

NEW JERSEY MARINE FISHERIES COUNCIL
Galloway Township Library
Galloway, New Jersey
March 6, 2014

Council Attendees: Acting Chairman Richard Herb
Erling Berg
Eleanor Bochenek
Barney Hollinger
Walter L. Johnson III
Sergio Radossi
Joseph Rizzo
Robert Rush
Joseph Zaborowski

Council Absentees: Frances Puskas

Division of Fish and Wildlife Attendees:

Brandon Muffley, Administrator, Marine Fisheries Administration (MFA)
Russ Babb, Acting Chief, Bureau of Shellfisheries (BSF)
Captain Dominick Fresco, Bureau of Law Enforcement
Russ Allen, Supervising Biologist, Bureau of Marine Fisheries (BMF)
Tom Baum, Supervising Biologist, BMF
Sherry Bennett, Council Secretary
Jeffrey Brust, Research Scientist, MFA
Mike Celestino, Research Scientist, MFA
Brian Neilan, Assistant Biologist, BMF

Ms. Bennett read the compliance with the Sunshine Law. Notice of the meeting was filed with the Secretary of State on February 10, 2014. The draft January 2014 meeting minutes were approved. Acting Chairman Herb began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Audience Conduct

Acting Chairman Herb reminded the audience to take conversations outside or wait until the end of the meeting and to turn off all cell phones. Individuals wishing to make a public comment will need to sign up.

Law Enforcement Report

Captain Fresco presented the Marine Fisheries Council (Council) with the Law Enforcement Report for January to February 2014 (detailed report provided in Handout #1).

December

- While on patrol around the Shark River in Monmouth County, a white van with a roof top refrigeration unit pulled up to a party fishing vessel moored at the dock in Belmar Marina. It was determined two of the three males present were in the process of selling a total of 72 live tautog to an individual associated with a North

- Jersey seafood market. A total of twenty three summonses were issued to these three men along with the vessel's captain and owner. The charges included; possession of sub legal tautog, possession of tautog over the daily limit, failure to keep accurate records, sale of tautog without a New Jersey Non-Directed Tautog Permit and the sale/purchase of illegally possessed wildlife.
- During an inspection of an otter trawl vessel in Sea Isle City, six summer flounder concealed within a stack of empty fish totes were found. Both the directed and by-catch commercial season for summer flounder was closed. The summer flounder was seized and summonses were issued to the captain and mate for interference with the duties of a conservation officer. In addition to the summonses, a written warning was issued for landing summer flounder during the closed season.

January

- A crab dredge vessel dredging for blue claw crabs in the New York Harbor prior to landing in the commercial port of Belford, Monmouth County. A summons was issued to the captain for the possession of 122 containerized hard clams, while engaged in the catching and taking of crabs by dredges. On February 10, the captain pleaded guilty to the charge and paid a penalty of \$400.00 plus court costs.
- Inspection of patrons on a party boat fishing vessel out of Point Pleasant Beach, Ocean County, despite extremely cold weather and rough sea conditions that day the boat had almost 30 patrons on board; revealed possession of a total of 5 ocean pout, which is a federally protected species. Since these were federal fisheries violations, Conservation Officers (CO's) gathered all of the individual's information and completed a referral form, which was then sent to a Special Agent of the National Marine Fisheries Service for further action.
- While conducting an at sea patrol in the Great Egg Harbor River and Bay, CO's inspected multiple fyke nets. Three fyke nets with the same gear number were found to have numerous decaying striped bass and white perch within the fykes. When the officers utilized the automated license system to identify the commercial fisherman whose gear number was on the nets, they discovered the commercial fisherman had failed to purchase a valid 2014 fyke net license for any of the nets being fished. Summonses were issued to the commercial fisherman for wanton waste of marine fish and failure to obtain a valid license for the fyke nets.

February

- An inspection of a 32' Regulator sport fishing vessel with 5 fishermen onboard that entered a lagoon in Ocean City, revealed 292 black sea bass during the closed season. The fish were sold for fair market value and weighed 566 lbs. Each fisherman was charged for possession of 58 black sea bass during the closed season. The owner of the vessel was issued 3 additional summonses for landing black sea bass in excess of 100 lbs. without a NJ black sea bass landing permit, landing black sea bass in excess of 10% bycatch limit, and land black sea bass during the closed commercial season.
- CO's observed five oyster harvesters in separate vessels harvesting oysters from waters classified as 'special restricted' in Delaware Bay, wherein harvest is

prohibited due to health concerns for consumption of shellfish from these areas. They were observed harvesting outside the seasonally approved waters otherwise known as the oyster tonging area in Maurice River Cove. Resultant to these observations, a total of 104 bushels of contaminated oysters were seized and interdicted from three separate shellfish dealers along the Delaware Bay, thus preventing this tainted product from reaching public consumers. Two days later, five oystermen in separate vessels were apprehended in the same condemned area of Delaware Bay with another 33 bushels of contaminated product. The combined total of 137 bushels had an ex-vessel value of \$5,480. In total from both days' observations, six commercial fishermen were found to be harvesting oysters in condemned waters. Four of the oystermen are facing a petty disorderly person's offense which carries up to \$500 fine and/or up to 30 days imprisonment, loss of their commercial shellfish license for three years, forfeiture of their vessel, outboard engines, and gear used to harvest the oysters. For the remaining two oystermen, this is a subsequent offense which carries up to \$1000 fine and/or 6 months imprisonment, loss of their commercial shellfish license for five years, forfeiture of their vessel, outboard engines, and gear used to harvest the oysters.

Legislative Report

Mr. Muffley presented Council with the legislative report (Handouts #2 a – c). Sponsored legislation included:

- A2684, sponsored by Assemblyman Bob Andrzejczak, establishes Menhaden Personal Use and Limited Sale License and permits use of certain gear for taking of menhaden.
- S691, sponsored by Senator Raymond J. Lesniak, prohibits certain possession, sale, offering for sale, trade or distribution of shark fins; and allows in NJ the processing or sale of wild striped bass caught outside of NJ.
- A2284, sponsored by Assemblyman Bob Andrzejczak, establishes recreational fishing license plate; dedicates fees to coastal fishing research.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Report

Mr. Baum and Mr. Allen presented Council with an update on ASMFC Management Boards (Board) proceedings (Handout #3) from the winter ASMFC meeting week.

Mr. Baum

Atlantic Herring Section

The Board initiated a new amendment with the purpose of protecting spawning herring in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine). The proposed draft amendment will review and consider (1) removing the fixed-gear set-aside rollover provision, (2) requiring the declaration of intended fishing gear types prior to the quota periods, and (3) requiring vessel fish holds to be emptied of fish before leaving the dock on a fishing trip. The draft amendment is initiated to correct inconsistencies in the application of current spawning area regulations.

Winter Flounder Management Board

The Board set specifications for the 2014 recreational fishing season for the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) stock. The season will extend from March 1 to December 31 with a two fish creel limit and 12" size limit. This change is an expansion of the current 60-day recreational open season. The Council will need to consider these changes to the winter flounder season later in the meeting.

Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board

The Board approved Addendum XXV to the Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan, establishing regional recreational management for both summer flounder and black sea bass species for the 2014 fishing year.

- Prior to the Board meeting, the ASMFC held several public hearings from Massachusetts to Virginia to obtain input on the addendum. On January 13, a public meeting was held in Toms River, where about 70 people were in attendance. No one was in favor of the regional management.

The approved summer flounder regions are Massachusetts and Rhode Island; Connecticut through New Jersey; Delaware through Virginia; and North Carolina. For black sea bass, the Board also approved the continuation of management measures by northern (Massachusetts – New Jersey) and southern regions (Delaware – North Carolina). The Technical Committee (TC) will work with states to develop, for Board considerations and approval, measures for each region that will collectively achieve, but not exceed, the recreational harvest limit.

- For summer flounder the Addendum XXV was initiated to address a growing concern that current summer flounder management measures are not providing recreational fisherman along the coast with equitable harvest opportunities to the resource.
- For black sea bass the Board approved the ad hoc regional measures approach for the 2014 fishing year, with the option of extending it through 2015 by Board action. States in the northern region (MA-NJ) will reduce catch based on the region's performance in 2013. States in the southern region (DE-NC) will implement measures consistent with federal regulations.

The Board will finalize the regional measures on a conference call scheduled for March 13, 2014.

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistical Program Coordinating Council

The Board approved the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and also approved a motion to move forward with the state conduct of the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, with the earliest start date of January 2016.

Mr. Allen

Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

The Board decided to combine Draft Addendum IV, which addresses reference points, with Draft Addendum V that will consider potential management options to achieve the new reference points. A public comment period is expected to be held on the combined draft addenda prior to Council's July meeting. The Board also tasked the TC, Law

Enforcement Committee, and Advisory Panel to evaluate a potential recommendation to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to consider opening the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to catch and release fishing. Council will be kept informed as more develops.

American Eel Management Board

The Board continues to work on the elements of Draft Addendum IV, which will propose coastwide conservation measures for glass and yellow eel fisheries. The Board will consider approval of the Draft Addendum for public comment at its next meeting in May 2014.

Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

The Board approved to manage cast net fisheries for 2014-2015 for menhaden under the bycatch allowance (i.e. landings not counted against the quota), with the states responsible for reporting.

Weakfish Management Board

The Board met to review the 2013 stock status indicators. The weakfish stock has shown some signs of improvement but has not recovered coastwide and will continue to be monitored.

Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board

The Board will submit a letter to NOAA Fisheries requesting a postponement of the Large Coastal Sharks season until July 1st for the 2015 fishing season. Council will be kept informed as more develops in the process of streamlining the specifications process each year.

South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

The Board initiated the development of a Draft Addendum to replace and update the analysis in determining management measures for Atlantic croaker and spot. Council will be kept informed as more develops at the May Board Meeting.

Mr. Zaborowski asked when any changes to the striped bass measures will take effect. Mr. Allen commented January 1, 2015. Mr. Zaborowski also asked if the specifications applied to all sharks. Mr. Allen commented he is not all that familiar with sharks, but knows they separated out various species from the large coastal group, such as all hammerheads. The Board could be making changes in an effort to stay streamlined with all state and federal agencies.

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC)

Mr. Baum and Mr. Kaelin, one of NJ's representatives for MAFMC, presented Council with an update on MAFMC (Handout #4) activities at their February meeting.

Mr. Baum

On February 5-6, 2014, MAFMC hosted a workshop focusing on the Best Management Practices on Offshore Wind Development. Many presentations were given including three United Kingdom presenters on what they have learned from their wind farms developing on their fishing grounds. A lot of good informative information came out that will help in NJ's development of wind farms, one being the importance of developers working closely with fisheries and the fisherman who work in and around the fishing grounds. Presentations are available on the MAMFC website.

MAFMC met on February 11-13, 2014 in North Carolina.

- Climate Change and Fisheries Science Workshop
This was the second in a series of workshops that the MAFMC has held to support the development of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) guidance document. The purpose of these workshops is to evaluate science and policy aspects of specific issues and develop “best practice” recommendations for the EAFM document. Presentations and audio recordings for the workshop are available at <http://www.mafma.org/workshop/2014/climate-change-and-fishery-science-workshop>

- Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish
The MAFMC considered two actions that have been proposed to address disapproved portions of Amendment 14 to the Atlantic, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP).
 - I. Slippage Framework
Framework 9 considers several management options to address slippage on observed trips in the mackerel fishery. The MAFMC reviewed a range of management options and approved Alternative 2, which would require vessels to terminate their trip following any non-exempted slippage on observed trips and submit notifications of slippage events by vessel monitoring system (VMS).

 - II. Omnibus Observer Funding Amendment
The Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils have initiated an Observer Funding Omnibus Amendment to address disapproved portions of Amendment 14 related to funding for observer requirements. The MAFMC decided to review additional analyses at a future meeting.

- Monkfish Framework 8
The MAFMC reviewed a range of alternatives that were developed as part of Framework Adjustment 8 to the Monkfish FMP. Motion was approved to increase Days-At-Sea (DAS) by about 15% for Northern and Southern Management Areas.

Mr. Kaelin

- The Monkfish FMP has made good progress on setting specifications which has allowed for positive movement forward with both management areas on common ground.
- Mr. Kaelin also had the opportunity to attend a New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC) meeting on behalf of the MAFMC. NEFMC reviewed an Omnibus Amendment for Essential Fish Habitat; this amendment will affect all fisheries but will likely have the greatest implication for scallop and surf clam fisheries. MAFMC has requested a public hearing slated for summer. Mr. Kaelin will keep Council informed, especially since this could impact NJ fisheries.

Shellfish Council Reports

No reports from Delaware Bay and Atlantic Coast at this time.

Committee Reports

Mr. Rizzo and Mr. Radossi, respectively, presented Council with two committee reports (Handouts #5a-b). Acting Chairman Herb requested to hold all general public comment to the end of Council meeting.

Mr. Rizzo

Reef Committee Report

The Reef Committee and Bureaus of Marine Fisheries and Law Enforcement staff met with recreational, commercial and for-hire advisors on 2/19/2014 to discuss the Christie Administration's compromise between recreational and commercial interests regarding access to artificial reefs in State waters. A short PowerPoint that summarized the proposed regulations as well as the locations of the Full Access Zones (defined locations where lobster/fish/conch pot can be set) was presented to the advisors. In addition, the language of draft amendment was distributed to the advisors and the group went over the document item by item for direct feedback. Marine Fisheries staff, working with lawyers from the Department, will adjust the proposed amendment accordingly to reflect agreed upon suggestions by the advisors.

Also discussed was the rule making process and the anticipated date (April 15, 2014) that the proposed regulations would be on the Governor's desk for review prior to publication. The amendment should then be available for the required 60-day public comment period prior to the July Marine Fisheries Council meeting

Mr. Radossi

Black Sea Bass and Summer Flounder Committee Reports

Meetings of the NJ Marine Fisheries Council's Black Sea Bass and Summer Flounder Committees were held at the Nacote Creek Enforcement Office on February 27, 2014. In attendance were Division of Fish & Wildlife staff, Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass

Council Committee members as well as advisors representing several recreational fishing organizations. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss options for New Jersey's 2014 recreational black sea bass and summer flounder fisheries regulations.

At their February 2014 meeting, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) approved ad hoc regional management measures for the 2014 recreational black sea bass fishery. These measures require states in the northern region, MA, RI, CT, NY, and NJ, to take a 7% reduction based on the preliminary 2013 recreational black sea bass harvest estimates. Since that meeting, preliminary harvest estimates for 2013 wave 6 have been published indicating that the northern region may only need to take a 3.2 % reduction in harvest. The current 2013 New Jersey recreational black sea bass regulations are 20 fish at 12.5 inches, with an open season from May 19-August 8, September 27-October 14, and November 1-December 31. Proposed Federal Regulations for 2014 are 15 fish at 12.5 inches, with an open season from May 19 to September 18 and October 18 to December 31.

The Black Sea Bass Committee reviewed 10 options which meet either a 7 or 3 percent reduction in harvest. All options retain the current size limit of 12.5 inches and make adjustments to the season and possession limit, with all seasons falling within the current 2014 federal regulations. The Committee requested the Bureau explore the possibility of a split bag option where the possession limit would decrease from 15 fish in the spring to 5 fish in the summer and again increase back to 15 fish in the fall. These options are currently being reviewed by the ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Technical Committee (TC). The TC will provide its comments on the scientific merit of the proposals to the ASMFC Board which is set to meet on March 13, 2014 for final approval. Therefore, no recommendation was made by the Committee regarding black sea bass regulations for 2014.

Also at their February 2014 meeting, the ASMFC Board approved Addendum XXV which implements adaptive regional management measures for the 2014 recreational summer flounder fishery. These measures require states from Massachusetts to North Carolina to regionalize, placing New Jersey in a region with Connecticut and New York (referred to as the Mid-Atlantic Region). Each state within a region is required to adopt complimentary management strategies (defined as same possession limit, same size limit and same season length) to achieve an overall regional harvest target.

All options for the Mid-Atlantic Region contain modifications to daily possession limits, size limits, and open seasons. The minimum size limit has been established at 18 inches. This represents a ½" increase in minimum size for both Connecticut and New Jersey, and a 1" decrease in minimum size for New York. There are also numerous options included with varying possession limits (4 or 5 fish) and season start and end dates. Again, these options have been approved by the ASMFC TC however; the ASMFC Board still needs to meet on March 13, 2014 for final approval. Therefore, since the Mid-Atlantic Region

is uncertain as to the exact options available to the Region, no recommendation was made by the Committee regarding the regulations for New Jersey's 2014 recreational summer flounder fishery.

The Committee recommends that a special April Council meeting be scheduled in order to take action on the 2014 black sea bass and summer flounder options that the ASMFC Management Board approves during its March 13, 2014 conference call.

Acting Chairman Herb announced that a special meeting will be held on April 3, 2014, at 4 pm in Manahawkin. He also stated the importance of obtaining public comment tonight for present (2014) and future regulations for the summer flounder and black sea bass fisheries. Mr. Herb also informed the Council and the public about actions taken by NJ's federal delegation seeking information as to why NMFS and USFWS voted on fluke management at the February ASMFC Board meeting.

Regulatory Actions

Mr. Allen presented Council with Draft NOAC, to modify the recreational winter flounder season (Handout #6). At the recent ASMFC meeting, the Board approved expanding the 2014 recreational season for the SNE/MA stock. Currently, all states are required to have a 60-day season. NJ's season is March 23 – to May 21. This new season approved by the ASMFC will be March 1 to December 31. The change is intended to increase fishing opportunities in the southern range where other species' availability may be limited later in the year. All other commercial and recreational management measures for the Gulf of Mexico and SNE/MA stocks will be maintained.

Mr. Zaborowski made a motion, seconded by Mr. Rush, to extend the recreational winter flounder season from March 1 to December 31. There were no comments from council or public and the motion was approved.

Old Business

Mr. Muffley

- Presented Council with a copy of a letter of public comments sent to ASMFC and Council, regarding Draft Addendum XXV to the summer flounder, scup and black sea bass, indicating they did not support regional management (Handout #8).
- Presented Council with a copy of the letter sent to Senator Van Drew from Council regarding draft legislations that addresses Council's concerns on S2726/A4036 Menhaden (Handout #7).
 - I. An update on the 2014 Menhaden fishery was presented to Council. The menhaden quotas were split with 95% of the quota allocated to the purse seine fisheries and 5% to the trawls, bait nets, pound nets and gill nets gear types. The 5% quota had been overharvested (approximately 2 million pounds) by the middle of February, thus closing down the fishery. However, under the closed season provisions set by ASMFC, all gear

types can still land menhaden but are restricted to a 6,000 lbs limit. Mr. Muffley suggested to Council to consider a Menhaden Committee meeting to discuss this early closure and how to address in the future.

- II. Much of what Council had requested be modified in the Legislation has been addressed: adding additional types of gears types that can now qualify for landing license, 10% by catch provision was removed, and a new personal use/limited sale license. This new license would allow for unlimited harvest but only 500 lbs per day (Council recommended 300 lbs/day) can be sold has also been added. The bill also requires the Council and the Menhaden Committee to meet annually as well as allow for paper copy submission of harvest records. Mr. Muffley will continue to keep Council informed as more modifications are made. Acting Chairman Herb agreed that Council will continue to stay on top of the menhaden modifications that are being addressed and Council will take action as needed.
- Introduced a presentation by Tony MacDonald from Monmouth University and Karen Lowrie from Rutgers University on a Commercial Fishing Mapping Program they are developing. This tool is to help many in the recreational and commercial fisheries as well as offshore projects in the identification of different habitats. The presenters are looking for help and support from the public and fishermen to help provide their insight and experience to help ensure this tool will be utilized and benefit everybody. Mr. Muffley will continue to keep Council informed as this mapping program develops.

Mr. Allen

Updated Council with the Bureau of Marine Fisheries report:

- I. Glass Eel Survey is underway at three locations: Absecon Creek, Patcong Creek and Nacote Creek. Weather related issues in fresh water have delayed the start of this survey.
- II. January's Ocean Trawl Survey has been completed even with the weather not being very conducive for sampling. Two Atlantic sturgeon were caught and one striped bass with a possible lesion. Work is in progress to make sure a sampling kit is on board for all future trips to collect samples from any abnormal potentially diseased fish.
- III. Process of setting up striped bass tagging operations in DE Bay.
- IV. Setting up of Atlantic sturgeon receivers for April in DE Bay.
- V. The 2014 Marine Digest will hopefully be out to the public by Council's May 1st meeting.
- VI. Commercial regulations summary document should be completed by April 1st.
- VII. If Council has suggestions for future presentations, please inform the Bureau.

New Business

Acting Chairman Herb requested Committee Meetings as follows: regulatory, menhaden, and recreational summer flounder and black sea bass.

Mr. Muffley updated Council that the ASMFC TC did approve NJ's split bag option on black sea bass and will be presented to the ASMFC Management Board on the March 13, 2014 conference call.

Mr. Muffley addressed the public to clarify and remind fisherman that the recreational winter flounder season is not open yet even though Council approved measures tonight. He indicated the season will likely not open prior to the current opening of March 23, 2014.

Mr. Rush requested an advisors meeting for summer flounder and black sea bass to be set up prior to April 3rd special meeting. Mr. Muffley agreed that it is a good idea to get an advisors meeting set up in case it is needed prior to April 3rd Council's meeting.

Public Comment

General

Mr. Fote, requested Council send a letter to the Chairman of the ASMFC to request the Policy Board remove USFWS and NOAA/NMFS representatives from future voting as per the ASMFC compact. Acting Chairman Herb commented Council will take under advisement.

Reef

Mr. DiDomenico, hopes artificial reef funding is reinstated by the state due to the regulatory compromise that is being developed. Also, requests Council to create a series of Reef Committee meetings prior to seeking SMZ designation at the MAFMC, so a concise agreement can be made before moving forward.

Black Sea Bass

Mr. Hartel, does not agree with regional management, and asked for a clarification in understanding of these regions. He finds it unfair for NJ to be placed into a region with a group of states that typically overfish their target.

Summer Flounder

Mr. Hartel, would like to see the season remain open as late as possible into September so there will be something to fish for in September.

Mr. Bunace, NJ seems to have smaller summer flounder. Would like to have season open as long as possible to hopefully be able to catch a larger size fish.

Mr. Plug, stressed the importance to spread out fisheries to keep fisherman fishing more year round.

Mr. Rupp, is a primarily DE Bay fisherman, he pays \$600 to DE to fish the Bay but is held to the 18" size flounder, while DE fishermen can keep a 16" fish. Request a proposal for DE Bay sectors to help out fisherman in these sectors.

- Mr. Rush commented that the economic impact was brought up, but this Council cannot make these changes, changes can only be made by the public. Mr. Rush reminded the public to call their federal politicians and push them to take some action.

Mr. Hartley, commented that NJ should be split at Barnegat Light. He supported the importance of Mr. Rush's comment on the public is the only way to make a change and encouraged the public to be present and attend the December Commission meetings in MD.

Mr. Siciliano, supports Mr. Hartley's comments and requests NJ be a split into two areas for summer flounder.

Mr. Showell, commented not much we can change for the 2014 season but would support an early opening to get the business jump started. He requests that any changes in season to include Memorial Day to Labor Day, prime time fishing season.

Mr. Van Daly, commented the dream of going out to catch fish is fading, as one fish does not support a meal anymore.

General

Mr. Wark, requests Council oppose the legislation to ban the sale of shark fins, as sharks are already highly regulated and banning the sale of fins is waste. He also opposes sharks being tied in with striped bass, as this confuses the issue.

Mr. Aikers, attended the wind farm workshop, with Mr. Baum. The presentation on mapping given tonight is important in helping the development of wind farm locations. The NJ representatives for ASMFC should not be affected by a political say.

Mr. Fote, requests Council write a letter to oppose the new legislation on shark finning.

Mr. Diehl, request an increase of winter flounder beyond the 38 fish (50lbs) in state waters. Mr. Muffley did comment that a motion was made at the ASMFC to increase the commercial trip limit to 100 lbs, in state waters, but failed. Without any changes by the ASMFC, NJ is held to the current winter flounder limits.

Mr. Isaksen, ASMFC and NMFS are destroying sport fishing and the commercial menhaden fishery in NJ. Last year lost money on menhaden season since it was closed so early.

Council

Mr. Rizzo

- Would like to set up a winter flounder committee to discuss strategy and options sometime in the summer.
- Would like to meet with or send a letter to the legislation sponsor in regards to shark fin bill. After some discussion, Mr. Rizzo commented we can revisit this later as more information is developed, since the Council has reached out on this topic via a letter last year.
- Would like to discuss further the issue of the NMFS and USFWS officials and their voting on ASMFC issues. After some lengthy discussion, Dr. Bochenek made a motion, seconded by Mr. Johnson, to draft a letter for Councils review by April 3rd, requesting the Governor write a letter to send to the Chairman of the ASMFC to have USFWS and NOAA to be removed from future voting as per the ASMFC inter-state compact. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned. Next Meeting April 3, 2014, **Stafford Municipal Building, Manahawkin.**