terry Alexander (Vice Chair), Rick Bellavance, Libby Etrie, Mark Godfroy, Sarah Heil (GARFO), Peter Kendall, Howard King (MAFMC), Matt McKenzie, Laurie Nolan (MAFMC), John Pappalardo, Melanie Griffin (representing David Pierce) and Mitch MacDonald (NOAA General Counsel); Dr. Jamie Cournane and Robin Frede (NEFMC staff); Ben Martens (GAP Chair); and Frank Blount (RAP Chair). In addition, approximately 14 members of the public attended.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:** Discussions were aided by the following documents and presentations: (1) Meeting memorandum dated June 8, 2017; (2) Meeting agenda; (3a) PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re summary of public scoping comments for Amendment 23, attachments includes the six public hearing summaries and written public scoping comments (May 9, 2017); (3b) Presentation: Summary of A23 Public Scoping Comments; (4a) PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re Atlantic halibut management (May 11, 2017); (4b) PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re possible reclassification of windowpane flounder stocks (May 18, 2017); (4c) PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re follow-up analysis on Atlantic halibut management (June 13, 2017); (4d) PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re recreational management measures (June 7, 2017); ~~(4e) PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re gear research large mesh belly panel to reduce southern windowpane flounder in the scup fishery (June 13, 2017) (not available in time for the meeting);~~ (4f) Presentation: PDT Report (2017 Council Groundfish Priorities); (5a) Groundfish Advisory Panel meeting, Jan. 18, 2017; (5b) Groundfish Committee meeting, Jan. 19, 2017; (5c) Groundfish Advisory Panel meeting, May 24, 2017 (DRAFT); (5d) Recreational Advisory Panel meeting, Jan. 18, 2017; (5e) Recreational Advisory Panel meeting motions or draft summary, June 12, 2017; (6a) NOAA’s MRIP Strategic Plan for public comment, 2017 – 2022, including attached appendices; (6b) Draft Council letter (inclusive of Council staff and RAP input) regarding feedback on the plan (June 13, 2017); (7) Interim Final Rule, Groundfish Fishery Sectors FY 2018 to FY 2019,

NMFS, Federal Register, Vol. 80, No. 81 pp 19618-19630 (April 28, 2017); (8) Correspondence (*Note: See document 3a for compiled public comments on A23*); and (9) Greater Atlantic Region: New England Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Roundtable Summary, Rye, NH, GARFO, April 3, 2017.

The meeting began at 9:01 a.m.

***KEY OUTCOMES:***

- The Committee recommends a revised purpose and need statement for Amendment 23 (A23).
- The Committee recommends to the Council the development of a range of alternatives for electronic monitoring (EM) in A23.
- The Committee recommends to the Council the development, within the range of alternatives for A23, of a dockside monitoring program (DSM).
- The Committee recommends to the Council to develop a range of alternatives to determine the total monitoring coverage rate, including re-evaluating the 30% CV precision standard and how it is applied (e.g., fishery versus stock level), in A23.
- The Committee recommends to the Council to develop alternatives that streamline and improve the sector weekly reporting process.
- The Committee recommends to the Council to include in the range of alternatives an option that would facilitate knowing the total coverage rate at a time certain to assist sectors for business planning.
- The Committee recommends to the Council to initiate Framework Adjustment 57 (FW57) and include:
  - To incorporate any status changes for groundfish stocks and set specifications for all groundfish stocks for FY 2018 to FY 2020.
  - To set specifications for FY 2018 for US/Canada stocks (Eastern Georges Bank cod, Eastern Georges Bank haddock, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder).
  - To evaluate the common pool trimester total allowable catches (TACs)
  - To modify Atlantic halibut management
  - To revise the recreational management measures process
  - To revise the AMs for large-mesh non-groundfish fisheries consistent with FW 52 measures for groundfish fisheries

***PRESENTATION: SUMMARY OF A23 PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS, MS. FREDE***

Council staff provided a brief summary of the A23 public scoping comments. This included a summary of the demographics of oral and written commenters, a summary of key themes identified from the scoping comments, and a brief summary of the PDT's discussion on the scoping comments. The goals of the Committee's discussion were to review the A23 public scoping comments and discuss and make recommendations to the Council on the scope, purpose and need, and range of alternatives for A23.

Questions and Comments on the Presentation:

One Committee member asked if the comments supporting increased monitoring were directed at the groundfish fishery specifically or more generally to all fisheries; staff clarified that most of these comments were specific to the groundfish fishery but some commenters were in favor of increased monitoring in general. The Committee member also asked about the comments on using catch data for stock assessments; staff explained these comments were from the general public and that the science center did not comment on this. Another Committee member asked whether there were any public comments from the common pool sector; staff confirmed that there were at the Groton public hearing, as well as input from participants outside of the groundfish fishery, and explained that these commenters provided comment knowing the Amendment does not directly apply to them since the focus is on the groundfish monitoring program. One Committee member asked to clarify in the Groundfish PDT's revised purpose and need statement what is meant by "fair and equitable catch accounting"; staff explained that this language is intended to capture the large number of public comments with respect to fairness in monitoring, in particular, concerns about some vessels receiving higher monitoring coverage rates than others.

*Public Comment:* Vito Giacalone (Northeast Seafood Coalition, NSC) commented on an issue he felt is key to addressing problems with the monitoring program: the link between accuracy in stock assessments and monitoring. He said that the further away the ACLs are from the truth, the less functional monitoring will be, resulting in inaccurate catch estimates. He attributed these inaccuracies in stock assessments to problems with the trawl surveys, and said there needs to be discussion on how to improve fishery independent data accuracy.

***PRESENTATION: GAP MEETING MOTIONS, MR. MARTENS***

Mr. Martens (GAP Chair) presented the GAP meeting motions pertaining to A23 (May 24, 2017; Document #5c).

Questions and Comments:

Committee members asked questions on the GAP's motion to revise the purpose and need statement for A23. One Committee member asked what is meant by "cost effectiveness" and what measure that is relative to; Mr. Martens said the GAP did not get in to too much detail, but the idea is the Advisors would like the best data for the least amount of cost. Another Committee member asked whether this motion is against the PDT's purpose and need statement or is expanding on it; Mr. Martens clarified that the GAP's intention is to expand the language to include fishing industry interests, and said that accountability across all segments of the monitoring program (industry, both sectors and common pool, and NMFS) is important to the GAP. Committee members had other questions on the GAP's motion on EM such as whether Council action is necessary and regarding cost concerns. Ms. Heil clarified that while NMFS can approve EM technology currently, Council action would be required for EM programs using maximum retention. One Committee member asked whether there would be different goals and objectives for EM from those for the monitoring program as a whole, or if there would be universal goals and objectives for the monitoring program that EM would have to meet, speaking

with regard to fairness and equity. Mr. Martens clarified that EM would be used as a way to achieve the current monitoring goals and objectives. Mr. Martens also explained that some of the Advisors opposed the motion because they have questions about what cameras can and cannot do and what role cameras have, while others think EM can already be used for monitoring. The Committee discussed the GAP's motion to look at alternatives to the current 30% CV standard and whether the GAP's intention is to examine precision of data as well as accuracy. Mr. Martens explained that the GAP would like the PDT to analyze using either fewer or more strata, in the interest of improving the data. One Committee member expressed concern that the GAP's motion for a maximum retention system would eliminate minimum sizes; Mr. Martens clarified that the idea would be to keep all allocated groundfish caught, with the potential for incentives to discourage targeting of small fish.

***AGENDA ITEM #1: AMENDMENT 23 (GROUND FISH MONITORING ACTION)***

**Motion #1:** Etrie/Alexander (friendly via Griffin)

To recommend to the Council that the purpose of Amendment 23 is to implement measures to improve reliability and accountability of catch reporting and to improve an accurate and precise representation of catch (landings and discards) and to reevaluate Amendment 16 and Framework 48 monitoring measures while taking into account over seven years of fishery, administrative and programmatic experience. Measures are sought that improve reliability and accountability across all segments of the monitoring program and directly take into account measurable costs and identified benefits to the fishery while meeting requirements in the most cost effective manner possible.

*Discussion on the Motion:* One Committee member noted the addition of "precise data" and asked whether this would move away from the current focus on "accurate data" in A23. Another Committee member expressed concern that the statement does not include a mention of minimum costs when discussing "cost effectiveness" of monitoring. One Committee member thought the inclusion of "Amendment 16 (A16) and Framework 48" is unnecessary because it is inherent. She also asked if Framework 55 (FW55) clarified the goals of the at-sea monitoring (ASM) program; staff confirmed that FW55 specified accuracy as the primary goal with all other goals being secondary, but pointed out this only applies to ASM and not to other potential monitoring programs (such as DSM). Another Committee member asked to clarify what is different between this statement and the PDT's statement; staff explained that the PDT discussed the purpose of catch data (to end overfishing, set quotas, etc.).

*Public comment:* Mr. Giacalone said NSC supports the motion, and also said the Council should not prescribe the science center on how to use fishery dependent data in stock assessments, and instead recommended having the science center demonstrate how a change in fishing performance could benefit the assessments.

**Motion #1a** to substitute Motion #1: Griffin/Pappalardo

To recommend to the Council that the purpose of Amendment 23 is to implement measures to improve reliability, accountability, accuracy, and precision of catch (landings

and discards) information across all segments of the monitoring program toward better achieving the existing goals and objectives as stated in Framework Adjustment 55.

*Public Comment:* Mr. Giacalone and Maggie Raymond (Associated Fisheries of Maine) both emphasized the importance of including “cost effectiveness,” explaining that A23 has to achieve the objectives but also has to be reasonable since industry will be paying for monitoring. Mr. Martens pointed out that FW55 discusses cost effectiveness so it would be included. Josh Wiersma (Environmental Defense Fund, EDF) said he likes this amended purpose and need statement because it is simpler and more refined, and also said it is premature to talk about benefits of a new monitoring program and that anything moving away from biased catch data is an improvement. He also said a need statement would capture why an improved monitoring program is important for adhering to catch limits, etc.

**Motion #1b** to amend the substitute Motion #1a: Etrie/Alexander

To recommend to the Council that the purpose of Amendment 23 is to implement measures to improve reliability, accountability, accuracy, and precision of catch (landings and discards) information across all segments of the monitoring program toward better achieving the existing goals and objectives as stated in Framework Adjustment 55, while directly taking into account measurable costs and identified benefits to the fishery while meeting requirements in the most cost effective manner possible.

*Public Comment:* Chris Maguire (The Nature Conservancy, TNC) said that “ending overfishing” and “adhering to catch accounting” should be included; it was pointed out that “accountability” captures these. Mr. Wiersma thought the last part is redundant and that the focus should be on accuracy and reliability.

*Discussion on the Motion:* One Committee member questioned whether cost effectiveness is allowed as a contingency for managing a public resource. Mitch MacDonald said it is not contingent on cost effectiveness, but the national standards do require using the most efficient system, or lowest cost for data, to be considered. Another Committee member asked whether the purpose and need statement would carry throughout the amendment or whether there would eventually be goals and objectives; staff clarified that if A23 includes programs other than ASM, additional goals and objectives may be needed beyond those defined in FW55.

*Motion #1b to amend the substitute **carried** on a show of hands (6/5/0).*

*Motion #1b as the amended substitute motion **carried** on a show of hands (7/4/0).*

*Motion #1b as the main motion **carried** on a show of hands (7/4/0).*

**Motion #2:** Etrie/Alexander

To recommend to the Council the development of a range of alternatives for electronic monitoring (EM) that achieve the purpose statement identified by the Committee, such that:

- Vessels should have the option to use EM in place of at-sea monitors (ASM)
- EM instead of ASM on selected trips, where EM is used to directly estimate discards consistent with current EM exempted fishing permits
- Audit based approach for EM where EM runs on 100% of trips and a subset of hauls or trips is reviewed to verify VTR-reported discards
- Maximum retention approach for EM where EM verifies that all groundfish are landed and uses dockside monitoring (DSM) to sample catch
- Formally approve EM as a monitoring tool

*Public Comment:* Ms. Raymond asked that if the EM pilot projects were only done with fixed gear vessels then what is known about EM with trawl vessels. Mr. Wiersma clarified that EDF has a project working with large trawl vessels using maximum retention. Mr. Maguire also explained that the majority of TNC's EM projects are on trawl vessels, as well as gillnet, longline, and jigging vessels.

*Discussion on the Motion:* One Committee member spoke in favor of the motion, and acknowledged that while EM may not work for the large offshore vessels, it gives another option for some vessels and will help save them money. Another Committee member also spoke in favor of the motion, saying that EM is a tool that may not work for all, and said that while sector operations plans may be the best approach for vessels to use EM, this motion will allow room to explore options with the Council.

*Motion #2 carried on a show of hands (11/0/0).*

**Motion #3:** Alexander/Heil

To recommend to the Council the development, within the range of alternatives, of a dockside monitoring program.

*Public Comment:* Mr. Martens commented that fishermen in small remote ports are concerned about the feasibility of a DSM program and said there would need to be analysis done on this. He also said the Council would need to look at filling in the gaps in the previous DSM program to make improvements.

*Discussion on the Motion:* One Committee member pointed out the PDT's white paper on DSM and suggested moving forward with this and using it to analyze the concerns raised by Mr. Martens. Another Committee member said that while he understands these concerns from fishermen, he believes DSM is important for accurate catch (landings) accounting. The

Committee discussed the effectiveness of a DSM program, and it was clarified that the interest is in having DSM that is a part of a larger monitoring program.

*Motion #3 carried on a show of hands (10/0/1).*

**Motion #4:** Etrie/Alexander

To recommend to the Council to develop a range of alternatives to re-evaluate the 30% CV precision standard and how it is applied (e.g., fishery versus stock level) to determine the total monitoring coverage rate.

*Public Comment:* Mr. Wiersma commented that he is concerned with the observer effect and while he is not sure how it should be handled, he said that it should be quantified. Mr. Giacalone said NSC supports this motion, and said this will give more tools to work with. Mr. Martens asked to clarify if this would just be examining the CV, or if the Council should examine other standards to assign coverage to address concerns with accuracy. Ms. Raymond asked if this motion is a broad look at the CV, or whether it would allow focus for stocks most in need; the maker of the motion explained that the intent was for this to be broad.

*Discussion on the Motion:* There was discussion on the fact that this motion is not broad as it would only examine the 30% CV standard, and thus only addresses precision of data, and discussion on whether the motion should be expanded to include examination of other potential standards. One Committee member thought the Council should examine other standards because the 30% CV standard does not work and they should move on from it. Another Committee member asked why they were focusing on a tool measuring precision when the purpose of A23 is to achieve accuracy and asked whether there is a problem with precision. The maker of the motion explained this is only part of the monitoring system (i.e. ASM), and that they would also need a way to determine coverage for other monitoring programs (DSM, etc.). Another Committee member said this motion would give more flexibility to re-evaluate the 30% CV standard.

*Motion #4 carried on a show of hands (7/2/2).*

**Motion #5:** Etrie/Alexander

To recommend to the Council to develop a range of alternatives to determine the total monitoring coverage rate.

**Motion #5a:** Etrie/Alexander (as friendly amended by McKenzie/Griffin)

To recommend to the Council to develop a range of alternatives to determine the total monitoring coverage rate that meets the broader purpose of A23 as stated by the Committee.

*Motion #5a carried on a show of hands (11/0/0).*

**Motion #6:** Alexander/Etrie

To recommend to the Council to consider expanding the scope of the amendment to include monitoring of other federal commercial fisheries that catch groundfish.

*Public Comment:* Ms. Raymond commented on the need for catch accounting in other fisheries so they can hold these fisheries accountable and limit their catch of groundfish.

*Discussion on the Motion:* There was discussion on what would constitute a fishery with a lack of groundfish data; the maker of the motion said he is mostly concerned with whiting and squid fishing on Georges Bank. Mr. Martens raised the concern that this may require more public scoping. Ms. Heil said it is highly likely this would require more scoping because it would involve other fisheries beyond groundfish, such as lobster and squid, and since this was not anticipated to be a part of A23, participants in these other fisheries were not present at scoping hearings. She asked the Committee to consider that this will delay the timeline for A23 and in the meantime the fishery will have the status quo monitoring system. One Committee member pointed out the 2017 Council priority for groundfish to evaluate groundfish catch in other fisheries. Ms. Heil clarified that evaluating catch is different from imposing monitoring. Another Committee member said that while he agrees with the sentiment, this motion should be voted down because there are procedural problems, and he thought this could be addressed later so it would not delay A23. Mr. MacDonald agreed that it is highly likely this would require more scoping because too many fisheries were left out of scoping.

**Motion #6a** to postpone Motion #6: Alexander/Etrie

To postpone until a time certain - the Council meeting next week.

*Motion #6a failed (0/11/0).*

**Motion #6:** Alexander/Etrie

To recommend to the Council to consider expanding the scope of the amendment to include monitoring of other federal commercial fisheries that catch groundfish.

*Motion #6 failed (0/11/0).*

**Motion #7:** Etrie/Heil

To recommend to the Council to develop alternatives that streamline and improve the sector weekly reporting process.



*Discussion on the Motion:* The maker of the motion explained that she had discussed some of these ideas with NMFS before but they were denied because of language in A16 and was told they would have to go through Council action. Ms. Heil offered a letter NMFS had written to the Council explaining what actions NMFS could take to streamline the sector reporting process, and said the PDT could help develop alternatives from this. Staff pointed out this is outside the realm of experience of the PDT so they would require help with this. Mr. Martens asked whether this action is necessary as part of the amendment to make these changes or whether NMFS could work on this directly; the maker of the motion clarified that this action is required since some of the items cannot be achieved without going through the Council process.

*Motion #7 **carried** on a show of hands (11/0/0).*

**Motion #8:** Nolan/XX

The Groundfish Committee does not support expanding the scope of the amendment to eliminate the common pool as an option for the commercial groundfish fishery participants.

*Motion #8 was **withdrawn** without objection.*

**Motion #9:** Etrie/Alexander

To recommend to the Council to include in the range of alternatives an option that would facilitate knowing the total coverage rate at a time certain to assist sectors for business planning.

*Rationale:* Industry needs this information ahead of the fishing year deadline in order to choose a sector and finalize their business planning.

*Motion #9 **carried** by consensus and without objection.*

**AGENDA ITEM #2: INTERIM FINAL RULE FOR FY 2017/FY2018 SECTOR OPERATIONS PLANS, AND NEFS9**

*Discussion:* Ms. Raymond explained the GAP's motion on the Interim Final Rule for Sector Operations Plans, saying that the GAP thinks there should be more guidance on sector overages and that the current language on this is inadequate. She said the GAP feels the rules for sector plans should be enforced, and questions why NMFS has not taken any action yet. One Committee member said that it is dangerous to make assumptions on what happened, and also pointed out NMFS received a letter from Sector IX under the proposed Interim Final Rule addressing actions they will take. She also said she respects that NMFS is constrained by the ongoing process and appreciates that they will share more information when they can. Another Committee member emphasized that this issue needs to be taken seriously and said that the Council will need to react once the final sentence is announced, because sectors are waiting to

see if there will be consequences of these overages. There was some discussion on whether this motion to address the guidance on sector overages could go in A23 so as not to slow the timing for FW57; staff clarified that it could go in either but will affect timeliness, and also said it could be brought up as a 2018 priority.

No motions or consensus statements were made.

### ***PRESENTATION: PDT REPORT (2017 COUNCIL GROUND FISH PRIORITIES), DR. COURNANE***

Staff presented an overview of 2017 Council groundfish priorities, including potential alternatives to include in FW57, and potential reclassification for windowpane flounder stocks. Staff also presented an overview of the PDT's discussion on Atlantic halibut management, including potential options for changing the Accountability Measures (AMs), and recreational management, including potential changes to the recreational management measures process (Documents #4a-4e). The goals of the Committee's discussion were to consider making recommendations to the Council on next steps for windowpane flounder management and the range of alternatives to include in FW57.

#### ***Questions and Comments on the Presentation:***

##### ***Windowpane Flounder***

One Committee member asked whether the size of the AMs for windowpane flounder could be affected by stock status, as in a tiered system. Staff explained that this would be similar to what the AMs are for groundfish, but that this would need to be changed in a framework adjustment, and while there is not analysis of this for non-groundfish fisheries there has been some economic impact analysis in a recent letter from the Council to GARFO. Another Committee member asked what the response was to the letter from NEFMC to NMFS on southern windowpane AMs and whether there was also a letter to the MAFMC. Staff clarified that both the NEFMC and MAFMC sent separate letters to NMFS regarding southern windowpane AMs, and said that the MAMFC got a response back but not the NEFMC. One Committee member said to consider that reclassification of windowpane flounder will take longer than modifying the AMs within a framework adjustment. Staff clarified that the intention was not to include windowpane flounder management in FW57, but instead as reclassification in a future amendment. One Committee member asked whether these options for windowpane AMs should be presented to the MAMFC; another Committee member pointed out this has been offered to the MAMFC before but they were not interested. One Committee member suggested adding windowpane flounder to FW57 using the provisions for AMs in Framework 52 (FW52), and said this could be a short term option that would not need to involve the MAMFC. Another Committee member commented that NMFS has discussed taking the lead on reclassification and asked whether they would do the analysis; Ms. Heil said that NMFS completed the initial exercise of checking through options and is still interested in taking the lead on this, but cautioned that the groundfish team is currently understaffed.

##### ***Atlantic Halibut***

One Committee member asked whether the Groundfish PDT could identify which of the options for revising AMs would be easiest. Staff said that creating a tiered system would be easier than changing the size of the AMs. Another Committee member asked whether there is any evidence that changing the AMs would be helpful to the groundfish fishery. Staff explained that these options would provide some relief to fishermen but still allow these to be functional AMs. One Committee member asked whether it was known where the state fishery catches occur, because the AMs could be moved to where the state fishery catches are high. It was confirmed that reporting area fished is a state fishery requirement. He also asked whether assuming less than 100% discard mortality would affect catch monitoring. Staff explained that this could affect the stock assessment, and since more fish are going in to the model, it could potentially lower the quota. Another Committee member pointed out that changing the quotas should be seen as different from management changes, which should be the solution. One Committee member asked whether there has been a response to the letter in January from the Council to GARFO about the use of Section 306b. Staff said there has not been a response yet.

### **Recreational Management**

No comments or questions.

### ***PRESENTATION: GAP MEETING MOTIONS, MR. MARTENS***

Mr. Martens (GAP Chair) presented the GAP meeting motions pertaining to FW57 (May 24, 2017; Document #5c).

### **Questions and Comments**

Ms. Heil commented on the GAP's motion to instate a maximum size limit for Atlantic halibut, saying they should understand that it's a hope that the State of Maine will follow these size limits, as states typically do, but there is no guarantee. Another Committee member asked whether this AM would include both the restricted gear areas and a maximum size limit; it was clarified that this motion would eliminate some or all of the gear areas. Staff also explained that the PDT has information on length frequency of Atlantic halibut, but does not yet have analysis to say what the savings would be with the maximum size limit. The Committee member also questioned whether the proposed size limit would result in more discards, thus taking away more quota. Staff explained that the only new discards under the proposed size limit would be from state waters, and also said not to lose focus on the gear areas. Regarding the GAP's motion on Federal handgear permit holders and halibut, one Committee member asked whether it was known yet how many people are switching back and forth between the Federal handgear permits and the state fishery. Ms. Heil said she pulled Handgear B permit numbers after the concern about the potential loophole and found only ten boats switched permits mid-season. She also said NMFS did outreach with the fishery to clarify issues of handgear permit holders hauling lobster traps on groundfish trips, which is not legal.

### ***PRESENTATION: RAP MEETING MOTIONS, MR. BLOUNT***

Mr. Blount (RAP Chair) presented the RAP meeting motions pertaining to FW57 (June 12, 2017; Document #5e).

Questions and Comments

Mr. Bellavance clarified that the RAP's motion addressing a different method for crafting recreational management measure involves two concerns: both the volatility of MRIP data and high Percent Standard Errors (PSEs) of the data.

**AGENDA ITEM #3: 2017 COUNCIL GROUND FISH PRIORITIES**

**Reclassification of Southern Windowpane Flounder**

**Motion #10:** Nolan/Bellavance

To recommend that the NEFMC and MAFMC prioritize a framework adjustment to modify the large-mesh non-groundfish accountability measures for southern windowpane flounder.

**Motion #10a** to postpone Motion #10: Nolan/Alexander

To postpone until this afternoon under the Framework Adjustment 57 discussion.

*Motion #10a carried by consensus and without objection.*

**Framework Adjustment 57**

**Motion #11:** Etrie/Alexander

To recommend to the Council to initiate Framework Adjustment 57 and include:

- To incorporate any status changes for groundfish stocks and set specifications for all groundfish stocks for FY 2018 to FY 2020.
- To set specifications for FY 2018 for US/Canada stocks (Eastern Georges Bank cod, Eastern Georges Bank haddock, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder).
- To evaluate the common pool trimester total allowable catches (TACs)
- To modify Atlantic halibut management
- To revise the recreational management measures process
- To revise the AMs for large-mesh non-groundfish fisheries consistent with FW 52 measures for groundfish fisheries

*Discussion on the Motion:* One Committee member thought that this list was not achievable, given that setting specifications for all stocks and for US/Canada stocks is a legal requirement, and said he only saw room for one other action. Staff explained the workload requirements of each item, and also said the Committee should consider A23 and that if the entire list for FW57 is approved, this would likely delay action on A23. Another Committee member pointed out that

these issues could be large or small depending on the number of options within them. She also said revising recreational management measures is timely, given NOAA's MRIP Strategic Improvement Plan and the GARFO workshop on recreational fisheries data.

**Motion #11a** to amend Motion #11: Kendall/Bellavance

To recommend to the Council to initiate Framework Adjustment 57 and include:

- To incorporate any status changes for groundfish stocks and set specifications for all groundfish stocks for FY 2018 to FY 2020.
- To set specifications for FY 2018 for US/Canada stocks (Eastern Georges Bank cod, Eastern Georges Bank haddock, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder).
- To modify Atlantic halibut management
- To revise the recreational management measures process

*Discussion on the Motion:* Doug Grout (Council member) spoke against the amended motion, saying the common pool quotas need to be adjusted this year because A16 said this should be done every five years, and that this should be fairly simple to do by looking at historic landings. One Committee member opposed this amended motion because this removes windowpane flounder AMs, and said this should be a minimal effort because the language is already there in FW52, and said this is unlikely to be taken up elsewhere. There was some discussion on whether adjusting windowpane AMs would require coordination with the MAMFC. One Committee member pointed out they have been involved before. Another Committee member recommended the following: the FW57 workload should allow A23 to continue as A23 affects everyone, setting specifications should be done on time, recreational management measures should be included as they go along with the assessments, windowpane flounder AMs could be included if this is minimal effort, and Atlantic halibut management should be dropped. There was also discussion on the workload requirements of these actions, and one Committee member recommended keeping everything on the list and re-evaluating in September before all the groundfish stock assessments occur.

*Motion #11a to amend failed (1/9/1).*

**Motion #11:** Etrie/Alexander

To recommend to the Council to initiate Framework Adjustment 57 and include:

- To incorporate any status changes for groundfish stocks and set specifications for all groundfish stocks for FY 2018 to FY 2020.
- To set specifications for FY 2018 for US/Canada stocks (Eastern Georges Bank cod, Eastern Georges Bank haddock, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder).
- To evaluate the common pool trimester total allowable catches (TACs)
- To modify Atlantic halibut management

- To revise the recreational management measures process
- To revise the AMs for large-mesh non-groundfish fisheries consistent with FW 52 measures for groundfish fisheries

*Discussion on the Motion:* One Committee member suggested that if the Committee recommended focusing on a few measures within each issue rather than including all, that perhaps all of these actions could be included in FW57.

*Motion #11 carried on a show of hands (10/1/0).*

#### **AGENDA ITEM #4: MRIP STRATEGIC PLAN**

Staff presented the draft letter from NEFMC to NMFS responding to the request for comments on NOAA's Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Strategic Plan. The letter includes staff comments regarding the following points: for-hire electronic reporting actions should be through the Council process, clarification on whether MRIP data should be used for in-season recreational fisheries management, an emphasis on outreach with anglers, and the question as to why there is no representative from the Northeast Region on the Executive Steering Committee. The Committee was asked to include any additional comments in the letter.

No comments or questions from the Committee.

#### **AGENDA ITEM #5: OTHER BUSINESS**

*Discussion:* One Committee member asked whether the GAP's motion asking to re-examine A16 guidance for how sector plans address overages should be included in A23. Mr. Martens clarified that the GAP's intention is to discuss this issue broadly and not specifically to the Rafael case because they want to fill holes in the sector plan guidance. Several Committee members asked whether there should be a placeholder for considering this in A23 once more information is available on the current guidance in sector plans. Staff also explained that the GAP's motion on expanding the dredge exemption area will be taken up under the Scallop report at the June Council meeting, and asked the Committee to think about whether this should apply to all Limited Access General Category (LAGC) vessels or just IFQ vessels, and whether this should be limited to the Gulf of Maine or also include Georges Bank. One Committee member asked whether this motion was endorsed by the Scallop Committee; it was clarified that the Scallop Committee passed a slightly different motion. Another Committee member pointed out the letter from GARFO to NEFMC that provides more focus for this request.

The Groundfish Committee meeting adjourned at approximately 4:38 p.m.