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## New England Fishery Management Council

### SUMMARY

Monkfish Oversight Committee Meeting  
Biltmore Hotel, Providence, RI  
November 2, 2010

### DRAFT

One Committee member (Avila) was absent.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the Monkfish Plan Development Team (PDT) analysis of options for consideration in Framework 7, and to review a draft scoping document for Amendment 6. Framework 7 will modify the Annual Catch Target (ACT) for the Northern Management Area (NMA), and adjust DAS and trip limits accordingly. Amendment 6 is the Councils' initiative to consider catch shares management in the monkfish fishery. The Committee also held a closed session after the public portion of the meeting to review advisory panel candidates for the 2011-2013 term.

The Councils are considering a revision to the ACT for the NMA because the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) has recommended a revision to the Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) based on the recent stock assessment. The revised ABC of 7,592 mt is lower than the ACT of 10,750 mt proposed in Amendment 5. In addition, Framework 7 will adopt revised biomass reference points based on the recommendations of the stock assessment review committee and the SSC.

Dr. Jay Hermsen of the Regional Office presented the PDT's analysis of three ACT options, and three DAS/trip limit combinations for each. The ACT options would set the ACT at 73%, 80%, and 86.5 % (5,550 mt, 6,074 mt, and 6,567 mt, respectively) of ABC. The first option is status quo landings target of 5,000 mt plus discards (since the ACT includes both landings and discards). The PDT included a second alternative based on the Council's earlier consideration of an ACT at 80% of ABC when it was developing Amendment 5. The specifications options would fix either the DAS allocation or the trip limits at current levels (and increase the trip limit or DAS accordingly), or set DAS at 40, the baseline allocation in the original FMP and calculate the appropriate trip limit.

In the report, the PDT commented that that vessels have not landed the target in recent years, and have not been constrained by either the trip limit or the DAS allocation, implying that increases to those specifications will not necessarily result in achieving the target catch. The PDT suggested that this situation was attributable to either restrictions in other fisheries, namely groundfish, or to the availability of monkfish. Two Committee members offered alternative explanations: that fuel cost increases in recent years have required vessels to fish in ways that make it difficult to target monkfish; and that the restriction of landing oversize lobsters has made the offshore gillnet fishery unprofitable.

### Motion

To recommend to the Council a preferred alternative that would set the ACT at 86.5% of the ABC, and to allocate 40 DAS with trip limits of 1,250 lbs. and 556 lbs. (tail wt. per DAS, for permit categories AC and BD, respectively). (Odlin/Preble)

**Motion perfected**

To recommend to the Council a preferred alternative that would set the ACT at 86.5% of the ABC, and to allocate 40 DAS with trip limits of 1,250 lbs. and 600 lbs. (tail wt. per DAS, for permit categories AC and BD, respectively). (**motion passed unanimously**)

The perfection was done to set the trip limit at a conveniently round number.

The Committee then took up the review of the Amendment 6 scoping document. A member of the public suggested that if the Councils are looking to revise the management program, they should not limit their options to catch share programs, but should also consider permit stacking or DAS leasing which could accomplish many of the same efficiency goals.

Committee members agreed that the document should include some more detailed discussion of how the referendum program might be designed, and include the example of the Gulf of Mexico referendum in the grouper/snapper plan.

The Committee made several suggestions for locations for the scoping hearings. The staff will investigate available venues and schedule the hearings to be held early this winter.

The Chair of the Advisory Panel requested the Councils considering covering the costs of Advisory Panel members to attend the hearings in their respective areas.