



New England Fishery Management Council

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DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

NEFMC Monkfish Committee/AP Meeting

Omni Providence Hotel, Providence RI
 January 10, 2014

OS MF Meeting Attendance: John Quinn (Chair), Mark Alexander, Terry Alexander, Matt McKenzie, Dave Preble, Vincent Balzano, Jeff Kaelin and Steve Heins (MAFMC); MAFMC staff: Jim Armstrong; NERO: Mike Pentony and Doug Christel; NEFMC staff: Chris Kellogg, Rachel Neild and Cate O'Keefe (SMASST contract staff).

AP MF Meeting Attendance: Randall Morgan, Tim Caldwell, Tim Froelich, Chris Hickman, Michael Karch, Ted Platz, Chris Rainone, Eric Hansen, Richard LaRocca; Audience: Maggie Raymond, Hugh Dunn, Scott Dudley, Gregory Pietroski, Jon Semlear, Paul R. O'Donnell, Charles Etzel.

The NEFMC –MAFMC Joint Monkfish Oversight Committee/AP met to discuss the following items:

- Discussion/Review on Framework 8 purpose and need, and timeline
- Review of Framework 8 alternatives to include: management uncertainty buffers and TALs for NMA and SMA; DAS/Trip limit alternatives for NMA and SMA; DAS usage requirements; and permit Category H fishery boundary
- Discussion on biological and economic impacts analyses of DAS/trip limit alternatives
- Review applications for open seats on the Advisory Panel and make recommendations to the NEFMC Executive Committee.

Introductions

Mr. Quinn began the meeting with introductions, which was then followed by a presentation from Dr. O'Keefe regarding the management measures under consideration for the proposed action in Framework 8. It was noted that the economic and biological impacts will be further developed for the NEFMC Council meeting, and it was also explained that any delays in the action from this point forward could delay implementation until July to late August.

Framework 8 Review

Committee discussion focused on FW 8 alternatives in the NMA and the SMA, including ways to better achieve the catch targets, minimize discards and improve catch accounting. The boundary line limiting the permit Category H fishery to 38°40' N Latitude was also discussed, along with a review of the management uncertainty buffers.

Management Uncertainty Buffers

The Committee reviewed previous motions from the May 30, 2013 Committee meeting and the September 2013 Council meeting regarding management uncertainty buffers for the monkfish fishery. The Committee needed to take action to either maintain status quo uncertainty buffers (13.5% in the NMA and 6.5% in the SMA) or change the buffers.

1. MOTION:

For purposes of FW8 the committee shall not adjust the management uncertainty buffers.
(Kaelin/T. Alexander)

Discussion on the Motion: It was recognized that there has not been a risk analysis to determine an appropriate buffer and the current buffers used in the NMA and the SMA are considered acceptable and catch has not exceeded the ACT with these buffers in place. Furthermore, it was explained that changing buffers at this time would possibly delay Framework 8 implementation. It was discussed that management uncertainty buffers may need to be further considered in a future action that includes a more explicit risk analysis.

Motion passed unanimously.

DAS Allocations/Possession Limits Alternatives

It was noted that monkfish is a data poor stock, which creates uncertainty in terms of biological analyses. Because all of the DAS/trip limit alternatives maintain projected catch under the ACT, the biological impacts would be similar to those analyzed in the A5 and FW7 EAs. Based on the updated Biological Opinion (December, 2013), there are no required changes to fishing operations for gears included in the monkfish fishery. Questions about economic impacts were raised by several Committee members, specifically about the impacts on each of the fishery management areas based on modifications to the DAS/trip limits. It was noted that an increase in landings could decrease the price of monkfish, but produce an overall increase in revenues.

2. MOTION:

Increase DAS to 46 DAS and change incidental trip limits when fishing under a groundfish DAS to 600 lbs a day for A and C permits and 500 lbs a day for B and D permits and also strike Alternative 3 from the document.
(T. Alexander/Balzano)

Discussion on the Motion: Many members were concerned about the monkfish catch not reaching the TAL in recent years and whether the health of the stock is in jeopardy. It was also noted that the NMA vessels do not currently use all 40 DAS, so why would the NMA need to increase the DAS allocation if much of the monkfish in the NMA is mostly incidental catch. There was concern that if the incidental trip limit increases in the NMA then monkfish directed DAS could potentially shift to the SMA. However, historical information indicates very little, if any, fishing effort has shifted from the NMA to the SMA.

Motion Failed 3/3/1

3. MOTION:

Increase DAS to 40 DAS and change incidental trip limits when fishing under a groundfish DAS to 600 lbs a day for A and C permits and 500 lbs a day for B and D permits and also strike Alternative 3 from the document.

(M. Alexander/Preble)

Discussion on the Motion: This motion is considered a more reasonable compromise by increasing trip limits while maintaining 40 DAS. It was noted that this alternative does not manage to the full resource potential as estimated by the updated Operational Assessment (2013); and it was recognized that long term effects of harvest levels should be considered in future actions.

Motion passed unanimously.

4. MOTION:

Propose a motion to adopt the previously passed motion identified as #3 as the preferred alternative.

(M. Alexander/Preble)

Discussion on the Motion: There was concern that there was not enough analysis to adopt Motion #3 as the preferred alternative and that it should go to the Council with further analysis to make a more informed decision. It was noted that this seemed more like a business model and not biological.

Motion passed 6/1/0

5. MOTION

To eliminate Option 4 for the SMA and add an option that would include 28 DAS and landing limits of 610 and 500lbs.

(Kaelin/T. Alexander)

Discussion on the Motion: This alternative represents a compromise to increase trip limits and maintain the status quo 28 DAS. It was explained that the increase in trip limits represents the previous landing levels and is a correction of the tail weight to whole weight conversion factor.

Motion passed unanimously.

6. MOTION

Move to replace Alternative 2 to include A,C permit daily limit to 610, B,D,H permit daily limit to 500, DAS 32.

(Preble/Kaelin)

Discussion on the Motion: The purpose of this motion is to have an increase in DAS to account for possible uncertainty within the assessment and provide a broader range of alternatives.

Motion passed unanimously.

7. MOTION

Move previous Motion #6 as the preferred Alternative for the SMA.
(Kaelin/T. Alexander)

Discussion on the Motion: Similar to Motion #4, some Committee members were resistant to make this a preferred alternative due to a lack of analysis and some members expressed that they would like to see the range alternatives go to the Council without specifying a preferred.

Motion passed 5/1/1.

DAS Usage Requirements

The option to allow monkfish-only DAS usage at any time during the year could increase flexibility for vessels in the SMA to target monkfish early in the fishing year without using a groundfish DAS. To date, the area where the provision to allow use of a monkfish-only DAS at any time in the fishing year should apply had not been specified by the Committee or Council.

8. MOTION

To clarify that the proposed changes (Alternative 2) to the DAS usage requirements only apply to the SMA.
(M. Alexander/Balzano)

Discussion on the Motion: The discussion recognized that there needs to be further clarification as to whether the DAS Usage requirements are for the NMA or SMA (or both). Currently, there is no opportunity to use monkfish-only DAS in the NMA. This option could be beneficial to the SMA and allow for seasonal targeting.

Motion passed unanimously.

9. MOTION

Move previous Motion #8 as the preferred Alternative.
(Kaelin/T. Alexander)

Discussion on the Motion: Similar to Motion #4 and Motion #6, some were resistant to make this a preferred alternative due to lack of analysis.

Motion passed 6/1/0.

Permit Category H Fishing Boundary

A discussion about Permit Category H was raised by a member and noted that there were 6 Category H permit holders with only 4 active vessels. It was explained that Category H did not qualify for Limited Access permits originally and that the intent was to maintain a low level of landings from this permit category by restricting the fishing area. A member explained how the H permit category is constrained by bycatch regulations and the change in the Category H

boundary-line will pose minimal impacts to the fishery. Based on earlier advice from NOAA General Counsel, the boundary line could be moved, but not eliminated, by a framework adjustment, rather than an amendment.

10. MOTION

Motion to move Alternative 2 as the Preferred Alternative for purposes of Permit Category H boundary.

(T. Alexander/Preble)

Discussion on the Motion: It was noted that of the six category H permits held, only two to three permit holders would possibly move north of the category H boundary line.

Motion passed 6/0/1.

Final Schedule/Timeline

A brief discussion on the schedule of events ensued and recognized that portions of the analysis not presented in this meeting will be available by the NEFMC Council meeting and it will also be provided for the MAFMC meeting in February.

Other Business

Mr. Kaelin brought up a prior discussion regarding small mesh regulations on monkfish DAS. Though this was not considered a motion at the time it has been addressed in previous actions but never included for analysis in a management action. Many members feel this is an issue that needs to be addressed as soon as possible, highlighting the two items below:

- exemption in Southern New England regulated mesh area – ability to use smaller mesh to target dogfish on monkfish DAS
- exemption in Mid-Atlantic regulated mesh area – ability to use smaller mesh to target dogfish on monkfish DAS.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30pm.