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## Monkfish FMP Amendment 6

*Summary of Scoping  
To Consider Catch Shares Management  
& Cooperative Research Program Issues*



Photo: Mark Dixon, NOAA NOS

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## Discussion Outline

- Summary of scoping comments
- Oversight Committee and Advisory Panel review and recommendations
- Exempted Fishery Permit Issue in the RSA program
- Timeline – Next Steps

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## Scoping

- Ten hearings from NC to Maine, December 15 – February 9, including two in conjunction with MAFMC meetings
- Approx. 210 attendees, 4 – 50 per hearing
- Approximately 2,100 written comments, including 2,045 “boilerplate” emails opposed to catch shares
- Individual written comments, other than the boilerplate emails, reflect the hearing comments in both substance and proportionality – ~7 supporting, ~28 opposing, and ~17 conditional or other

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## Supporting Comments

- Most cited vessel and operations and efficiency benefits, especially for groundfish sector vessels
- Mitigate discards associated with restrictive trip limits
- Acknowledge the time and capital investment in the monkfish fishery
- Promote safety
- Allow for full utilization of the resource (optimum yield)
- Enhanced catch information resulting from greater monitoring, in spite of increased monitoring costs, and
- Promote consolidation which results in efficient use of capital, and reduced impacts on habitat and protected species.

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## Opposing Comments

- Questioned why change a plan that is working; adjustments to current plan could fix any problems
- Social and economic impacts, especially on small-scale operations and fishing communities
- Concerns about consolidation and ownership concentration by individuals or entities that are not vessel operators or owners
- Job losses and employment effects of consolidation
- Costs of purchasing quota and costs of monitoring, and the impact of increased costs on captain and crew income
- Concerns about initial allocation and use of landings history data
- Questions about the effect of scientific uncertainty and the capability of the current scientific knowledge to support catch shares management
- Impact of choke species (esp. skates) on the ability to harvest available monkfish quotas, and
- Should be a broad referendum including crew for any catch share proposal.

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## Conditional or Other Comments

- Some supported/opposed catch shares and identified issues to be addressed
- Some support only sector or ITQ, not both
- A processor group opposed catch shares but if the Councils proceed, they should consider processor/dealer allocations and/or area-based mgmt. (separate N and S plans)

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## More Conditional or Other Comments

An NGO opposed to catch shares said any such program should:

- Retain public control; return value to the public
- Preserve fleet diversity and small-scale operations; accumulation limits
- Have program costs borne by industry.
- Councils need to acknowledge consolidation impacts – job losses, community effects
- Any program subject to a broad referendum, not weighted by landings history

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## More Conditional or Other Comments

- Question NMFS landings data as basis for allocation
- If landings are the basis for allocation, should be pre-FMP due to differential impact of regulations
- Consideration should be given to the unique situation of the permit cat. H fishery history and geographic restrictions
- Several commenters withheld support or opposition to catch shares until they could review specific proposals and determine the impact on their own operations or communities.

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## AP Discussion

- Identified problems with the current fishery; recommend further analysis of extent and nature of these problems
- Recommend consideration of separate mgmt. programs or FMPs for two areas
- Recommend consideration of full range of alternatives to address problems, including catch shares or modifications of current system

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## OS Discussion

- Recognized regional differences in need for and views about catch shares
- Identified problems with the current fishery that could be addressed by catch shares (next slide) and could be the basis for Amendment 6 goals and objectives
- Tasked PDT to draft report on considerations and issues with separating management (N & S) or separate FMPs

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## Problems with the Fishery

- Latent effort
- Lack of continuous supply to processors
- Wasteful discards
- Inefficient vessel operation
- Lack of flexibility
- Geographic restrictions for Category H vessels
- Coordination of management regimes within geographic areas (groundfish sectors)
- Full utilization of catch targets, and
- Protected species interactions.

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## Directions to Staff/PDT

- prepare a white paper outlining the issues and considerations in (a) having separate and different fishing rules in the two management areas, and (b) having two separate and independent FMP's with the NEFMC having the sole authority over the northern area and the MAFMC having sole authority over the southern area.

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## RSA Exempted Fishery Permits

- Issue raised in scoping by some SNE fishermen claiming trip limit exemptions result in excessive gear, localized overfishing, discards and other problems
- Proponents state the exemption is necessary for research success and broader participation
- Discussed by AP and OS
- AP recommends - outreach letter to spread research effort over wider area; consider conversion of RSA to a quota system
- OS noted that changes (FW or amendment) to RSA would either delay Amendment 6 or be done in Amendment 6

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## Next Steps

- PDT will complete the white paper for Committee review prior to the June Council meeting
- Committee will recommend next steps at the June Council meeting
- Any questions or comments?

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