

New England Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Oversight Committee Meeting
Hilton Garden Inn, Warwick, RI
January 10, 2012

Committee members: Alexander (chair), King (vice chair); NEFMC: Avila, Dempsey, Libby (absent) Odlin (absent), Preble; MAFMC: Himchak (absent), Berg, Nolan (absent), Shafer.

Staff: Haring (NEFMC) and Armstrong (MAFMC)

Advisory Panel Chair: Raymond

The primary purpose of the meeting was to consider recommending that the Councils establish a control date pertaining to possible changes in the management of the monkfish fishery in Amendment 6, including but not limited to, accumulation limits and allocation of quota based on fishing history. The meeting was also convened so the Committee could start outlining the range of alternatives to meet the Amendment 6 goals and objectives that were adopted by the Councils at their last meetings.

The vice-chair requested an opportunity to brief the Committee on the activities of the MAFMC monkfish subcommittee. The subcommittee was formed to provide a way for MAFMC members to address the specific concerns of mid-Atlantic stakeholders, and to adequately represent their interests in the Oversight Committee process. The subcommittee met on December 13th and discussed the proposed goals and objectives, and also the possibility of developing a parallel management action to Amendment 6 that would address some of the immediate concerns, particularly the permit category H issue that had been raised previously.

Following the MAFMC subcommittee report, the Committee took up its first scheduled order of business, consideration of a control date, and considered the following motion:

Motion

The Committee recommends establishing a control date for Amendment 6
(Preble/Berg)

Several members of the public questioned the purpose of the control date. Committee members discussed how a control date is intended to protect the interest of people already invested or involved in the fishery from speculative activity in anticipation of some future regulatory action.

Motion perfected by friendly amendment

The Committee recommends that the Council request that NMFS publish in the *Federal Register* as soon as possible, a control date pertaining to management of the monkfish fishery that is applicable to, but not limited to, limits on the

accumulation of excessive control or ownership of fishing privileges, qualifying landings history, and referendum qualification.

Motion passed unanimously

Based on the apparent uncertainty about control dates in general, and this one in particular, one member suggested that staff put together a FAQ sheet to be distributed at the Council meetings where this motion will be considered.

The Committee then began the discussion of developing Amendment 6 alternatives to meet the approved goals and objectives. The Chair initially proposed working through the list of goals and objectives and identifying specific management measures that could address each one, recognizing that some measures may address several goals. As the discussion evolved, with members of the audience suggesting specific measures, it became apparent that this approach was not working as intended. Members of the audience, including several who are on the Advisory Panel, disagreed with each other as to what measures would work to achieve a particular goal. In this case, the first objective was to reduce discards, and the first proposal was to reduce the allowed number of gillnets, to which other fishermen objected. As a result of this situation, the Committee realized quickly that development of management measures might benefit from a more structured discussion involving stakeholders and designed to answer specific questions.

The Committee had significant discussion on the possibilities for increased outreach to get stakeholder input on the development of measures to address the goals and objectives. Among the approaches, the Committee discussed, but did not take action on organizing a stakeholder workshop. Additionally, the Committee agreed to increase the engagement of the advisors, particularly encouraging them to do informal outreach in their communities to gather the views of fishermen who may not attend meetings. In that regard, the Committee agreed to the following:

Consensus

To schedule the next meeting in conjunction with (i.e., consecutive days) the Advisory Panel, and to authorize Committee and Advisory Panel members to attend both meetings.

The Committee also agreed that the discussion of measures to achieve Amendment 6 goals and objectives could be structured around the basic management strategy options available: the current days-at-sea (DAS) system, a system that allows DAS leasing, a system that is based on the current groundfish sector approach, and an ITQ system.

Motion

Direct the PDT to begin development on the following management alternatives for each of the management areas:

- DAS allocation/leasing program
- Integration of monkfish into sector management
- Individual quota management

(Dempsey/Preble)

Some members of the Committee felt that the motion should explicitly include the strategy of making relatively minor changes to the current plan.

Motion perfected by friendly amendment

Direct the PDT to begin development on the following management alternatives for each of the management areas:

- Minor modifications to the existing DAS management system
- DAS allocation/leasing program
- Integration of monkfish into sector management
- Individual quota management

Motion passed unanimously

The rest of the meeting focused on how to structure the upcoming deliberations. One aspect is that measures need to be considered in the context of the individual management areas (Northern and Southern), as well as throughout the fishery. With regard to integrating monkfish management into groundfish sector management, the AP Chair noted that current sector rules specify that a vessel has to have a groundfish permit. Any change to accommodate monkfish vessels that do not have a groundfish permit would require regulatory action within the Multispecies FMP.

The Committee considered whether to prioritize the order in which these management approaches would be developed, but agreed that it would be more efficient to develop individual elements in parallel. Another approach the Committee considered, but did not adopt was to establish sub-committees to work on each approach. Generally, the members agreed to reconvene as soon as possible but allowing sufficient time for the PDT to compile the range of alternatives, at least a significant set of measures. Members also indicated that they are looking for specific measures, not just categories, and suggested that the catch shares measures that had been developed in Amendment 5 be included in the range of alternatives being compiled by the PDT. Following this discussion, the Committee agreed by consensus that it might be necessary for it to meet without the AP to review PDT work and provide additional PDT recommendations before the consecutive AP/OSC meeting agreed upon earlier in the meeting.