

# Gloucester Fisheries Commission

Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2016

## Commission Members

Mark Ring, Chair  
Bill Muniz  
Paul Vitale  
Scott Memhard, City Councilor  
Scott Swicker

Joseph Orlando  
BG Brown  
Angela Sanfilippo

Al Cottone, Executive Director of the Fisheries Commission

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The Fisheries Commission Chair Mark Ring called the Meeting to order at 7:15 pm. The Meeting was scheduled to be held in the Third Floor Conference Room and was moved to the First Floor Conference Room due to it being unoccupied - at the Gloucester City Hall, 9 Dale Avenue, Gloucester, MA.

Present: Mark Ring, Al Cottone, Scott Swicker, Scott Memhard, Joe Orlando, Bill Muniz

Absent: BG Brown, Angela Sanfilippo, Paul Vitale

## Meeting Minutes

Scott Memhard made a motion to accept the Meeting Minutes of September 1, 2016.

Bill Muniz seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by a majority of the Commission Members present.

## New Business

The Commission Members reviewed a draft letter addressed to the Governor of Massachusetts Charles D. Baker:

“We write to as the Fisheries Commission of Gloucester, a community deeply concerned about the loss of fishing opportunities in the Port City of Gloucester. We need your leadership to continue the long term sustainability of the entire fishing industry in Gloucester, which has been the economic driver of the community for nearly 400 years. In order for the industry to survive, our community needs you to be a strong champion. It is with urgency that we invite you to tour the Gloucester Harbor and see firsthand the need for repair of the existing structures and future improvements. The businesses that occupy the waterfront in Gloucester require investment in order to continue serving the fishing fleet. Without the dockside businesses, the fleet will not survive and Gloucester will no longer be a hub port. Investment now will ensure that the fishing industry can thrive and continue to support the current workforce and also create new jobs for the future. We look forward to seeing you and members of your administration in Gloucester in the near future. Given your past words and actions of heartfelt empathy for the plight of the fishing community we trust that you will give this matter the immediate attention it deserves.”

Gloucester resident and business owner, Vito Giacalone, and Sunny Robinson, Gloucester resident, both shared their insights and conviction that such a letter should be sent to the Governor from the Commission.

The Chair Mark Ring, initiated a poll of the Commission Members present.

The five members present were in favor of sending the letter; none were against.

Executive Director Al Cottone will ensure that the letter is sent to the Governor.

## Open Position of Vice Chair of the Fisheries Commission

The Commission Members discussed which Commission Member should be Vice Chair of the Fisheries Commission. It was decided that Scott Memhard would be the new Vice Chair.

Scott Swicker nominated Scott Memhard to be Vice Chair.

Joe Orlando seconded the motion.

The motion was passed by a majority of the Commission Members present.

## New Business

Chair Mark Ring shared with the Commission Members that he had received a letter via email today from the Menhaden Fisheries Coalition (MFC) and the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association dated October 20, 2016 which reads:

"We are writing to you on behalf of the Menhaden Fisheries Coalition, the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, ARK Bait, Channel Fish and F & J Lakemen. Menhaden is a frequently overlooked fish, but it has a long tradition in the Commonwealth. Native Americans are said to have taught the original settlers how to use menhaden as a fertilizer, and today the species serves as a key bait fish for many of our fisheries, particularly the lobster fisheries. Next week, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will meet to set the 2017 coastwide quota for Atlantic menhaden. An increase in the quota stands to benefit the many Massachusetts fishermen who rely on menhaden as a source of bait. We strongly encourage the Commonwealth to support a quota increase of at least 10 percent. In 2012, the ASMFC reduced the coastwide menhaden harvest by 20 percent, based on the conclusions of a stock assessment that found overfishing was occurring. In 2015, however, a new, peer-reviewed assessment utilizing new data found that Atlantic menhaden were neither overfished nor subject to overfishing. Additionally it found that menhaden were neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing at time of the 2012 harvest cuts. This strongly indicates that the menhaden fisheries is being managed sustainably." *(The letter references technical data to support the forementioned.)* In its 2015 assessment, the ASMFC showed that menhaden fishing mortality, the amount of fish being harvested, has been steadily decreasing, and is now at an all-time low. It also found that menhaden fecundity, or egg production, has been near record highs in recent years, and is currently 170 percent higher than target levels set by regulators to ensure a healthy fishery." *(the letter references attached charts to support this fact).* The health of the Atlantic menhaden stock has led to an abundance of menhaden in Massachusetts' waters. In August, the Cape Cod Times wrote of a "large school of Atlantic menhaden" being sighted along the Outer Cape. Also in August, the Boston Herald called it "a banner summer for menhaden across New England." Earlier this month the Warwick Beacon wrote, "there is a ton of peanut bunker (immature Atlantic menhaden) in the water." These fish are literally dying in Boston Harbor. Unfortunately, fishermen are currently unable to take advantage of this abundance of menhaden due to an unnecessarily low quota. The ASMFC's 2015 assessment showed that the menhaden quota can be substantially raised without impacting the sustainability of the species, and an analysis by ASMFC scientists earlier this year confirmed this finding. In projections using nine different potential quota levels for the 2017 fishing season, the ASMFC's Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee found a 0 percent chance of overfishing, even when menhaden quota was increased by up to 40 percent. The science, as Dr. David Pierce, director of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, acknowledged in meetings with industry representatives, is clear that a substantial increase in menhaden harvest is sustainable and justified. Next Wednesday, the ASMFC will set menhaden quota for 2017. Based on this overwhelming evidence, we strongly encourage you to support at least a 10 percent quota increase. Notably, such an increase would still leave total harvest catch below catch levels maintained before the 2012 reduction."

Scott Memhard made a motion that the Fisheries Commission support the letter.

Joe Orlando seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by a majority of the Commission Members present.

*Due to other obligations, Scott Memhard left the meeting at 7:28 PM.*

#### Seafood Show 2017 to be held in Boston

The Commission Members discussed the fact that In 2017, the Seafood Expo North America/Seafood Processing North America which is held in Boston will begin on March 19, 2017. March 19, 2017, is the date of Saint Joseph's Day, a celebration; the Feast of Saint Joseph and it is also the day Bostonians have a Saint Patrick's Day parade in celebration of St. Patrick.

#### New Business – Barndoor Skates

The Commission Members discussed the recent Press Release of the New England Fishery Management Council (NFMC) which in a statement posted on the NOAA web page on October 7, 2016 “barndoor skate is now considered rebuilt based on the best available scientific information. Barndoor skate has been a prohibited species for commercial and recreational fishermen since 2003.”

#### Update from the Executive Director

Al Cottone shared with the Commission Members the fact that he sent, with the Commission's prior approval, a letter to GARFO (the Greater Atlantic Fisheries Office) – a division of NOAA (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association) which stated: “ On behalf of the Gloucester Whiting fleet, the Gloucester Fisheries Commission would like to raise some concerns about the red hake accountability measures for next season. It has come to our attention that some of the data used to assess red hake may be outdated. If this is the case, we are very concerned for next year due to the abundance of red hake we witnessed this year. Industry is fully committed to a healthy and profitable fishery. If there is any way we cme together and find reasonable solutions to this problem industry is more than ready to do what is needed to bring this issue up to date. Could we meet with a small group to discuss these matters at the GARFO office in the near future.” Al stated he will continually follow up to ensure the letter is taken under consideration.

#### *From the September 1, 2016 Approved Minutes:*

*Commission Discussion - The Commission to discussed writing a letter regarding the Total Allowable Catch to be sent to the Fisheries Service. Paul Vitale made a motion to write and send a letter to the National Fisheries Service which will request that current data be used to determine the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Red Hake. Joe Orlando Seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a majority of the Commission Members present.*

Al also shared with the Commission that recently he was involved in the taping of a cooking show with a notable chef featuring local product, a visit from an idependent film producer and a Harvard College student researching and filming about the fisheries. Al stated that each of these occassions were positive occasions for the Gloucester Fresh marketing campaign, the Fisheries Commission and the Fisheries Industry of the City of Gloucester. Both Al and Chair Mark Ring noted the work of Sal Di Stefano. Community Development Title: Economic Development to create these marketing experiences for the City of Gloucester.

#### Update from the Chair

The Chair Mark Ring explained that the State of Massachusetts along with staff from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, the States of Maine, the State of New Hampshire, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission completed a survey of the shrimp population. The survey is carried out about 22 days each summer, divided up into four legs, from the end of July to the middle of August.

Motion to Adjourn

Joe Orlando made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Bill Muniz seconded the motion.

The Motion was passed by a majority of the Commission Members present.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the Chair declared the Meeting to be Adjourned at 7:38 PM.

*The next regularly meeting of the Fisheries Commission is scheduled for November 17, 2016, to be held in the Third Floor Conference Room of Gloucester City Hall, 9 Dale Avenue, Gloucester, MA and it will begin at 7:00 PM. The date, location and time of the meeting is subject to change. Please refer to the City web site: [Gloucester-ma.gov](http://Gloucester-ma.gov) prior to the meeting for details.*