

## **Social Impact Assessment for Skate Amendment 3**

### Defining What Constitutes a Community

Before beginning, a few words are necessary about how community is defined in this document. By National Standard 8 requirements of the MSA, a “fishing community” must be a geographic entity. Generally speaking, we use any geographic unit that the U.S. Census recognizes as a “place”. This includes cities, towns, and some townships, boroughs or other small administrative entities. However, it must be smaller than a county. Occasionally a town may be unincorporated and not have been surveyed as a “Census Designated Place” or CDP. In this case, there are no available census data for the entity. Unless it appears as important in terms of landings or residence of permit holders, such an entity will be aggregated into the next smallest available census place. In this document the port/town is the most basic unit of analysis. Because in some cases there is a port which serves as the base for fishing activity but most fishermen do not reside directly in that port town, both owner’s home address and primary port of landing for a vessel are discussed. Other sections of the MSA require analyses that need not be place-based. Thus, some discussions will be about gear groups or those who target skate versus those who take skate as a bycatch or about other groups such as processors or dealers.

### Organization of the SIA

The discussion below focuses on social and cultural impacts of the FMP on communities and individuals. Because economic impacts also have social and cultural ramification, they are also included, though in a different form than seen in the economic impact sections of the document. First the SIA discusses some general features of importance within and across communities, which create different contexts for the various proposed conservation measures. Then, rather than discuss impacts by alternative - as these may change, the discussion is divided into sections on each of the proposed conservation measures.

### Summary of Factors Important to Assessing Vulnerability

#### Permits

On a permit application two separate locations of interest are noted: the owner’s home city and the vessel’s home port. These are not always the same place. These two locations provide two ways of discussing potential impacts. Some impacts may fall mainly on the place where the vessel docks and likely does general maintenance and restocking. Others may fall on the place where the owner lives and spends some of his income on non-vessel-related activities.

Only 9 towns have 50 or more permits listed under either owner’s residence or homeport. These are, in descending order of number of permits, New Bedford and Gloucester, MA; Cape May, NJ; Point Judith/Narragansett, RI; Montauk, NY; Chatham, MA; Barnegat

Light/Long Beach, NJ; Portland, ME; Point Pleasant/Point Pleasant Beach, NJ; and Ocean City/West Ocean City. When examined as a percent of all skate permits only these nine plus Hampton Bays/Shinnecock have at least 2% of all skate permits either as homeport or as residence. Only four ports have at least 5%: New Bedford and Gloucester, MA; Cape May, NJ and Point Judith/Narragansett, RI. It is interesting that Cape May has so many permits, as it has a relatively low level of landings. Ocean City also has a very low level of landings.

**Table 1 All Towns with 2% or More of Northeast Skate Permits as That List That Town as Homeport or Owner's Residence for 2007**

ST	CITY	HOMEPORT	RESIDENCE	% HOMEPR T of ALL SKT Permits	% RESIDEN CE OF ALL SKT PERMITS
MA	New Bedford	261	207	9.72%	7.71%
MA	Gloucester	210	152	7.82%	5.66%
NJ	Cape May	170	89	6.33%	3.31%
RI	Point Judith/Narragansett	124	27	4.62%	1.01%
NY	Montauk	111	72	4.13%	2.68%
MA	Chatham	85	29	3.17%	1.08%
NJ	Barnegat Light/Long Beach	75	36	2.79%	1.34%
ME	Portland	63	31	2.35%	1.15%
NJ	Point Pleasant/Point Pleasant Beach	55	20	2.05%	0.74%
MD	Ocean City/West Ocean City	50	6	1.86%	0.22%
NY	Hampton Bays/Shinnecock	41	23	1.53%	0.86%

Other Permits Held by Skate Permit Holders

In 2007 there were 2,685 vessels with a Skate Permit. Of these, most held permits in a variety of other Northeast fisheries. This is actually a common pattern for all Northeast vessels, which typically hold permits even in fisheries in which they are not active. The most common other permits held were Bluefish, Multispecies, Dogfish and Monkfish.

Bluefish were solidly category 1 (2,123) - Commercial. Most lobster permits (1002) were in category 1 - Commercial, Non-Trap. Multispecies permits were primarily in category A (992) - DAS - and category HB (704) - Open Access Handgear. There is only one dogfish category - General. Monkfish were 75% in category E (1,691) - Incidental Catch.

Commercial Landings and Revenue

Only 9 ports receive at least \$100,000 per year. In descending order of revenue received these are: New Bedford, MA; Chatham, MA; Point Judith, RI; Boston, MA; Tiverton, RI; Newport, RI; Barnegat Light/Long Beach, NJ; Gloucester, MA and Provincetown, MA (in bold). Only 15 ports landed at least 100,000lbs. In descending order of pounds landed they are: New Bedford, MA; Point Judith, RI; Chatham, MA; Tiverton, RI; Newport, RI; Boston, MA; Stonington, CT; Sea Isle City, NJ; Barnegat Light/Long Beach, NJ;

Gloucester, MA; Hampton Bays, NY; Provincetown, MA; Fall River, MA; Belford, NJ and Montauk, NY (in italics).

**Table 2 Skate Ports by Value and Pounds: Ports with at least \$100,000 or 100,000lbs of Skate in 2007**

ST	CNTY	PORT	SKTVAL	SKLBS
MA	<i>BRISTOL</i>	<i>NEW BEDFORD</i>	\$4,869,521	10,179,163
MA	<i>BARNSTABLE</i>	<i>CHATHAM</i>	\$1,550,200	3,101,339
RI	<i>WASHINGTON</i>	<i>POINT JUDITH</i>	\$658,754	4,841,657
MA	<i>SUFFOLK</i>	<i>BOSTON</i>	\$294,610	497,194
RI	<i>NEWPORT</i>	<i>TIVERTON</i>	\$239,485	2,632,083
RI	<i>NEWPORT</i>	<i>NEWPORT</i>	\$179,018	925,977
		<i>BARNEGAT LIGHT/LONG</i>		
NJ	<i>OCEAN</i>	<i>BEACH</i>	\$158,096	210,091
MA	<i>ESSEX</i>	<i>GLOUCESTER</i>	\$107,764	205,707
MA	<i>BARNSTABLE</i>	<i>PROVINCETOWN</i>	\$103,502	166,160
NY	<i>SUFFOLK</i>	<i>HAMPTON BAYS</i>	\$92,426	167,340
NJ	<i>MONMOUTH</i>	<i>BELFORD</i>	\$57,748	106,536
NY	<i>SUFFOLK</i>	<i>MONTAUK</i>	\$56,364	101,295
CT	<i>NEW LONDON</i>	<i>STONINGTON</i>	\$46,406	441,302
NJ	<i>CAPE MAY</i>	<i>SEA ISLE CITY</i>	\$36,357	300,445

In terms of percent dependence on skate relative to all species landed, however, only 3 ports depend on skate for at least 10% of their revenue. Here Center Moriches, NY - which has low total skate landings and low landings overall – appears as more dependent on skate than some of the larger landings ports. Only 9 ports depend on skate for at least 10% of their pounds landed. Here Center Moriches appears again, as well as Cambridge, MA – which lands under 100lbs of skate and under 500 lbs of any fish and thus is technically highly dependent but in actual fact does not rely on skate to maintain its economy.

However, it is interesting to note that Chatham and Tiverton, which are among the top skate ports by actual revenue and pounds are also among the highly dependent ports. And Point Judith, Newport and Provincetown which have high levels of landings and revenue are dependent by pounds landed. This means, too, that the counties of Barnstable, MA and Washington, RI each have 2 dependent ports. For RI the addition of neighboring Newport County is also notable.

**Table 3 Top Skate Ports by Value Dependence**

ST	CNTY	PORT	SKTVAL/TOTVAL	SKTLBS/TOTLBS
RI	NEWPORT	TIVERTON	33%	89%
MA	BARNSTABLE	CHATHAM	11%	37%
NY	SUFFOLK	CENTER MORICHES	10%	26%

**Table 4 Top Skate Ports by Pounds Landed Dependence**

ST	CNTY	PORT	SKTVAL/TOTVAL	SKTLBS/TOTLBS
RI	NEWPORT	TIVERTON	33%	89%
MA	BARNSTABLE	CHATHAM	11%	37%

NJ	CAPE MAY	SEA ISLE CITY	2%	36%
NY	SUFFOLK	CENTER MORICHES	10%	26%
CT	NEW LONDON	STONINGTON	1%	16%
MA	MIDDLESEX	CAMBRIDGE	2%	14%
RI	WASHINGTON	POINT JUDITH	2%	14%
MA	BARNSTABLE	PROVINCETOWN	3%	12%
RI	NEWPORT	NEWPORT	1%	11%

### Census Data for Top Skate Ports

These and other census data can be found in the port profiles in the appendices, where they are placed in greater context. Here they are order by descending percentage of occupations in farming, fishing and forestry relative to all occupations. It should be kept in mind, however, that fishermen may be undercounted due to being listed as self-employed. The top three communities for percent occupations in faming, fishing and forestry are Portland, ME; Long Beach/Barnegat Light, NJ; and Montauk, NY. These are, of course, all species and gears and cannot be broken out to show skate only. The three communities with the highest percentages of families in poverty are New Bedford, Boston and Fall River, MA. The three communities with the lowest total population are Chatham, MA; Sea Isle City, NJ and Provincetown, MA. The three communities with the lowest percentage of persons age 25 or over who have graduated at least high school are Fall River and Boston, MA and Tiverton, RI. The three communities with the highest unemployment levels are Provincetown and New Bedford, MA and Montauk, NY – followed very closely by Newport, RI and Boston, MA.

**Table 5: Selected Census Variables for Profiled Communities**

ST	Port Community	Median cost of a home	Occupations in farming, fishing and forestry*	Median household income	Families in poverty	Total pop.	Median Age	Pop. (25 or over) High School Graduate or Higher	% Pop. Over 16 In Labor Force and Unemployed
ME	Portland	\$121,200	7.10%	\$48,763	9.20%	64,257	35.7	88.30%	3.30%
NJ	<i>Long Beach/ Barnegat Light</i>	\$334,400/	None*/	\$48,697/	3.8%/	3,329/	57.3/	92.0%/	2.3%/
		\$299,400	6.50%	\$52,361	2.60%	764	54.9	92.10%	1.20%
NY	<i>Montauk</i>	\$290,400	6.10%	\$42,329	8.30%	3,851	39.3	84.00%	7.70%
MA	<i>Chatham</i>	\$372,900	3.60%	\$47,037	0.90%	1,667	53.3	89.90%	2.00%
NJ	Point Pleasant/ Point Pleasant Beach	\$160,100/	0.3%/	\$55,987/	2.00%/	19,366/	39.4/	88.50%/	2.50%/
		\$223,600	2.60%	\$51,105	5.00%	5,112	42.6	87.10%	3.10%
NJ	<i>Belford/ Middletown<sup>+</sup></i>	\$146,000/ \$210,700	2.3%/	\$66,964/ \$75,566	1.3%/	1,340/ 66,327	35.8/ 38.8	89.7%/	2.20%
RI	<i>Little Compton</i>	\$228,200	2.10%	\$55,368	3.70%	3,593	43.5	91.00%	2.00%
MA	<i>Gloucester</i>	\$204,600	2.00%	\$47,722	7.10%	30,273	40.2	85.70%	3.20%
NY	<i>Hampton Bays/ Shinnecock<sup>#</sup></i>	\$178,000	1.70%	\$50,161	6.70%	12,236	38.8	86.60%	3.40%

RI	<i>Point Judith/ Narragansett</i> <sup>#</sup>	\$195,500	1.60%	\$39,918	8.80%	3,671	44.5	87.50%	2.20%
MA	<i>Provincetown</i>	\$333,100	1.00%	\$32,731	8.70%	3,192	45.4	85.10%	13.10%
MA	<i>New Bedford</i>	\$113,500	1.00%	\$27,569	17.30%	93,768	35.9	57.60%	5.00%
RI	<i>Newport</i>	\$161,700	0.60%	\$40,669	12.90%	26,475	34.9	87.00%	4.70%
RI	<i>Tiverton</i>	\$144,400	0.60%	\$49,977	2.90%	15,260	40.8	79.50%	3.40%
NJ	<i>Cape May</i>	\$212,900	0.40%	\$33,462	7.70%	4,668	47.4	87.60%	3.80%
CT	<i>Stonington</i>	\$168,200	0.30%	\$52,437	2.90%	17,906	41.7	88.20%	2.00%
MA	<i>Fall River</i>	\$132,900	0.30%	\$29,014	14.00%	91,938	35.7	56.60%	4.10%
MA	<i>Boston</i>	\$190,600	0.10%	\$39,629	15.30%	589,141	31.1	78.90%	4.60%
NJ	<i>Sea Isle City</i>	\$280,100	None*	\$45,708	6.40%	2,835	51.3	85.20%	3.70%

\* The census is known to undercount those employed in fishing. Further, fishing data are unavailable as a unique category due to confidentiality issues. Finally, those who fish out of this community may not live there.

<sup>+</sup> These communities have two sets of census data, though socially and in terms of fishing they are best treated as a single community. For example, in some cases fish are landed in one area but fishermen live in the other, or sometimes one houses the majority of the recreational fishing and the other the majority of commercial fishing.

<sup>#</sup> These communities include a port of landing for which no census data are available plus census data for the smallest census unit which encompasses the port.

### Skate Dealers

There were 195 skate dealers in 2007. The vast majority (156) depended on skate for only 0-5% of the ex-vessel value of all species they bought, though there were 4 dealers that depended on skate for 95-100% of this value. The absolute amount of this percentage varied widely, however, with the largest group of dealers (56) reporting an ex-vessel value of \$100,000 to \$500,000 for skate and groups of 20-30 vessels reporting anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000 and \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000.

**Table 6: Federally Permitted Dealer Dependence on Skate in 2007**

Percentage Level of Dependence	Number of Dealers	Absolute Level of Dependence	Number of Dealers
0-5%	156	\$0-100	0
6-10%	12	\$101-1000	4
11-15%	7	<b>\$1001-10,000</b>	<b>25</b>
16-20%	4	<b>\$10,001-50,000</b>	<b>21</b>
21-25%	3	<b>\$50,001-\$100,000</b>	<b>30</b>
26-30%	1	<b>\$100,001-500,000</b>	<b>56</b>
31-35%	0	<b>\$500,001-1,000,000</b>	<b>17</b>
36-40%	1	<b>\$1,000,001-5,000,000</b>	<b>28</b>
41-45%	0	\$5,000,001-\$10,000,000	5
46-50%	0		
51-55%	2		
56-60%	1		
61-65%	1		

66-70%	2		
71-75%	0		
76-80%	0		
81-85%	1		
86-90%	0		
91-95%	0		
96-100%	4		
TOTAL	195		186

Only 4 ports had 10 or more dealers: Hampton Bays/Shinnecock, NY (20), Montauk, NY (17), Point Judith, RI (15), and New Bedford, MA (12). An additional 7 had at least 5 dealers: Chatham, Provincetown and Gloucester, MA; Little Compton and Newport, RI (6 each), Scituate, MA and Mattituck, NY (5 each). Here the total number of dealers may exceed 195, as some dealers buy in multiple ports. One factor to note in regard to the large number of dealers in Montauk is that many individual vessel owners have acquired dealers permits in order to sell skate as bait to local lobster and whelk fishermen<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 7: Federally Permitted Dealer Dependence on Skate in 2007 – by Port**

State	Port	Number of Federal Tilefish Dealers	Percentage Dependence on Tilefish of These Dealers	Number of Federal Tilefish Dealers	Absolute Dependence on Tilefish of These Dealers
Massachusetts	Chatham	6	0-100%	6	\$1k-5M
	New Bedford	12	0-5% (6), 10-60% (6)	9	\$1k-5M
	Gloucester	6	0-10%	4	\$10k-1M
	Boston	4	0-10%	4	\$500k-1M
	Provincetown	6	0-10%	6	\$10k-5M
	Scituate	5	0-15%	5	\$10k-5M
	Westport	4	0-70%	4	\$10-100k
New Jersey	Cape May	4	0-5%	2	
New York	Amagansett	4	0-5%	4	\$50-500k
	Montauk	17	0-10%	17	\$0-100k (5), \$500k (6), \$1-5M (6)
	Hampton Bays/Shinnecock	20	0-5% (19)	20	\$1-10k (5), \$50-100k (5), \$500k (5), \$1-5M (5)
	Mattituck	5	0-5%	5	\$10-500k
Rhode Island	Little Compton	6	0-15%	6	\$10k-5M
	Newport	6	0-5% (4)		\$10k-5M
	Point Judith	15	0-5% (12)	15	\$10-100k (6), \$500k-1M (4), \$5-10M (5)

<sup>1</sup> Pers. Comm.. from Victor Vecchio, NMFS Port Agent in East Hampton, NY.

### *Bait Skate versus Food Skate and Targeted Skate versus Bycatch Skate*

Among the top ports listed above, ports which heavily land skate for bait include: Point Judith, Tiverton, Newport, New Bedford and Stonington (CT) Secondly, bait skate is landed in, Chatham and Provincetown. Point Judith's landings have accounted for 39-67% of bait landings between 2000-2007. Point Judith landings have declined somewhat in recent years, while landings in Newport, Tiverton and New Bedford have risen significantly. Other ports such as Montauk have individual vessels which sell skate directly to lobster and other pot fishermen for bait, though there are no major skate bait dealers here. Bait skate is primarily landed by trawlers, often as a secondary species while targeting monkfish or groundfish. Since 2003, with the implementation of the original Skate FMP, all vessels landing skate must be on a groundfish Day-at-Sea (DAS).

New Bedford is one of the major skate wing or food skate ports. Skate wings are also landed significantly in Gloucester, Chatham, Point Judith, Boston and Barnegat Light. Secondly they are landed in Portland. Since 2000, skate wing landings in Provincetown have been on the decline, while Chatham landings have risen. Both trawlers and gillnets catch food skate. Some trawlers target skate, with others catching skate as a bycatch. Most of the gillnet vessels are targeting skate. The gillnets are based largely in Chatham but also in New Bedford. There is a very small skate wing fleet in Virginia, though it has dramatically declined in recent years. Most of these are monkfish gillnets though some draggers caught skate as a bycatch at the height of the fishery.

### *Skate Fishing Areas*

Vessels landing skates for the wing market generally fish on Georges bank, in the Great south Channel near Cape Cod, or west of the Nantucket Lightship Area in Southern New England (SNE) waters. Gillnet wing vessels often also fish east of Cape Cod.

Vessels that land skate as a bycatch often fish in Massachusetts Bay and on Georges Bank. Scallop dredges with general category permits often catch skate while fishing in the Great South Channel. There is also a mixed monkfish/skate fishery west of the Nantucket Lightship Area and off northern New Jersey, near Point Pleasant.

Vessels landing bait skate generally fish in the inshore waters of SNE, are most often trawlers, and frequently fish in an exempted fishery.

### *Summary of Economic Impacts*

The Economic Impact Analysis in this EIS indicates negative effects for both buyers and sellers (-8 to 17%) of all actions due to reduced quantity of skates landed. The reduction in supply to buyers would have a negative effect on the lobster fisher as well, as bait would be limited.

The major impacts would be on (in order of highest to lowest level of impacts): New

Bedford, Chatham and Point Judith, and secondarily Tiverton, Newport, Boston, Stonington, Gloucester, Barnegat Light and Hampton (VA).

Combined Factors For Vulnerability

Some towns show up in multiple indices of vulnerability; others in only one. Communities with multiple elements of vulnerability are more at risk for potential negative impacts. Those with fewer are generally likely to have more positive outcomes. Here we see that Chatham and New Bedford, MA and Point Judith, RI are the most at risk. Risks include job loss, family disruption and damage to long-standing social networks.

**Table 8 Number of Combined Vulnerability Factors per Town Among the Profiled Communities**

ST	Port Community	No. of Vulnerability Factors
MA	<i>Chatham</i>	9
MA	<i>New Bedford</i>	8
RI	<i>Point Judith/ Narragansett</i>	7
MA	<i>Boston</i>	5
MA	<i>Provincetown</i>	5
NY	<i>Montauk</i>	5
RI	<i>Tiverton</i>	5
MA	<i>Gloucester</i>	4
NJ	<i>Long Beach/ Barnegat Light</i>	4
RI	<i>Newport</i>	4
CT	<i>Stonington</i>	3
NJ	<i>Sea Isle City</i>	3
MA	<i>Fall River</i>	2
NY	<i>Hampton Bays/ Shinnecock</i>	2
ME	<i>Portland</i>	1
NJ	<i>Belford/Middletown</i>	1
NJ	<i>Cape May</i>	1
NJ	<i>Point Pleasant</i>	1
RI	<i>Little Compton</i>	1

Discussion of Specific Conservation Elements of the Alternatives

Material in this section is based on the information above plus 37 interviews with NMFS port agents, skate vessel owners, lobster vessel owners, fishing association staff, dealers and processors throughout the region. One overarching issue for many involved in the skate fishery is a question of how good the science is. Given that wings versus whole



skates have only been distinguishable since 2004, and that there is some question of confusion between juvenile Little and Winter skates, and that fishermen are seeing a lot of skates out on the grounds, there is concern over the accuracy of assessments. This may to some degree undermine any provisions implemented. Others feel that it is not the time to implement new skate regulations, given that there's move afoot to create a skate sector but that this cannot be in place before 2010 even if it is implemented. "Why not wait for the sector?", they ask. A few see this as the latest in a series of movements by the NMFS to destroy commercial fishing, making one fishery after another economically non-viable.

Some wonder why the increasing restriction on groundfish DAS and the fact that the lobster fishery has been cutting back on traps over the past few years aren't enough to ease pressure on the resource. Some processors have already cut back their hours, e.g., from 5am-5pm down to 8am-1pm. Some lobstermen are already having trouble getting bait. If the availability of bait skate is cut dramatically then SNE lobster vessels will have to turn to the herring and menhaden, and the redfish and cod racks, that are more commonly used in ME and northern New England, putting greater pressure on these species. Already ME lobstermen are being required to cut back on herring, leaving

The current economy does not make it any easier for fishermen who are already stressed, though recent drops in fuel prices help to some degree.

Some fishermen note that in areas where skate cluster there is little else, so it is easy to target or avoid as you prefer.

Several processors noted that if they could not get steady product at sufficient levels they would go the way of many recent dogfish processors and shut down at least their skate division and in some cases their entire facility.

### Trip Limits

Universally, fishermen (both those who target skate and those who catch it as a bycatch), dealers and processors emphasize that 2500 lbs of skate wings per trip would put large numbers of people out of business. Day fishermen, like gillnetters seem to see 4800 lbs skate wings per trip as perhaps possible, though 6,800lbs would be better. Trip boats like draggers are currently bringing in 15-20,000lbs and see a drop to 12-14,000lbs as more feasible.

### Time/Area closures

Chatham fishermen note that the proposed closures cover precisely the grounds they normally fish and would therefore be devastating to their fleet. To go further out beyond the closures would be too expensive in terms of fuel, given the price of skate. In addition, this would push draggers and gillnetters into a smaller section of bottom and lead to gear conflicts.

### Quota Management

Several skate fishermen said they'd prefer an ITQ or a sector to the measures currently proposed. At least then they'd know how much fish they could catch and could decide when to catch it.

In terms of an annual versus a trimester or a quarterly TAC, many fishermen, processors and dealers expressed a preference for a trimester or quarterly TAC in order to smooth out the flow of product throughout the year. However, since skate catch is seasonal for most fishermen there is some concern over the setting of the within year TACs and there is the question of whether quota underages in one period could be carried over to the next within the year.

*Prohibition on Using Multispecies Category B DAS to fish for skates*

One lobster association staff person noted that this is an excellent way to limit discards. A skate gillnetter noted that as he understands it B days are being cut due to a slightly lower tow on the Albatross that he feels is insufficient to warrant such a large change. More generally, the dropping of B days is expected to turn draggers away from skate and limit total landings – a problem for dealers and processors.

*Comments on Specific Alternatives*

With regard to the specific alternatives proposed, the one most mentioned as feasible is alternative 4, though 3b was also noted – if the possession limits were higher.