

# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## Tautog Technical Committee Call

### Draft Agenda

*Tuesday April 7, 2020*

*10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.*

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary.

Webinar URL: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/714484821>

Join the conference call:

**Phone:** 1-888-585-9008 **followed by the Conference Room:** 853-657-937

- 1) **Welcome/Review draft agenda** (Facilitator: *ASMFC Staff*) 10:00-10:05 a.m.  
Assign note taker for the call
- 2) **Presentation on RI Conservation Equivalency Proposal** (Presenter: *ASMFC Staff*) 10:05-11:00 a.m.  
*Objective:* Review RI CE proposal and provide feedback on analysis; data used; and potential impact to 2021 stock assessment update
- 3) **Update on 2021 Stock Assessment Update** (Presenter: *ASMFC Staff*) 11:00 -11:55 a.m.  
*Objective:* Review likely SAS members, discuss 2020 data considerations, and timeline for the assessment update
- 4) **Any other business** 11:55 a.m.

## **Rhode Island Tautog Party and Charter Proposal**

### **Introduction**

The state of Rhode Island (RI) is submitting a conservation equivalency (CE) proposal in the interest of party and charter industry in RI.

An update stock assessment was completed and approved for management use in 2016. This assessment placed Massachusetts (MA) and RI in a single management region, MARI. The assessment found the MARI region was not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Other regions within the management area were overfished and experiencing overfishing, therefore, an amendment was drafted to consider management to reduce fishing mortality and harvest in those areas as required, as well as implement a commercial tautog tagging program to reduce illegal harvest.

Amendment 1 of the tautog fishery management plan was approved in October 2017. This amendment created management measures for the MARI region, including setting new recreational management for each state. Since MARI region is not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring, the goal when setting recreational regulations was to align MA and RI recreational regulations as closely as possible for consistency within the management region. The amendment does allow for changes to the management measures, it does require the changes be approved by the Board and indicates states should agree with any changes to the measures. Any changes should also attempt to keep the regions regulations consistent when possible. While the amendment established similar recreational regulations in both states, there is an inconsistency, namely MA has a 1 fish bag limit during the RI spawning closure (June – July). It is on this difference RI is basing a conservation equivalency proposal for the party and charter industry.

Prior to the amendment, the RI recreational measures allowed for a 6 fish bag limit in the fall season (October 15 – December 31) and a 10 fish/vessel limit. The party and charter industry is exempt from the 10 fish vessel limit due to mandatory reporting requirements. The vessel exemption and bag limit combination were a feature the party and charter industry used to market fall tautog trips to perspective customers. Under the new recreational measures, the 6 fish bag limit has been reduced to 5 fish, and the party and charter fleet is still exempt from the 10 fish/vessel limit due to mandatory reporting requirements. The reduction in bag limit has impacted the industry's ability to competitively market trips in the fall season. The number of trips targeting tautog by the industry has shown a decline from 2018, the first year under the amendment to 2019 (Table 5). From 2014-2017 the number of tautog trips taken by the industry was variable ranging from ~400 trips to ~4,000 trips but was over 2,000 trips annually in the most recent years. Total trips in 2018 totaled 1,530, a slight decrease, however there has been a large decrease in 2019 to only 443 trips.

The party and charter industry also primarily only targets and harvests tautog during the fall season. From 2014-2019 there were 3 years (2016, 2017, 2019) that harvested tautog outside

of the fall season, 75 trips (0.75% of all trips) total across the three years. Due to this, the decreased bag size impacted the party and charter industry disproportionately to the rest of the recreational community as the private recreational sector harvests tautog year-round.

Between the seasonality of the party and charter industry resulting in higher impacts from the reduced bag limit, and the decrease in trips taken, there is an economic impact to the industry that needs to be addressed. A small inconsistency to MARI recreational regulations should be considered to help the RI party and charter industry. It is important to note that the MARI recreational regulations are already inconsistent due to the MA open season for all recreational fishermen against the aim of the amendment. The amendment also indicates any proposed management changes should prevent the shift of fishing effort into area with more liberal regulations. The proposed regulations would impact a significantly smaller user group than the existing inconsistency (MA open season). Due to this, any potential shift in fishing effort would be minimal, as only RI licensed party and charter vessels would be allowed the 6 fish limit.

The party and charter industry is a small percentage of the total RI recreational catch, ranging from <1% to 4% of RI's total recreational harvest from 2014-2019 (Table 1), therefore a small increase in their harvest would not have a significant impact on RI's total recreational harvest.

The impact on fishing mortality (F) is also likely to be minimal. Since the MARI region was not overfishing, no action was needed per the amendment to lower F (0.23) as it was below both the target (0.28) and the threshold (0.49). The proposed regulations would likely not result in overfishing, as the proposed regulations are still more conservative than the regulations prior to amendment 1 while F was below the target and threshold. The regulations prior to the amendment allowed all recreational anglers in RI a 6 fish/person limit.

It is requested that this change be made with no end date. RI will continue to monitor the recreational tautog landings and investigate any significant increases in recreational harvest. If the recreational harvest numbers increase to a level that impacts the stock, new regulations will be considered and enacted as required. In addition, RI party and charter industry continues to have mandatory reporting, and in fact has been increased in the past year to require electronic submission of all trips within 48 hours of the trip.

### **Summary of Proposed Measures**

#### **Current Recreational Fishery Regulations MARI Region**

<b>Size Limit (inches)</b>	<b>Possession Limits (number of fish/person/day)</b>	<b>Open Seasons</b>
16"	3 fish (up to 10/private vessel)	March 1 – May 31 Aug 1 – October 14
	1 (Massachusetts)	June 1 – July 31
	0 (Rhode Island)	
	5 fish (up to 10/private vessel)	Oct 15 – Dec 31

Proposed Recreational Fishery Regulations MARI Region

Size Limit (inches)	Possession Limits (number of fish/person/day)	Open Seasons
16"	3 fish (up to 10/private vessel)	March 1 – May 31 Aug 1 – October 14
	1 (Massachusetts)	June 1 – July 31
	0 (Rhode Island)	
	5 fish (up to 10/private vessel Massachusetts)	Oct 15 – Dec 31
	5 fish private sector (up to 10/private vessel Rhode Island)	
	6 fish Party/Charter (Rhode Island)	

**RI Recreational Fishery Proposal**

RI conducted an analysis comparing the MA harvest during the 1 fish bag limit season during RI's spawning closure (Jun 1 – Jul 31) to the anticipated increase in harvest if RI's party and charter industry was allowed a 6 fish bag limit in the fall seasons (Oct 15- Dec 31).

- Our proposal uses final 2014-2018 MRIP data and preliminary 2019 MRIP data. The preliminary data is not finalized and is only included as a reference to support the 2018 harvest under the new regulations promulgated in accordance with amendment 1 to the tautog fishery management plan.
- State specific landings for MA and RI were generated from the raw MRIP data.
- MA total landings in 2018 for the 1 fish season were calculated (114 fish), however the PSE for the season were high (Wave 3 PSE 57.3, wave 4 PSE 66.3) due to low intercepts, as there were only 2 intercepts of tautog. Preliminarily 2019 data shows a harvest of 318 fish during the closed season. Due to the uncertainty in the 2018 data, the average harvest from 2014-2017 assuming 100% compliance with a 1 fish bag limit was calculated (6,228 fish) to estimate what harvest could have been if the 1 fish limit was in effect from 2014-2017. This value is likely a higher estimate of potential harvest. A summary of the data is available in table 2.
- RI average party and charter landings for the fall season were calculated for 2014-2017 under the prior regulation of a 6 fish bag limit (5,456 fish). The total party and charter harvest for the fall 2018 was calculated to be 2,280 fish, and preliminary 2019 data shows a harvest of 1,482 fish during the fall. This puts an anticipated increase in RI party and charter fall harvest to 3,176 fish (based on 2018 harvest), within the calculated harvest range (114 – 6,228 fish) for the MA 1 fish season during RI's closure. The potential harvest increase based on 2018 landings accounts for <1% of RI's total recreational harvest in 2018 (330,373 fish). A summary of the data is available in table 3.
- Number of trips taken for RI party and charter industry were generated from the MRIP data query tool and analyzed to see how the amendment impacted in ability for captains to market their trips. While 2018 showed a small decrease in trips, 2019 showed a large

decrease in party and charter tautog trips taken. A summary of the data is available in table 5.

### **Timeline for Implementation**

If approved the technical committee and board, RI would move forward with a spring/summer public hearing process for implementation of late summer/early fall, in time for the new bag limit to effective in October 2020.

Table 1: Total RI Recreational Harvest (in numbers and percent) from 2014-2019. 2019 data is preliminary

Mode	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
RI Total Recreational Harvest	238,596	295,674	343,781	140,778	330,373	365,967
Party/Charter Harvest	1,952	3,250	12,752	4,648	2,281	1,506
Party/Charter Percent	0.82%	1.19%	3.71%	3.30%	0.69%	0.41%

Table 2: Summary of Massachusetts Data Used for Analysis (June-July MRIP Data)

Year	Number of Fish	Number of Positive Intercepts	Total Number of Intercepts
2019	318	4	3107
2018	114	2	2537
2017	9411	3	2081
2016	2079	5	2013
2015	3859	9	2543
2014	9563	7	2228

Table 3: Summary of Rhode Island Data Used for Analysis (Oct 15 – Dec 31 MRIP Data)

Year	Number of Fish	Number of Positive Intercepts	Total Number of Intercepts	Intercepts at Possession Limit
2019	1482	81	131	23
2018	2280	72	136	27
2017	4534	66	192	9
2016	12388	69	128	13
2015	3519	27	67	2
2014	1382	19	68	4

Table 4: Count of Massachusetts tautog trips during waves 3 and 4 (May – August). Number of trips represents the number of trips targeting tautog or trips where tautog were harvested. 2019 data is preliminary.

Year	Wave	Number of Trips	PSE
2019	3 (May/June)	46,293	49.2
	4 (July/Aug)	6,379	86
2018	3 (May/June)	36,240	54
	4 (July/Aug)	1,547	77.7
2017	3 (May/June)	141,769	83.9
	4 (July/Aug)	no data	-
2016	3 (May/June)	13,581	55.8
	4 (July/Aug)	79	56.2
2015	3 (May/June)	7,951	42.4
	4 (July/Aug)	44	63.2
2014	3 (May/June)	38,560	573
	4 (July/Aug)	46	66.5

Table 5: Count of Rhode Island party and charter tautog trips by wave. Number of trips represents the number of trips targeting tautog or trips where tautog were harvested. 2019 data is preliminary.

Year	Wave	Number of Trips	PSE
2019	3 (May/June)	8	3.5
	5 (Sept/Oct)	195	55.5
	6 (Nov/Dec)	240	14
2018	5 (Sept/Oct)	403	55.1
	6 (Nov/Dec)	1,127	81.8
2017	3 (Mar/Apr)	37	-
	5 (Sept/Oct)	579	37.5
	6 (Nov/Dec)	1,383	25.5
2016	3 (Mar/Apr)	7	-
	4 (Jul/Aug)	23	-
	5 (Sept/Oct)	2,625	55.4
	6 (Nov/Dec)	1,787	25.6
2015	5 (Sept/Oct)	510	57.9
	6 (Nov/Dec)	577	-
2014	5 (Sept/Oct)	437	-
	6 (Nov/Dec)	no data	-