

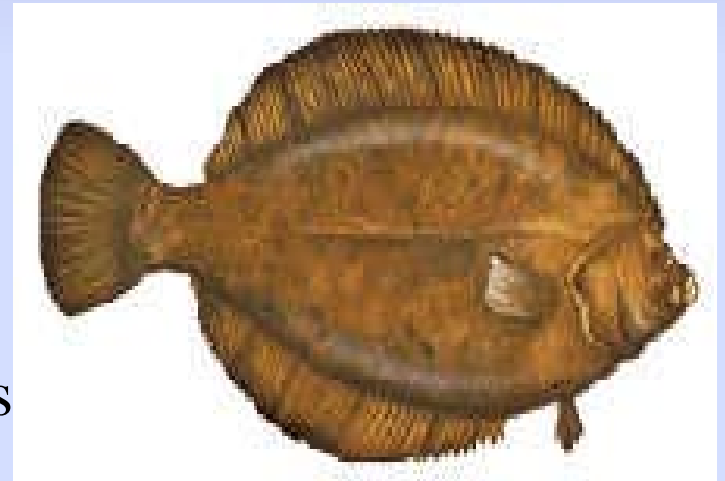


# Should There be Marine Recreational Fishing Licenses in Rhode Island?

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# Order of Events

- Stakeholders: who is involved?
- What is a license?
- Why would The Department of Environmental Management want a license?
- What are other states doing?
- To find out more: My survey
- Why not have a license?
- Recommendations and Conclusions
- Acknowledgements





Who is involved?

# What is a license?

- A permission that is granted by some authoritative agency that allows an individual or a group to do something that's otherwise unlawful
- There is evidence that a person has a license (a paper, card, tag)
- The permission can be taken away by the issuing authority
- In most cases a license cannot be passed down to a family member or a friend (unlike property rights)

# Why would DEM want a license?

- 1) To manage the fishery better
- 2) To collect data
- 3) To raise revenue



# Why RI needs better management...

## The Problem...

- Many species of fish stocks are declining
- Recreational fishermen catch 24 % of the total fish landed in New England (MRFSS)
- Some species are harvested more by Recreational fishermen than commercial (examples: Striped Bass, Tautog and Bluefish)

Figure 6. Trends In the Demersal Fish and Pelagic Fish/Squid Complexes In Narragansett Bay and RI Coastal Waters from the RIDFW Trawl Survey

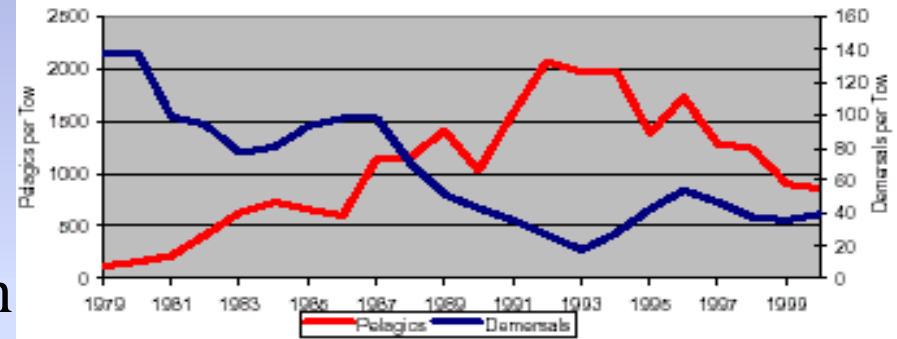
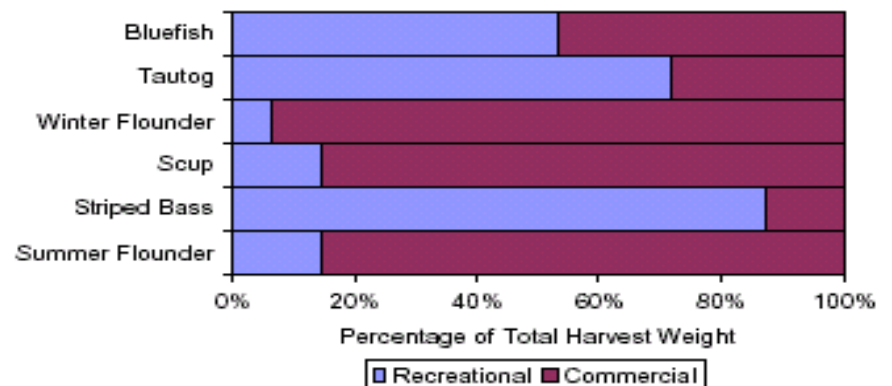
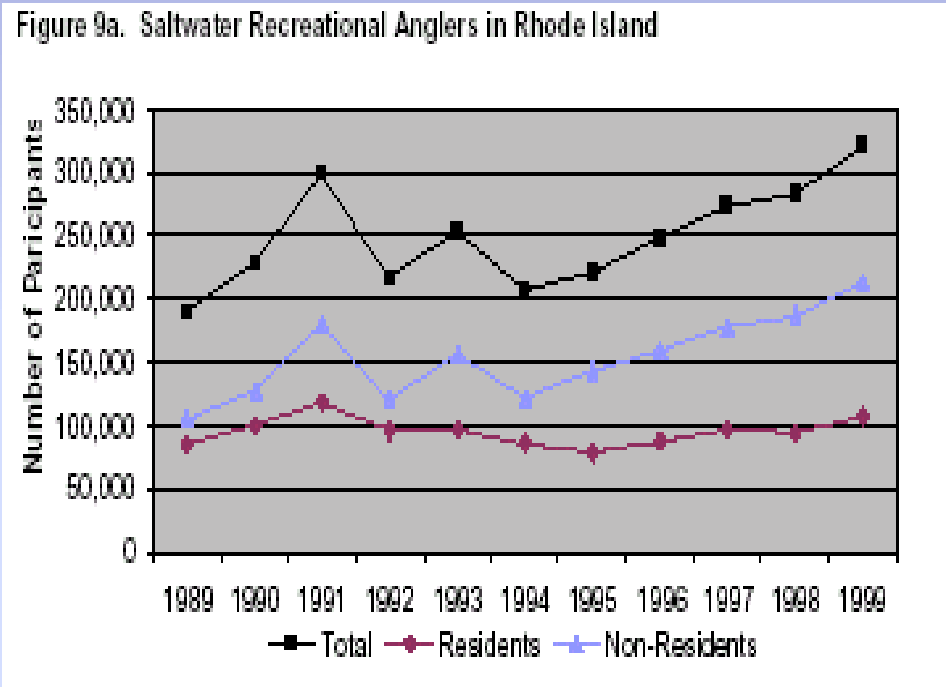


Figure 11. Recreational vs. Commercial fishing in Rhode Island: total landings (1989 - 1999)



# The Problem...

- There are about 300,000 saltwater anglers in RI, compared to 4,000 commercial fishermen
- The numbers of recreational fishermen have increased over time



## Goal #2: To Collect Data

- DEM wants to know information about the fishermen such as:
  - How many fishermen are there?
  - What are they fishing for and why?
  - What size are the fish and where are they being caught?



# Outcomes of Better Data

- DEM will be better able to manage the fishery:  
*When managing a prey (fish) species, it is imperative that the predator (fisherman) also be studied*
- DEM thinks it might increase the “bag limits”:  
The less information DEM has = more conservative limits



# Goal #3: Raising Revenue

- DEM receives \$200,000 directly from the RI General Assembly
- DEM gets most of their money from the federal government and matching grants

**BOTTOM LINE:** *MORE FUNDS ARE NEEDED FOR DEM TO CARRY ON THEIR PROGRAMS AND IMPROVE RHODE ISLAND'S FISHERIES*

# What about other states?



- 12 out of the 21 coastal states require the purchase of a license for marine anglers
- Prices range from \$7.50 to \$110 for non-residents and \$5.50 to \$29 for residents
- Licensing has been most difficult to introduce into the New England states (New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine are all **unlicensed**)
- In the states that do have licenses, it has not been overly difficult to administer them

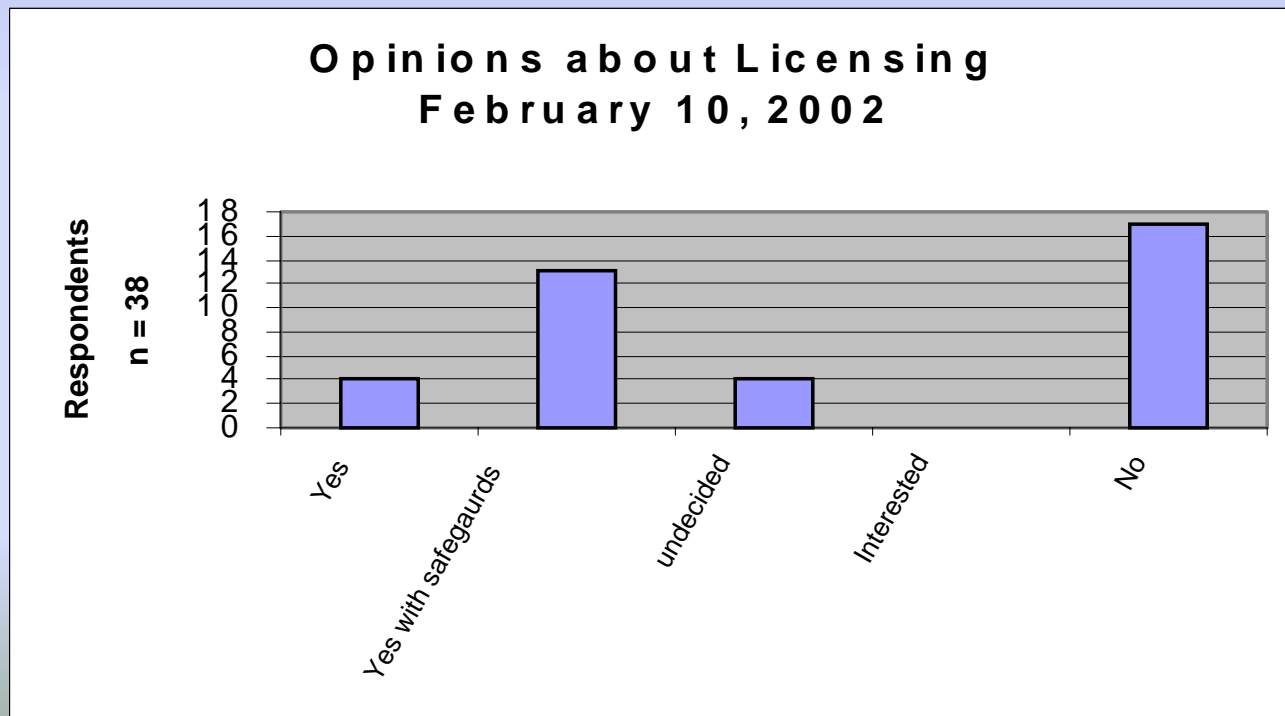
# To Find Out More: My Survey

- I created a survey to collect more information on fishing habits and opinions about a license
- I administered this survey through the subcommittee meetings and a few fishing clubs
- There were 40 total respondents



# What I found: Results

- Fishermen were split down the middle as to whether or not there should be a license



# Results Continued...

- Fishermen said they didn't mind government regulations, but they mainly supported regulations *already* in place
- Certain fish fit the profile of “sports fish” such as Striped Bass, Tautog and Summer Flounder and Bluefish



# Arguments Against a License

- Constitutional issue
- Tourism issue
- Captive Agency issue
- Possible justice issue



# Constitutional Argument Against a License

- The Justinian Code and the King Charles II charter granted the **common right to fish** in the sea and all navigable waters anywhere in the colonies **to all people**
- The RI Constitution continued this right in Article I: section 17

*“The people shall continue to enjoy and freely exercise all the rights of the fishery, and the privileges of the shore...”*

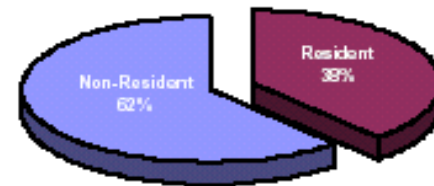
- DEM is managing the fishery for the whole state
- Licenses could be seen as a mechanism to limit access to the fishery

# Tourism Issue

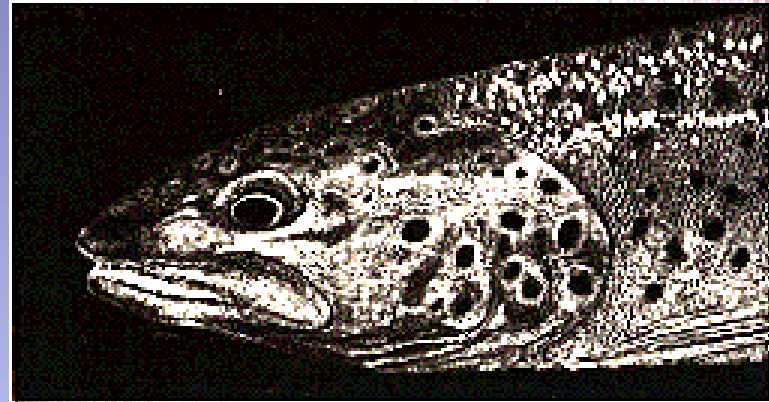
- Fishermen are worried that any sort of fee will negatively affect the RI economy
- Fishing brings in a good deal of money from non-residents who spend money while vacationing in RI
- A fee might make some non-resident fishermen turn to Connecticut or Massachusetts for fishing trips



Figure 9b. Percentage of Resident and Non-resident Saltwater Recreational Anglers in Rhode Island (average number for 1989-1999)



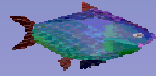
# Captive Agency



- If DEM is getting money from licenses it is likely the RI General Assembly will take away the \$200,000
- DEM will rely mostly on the license fees for funding their programs
- DEM will have an incentive to encourage more people to fish in order to raise more funds
- DEM becomes a “Captive Agency”

# Justice Issue for Subsistence Fishermen

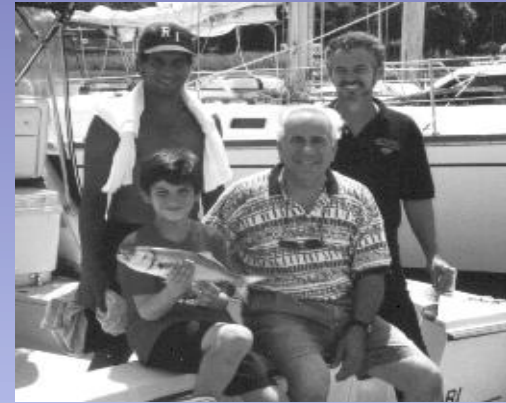
- Subsistence Fishermen are at risk because a license is geared towards strictly recreational anglers
- This could become a justice issue if the fee of the license climbed to a point that was very difficult for a subsistence fishermen to pay
- Before a license is put in place this issue should be addressed to figure out alternatives



# FLASHBACK QUIZ

- What is one reason why RI DEM would want a license?
- What are some fish stocks that are fished more by recreational fishermen than by commercial fishermen?
- What's one reason a license could be problematic?

# Recommendations



- RI is not ready for a license, so I suggest a “stamp”
- Look at other possible management options
- RI should work on a regional level for a license because if neighboring states don’t have a license it will be much harder for RI DEM to get one started here
- Non-fishermen need to be involved because this is a resource for all of Rhode Island
- Types of licenses need to be studied carefully to come up with the most appropriate one for RI
- Collecting more information: I suggest more surveying and re-designing parts of my own survey to better target certain stakeholders

# Acknowledgements

- Caroline Karp, an un-beatable thesis advisor... I feel so lucky to have her as my advisor
- My thesis readers: Dennis Erkan, Tim Lynch and Steve Medeiros, who answered endless e-mails and questions
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- All the fantastic fishermen, charter boat owners and bait and tackle shop owners who shared a piece of their lives with me
- My friends, family and Sam
- And the fish who made this project possible



# Final Wrap-Up

QUESTIONS?

