



New England Fishery Management Council

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LISTENING SESSION SUMMARY

Recreational Groundfish Party/Charter Fishery - Limited Access Program

April 18, 2019

Wells Public Library

1434 Post Road

Wells, ME

The Council held a series of listening sessions to solicit public comment on whether it should develop a limited access program for the recreational party/charter boat fishery for the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan, under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Meeting Attendance: Mark Godfroy (Party boat owner/NEFMC), Tracey Godfroy (Party boat owner), Capt. Shawn Tibbett (Charter boat operator), Capt. Marco Lamotte (Charter boat operator), Pam Thames (NMFS), Capt. Chris Perkins (Commercial fisherman), Chuck Civiello, Pauline Civiello, Paul Hood, Bryan Tufts (Commercial fishermen), Shelley Wigglesworth, and Michael Perkins. The following NEFMC members and staff were also in attendance: Terry Stockwell (Groundfish Committee Chair), Jamie Cournane, PhD (Council Staff), and Jessica Joyce (Contractor, Tidal Bay Consulting).

The listening session began at approximately 5:55 pm.

Terry Stockwell, Chair of the Groundfish Committee, began the meeting with a brief introduction, explaining the purpose of this listening session and options on how to provide comments. Dr. Jamie Cournane gave a brief presentation reviewing *why* the Council is taking action, *what* action has already been taken (control date of March 19, 2018), *what* comments should address, *how* to submit public comments, and next steps.

Attendees asked a number of clarifying questions throughout the listening session, including the definition of limited entry, the inclusion of head boats in a limited entry program, and the effects of a limited entry program on vessel owners who charter fish part of the year and fish commercially the remainder of the year.

Comments:

Ms. Wigglesworth from Kennebunkport, ME, does not support a limited access program. She commented that the fishery has enough restrictions with haddock and cod, and she doesn't support the addition of more restrictions. She doesn't see why recreational anglers who aren't being affected are able to weigh in on this proposal that does affect the party/charter fishermen doing this to make a living.

Mr. Lamotte, a Charter boat captain from Saco, ME, inquired about differences in cod quotas in Maine and Massachusetts. Council staff offered an explanation of the two stocks, Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod and Georges Bank (GB) cod, to clarify the ability for MA fishermen to retain ten cod for the GB stock. In response to information around the proposed two-week open cod seasons for GOM next fall (2019) and spring (2020), he commented that they can't put their boats into Wells harbor until early May and that most customers are gone after Labor Day, so Maine would not benefit from the proposed open cod seasons in GOM. Mr. Lamotte commented that the small boat recreational charter/party fishery is doing the right thing and self-imposing restrictions, and that it's the commercial vessels that got the fishery into the current status. He thinks limited entry is a bad proposal that does not address the problem, and won't change the status of the fishery.

Mr. Tibbett, a Wells resident that operates a charter boat out of Saco, commented that people fishing in MA and southern New England are the only ones who would benefit from the new cod seasons. The Maine season starts around June 15, picks up after July 1 and runs through September 1, so the spring and fall cod openings would not help Maine.

Mr. Tufts, a lobsterman from Kennebunk, commented that he has been thinking about getting a recreational party/charter boat license, but does not currently have a license and does not support a limited entry program. He has been working on party boats in Kennebunk for 25 years, and commented that all the trips used to be full, and now you can't fill a boat with customers. He got out of working on recreational fishing vessels because it was getting too hard to make a living, and now he lobsters. Mr. Tufts feels it is not the recreational fishermen who hurt the fishery.

Mr. Chris Perkins, a commercial tuna fisherman, inquired about the goal of a limited entry program, and whether it is to put less pressure on the resources. He commented about the inequity of limiting charter/party boats when there are hundreds of recreational anglers pounding the same resources on Jeffreys Ledge who wouldn't be affected by limited entry.

The listening session ended at approximately 6:30 pm.