

**Marine Fisheries Council Meeting
July 11, 2019**

Council Attendees:

Joe Rizzo	Eleanor Bochenek
Sergio Radossi	John Maxwell
Jim Alexis	Dick Herb

Council Absentees:

Barney Hollinger
Bob Rush

DEP and Division of Fish and Wildlife Attendees:

Ray Bukowski – Assistant Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection
Dave Golden – Acting Director, Division of Fish and Wildlife
Jeff Brust – Research Scientist, Marine Fisheries Administration (MFA)
Mike Celestino – Research Scientist, MFA
Jeff Normant – Supervising Biologist, Bureau of Shellfisheries (BSF)
Colleen Brust – Research Scientist, BSF
Heather Corbett – Supervising Biologist, Bureau of Marine Fisheries (BMF)
Linda Barry – Senior Biologist, BMF
Brian Neilan – Senior Biologist, BMF
Tim Daniels – Assistant Biologist, BMF
Matt Heyl – Assistant Biologist, BMF
Jason Snellbaker – Captain, Bureau of Law Enforcement (BLE)

The meeting was called to order. Notice of the Marine Fisheries Council (Council) meeting was filed with the Secretary of State on June 27, 2019. Acting Chairman Herb began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from the March 7th meeting of the Marine Fisheries Council were approved without revision. Motion Made by Mr. Radossi and seconded by Dr. Bochenek. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting minutes from the April 16th meeting of the Marine Fisheries Council were approved without revision. Motion Made by Dr. Bochenek and seconded by Mr. Maxwell. Motion carried unanimously.

1. Enforcement Report- J. Snellbaker

Capt. Snellbaker reported on striped bass enforcement highlights from the Raritan Bay region. In March through late May Marine CPOs, assisted by officers from District 8 and the Central Region, issued over 60 summonses for possession of undersized and/or over the limit striped bass, 2 summonses for interference

with the duties of a CPO, and 5 summonses issued for various boating safety violations. In one notable case, CPO Henderson and Lt. Scott inspected two men who launched a small boat under the GSP bridge in Woodbridge, Middlesex County. Upon inspection, the men were found to be in possession of 21 undersized striped bass measuring from 13 to 26 inches. The men were issued summonses totaling over \$4000.00 in monetary penalties and their court case is scheduled for early May. In another notable case CPO Woerner inspected a kayak fisherman in Perth Amboy, Middlesex County, in possession of 16 striped bass, all but one of which was undersized. Summonses for over the limit and undersized striped bass were issued totaling almost \$3000.00 in monetary penalties. Capt. Snellbaker expressed his gratitude to the Northern and Central Region CPOs for their efforts in enforcing marine regulations in their parts of the state.

Detective Harp, CPO Meyer and Lt. Petruccelli conducted a middle of the night inspection of an Atlantic City clam vessel suspected of landing Atlantic sea scallops without a permit. The officers found 18 pounds of shucked sea scallops on board the vessel and the product were not declared on the vessel operator's trip report. The violations were referred to National Marine Fisheries Service for enforcement action. The violations are punishable up to a \$3,500 fine.

CPO Meyer, Raker, and Lt. Petruccelli set up an on-water inspection of a fyke net fishermen whom they had previously observed exhibiting abnormal behavior when tending his nets. As the officers approached his vessel and identified themselves, the fisherman attempted to make evasive maneuvers and threw a live horseshoe crab into the water from his vessel. Once the officers were able to stop the vessel they found the fisherman was in possession of a live diamond backed terrapin and possessed summer flounder in excess of the bycatch allowance. The fisherman was charged with failure to facilitate safe boarding/inspection of catch, possession of horseshoe crab during the moratorium, possession of a regulated non-game species, exceeding the summer flounder bycatch allowance, and failing to put identification of owner on his fyke nets.

CPO Raker and Detective Harp apprehended a Cape May based fish pot fisherman that landed approximately 1,200 pounds during the commercial closed season. The fisherman failed to notify the Department prior to offloading the sea bass as required. In addition, 177 undersized black sea bass, undersized lobster, mutilated lobster, filleted marine finfish, and closed season tautog were found landed by the vessel. The fisherman was also in violation for accepting black sea bass as a dealer during the closed season. The seized fish were sold to an NJ permitted dealer for fair market value and 20 summonses were issued for the violations. Penalties for the violations include mandatory black sea bass permit suspensions for both fisherman and dealer.

District 8 CPOs patrolled for closed season recreational fluke violations last month and made multiple apprehensions. CPO Raker and Lt. Petruccelli apprehended a repeat offender during the same week and location that he was caught a previous year. During the previous incident the fisherman fled the scene in his vessel and was charged with criminal obstruction and numerous boating violations in addition to the closed season summer flounder offenses. This year, CPOs planned the apprehension knowing he was a flight risk and completed it without incident. CPOs seized the man's fishing gear and charged the man for taking closed season summer flounder.

Detective Harp and CPO Meyer observed an individual in an area of Absecon Bay not commonly used by recreational vessels and is used primarily by commercial crab pot fisherman. CPOs conducted an inspection and observed blue claw crabs and seaweed throughout the floor of the vessel. The individual possessed no nets, bait, traps, or apparatus to catch crabs. CPOs interviewed the individual who eventually admitted to taking the crabs from commercial crab pots that did not belong to him. He was issued summonses for tending and tampering with pots of another, undersized blue claw crabs, and vessel safety equipment.

Shortly before midnight on May 31st, CPOs Klitz and Moscatiello witnessed two divers in the water with spear guns in the Shark River area. After a brief surveillance period the CPOs observed one of the divers exit the water and place a bag next to a garbage can. Upon inspection the divers were not truthful about the bag which held eight undersized summer flounder and two summer flounder over their daily limit. The men were charged for taking undersized and over the limit summer flounder and interference with the duties of a conservation officer.

On June 1st, aboard the P/V Integrity, CPOs Henderson, Nicklow, and Mascio conducted an offshore patrol targeting commercial lobster gear to check for compliance with federal lobster trap tagging requirements. One trawl, consisting of 28 lobster traps, was found to be out of compliance for not having any traps tagged with valid NMFS lobster trap tags. The case is being referred to NMFS for enforcement action.

On June 4th, aboard the P/V Integrity, CPOs Klitz, Nicklow, and Woerner were inspecting fixed gear on the state artificial reef sites. The CPOs came across three trawls of commercial lobster gear belonging to a local commercial lobsterman out of Shark River, which was located outside of the approved “full-access zones” of the reef. The lobsterman was issued the appropriate summonses and court is scheduled for early August.

On the night of June 15th, CPOs Henderson and Woerner were patrolling Perth Amboy, Middlesex County, where they encountered individuals actively fishing from shore. Upon inspection, 10 striped bass were discovered in the sand between two logs near the group’s campfire. The cooked remains of an additional striped bass were also found, and the group eventually admitted to cooking the fish over their fire and partially consuming it. The CPOs issued a total of five summonses to the group for possession of over the limit and undersized striped bass.

Detective Harp and CPO Meyer apprehended multiple individuals using illegal gill nets in the waters off Great Bay Boulevard in Little Egg Harbor Township. Prior to making apprehensions, CPOs observed the individuals tend and harvest fish and crabs from two separate nets. Summonses were issued for setting a gillnet without a license, setting a gillnet in an unlawful area, failing to have proper identification on nets, and possession of undersized blue claw crabs and summer flounder.

2. Legislative/Regulatory Report- J. Brust

No new or old legislative or regulatory issues were reported on.

3. Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Report – J. Brust & H. Corbett

H. Corbett gave an update on the striped bass and coastal shark management board proceedings from the ASMFC's spring meeting. The Striped Bass Management Board approved the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment for management use. The assessment indicates the stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing, so the Board initiated development of a Draft Addendum to consider measures to reduce F to the target level in 2020. The Draft Addendum will provide a range of management options including minimum size and slot size limits for the recreational fishery, and circle hook requirements. The Board will review the Draft Addendum at the August meeting. If approved, the Addendum will be released for public comment for final approval in October, and for implementation in 2020.

In order to fully focus on the Addendum, a motion to initiate the development of an Amendment was delayed until the August meeting.

The Coastal Sharks Management Board met to approve changes to the recreational size limit for Atlantic shortfin mako sharks in state waters. The new size limits of 71 inches (FL) for males and 83 inches (FL) for females are consistent with federal regulations, and states must implement the changes by January 1, 2020.

J. Brust - Lobster Management Board: The Lobster Management Board received an update from the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT). The ALWTRT met in April to discuss reducing injuries and mortalities of large whales due to entanglement in fixed gear fishery equipment. The ALWTRT determined that a 60% reduction in injuries and mortalities was necessary to protect the whale populations. NOAA will work with the states to find the best way to meet this goal through a reduction in vertical lines in the lobster and Jonah crab fishery. A control date of April 29, 2019 was set for implementation of these reductions. The Board was previously going to draft an addendum with similar measures but postponed it in lieu of those developed by the take ALWTRT.

Mr. Brust also reported on the proceedings of the Atlantic Herring Board. Recent years have shown some of the lowest recruitment on record for Atlantic herring. The Board approved Addendum II to Amendment 3 of the Atlantic Herring ISFMP which strengthened spawning protections in Area IA (Gulf of Maine) with the goal of improving recruitment. The Board also received an update on spawning protections for offshore waters that were considered in October of 2018 in conjunction with the MAFMC. An outside consultant has been hired to gather data and discern the feasibility of implementing federal closures in the future.

Mr. Brust - The ASMFC handed out its annual Awards of Excellence. MFA staff member Mike Celestino received an award for his significant scientific and technical contributions, particularly for his work with the Assessment Science Committee (ASC), the Ecological Reference Points Work Group, and the Science and Data Working Group of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, as well as species technical committees and stock assessment subcommittees for bluefish, striped bass and Atlantic sturgeon.

Mr. Brust - The Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board met to receive a report from the Plan Development Team (PDT) on strategies for addressing issues in the black sea bass commercial fishery; consider feedback from the Board's and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Advisory Panels (APs) on those strategies; and review and populate AP membership. The Board first reviewed the PDT Report on black sea bass commercial management. The Board formed the PDT in

February 2019, with the purpose of further developing and analyzing approaches for adjusting the commercial state allocations to address changes to the distribution of the resource. The Board approved almost all options for moving forward for public review, but rejected an option where fishers can buy quota beyond their personal allocations through an auction system.

Mr. Brust – The Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment was approved for management purposes after a successful peer review. The Delaware Bay stock was determined to be at least stable with some indicators of increase. The New England region has improved. The New York region seems to be trending down. There were no reference points for any stocks so no overfishing/overfished designations could be determined.

- Dr. Bochenek inquired about the declines in the New York stock and what, if anything is currently being done to address the issue? Mr. Brust explained that there is nothing being done currently since there is no overfishing reference points. Staff will look into it and update council.

Mr. Brust – The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board met to consider Draft Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia (Atlantic cobia) for public comment. Amendment 1 was initiated to address the approval of Regulatory Amendment 31 to the South Atlantic and Gulf Fishery Management Councils' Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources (CMP FMP), which removes Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP, making the Commission the sole management body for this stock. Amendment 1 addresses a variety of issues including FMP Goals and Objectives, biological reference points, establishment of a harvest specification process, recreational and commercial management measures, de minimis status for the commercial fishery, and what regulations will be recommended for implementation by NOAA Fisheries in federal 24 waters. The Board made several edits to the Draft Amendment, which will be incorporated before it is released for public comment. The Board then approved the document, as modified, for public comment.

The South Atlantic Board also moved to initiate addenda to the Spot and Croaker Fishery Management Plans to incorporate the revised Traffic Light Analysis Approach and redefine its management purpose.

Mr. Rizzo inquired about whether or not there is still a trawl survey for horseshoe crab in Delaware Bay? Mr. Brust explained that the Virginia Tech Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey does come in to Delaware Bay to sample.

4. Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Report – J. Brust

The Council reviewed updated catch and landings information for surfclams and quahogs, as well as recommendations from staff, the surfclam and ocean quahog AP, and the SSC, and determined that no changes to 2020 measures are warranted. To maintain the current measures, the Council also voted to recommend suspending the minimum shell length for surfclams in 2020. The Council reviewed the Draft Public Hearing Document for the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Excessive Shares Amendment and considered recommendations from the SCOQ Committee. Although there was some discussion of removing Alternatives 5 and 6 from the document, the Council ultimately voted to approve the public hearing document for public hearings without modification.

The Council reviewed Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish (MSB) specifications for 2020, which were previously established as part of multi-year specifications. For squid and butterfish, the Council did not recommend any changes. For Atlantic mackerel, the Council recommended that the 2020 ABC be maintained at the 2019 level, which is a 10% reduction from the earlier multi-year recommendation for 2020. Forgoing a higher ABC in 2020 increases the likelihood of achieving the current rebuilding schedule for Atlantic mackerel (June 2023). An assessment update is expected in 2020 and will inform specifications in future years.

The Council received an update on a working group tasked with improving quota-setting methods for *Illex* squid. Also related to *Illex*, the Council reviewed scoping comments on an Amendment that will consider modifying the *Illex* squid permitting system as well as the MSB plan's goals and objectives.

As part of the process for developing its next strategic plan for the years 2020-2024, the Council has been gathering stakeholder input through an online survey, Advisory Panel and SSC meetings, public feedback sessions, and discussions with management partners. Stakeholders have been asked to comment on how the Council has performed under its current strategic plan and what issues should be addressed in the next plan. During the meeting, the Council reviewed a summary of themes and recommendations that emerged from this process. NMFS is working on their Northeast Regional Strategic Plan concurrently, and will share the same goals as the council's plan.

The Council reviewed a report on commercial landings of species that are not managed in the northeast region by the Mid-Atlantic, New England, or South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, or by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The report also included landings of species managed as ecosystem components through the Council's Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment. The report did not show any notable increases in landings of species caught predominantly in federal waters.

5. Bureau Reports- J. Brust & J. Normant

No Marine Fisheries Bureau issues were reported on.

J. Normant presented the Shellfish Bureau Report.

Approximately 51,000 bushels of oysters have been harvested in the Delaware Bay fishery of the 110,000 bushel quota.

60,000 bushels of shell have been planted so far this year with another 60,000 scheduled to be planted before the end of the year.

The Delaware Bay and Atlantic Coast Shellfish Councils drafted a joint letter opposing a bill in the State House requiring DEP to allow the cultivation of shellfish in contaminated waters for certain purposes. This would take away oversight and enforcement of shellfish regulations from the DEP which is necessary to ensure safe shellfish products are harvested and sold from New Jersey. New Jersey currently follows the Federal model ordinance which dictates permitting and handling processes to ensure culpability and oversight.

Mr. Maxwell brought to the attention of the full Council the lack of Shellfish Council members and the resulting difficulty of achieving a quorum to have official meetings and decide on shellfish issues. Mr. Herb echoed the sentiment saying the full council is having similar problems and in the future, they might not be able to vote on mandatory compliance regulations if the problem continues. Mr. Bukowski explained that many of the Councils throughout the state are having the same issues.

Council made a **motion to send a letter opposing the shellfish cultivation bill to the sponsor and all coastal legislators.** Motion by Mr. Maxwell, second by Dr. Bochenek. Motion was approved unanimously.

6. Committee Reports

Mr. Rizzo read the report from a meeting of the Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Committee. The report detailed the proceedings of the June 18th meeting of the Committee and stakeholders regarding development of an ITQ system for the commercial menhaden purse seine fishery. Staff presented options on how percent shares could be distributed. None of the small boats were confident about making a decision at this point. Belford fishermen had not submitted their data yet which they claimed would justify a larger share for boats from that port. Mr. Rizzo suggested not having another meeting unless new data is presented. Mr. Brust agreed that without new data from Belford, there would be little change. Mr. Herb agreed with Dr. Bochenek that a small group should not necessarily be responsible for abandoning an ITQ program and they should find a way to move forward.

Mr. Radossi read the meeting summary from the Tautog Committee meeting on June 13th, 2019. Ms. Barry followed up with a presentation on recommendations from Tautog Committee. She explained Tautog FMP Amendment 1 tagging requirements for implementation January 1st, 2020. The ASMFC will be requiring single use, tamper evident tags that can be tied back to the fisherman and dealer who caught and sold the tautog. For 2020 NJ will pay for all tags and one applicator per fishermen. Payment for tags beyond 2020 will be determined based on future budgets. Possession of the tags will be deemed to be evidence of commercial intent. Concerns were raised about not being able to sell tautog with expired tags from previous year as fish might be saved beyond calendar year to get a better price. Waiting for Board decision/guidance on expired tag use.

Mr. Radossi wanted to clarify whether or not this applied to the keeping of live tautog by recreational fishermen. Mr. Brust explained that it did not.

Brick Wenzel, a commercial tautog fisherman, explained that the tagging process is burdensome, especially considering the amount of tautog harvested in New Jersey. Mr. Wenzel said that he understood that this was a compliance criterion being handed down from ASMFC.

Council made a **motion to approve the Tautog Committee's recommendation to adopt the details of New Jersey's commercial tautog tagging program to maintain compliance with the ASMFC Tautog FMP.** Motion by Tautog Committee (no second needed). Motion passes unanimously.

Applications for committee advisors have been received by council for review. No applicants had any F&W violations. No public comment. There were many applications for committees that don't exist and

staff should make a list for the future. The Council made a **motion to approve the Executive Committee's recommendation to approve the supplied names for those who applied to be advisors for various committees.** Motion by ExComm (no second needed). The motion passed unanimously.

7. Regulatory Actions- J. Brust

J. Brust announced that NMFS had increased the retention limit for Large Coastal and Hammerhead sharks to 36 sharks per day. The MFA notified shark fishermen via first class mail of this change.

Mr. Brust presented a draft Notice of Administrative Change for consideration of the Council in regards to increasing the commercial summer flounder trip limits and landing days for Season 4. Significant rollover of quota from the previous seasons resulted in Season 4 having an adjusted quota that was ~450,000 pounds higher than the initial 2019 quota. The assumed explanation for these large season rollovers is that many of the larger boats with summer flounder landing permits were focusing their efforts on the lucrative scallop fishery. In consultation with commercial fisherman (only one of which opposed the change) and advisors to the Council's Summer Flounder Committee, MFA staff proposed increasing the weekly landing limit from 1,500 pounds to 2,400 pounds. Permitted summer flounder fisherman would be able to land 600 pounds four times a week or 400 pounds six times a week of summer flounder. This represents an increase over the current Season 4 trip limits of 500 pounds three days per week or 250 pounds six days a week that a vessel may land summer flounder. These increased trip limits and landing days would allow permitted vessels to take advantage of the greatly increase Season 4 adjusted quota. Director Golden asked how many advisors are on the Summer Flounder Advisory Committee. J. Brust was not sure of the exact number but explained it was at least a dozen.

Jim Lovgren, a commercially permitted summer flounder fishermen provided the following public comment before the Council made a motion:

- Mr. Lovgren claims a lot of permits that were inactive turned on and caused seasons to close early. The market is good, not a matter of price driving down effort. There is less participation because fishermen are scalloping instead. Mr. Lovgren spoke with staff in consultation on new trip limits and supported three days per week for landing. Summer seasons have different participants that don't fish during the winter and that's how the quota was divvied up. The guys that fish in summer need this done ASAP so that they can take advantage of all the extra quota for season 4. The more fish they can catch now, the better price they can get before the market floods in the fall.

Motion to approve the draft Notice of Administrative Change, pending review by Division lawyers. Motion by Dr. Bochenek. Second by Mr. Rizzo. Motion passes unanimously.

8. Old Business- J. Brust

There was an update from Ms. Brust on wind energy issues. A leasing proposal for a wind energy site proposed by the Orsted company was approved conditionally for 11MW wind plan. Some conditions on

the approved lease plan included mitigation issues shall be reported, any data from environmental and fisheries surveying shall be shared with DEP, and no windmills can be constructed closer than 15 nautical miles from shore. Ms. Brust anticipates that Orsted's construction plan will be submitted by the end of the summer. BOEM will draft an Environmental Impact Statement based on the construction plan that will go out for public comment. A Record Of Decision (ROD) will be issued within 21 months with rejection, approval, or conditional approval. Construction could begin by 2021 at the earliest. Dr. Bochenek inquired if anything about transit lanes has been discussed? Ms. Brust explained that that is one of the major topics of concern being raised by MFA staff.

A proposal was submitted to build transmission cables and shore landings for the continental shelf that would serve as a consolidated energy transmission avenue for all lease holders. MFA staff will be submitting comments based on fisheries concerns.

A meeting of the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA) will be held on July 30th regarding offshore wind science and research. ROSA seeks to address broader aspects of the ocean environment that offshore fisheries and wind energy activities occupy, including pre-facility baseline activity and resource status, ecosystem-based fishery management, socioeconomic effects, cumulative impacts, and other relevant science.

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities is expecting to have an offshore wind strategic plan draft completed by comment in August with an expected finalization in December.

Mr. Radossi asked about cable exposure at the experimental wind energy site off of Rhode Island. Ms. Brust explained that cable depth is a concern that is always submitted with any MFA comments. Mr. Radossi thinks the boat is being missed on good project management for wind farms. He believes that accountability for ensuring that the wind companies follow through with what they say their plans are is not what it should be. Ms. Brust noted that the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) website should have information on wind energy accountability measures.

Mr. Bukowski explained that his role is to ensure DFW is represented in all DEP and State conversations on wind energy efforts. We can now engage Orsted in a preapplication to explain DEP and DFW plans, expectations, and concerns for development. Mr. Bukowski took a tour of the experimental windfarm to better understand the scope of what is involved in building, planning and maintenance of wind farms. There are two upcoming meetings with developers to minimize any major impacts and get our experts in touch with their executives.

Dr. Bochenek inquired about where the cable line for the Orsted lease would be coming ashore. It was explained that Orsted is still in the permitting process to be able to survey different locations to be able to determine the most suitable location.

Mr. Brust reviewed current advisory committee membership including total members and active chairmanships. A list of who has requested to serve on the various committees was presented to the Council. Most of the committees are experiencing a similar issue to the Council's current issue of missing necessary members to ensure proper stakeholder representation.

There has been a request for a Regulatory Committee meeting to address stakeholder interest in making changes to the fyke net fishing season in order to take advantage of the available winter flounder that are caught in this gear. At the time of this request the Regulatory Committee had no current members. Dr. Bochenek suggested populating the committee now with volunteers from the Council in order to have a meeting in regards to the request. Dr. Bochenek volunteered to chair the committee. MFA staff will reach out to the new committee members to set a date for a meeting in the next few weeks.

9. New Business- J. Brust

There needs to be a meeting of the Executive Committee. The three-year term limit for advisors expired on July 1 and staff let them know in May so that those that wanted to could reapply. MFA staff will set up a conference call to go over the applications that have been received in order to populate the committee.

Mr. Brust and Capt. Snellbaker addressed a recent issue with prohibited shark species being targeted by shore-based fishermen. This fishery is getting more and more attention from the public and fishermen due to local news stories and social media posts. The Division sent out news releases to the public to explain the regulations and why prohibited species may not be targeted. Capt. Snellbaker explained that the regulations need to be revisited in regards to taking vs. attempting to take prohibited species. Fishermen are taking too much time releasing sharks and mortalities are increasing. He has been contacted by the chief of police from multiple towns in regards to how to address the issue. Capt. Snellbaker has been in talks with other states to better understand the regulations they are implementing. He wants to get ahead of the issue and make the public aware.

Dr. Bochenek made an announcement that NMFS is holding cooperative science meetings to talk with fishermen and see what topics they think research needs to be done. A meeting is planned for September 10th in Toms River and September 11th in Cape May.

A presentation was made by commercial fisherman and founder of America's Gleaned Seafood, Brick Wenzel and former NJ Fish and Wildlife Director, Marty McHugh on seafood gleaning. Seafood gleaning was described as using unused, already harvested product/fish to donate to food banks and pantries to help fight food insecurity. Taking a small percentage of legal discards/bycatch for processing could have a huge impact on food insecurity issues. There is support from commercial fishermen and pilot programs are being started in the Point Pleasant and Barnegat Light fishing ports. Fish that could be gleaned include lower value species, research catches, enforcement seizures and non-marketable catches. However, they plan to focus on non-regulated species to start, specifically cownose rays and sea robins. Gleaned fish will be collected at docks and entered into VTR to get data. Benefits include year-round source of healthy protein, economic boost associated with new interest in unregulated species, and taking pressure off of heavily targeted species which addressed MSA goals.

Dr. Bochenek inquired how undersized regulated species are going to be gleaned.

Mr. Radossi asked how NMFS feels about this project. Mr. McHugh and Mr. Wenzel explained that there has not been much communication yet besides introducing them to the concept. There will be no financial

incentive for the fishermen, whether monetary or for tax write-off purposes, in order to avoid hits to the TAL and TAC. Gleaning is already happening, and this project is a formal way to make this gleaning most effective.

10. Public Comment

Jim Lovgren, commercial fisherman with the Fishermen's Coop, Pt. Pleasant, said that the Pt. Pleasant fishermen are fully in support of the gleaning program. Especially cow nose rays as they are having an impact on commercial clammers. He catches thousands of pounds of them when fluking and squidding. He also mentioned that sea robins are plentiful, and large ones have enough meat to make it worth their processing for the gleaning program. Mr. Lovgren also addresses the talked about the possible reallocation of black sea bass quota at the ASMFC. He was upset how the original reallocations were calculated and felt New Jersey was robbed of quota. Mr. Lovgren feels that New Jersey has weak representation at the ASMFC and wants New Jersey to take a stand and stop giving away quota. Mr. Lovgren also said that sand dredging has ruined the sea bottom and available fish habitat. Newly exposed rock has made for dangerous fishing and damage to gear. Sand is accumulating in Manasquan Inlet and causing a navigation hazard as a result of beach replenishment projects.

James Elmore was accompanied by his sons who are ambassadors for the State's HOFNOD program. Mr. Elmore explained that he feels there is a lack of connection with the younger generations and DFW resource management programs which is deterring them from joining or participating in the hobby of fishing. He explained that fisheries management information and general environmental science and programs need to be presented in a way to be more digestible by young people and the general public.

Meeting concluded at 7:36. The next Marine Fisheries Council Meeting will be held on September 5th at 5:00 p.m. at the Stafford Township Municipal Building.