



The Watch

Capt. Dave Monti, Chairman



The RISAA Legislative Committee’s mission is to provide, in partnership with the Affiliated Clubs, a forum for improving the knowledge and understanding of fishery related issues that affect recreational anglers. An informed membership encourages involvement and advocacy. The Legislative Committee will strive to advocate responsible fishery decision.

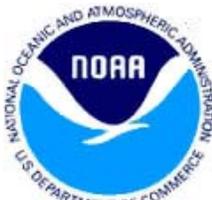
The Committee is comprised of RISAA Members and delegates from the Affiliated Clubs. The Committee meets two or three times a year, depending on the number of fishery and/or legislative issues that develop.

Recreational Summit, 2014 Regs Set

Recreational summit sets national fishing agenda

Last month I attended NOAA’s Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit in Alexandria, VA with **Capt. Frank Blount** of the Frances Fleet and **Capt. Rick Bellavance** of Priority Too Charters, Pt. Judith. This was quite a showing for Rhode Island as we were three of the 70 recreational fishermen, charter captains, boat manufacturers and fisheries policy makers attending the Summit.

The Summit gathered recreational fishing leaders from around the country to discuss ways of improving the science, service and stewardship of America’s saltwater recreational resources. The last Recreational Summit was held in 2010.



today requires partnerships between managers, scientists and people who enjoy the resource. I commit that NOAA Fisheries will actively engage the recreational fishing community, and we will do our part to find cooperative solutions.”

During her closing remarks Sobeck said, “One promise I make is to commit the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop a formal NOAA policy on recreational fishing.” The policy will broadly guide future actions and better integrate recreational fishing with NOAA Fisheries’ mission.

The formation of a national policy for recreational fishing was a key recommendation of one of the Summit’s guiding reports titled “Vision for Managing America’s Saltwater Recreation Fisheries,” The report and a white paper developed by NOAA’s Recreational Fisheries Working Group that addressed recreational fishing “Challenges and Recommendations” in light of the MSA Reauthorization, set the agenda and framed key issues discussed at the Summit.

Key issues addressed at the Summit focused in the areas of angler satisfaction, healthy recreational fisheries (resource stewardship), science and data, both biological and socio-economic, successful relationships between fish managers and anglers as well as regional engagement and collaboration.

At the end of the conference participants prioritized anywhere from fourteen to twenty five possible action steps for each key issue. Participants voted with electronic clickers to prioritize action agenda items. The action agenda items and rankings will be used by NOAA to develop recommendations in regard to MSA Reauthorization and will serve as the guiding principles to develop a formal NOAA policy on recreational fishing.

Recreational fishing regulations highlights

The Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council (RIMFC) met in April to review and vote on recreational fishing regulation recommendations for 2014. Their actions were sent to Janet Coit, director of the RI Department of Environmental Management, for final approval.

Here are highlights of this year’s Council deliberations on recreational regulations.

STRIPED BASS: Status quo with last year’s regulations, 28” minimum size, a possession limit of two fish/person/day. No closed season.

(to page 24)

Capt. Bellavance gave a presentation on fishing data collection and the RI Fish for the Future’s efforts (a pilot project that ran this summer) in which eight RI charter captains recorded and collected their catch data in real time on computer tablets on their vessels. Capt. Bellavance said, “I guess you might say I’m a data geek... I believe good reliable data is necessary for effective management.”



Bellavance

The Summit’s agenda included developing an action plan that would help the Country shape fishing law as the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) that governs commercial and recreational fishing will be coming before congress for Reauthorization this year. The hope was that the Summit would not only guide legislation but would also serve as an action plan for NOAA and its ocean work for the coming years.

Eileen Sobeck, assistant administrator for fisheries at NOAA (their top fisheries executive) said, “There is a lot of positive energy in the room with more than a modest supply of hope and a commitment to follow through on key recreational issues.” Sobeck, who attended the two day Summit participating in discussion groups and listening sessions, said “Resolving issues facing our fisheries



Eileen Sobeck