



Fisheries Report . . .

Tautog Advisory Panel



by Paul Karcz
Panel Member



RHODE ISLAND'S TAUTOG RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2007

The Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council's Tautog Advisory Panel met on January 23 in Wakefield, RI to review the 2007 tautog fishery, and put proposals together for 2008.

Last year, with the approval of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), Rhode Island and Massachusetts combined their tautog fisheries to form a "region" in order to manage them better. This, along with the fact that Rhode Island took a pro-active and conservative management approach has apparently kept us ahead of the game.

Although the Rhode Island/Massachusetts stock is still considered overfished, it is not as severe as the coastwide assessment.

After reviewing all the information provided, the following proposal was agreed upon by members of the Advisory Panel:

2008 TAUTOG FISHERY PROPOSAL

- Minimum length: 16 inches.
- Split Season:
 - April 15 to May 31..... 3 fish per day
 - June 1 to June 30..... closed
 - July 1 to October 17..... 3 fish per day
 - October 18 to December 15... 8 fish per day

This AP recommendation will be presented to the Fisheries Council at it's February 11th meeting for consideration.

It is important to note that, although this tautog fishery appears to be holding it's own, conservation continues to be extremely important, *especially* during the Spring spawning season. We should all keep this in mind.

PESIDENT'S REPORT (from page 2)

"The people who fish for scup are average anglers who fish from shore or in small boats. The fish mostly in the bay, and most of them fish for food to eat, not for sport."

Up to a few years ago, Rhode Island anglers had to minimum bag limit on scup. Then we went to 50 fish a day, then 25.

Frank Blount, who's Frances Fleet boats provide access to scup fisherman, also lost his cool and told them, "Rhode Island has been hammered since we went to this regional approach and Rhode Island took a huge hit. If you ask me, we're better off alone."

Unfortunately, that wasn't a choice so the bartering continued, and the result will now to back to the ASMFC Technical Committee for examination to be sure the required 53% cut is achieved. Here's what came out of the meeting:

The size will remain at 10.5 inches and there will be an open season of May 24 to September 26.

Party & charter boats will be different (as last year). The minimum size will be 11 inches, and they will have the same season as above, except that they have a "bonus season" of 44 days during which passengers can keep 45 fish.

MENHADEN (from page 41)

The emergency regulations prevented a slaughter of the fishery, and guaranteed at least 50% of the menhaden stock would remain. After a short time, the Maine boat left the bay, and soon thereafter, the menhaden season ended.

The emergency regulations automatically expired. This brings us to 2008.

DEM has proposed that those emergency regulations from 2007 be made permanent. This was brought to the Marine Fisheries Council in December, and the Council ordered the Menhaden Advisory Panel to meet and review the proposal.

In a nutshell, here are the results of the AP meeting and this will be brought to the Fisheries Council as the "recommended" AP regulation:

- Purse seine (menhaden) boats will not be able to take more than 120,000 pounds a day. If two boats intend to fish, the number will drop to 75,000 per boat.
- Any boat intending to fish for menhaden must call DEM before fishing that day
- They will take a DEM observer aboard when requested
- They will report their daily catch
- Purse seine nets will be no longer than 600 feet
- Purse seine nets may not fish more than 90 feet deep
- No more than 50% of the bay stock may be removed.

If it is determined that the removals have reached 50%, the commercial menhaden fishery will be immediately shut down.

In addition to above, existing regulations will remain in place such as a prohibition on fishing on weekends and holidays, and all previously closed areas (Greenwich Bay, etc) will remain closed.

The results of this meeting will be presented to the R.I. Marine Fisheries Council at their meeting on February 11.

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