

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION  
WEAKFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**World Golf Village Renaissance**  
St. Augustine, Florida  
November 3, 2015

**Approved May 5, 2016**

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2. **Motion to approve proceedings of February, 2014 by Consent** (Page 1).
3. **Move to approve the 2015 FMP Review including the state compliance reports and *de minimis* status for Massachusetts, Georgia, Florida and Connecticut** (Page 2). Motion by Steve Heins; second by Tom Fote. Motion carried (Page 2).
4. **Motion to adjourn by Consent** (Page 2).

## **ATTENDANCE**

### **Board Members**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Nicola Meserve, MA, proxy for D. Pierce (AA) | Bill Goldsborough, MD (GA)                |
| Bill Adler, MA (GA)                          | Lynn Fegley, MD, proxy for D. Blazer (AA) |
| Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA) | Robert Boyles, SC (LA)                    |
| David Borden, RI (GA)                        | Sen. Ronnie Cromer, SC (LA)               |
| Dave Simpson, CT (AA)                        | Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)                   |
| Lance Stewart, CT (GA)                       | Spud Woodward, GA (AA)                    |
| Steve Heins, NY, proxy for J. Gilmore (AA)   | Pat Geer, GA, proxy for Rep. Burns (LA)   |
| Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)                   | Nancy Addison, GA (GA)                    |
| Roy Miller, DE (GA)                          | Jim Estes, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA) |
| John Clark, DE, proxy for D. Saveikis (AA)   | Martin Gary, PRFC                         |

**(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)**

### **Ex-Officio Members**

#### **Staff**

|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| Bob Beal   | Katie Drew         |
| Toni Kerns | Kirby Rootes-Murdy |
| Megan Ware |                    |

#### **Guests**

Jason McNamee, RI DEM  
Capt. Steve T. Anthony

The Weakfish Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the St. Augustine Ballroom of the World Golf Village Renaissance, St. Augustine, Florida, November 3, 2015, and was called to order at 11:55 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Russ Allen.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

CHAIRMAN RUSS ALLEN: We're ready to get started here. If you don't take a seat you miss out. I would like to get the Weakfish Board started.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS**

The first thing on the agenda is approval of the agenda and approval of proceedings from the February, 2014 meeting. Are there any changes to the agenda or objections to those proceedings? Seeing none; we'll consider those approved.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There is no one signed up for public comment, but if someone wants to do that at this time, we'll take them to the front for a couple of minutes. Seeing none; we will move on.

### **UPDATE ON THE 2016 BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT**

The first real agenda item here is an update on the 2016 benchmark stock assessment, and I'll turn it over to Katie.

DR. KATIE DREW: Modeling is well underway and we are still on track to have it peer reviewed at the beginning of 2015, so you will be able to receive the completed assessment and the peer review reports at the May meeting. Yes, 2016.

### **FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW**

CHAIRMAN ALLEN: Thank you, Katie, any questions for Katie? Seeing none; we'll move on to the Fishery Management Plan Review with Megan.

MS. MEGAN WARE: I am going to go quickly through this, and if anyone has any questions at the end you can let me know. First, I'll start with the landings here. Obviously, landings are down. Commercial harvest is in green, recreational harvest is in red.

Total coast wide landings in 2014 were about 273,000 pounds; which is a noticeable decrease from 2013 and 2012. They were both over 500,000 in those previous years.

If we go to the next slide, this graph shows recreational harvest in blue and recreational releases in red. Landings in 2014 were 77,000 pounds or 62,000 fish; and this is well below the five-year average. In terms of pounds, North Carolina had the largest portion of recreational harvest and the number of fish released was a little over 550,000. Addendum 1 to Amendment 4 requires the collection of otoliths and lengths to characterize catch, and this year shows what all the states were required to sample and the actual sampling that took place.

All of the states that are not de minimis met that requirement so that is great for 2014. The starred states are those de minimis states. We have management measures in Addendum 4 that replace those in Addendum 2; however, the Plan Review Team continues to evaluate the management triggers in Addendum 2 to provide perspective on the fishery. The first one is to reevaluate management measures if commercial landings exceed 80 percent of the mean commercial landings from 2000-2004, and it is about 3 million pounds. This trigger was obviously not met. The second is if a single state's landings exceed the five-year mean by more than 25 percent in a single year; and this did occur in Georgia and South Carolina, however this increase is really due to extremely low landings so this is not something that the PRT felt was a need for immediate action. It is just something to keep in mind.

Status of the stock, the 2009 stock assessment said the stock is depleted but overfishing is not occurring; and as Katie just mentioned, we're on schedule to have the next assessment approved in 2016. For status of management, we don't have any new addendums in place. We're currently in to Amendment 4, Addenda 1 through 4.

In terms of state compliance, all states are found to be in compliance for de minimis. The definition of de minimis is, for the last two years, the combined average commercial and recreational landings by weight constitute less than 1 percent of the coast

wide commercial and recreational landings in the same two-year period.

We got requests from Florida, Georgia, Connecticut and Massachusetts; Florida, Georgia, and Massachusetts qualify, Connecticut was just above the 1 percent at 1.07 percent. That is something that the board can discuss. In terms of recommendations, the PRT recommends the board approve the 2015 Weakfish FMP Review, state compliance reports and de minimis status for Florida, Georgia, and Massachusetts. With that I will take any questions.

CHAIRMAN ALLEN: Any questions for Megan? Seeing none; I'll be looking for a motion.

MR. STEVE HEINS: **I move that we approve the 2015 FMP Review including the state compliance reports and de minimis status for Massachusetts, Georgia, Florida and Connecticut.**

CHAIRMAN ALLEN: Tom Fote with a second on that. Discussion by the board.

MS. NICOLA MESERVE: Just a question. If Connecticut were to be found not de minimis, the only change would be the biological monitoring requirements, right; which I believe last year were something like five otoliths and nine lengths.

MS. WARE: That is correct. De minimis states are not required to implement the biological sampling. If Connecticut did not get that status granted they would have to implement that. The number of otoliths and lengths sampled is based on catch, so I believe it is six otoliths for metric tons of commercial landings and three for combined.

CHAIRMAN ALLEN: Anyone else?

CAPTAIN ANTHONY: I just want to say I can appreciate how hard it is to dedicate the resources to collect biological samples from a species that is very hard to find.

CHAIRMAN ALLEN: Yes, I echo your sentiments there. **Seeing no further discussion, is there any objection to this motion? Seeing no objection; the motion passes unanimously.** That pretty much

wraps up the board meeting unless someone has something else.

MR. TOM FOTE: I was just wondering, probably about five weeks ago fishing for bluefish along the beach, all of a sudden they came up spitting up heads and then tails and I realized that what I thought was rain fish in the Wash were schools and schools of bluefish coming in along the beach.

They were all about five or six inches long. There were these bluefish that we're eating - only about a pound and a half. I was wondering if anybody else has seen the same thing. Usually, we were having a problem, we saw only two inch ones, but at least now I'm seeing five and six inch ones. I was just wondering if anybody else has seen that along the coast.

## ADJOURNMENT

CHAIRMAN ALLEN: Nobody else? Is there anything else to come before the board? If you do see anything like that you can discuss that with Tom later. Seeing nothing else; I'll turn it over to Bob. I think we're done.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 o'clock p.m., November 3, 2015.)