

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Monkfish Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The Monkfish Plan Development Team (PDT) met on April 30th to discuss a number of the items described in the following sections. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) met on May 16th to develop recommendations Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) in consideration of the assessment update and PDT recommendations. The Oversight Committee met on May 29-30 in Providence, RI. To address a number of the items discussed below.
- B. Amendment 6: In Amendment 6, the Councils are considering adopting catch shares management for the monkfish fishery, as well as modifications to the current management system, including a days-at-sea leasing program. The Council approved Amendment 6 Goals and Objectives at its November, 2011 meeting. The Committee and Advisory Panel are in the process of developing a range of alternatives for public hearings, including modifications to the current management system, a days-at-sea leasing option, sector management and individually transferrable quotas (ITQs). Based on discussions at the April NEFMC meeting, the Committee considered, but took no action pending input from the Advisory Panel, on whether to remove ITQs from further consideration in the amendment.
- C. Updated Assessment and Specifications for the 2014-2016 fishing years (Framework 8): The Northeast Fisheries Science Center conducted an updated assessment on April 8-9 in Woods Hole, and reported preliminary the results at the April NEFMC meeting. The PDT met April 30th to discuss the results and develop recommendations to the SSC, and also to begin working on developing the specifications document. The SSC met on May 16th to develop ABC recommendations prior to the meetings of the Committee and this Council. At this time, The SSC is requesting additional analyses before finalizing its specific ABC recommendations.

At its May 29-30 meeting, the Committee made a number of motions outlining the options it wants the PDT to analyze for consideration in Framework 8, and for consideration and input from the Advisory Panel. The Committee will review this input and finalize the range of alternatives or the September Council meeting.

- D. 2013 Emergency Action: On February 25, 2013) NMFS published a proposed rule and request for comments (*78 Federal Register 12708*) in response to a request by the NEFMC that the agency take emergency action to alleviate the substantial social and economic harm to groundfish and monkfish fisheries and associated fishing communities anticipated under severe reductions in 2013 catch limits for some important groundfish stocks in the northern management area. The intent of the Council in making the request was to provide additional fishing opportunities to affected vessels while simultaneously achieving full utilization of the monkfish catch targets. The Council's original request was to eliminate the monkfish trip limits while a vessel is fishing on a groundfish DAS in the Northern Management Area (NMA), but NMFS, in consideration of comments received and its analysis of potential impacts of such an action, has proposed removing the trip limit only while a vessel is on a monkfish DAS. At its April meeting the

NEFMC voted to request that NMFS reconsider its decision and modify the action to implement the trip limits currently applicable to vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS to all vessels fishing on a groundfish DAS in the NMA. As the comment period ended on May 31, the agency's response is pending.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

- A. **Motion:** to initiate Framework Adjustment 8 to the Monkfish FMP to implement revised specifications of DAS and trip limits for FY2014-2016, and other modifications to the current management plan.
- B. **Motion on behalf of the Committee:** to adopt revisions to the cooperative research program priorities.

III. INFORMATION

- 1. Summary of the May 29-30 Oversight Committee meeting (to be distributed before the Council meeting)
- 2. Report on the April 30 Plan Development Team meeting, including recommendations to the SSC
- 3. Report of the May 16th SSC meeting
- 4. NEFMC and MAFMC comment letters (5/28 and 5/30, respectively) on the proposed Emergency Action rule
- 5. Memo conveying Oversight Committee recommendations on revisions to the cooperative research priorities