

Port Meeting Summary:
Southport, NC
March 17, 2014, 10 a.m. session

1) Annual Catch Limits/Quotas- Flexibility & Regional Approaches

Issues/Not Working --

- Larger catch limit on red porgy – quota for whole eastern seaboard, Council needs to figure out how to break up quota.
- Larger quota on vermilion overall
- ACL is for whole region & not individual states

Solutions --

- Red porgy: set rec and commercial size limits the same; 500 lb of red porgy.
- Vermilion: state-by-state quotas. See summer flounder in mid-Atlantic
- Allow fishermen to manage quota
- Allowing the bsb pot fishery during winter months
- Allow for-hire to sell their bag limit (currently a problem with for-hire sector catching their quota and not being able to sell any of their fish)
- Keep size limits the same for commercial/rec/for-hire

2) Improve recreational data collection

Issues/Not Working --

- Recreational survey could be improved (MRIP)

Solutions --

- Cooperative data collection w/ universities (a lot of ways to get states together to get assessments done correctly)
- Trip tickets for recreational fishermen
- Commercial/rec sector underwater video data collection (C. McCaffity – most people agree that stock assessments aren't accurate; is the Council open to a presentation about better data collection through underwater video and other tools?)
- State saltwater fishing license for offshore fishing

3) Reducing discards & preventing closures

Issues/Not Working --

- Limit multiple extended closures and excessive regulatory discards

Solutions --

- Go to a size limit that allows for a year-round fishery (need access to fish year-round; Lent season and no fish and that's a problem)
- Split seasons, trip limits, bycatch allowance
- Descending devices

4) Improve law enforcement

Issues/Not Working --

- NC needs a Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA)

- Need to better enforce existing regulations (comments about fishing happening outside of the 32 endorsement holders for bsb pot trapping; this commenter fishes out of Little River)

Solutions --

- Consider trip limit minimal overages at unload

5) Year-Round Fishery

Solutions --

- Eliminate latent permits as a whole, this protects those that do have catch history but are not able to obtain a permit (take a permit with no catch history and eliminate that permit, solve numerous problems.
- Re-examine commercial snapper grouper eligibility requirements (fishermen are leasing SG permits in general, not just trap endorsements, breaking law)
- Consider a buy-out program for commercial permits – gvt voluntary buy-out program - take \$ that is set aside and have government do a gov't buy back of permits – voluntary buyout program; if you do a buy-out program, a lot of people would be happy.

6) Ecosystem-Based Management

Issues/Not Working --

- Consider land-use activities on SG habitat
- Council needs to examine coastal ecosystems; habitat is directly connected to offshore fisheries (comments from a commercial shrimper).
- No small fish for Spanish mackerel to feed on, sand has covered up all the mud the crustaceans feed on; Spanish has moved offshore in Brunswick county beaches, same goes for grouper; nothing for these fish to feed on; tremendous reduction in what you see in crab traps; beach renourishment causing problems, sand is covering up soft bottom and permanently destroying habitat/ecosystem that are essential for offshore fisheries.

Solutions --

- Have EPA include our coastal soft bottom in their assessment for beach renourishment, our coastal ecosystem is being destroyed by renourishment.

7) Improve Reporting/Diminish Paperwork

Issues/Not Working –

- Timing it takes to develop management decisions/address issues
- Too much paperwork

Solutions --

- Have one report for all agencies

8) Other Issues/Solutions

- Catch shares – the people who are telling the Council not to use catch share programs are those that aren't fishing – they don't have catch history. There are more of them than there is fishermen with catch history, so fishermen took the fall.
- Focus on properly managing existing quotas, improve stock assessments instead of focusing on VMS and other management issues/amendments; many developing amendments should be tabled until the visioning process is complete