



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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NE Fishery Council Approves New Monkfish Rules

Newburyport, MA For the first time since the implementation of the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan, vessels fishing in the Northern Fishery Management Area, a region that under the monkfish management program encompasses the northern part of Georges Bank as well as the Gulf of Maine, will be subjected to tight restrictions. The New England Fishery Management Council approved Framework Adjustment 4 to the Monkfish Plan at a meeting last week in Gloucester, MA. The new rules are intended to rebuild monkfish stocks to sustainable levels by 2009.

To better account for the catch of monkfish, the fishery in the Northern Area will be controlled by a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 5,000 metric tons or about 11 million pounds, an amount that is expected to result in a 35 percent reduction from the current TAC. The Southern Fishery Management Area TAC will be slightly higher, 5,100 metric tons or 11,220 million pounds of monkfish.

Catch also will be monitored through the use of monkfish days-at-sea, similar to the mechanism used in the Council's Groundfish Plan, to account for and limit the number of days that fishermen are allowed to direct effort on monkfish. Boats with monkfish limited access permits and fishing on a monkfish day-at-sea in the Northern Area will have 31 monkfish days and those fishing in the Southern Area will have 23 days. Vessels may fish in either area, but the total monkfish days used may not exceed the 31 days available for use in the Northern Area.

While Framework 4 measures are designed to be in place for three years, through the 2009 fishing year, they will remain in place in 2010 and beyond, unless both the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils implement new measures for the joint plan through another framework adjustment or amendment. All measures approved by the New England Council at its Gloucester meeting will be considered by the Mid-Atlantic Council on December 13 in New York City. If subsequently approved by NOAA Fisheries, the new measures are scheduled to be implemented in May 2007.

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