



# *New England Fishery Management Council - News Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 30, 2010

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978.465.0492

## ***Fishery Council Acts on Issues Affecting Skate and Herring Fishermen, Elects New Officers***

NEWPORT, RI During the first two of its three-day meeting in Newport, the New England Fishery Management Council addressed several important items of business that will affect the region's fishermen.

**Skate Emergency Action Requested:** Responding to the testimony of concerned stakeholders about the negative economic impacts the skate accountability measure is having on the skate wing fishery, the Council on Tuesday asked National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Regional Administrator Pat Kurkul to take emergency action as a potential remedy to help both fishermen and shore-side businesses. The Council seeks an increase in the skate wing possession limit if it appears that the fishery will be unable to land 100 percent of the skate total allowable landings by April 30, 2011 (end of the current fishing year) while the 500 pound possession limit remains in effect.

As background, NMFS, in keeping with the Council's skate management plan, reduced the skate wing possession limit from 5,000 pounds of wings to 500 pounds on September 3 because the landings for the fishing year, which began this past May, had exceeded an 80% "trigger". The management concern is that the skate catch would soon exceed the management plan's total landings limit.

The Council also directed its Skate Plan Development Team to estimate and forecast skate discards for 2010 using recently collected groundfish sector data. Based on that information, the plan team would provide recommendations on whether total skate discards have declined enough to allow an overall increase in skate landings. The fishing industry believes skate discards have declined because groundfish sector vessels now use modified gear to target specific groundfish species and avoid skates.

**Atlantic Herring - Major Issues Highlighted:** Although Amendment 5 to the herring management plan is still very much in development, the Council, by unanimous consent, agreed on Tuesday to better target the issues of greatest concern to fishermen and the public --- an effective monitoring program for the herring fleet and the protection of river herring populations that are taken as bycatch in the fishery.

A number of measures under consideration were eliminated altogether or modified. These related to costly and/or impractical methods of tracking the herring catch and other species taken in the fishery. Importantly, the Council retained a number of proposals that would identify and contain measures to avoid river herring "hotspots". To further protect river herring --- principally alewives and blueback herring --- the Council unanimously agreed to develop river herring "catch caps" that would directly limit amounts taken by the Atlantic herring fishery. The Council also will consider measures to protect Atlantic herring when they aggregate in NE waters to spawn. Further action on Amendment 5 is scheduled for January 2011.

**New Officers Elected:** The Council also elected its 2010-2011 officers on Tuesday. Again this year by acclamation, the Council named John Pappalardo Chairman and Rip Cunningham Vice Chairman. Mr. Pappalardo is a fisherman and CEO of the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association, while Mr. Cunningham is a former editor and publisher of *Saltwater Sportsman* magazine and an active sport fisherman. The Council elected three members to its Executive Committee: Mr. Jim Odlin, a Portland ME fisherman, Mr. Terry Stockwell, Director of External Affairs for the Maine Dept. of Marine Resources and Ms. Sally McGee, New England Policy Director for Environmental Defense.

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