



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 25, 2010

Patricia M. Fiorelli
978.465.0492

NE Fishery Council Approves New Monkfish Rules

NEWBURYPORT, MA At its meeting in Portland, ME yesterday, the New England Fishery Management Council took the final step in updating rules for the region's monkfish fishery by voting to submit Amendment 5 of the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan to the Secretary of Commerce. The Council had approved the suite of new monkfish rules at its April meeting, but approval of the annual monkfish catch target for 2011-2013 for the Northern Management Area (NMA), which includes New England waters, was conditional upon the results of the analysis of an alternative target which was presented yesterday.

The alternative target would have set total catch at 13,988 metric tons, or 31 million pounds, but upon review of the analyses, the Council retained its initial target of 10,750 metric tons or 24 million pounds. The Council chose a conservative level that is likely to ensure greater stability of the monkfish resource and better opportunities for those who participate in the fishery, especially given the high degree of scientific uncertainty with the stock status.

The Council has also approved a 2011-2013 annual catch target for the Southern Management Area (SMA) of 11,469 metric tons, or 25 million pounds. The new SMA and NMA catch targets represent increases of 75% and 100%, respectively, over the catch targets in place since 2007. The increases are justified based on peer reviewed stock assessments that have concluded both monkfish stocks are above their management biomass targets. But the assessments contain statements about the uncertainty associated with the scientific understanding of monkfish biology, a situation that warrants a precautionary management approach.

The April decisions were based on recommendations made by the Council's Monkfish Committee and its Advisory Panel, as well as the actions taken by the Mid-Atlantic Council. These included the specifications for trip limits and days-at-sea (DAS) allocations for the 2011-2013 fishing years based on the catch targets, and several other administrative measures. Amendment 5 also incorporates new biological and management reference points, yardsticks that enable the Council to base its rules on the health of the monkfish resource and measure how well the plan is working --- Allowable Biological Catch (ABC), Annual Catch Limits (ACLs), and Accountability Measures (AMs).

The Monkfish Plan and its amendments are prepared jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Council. Both Councils have now approved the new management measures which will be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval. Implementation is expected for the start of the fishing year in May, 2011.

The monkfish resource is not overfished, nor is overfishing occurring. East coast monkfish tails, cheeks, and livers generate landings that are worth about \$40 million annually. The tails produce firm white meat that has become very popular in the United States. Europeans sauté, roast, or serve the cheeks in sauces or fish stews, and the livers are exported to Japan for sushi.

#