

New England Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing
MA DMF Annisquam Lab, Gloucester, MA

January 4, 2011

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Phil Haring

Attendance: approx. 20

One fisherman stated that the current plan with days at sea is working fine. He asked why the Council is considering catch shares at this time when the sector program in groundfish is a mess and may not be permanent. In a later statement, he suggested that part of the plan include a provision wherein if someone wants to leave the fishery, that the government buy back the shares and return them to the common pool to be redistributed even to all remaining active participants.

A second fisherman, who has an incidental monkfish permit and who fishes for groundfish with a handline, said his comments represent the views of a group of similar fishermen working out of Gloucester. He said they only occasionally catch monkfish and do not have a history that would provide them with an allocation. He stated that any IFQ or catch share program should allow such vessels to land their incidental catch.

A third commenter, who is a member of the Council but is speaking as a fisherman, also stated that the current plan is working fine. He feels that the sector program is too bureaucratic and needs to be simplified. He feels that an IFQ program would be preferable to sectors in the monkfish fishery, as long as there were adequate consolidation limits. He said the Council should consider a full retention provision under catch shares. Commenting on the low hearing turnout by the industry, he said that people are very discouraged and feel that monkfish catch shares is a done deal, and is being implemented from the top down. With regard to an allocation formula, he said that 50% should be equal shares to all permit holders, and 50% be based on landings history. He is hopeful that the courts overturn the allocation formula used in the groundfish fishery because it will result in better guidance with regard to National Standard 4. He said there should be a referendum for any catch share program, including sectors, even if it is not legally required. He feels that consolidation limits should be set in advance, and that there should be a use-it-or-lose-it provision so quota holders do not simply lease their shares in perpetuity. With regard to incidental catch of monkfish in other fisheries, he said there should be an allocation for that but it does not need to be as closely monitored because the individual vessels' monkfish catch is relatively small.

The hearing started at 3 p.m. and adjourned at about 3:35.