

#4

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing
Hilton Oceanfront, Virginia Beach, VA
December 15, 2010

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Jim Armstrong

Attendance: approx. 24

After the staff presentation, the floor was opened up for questions. None of the H permit fishermen, the only monkfish fishermen in attendance, initially volunteered to speak.

A commenter asked how Amendment 6 fits in with the MAFMC's visioning project and was told that they are on separate tracks/timeframes.

The chair was asked if the referendum requirement could be interpreted to allow separate referenda in the different management areas. He replied that counsel is working on that question.

A commenter remarked that the catch history will be complicated by restraints on effort from various federal actions as well as trip limits and will, as a result, make allocation problematic.

A monkfish fisherman described some of the attributes and constraints of fishing under the H category permit. He stated if catch shares would allow him to keep his entire catch, that would be helpful. He said that the net limits are a constraint on catch anyway and that tides and weather and restrictions for marine mammals and turtles reduce the amount of gear the H category fishermen have in the water. He said he was hoping that allocation would take into account the unique aspects of the H category and not just the poundage landed by them. The season is a couple months long at the most. He emphasized that his support for catch shares is limited to the degree to which industry is involved in developing them. He suggested that the potential catch (DAS x trip limit) be used rather than actual landings for allocation purposes due to all the other constraints on their landings.

A second monkfish fisherman described the restrictions due to harbor porpoise and turtle regulations that limit their ability to fish.

A third monkfish fisherman who has both an H permit and a D permit expressed concern that catch shares were just another way of imposing sectors. He said that sectors have been unsuccessful in that he has to pay a lot of money for monitoring – usually \$1,500 per observed trip.

A fourth monkfish fishermen added that he was concerned that historic landings might include the 1991-1995 period when they didn't have any landings and that landings in recent years after the category H permit was created are constrained by the short season and regulations that keep them from fishing as much as they could.

The fishermen were asked if they would be interested in participating in a workshop to work out their concerns in greater detail. One fisherman spoke up and said he would like to do that. Others responded by nodding their heads.

There was a discussion about the availability of landings data prior to the issuance of the H permit. Several fishermen said that the data are available. Additionally there was discussion about the spatial restrictions on harvest associated with the H permit and concern about whether catch shares would be a way to relieve that.

The hearing started at 5:30 p.m. and adjourned at about 6:30 p.m.

New England Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing
MA DMF Annisquam Lab, Gloucester, MA
January 4, 2011

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Phil Haring

Attendance: approx. 20

One fisherman stated that the current plan with days at sea is working fine. He asked why the Council is considering catch shares at this time when the sector program in groundfish is a mess and may not be permanent. In a later statement, he suggested that part of the plan include a provision wherein if someone wants to leave the fishery, that the government buy back the shares and return them to the common pool to be redistributed even to all remaining active participants.

A second fisherman, who has an incidental monkfish permit and who fishes for groundfish with a handline, said his comments represent the views of a group of similar fishermen working out of Gloucester. He said they only occasionally catch monkfish and do not have a history that would provide them with an allocation. He stated that any IFQ or catch share program should allow such vessels to land their incidental catch.

A third commenter, who is a member of the Council but is speaking as a fisherman, also stated that the current plan is working fine. He feels that the sector program is too bureaucratic and needs to be simplified. He feels that an IFQ program would be preferable to sectors in the monkfish fishery, as long as there were adequate consolidation limits. He said the Council should consider a full retention provision under catch shares. Commenting on the low hearing turnout by the industry, he said that people are very discouraged and feel that monkfish catch shares is a done deal, and is being implemented from the top down. With regard to an allocation formula, he said that 50% should be equal shares to all permit holders, and 50% be based on landings history. He is hopeful that the courts overturn the allocation formula used in the groundfish fishery because it will result in better guidance with regard to National Standard 4. He said there should be a referendum for any catch share program, including sectors, even if it is not legally required. He feels that consolidation limits should be set in advance, and that there should be a use-it-or-lose-it provision so quota holders do not simply lease their shares in perpetuity. With regard to incidental catch of monkfish in other fisheries, he said there should be an allocation for that but it does not need to be as closely monitored because the individual vessels' monkfish catch is relatively small.

The hearing started at 3 p.m. and adjourned at about 3:35.

New England Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing
Holiday Inn, Hyannis, MA
January 10, 2011

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Phil Haring

Attendance: approx. 14

Howard King, Monkfish Committee Vice Chair and Mid-Atlantic Council member also attended.

One fisherman expressed concerns about the costs of catch shares and asked what the cost sharing program would entail. He also asked how the skate fishery, which is linked to days-at-sea (DAS) would be handled if monkfish was managed under a catch share program, since the two species are caught together.

The second fisherman to comment stated support for catch shares, especially an IFQ program. He says that now he hauls his nets until he gets the trip limit, and when he returns to haul the remaining gear, the product is not marketable and must be discarded. He feels that his costs would be reduced by a catch shares system. He supports catch history from 1999-2009, with each permit holder being able to select the best five years. With regard to accumulation and transferability of quota, the industry should decide the limits. He also said that there should be a weighmaster system with dockside monitoring.

The next three fishermen supported catch shares, particularly individual allocations. One supported using catch history from 2000-2009 for the initial allocation. He also stated that trip limits and DAS causes significant discards.

The next commenter suggested that monkfish discards in the scallop fishery is like their yellowtail flounder discards, and to give them credit for their discards when allocating catch shares would be unfair to those in the directed monkfish fishery. He noted that the sector program in the groundfish fishery is going through growing pains but that the Councils should look into how they can incorporate monkfish into the existing plan.

With regards to the scallop fishery, a previous commenter noted that the areas where the scallopers fish varies from year to year, and that their needs for monkfish allocation from either the northern or southern management areas will vary. Another commenter suggested that the allocation of monkfish to the scallop fishery does not have to be on an individual basis, but could be done on a fleet-wide basis.

Another commenter with experience in the scallop fishery noted that most of the monkfish bycatch in the fishery is from the northern area, and that very little is caught in the southern area. While the scallopers historically caught a substantial part of the total monkfish landings, that was at a time when they were fishing as much as 280 days a year, compared to 70-80 days now. At that time, they also targeted monkfish because it was unregulated and there was a market

emerging. His biggest concern with regard to monkfish in the scallop fishery is that there be a realistic allocation, so the fishery does not get shut off from scalloping. He said there should not be a situation such as what is occurring with the yellowtail flounder bycatch that potentially prevents catch the available scallops. He also strongly opposes catch shares unless the program is designed to benefit fishermen and not the outside investor. He said catch shares have been an unjust imposition on the groundfish fishery. He asked about the costs imposed on a vessel that is in two sectors, monkfish and groundfish, and whether that vessel would have to pay two sets of costs. He stated that the sector program has only increased NMFS size and budget, but has not benefitted most fishermen. He also said that the sector program should have been subject to a referendum.

The hearing started at 3:10 p.m. and adjourned at about 4:10.

New England Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing
Fairfield Inn, New Bedford, MA

January 11, 2011

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Phil Haring

Attendance: approx. 40

Howard King, Monkfish Committee Vice Chair and Mid-Atlantic Council member also attended.

The first commenter noted that the stocks are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, and he suggested that the fishery is well managed under the current system. He asked what the impetus is for exploring catch shares, and said the Councils should consider other alternatives if they want to improve economic performance of the fishery. He also said, if the Councils follow through with catch shares, that captains and crew should get shares, and everyone should know their share before the referendum vote.

A fisherman also commented that he needs to know what his share would be before commenting on any proposals. He pointed out that he thought he would have a reasonably large share of groundfish based on his history until he received his actual allocation.

One person alerted the audience to an independently prepared economic profile of the fishery which is available on the web.

A monkfish gillnetter since 1990 with no groundfish permit said the biggest problem with the current system is the lack of flexibility to land trip limit overages. The staff informed him that pending in Amendment 5 is just such a provision, which will allow a one-day's trip limit overage with automatic accounting on the DAS. He also pointed out that the current permit system already allocates fishing privileges in a sense. He asked why the Councils can't just make some adjustments to the current system to achieve the objectives outlined at the beginning of the scoping document.

One commenter stated that he believed the decision to go to catch shares has already been made. The process now is all about the allocation. He said we should use a 10-year history and that permit holders be allowed to select their best five years.

The next commenter asked if there will be a referendum even if the Councils adopt a sector approach. She asked how many boats and jobs would be eliminated under monkfish catch shares, and based on what is happening in groundfish, believes it will likely be substantial. She says the Councils should not be eliminating jobs at this point in the economy. She also said that under the current federal budget climate, the government is not going to continue funding catch share monitoring and enforcement programs, and that the costs will fall to the industry who can least afford it. She said catch shares do not work, and they are not the answer for monkfish management.

Another commenter stated that he has a substantial investment in fisheries, including monkfish, amounting to more than \$25 million. He said that while he is successful under the groundfish sector program, it is not working for the 99% of the industry. He said well-capitalized businesses can buy the quota they need, and can absorb short-term losses. Most smaller operators who have to buy quota to go fishing, have to do so without knowing what the price of fish will be when the vessel returns to port, and often it is at a loss. He feels strongly that the Councils should not allocate shares to dealers and processors. He asked how crew/captain allocations would work. If a crew member has quota that he is bringing to the vessel, but he does not show up for work when his quota is needed, the operator will have to purchase quota at great risk. He says that the allocation process should use the permit qualification as the initial qualification; it takes into account history before the distributional effects of different regulations, and there would be no need for appeal. He says, however, that catch shares will create World War III in the industry, and only 25% of the businesses will survive.

The next commenter pointed out that the previous commenter is opposed to catch shares even though he would survive and succeed because he knows it is bad for the industry and the community. This individual believes that the federal government has a goal for the fishery, and it is not to protect the fishermen. He said catch shares is not managing the resource, but managing the people. He feels it is ironic that despite the industry's sacrifices since 1994, the government is trying to take away from them the payback for their conservation efforts. He continued, that the costs of catch shares is going to have to borne by the industry, and that those costs will come out of the fish money, reducing what's left for the crews, and, eventually, those costs will be passed on to the consumers.

An earlier commenter returned to point out that a problem will arise with respect to financing. The financial institutions will only lend to the big players. The small boat operators will not get the financing they need to purchase quota and have a successful business plan. He urges the Councils to develop a program that is fair to small-boat operators if they proceed with catch shares.

The next individual agreed with the previous comments and then proceeded to strongly oppose catch shares. She said those systems only benefit a few, while the rest suffer and have to leave the industry. She said that just because someone has a share of the resource, they do not become better shepherds of the resource, as some have claimed. There are all kinds of people in the industry, some are good and some are not, regardless of the management system. She thinks that sectors should be subject to a referendum, and that calling them "sectors" rather than "cooperative quotas" is just a way to get them out from the referendum requirement. She added that catch shares eliminate jobs, and that they have nothing to do with the resource, but are, rather, simply social engineering. She pointed out that sectors are not achieving optimum yield in groundfish, but are eliminating boats and jobs. She also observed that in Alaska, most of the quota is owned by foreign companies, even if the fish is caught on American boats.

A previous commenter returned to add that it will be a serious problem if the fishery gets into a situation where bycatch of monkfish is capped and becomes a constraint on other fisheries, particularly the scallop fishery.

Another earlier commenter returned to highlight the unemployment impacts of catch shares. He said that the fishing industry provides a good opportunity for many people who lack a higher education, and who have difficulty finding other work. As vessels and jobs are reduced, the impacts are felt most by those people who have the fewest alternatives for employment.

The hearing started at 9:10 p.m. and adjourned at about 11:00.

New England Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing
Hilton Garden Inn, Warwick, RI
January 11, 2011

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Phil Haring

Attendance: approx. 20

The first person asked how landings history would be used to set allocations.

The next commenter was concerned about how catch shares management will affect state-only vessels. He said that monkfish landings were controlled by the state, so vessels have no history applicable to an allocation system. He said, "catch shares leave a bad taste in my mouth."

The next individual started by saying that catch shares are an economic tool, not a conservation mechanism. They are a poor economic tool at that because they put people out of work. The Councils should not be putting people out of work. As for promoting safety, the only way they promote safety is by getting boats off the water. She said that uncertainty in the science is a major problem. She said that while the claim is made that catch shares are not property rights, in effect they are. She pointed out that in Alaska, three processors own crab shares, and many of the boats still fishing for crab do not own their own quota. She believes groundfish catch shares are a disaster. She also stated that in the current budget climate, NOAA will not be able to fund the costs of catch shares, and the industry will be forced to pay.

The next commenter reiterated the sentiment that groundfish catch shares are a disaster, and that many businesses are failing. He said he just spoke with one fisherman who paid \$0.80 for quota, \$0.05 for dockside monitoring, \$0.15 to ship the fish, and he got paid \$0.80 a pound for his landings. He feels that privatizing the resource and giving it to a few people is just not the right thing to do. He also feels that the larger boats will be put out of business because of the trip limits currently in place.

Another commenter asserted that the catch share program does not improve the economic performance of the fishery, and does not reduce the regulatory burden. Nor, he said, do catch shares promote safety. He suggested that if an absentee owner of the quota directs the boat to go fishing, the boat will have to go out of financial necessity. He is totally opposed to catch shares, and also feels that any program, including a sector program, be subject to a referendum.

The next commenter said he is intrigued by ITQs as a catch share alternative. He thinks that the ITQ allocations should be based on the vessels' original permit qualification history, and that the TAC be divided by shareholders based on their permit category. He would like to do away with DAS and trip limits. With respect to cooperative research programs, he thinks that research DAS should be sold at auction, and that no more than one-third of the DAS be used in each fishery area (Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and the Mid-Atlantic). He proposed that there be a net limit,

and if a vessel stacks permits, each additional permit would be subject to a 50% reduction in allowable nets. For example, if the net limit is set at 80 per vessel, and a vessel is fishing under two permits, the number of allowable nets would be 120 (80+40). He feels that quota transfers should be subject to NMFS approval, and that the seller of quota be required to transfer all the net tags to the buyer. He also feels that current observer levels are adequate, and that dockside monitoring and observer costs are too high.

A fisherman who had commented earlier in the day at the New Bedford hearing said he has had some additional thoughts. He does not support catch shares as he understands them. He thinks that the goals outlined in the scoping document, why the Councils are considering catch shares, can be achieved by making adjustments to the current DAS program. He thinks the catch share initiative will pit fishermen against each other. He believes there are already too few boats chasing too many fish. If the Councils do continue with development of catch shares, however, vessel size should be a consideration in the allocation process.

Another fisherman said that monkfish catch shares should be put on the back burner until the full impacts of groundfish catch shares can be assessed. He thinks the Councils should find ways to improve the current system. He also thinks the biggest problem ahead will be dividing up the quotas, and that it will create a divide among fishermen.

One commenter, who had previously spoken, returned to say that the landings data is not accurate enough to make the allocations, and that some vessels have ended up with only a fraction of what they historically caught.

Another prior commenter said he does not like sectors. He thinks that he should just be given an allocation based on his DAS times his trip limit. He does not believe in stacking permits. He said he does not support ITQs, and thinks that if a vessel has a quota but does not land it, the fish should be left in the water, rather than transferring the quota to another vessel.

A third previous commenter returned to say that when it comes to using history as the basis for allocation, there may be any number of factors affecting individual vessels, such as a captain's illness. It would be unfair to use fishing history for allocating quota. He thinks that the allocation should be based on permit category.

The next commenter does not support ITQs, but feels that if the industry is forced to go that route, the allocation should be made equal among active permits and based on permit category. He also believes that even under an ITQ system there needs to be a reasonable net limit, and suggests it be about half of the current limit. He also feels that the cooperative research program is now run like a quota system, with trip limit exemptions routinely given. This change has impacted all the fishermen because of the increased amount of gear being deployed on RSA trips and the concentration of RSA effort in southern New England. He also thinks there should be a referendum for any catch share program, including sectors. He thinks the current system is working well for the gillnet fishery, especially considering the Amendment 5 provision to allow landing of trip limit overages.

The next commenter, who also spoke earlier, disagreed with the previous speaker that the decline in inshore monkfish fishing is due to the RSA effort. He says it is due to the large influx of skates. He also thinks that there should be inshore and offshore zones with different net limits, because the offshore fishery needs more nets to be viable.

The hearing started at 4:00 p.m. and adjourned at about 5:30.

New England Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing

Clarion Hotel, Portland, ME

January 19, 2011

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Phil Haring

Attendance: approx. 12

The first commenter, who said he spoke on behalf of fishermen in Port Clyde, ME, supported catch shares, either sectors or IFQs. He believes that the initial allocation should be based on fishing history during the period 1996-2006, the same period used in the groundfish sector allocation.

The second speaker also supported catch shares based on fishing history, and while he said the time period was not so important, it should be as consistent as possible with that used for the groundfish sector allocation. He said that the 300 lbs. (the incidental limit applicable to vessels fishing on a multispecies DAS but not a monkfish DAS in the northern area) does not work well for vessels fishing like he does.

The third commenter advocated an allocation decision process similar to a control date, where vessel permit holders would know their initial allocation before engaging in further amendment development and decisions. He supported using 1999-2008 as the time period for the initial allocation, because, he said, those active vessels are the ones who made the sacrifices fishing under the rules of the plan that resulted in stock rebuilding. He feels that there is too much latent effort in the fishery that could be a problem in the future. He also supports separation of the northern and southern fisheries management, saying that most of the southern boats do not have groundfish permits and are not in sectors. He also supports consideration of permit stacking as an alternative way to improve the economic performance of the fishery. He says a number of multiple permit holders in the fishery would benefit from such a program.

The final commenter supported an allocation system using the longest period possible, and that the allocation be based solely on landings history. He said that such an approach would reward those vessels that played by the rules and reported their landings, rather than landing the fish as "shack" and not reporting it. He prefers a sector approach at this time because it would integrate with the groundfish management program and help to minimize duplicative costs, but he also would support ITQs. He commented that DAS management does not work well with sectors.

The hearing started about 4:10 pm, and ended at 4:40.

New England Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing

Cornell Extension, Riverhead, NY

January 31, 2011

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Phil Haring

Attendance: approx. 50

The first individual began by saying that he has the feeling that not a lot of good things happened with New England's catch share program. He said it was difficult to comment on monkfish catch shares since there are not a lot of specifics presented. He said, "we know the devil we got with DAS" and that fishermen's houses, boats and business plans are based on knowing how the DAS program is working. He said DAS works for the monkfish fishery, but it could be improved by allowing vessels to land some overages of the trip limit. (Staff informed him of the Amendment 5 proposal that would accomplish that.) He also said that the cost of catch shares programs to vessels is huge, taking into account the cost of enforcement, observers and quota purchases.

The next commenter fishes mainly out of Gloucester. He said that he went from landing 300,000 pounds a year to a quota of 26,000 pounds. He has had to sell one boat and lay off all his employees as a consequence of catch shares. The small boat operators, and the Long Island fleet, he said, will get crushed by the costs of catch shares. He advised against sectors, specifically, because groups of fishermen don't work well together. Some will get nothing, and a few will get a lot. Such a system puts some people in charge of others' livelihoods. Later, this individual said that if the Councils continue with catch shares development, the initial allocation should be based on 1996-2006 history.

The next commenter read and submitted written comments. He protested against changing the current system, and asked why the Councils are considering changing it if it is working. He said the resource is in better shape than anytime in the past 25 years due to DAS. He also expressed concern about NMFS' landings data, and feels it should not be used as the basis for allocating.

The next person echoed the comment about data inaccuracies, and noted that in groundfish, people with good fishing history ended up with low allocations. He is against ITQ's and feels that DAS has worked to rebuild the stocks.

Another individual also opposed ITQ's because of the costs to vessel. He said that with fuel prices rising, the added costs of observers and other program costs would make it difficult to survive as a business. He also pointed out that the monkfish fishery is not closely linked to groundfish in this region, as it is in the north, and that DAS is working for fishermen in this area.

The next commenter read and submitted written comments. He is opposed to sectors, and said if the Councils proceed with catch shares, only vessel owners should be allowed to own quota. He also agreed with the comments of the earlier fishermen from Gloucester.

The next fisherman to comment owns a dragger. He is not convinced that catch shares are the way to go, but said the current plan isn't working for him either. He said the trip limits are too low for a dragger to be profitable fishing offshore, and current trip limits make monkfish a bycatch fishery for him. He feels that draggers are not on a level playing field with gillnetters. If the Councils do proceed with an allocation, it should be based on 1996-2006 history, which includes a period when the offshore trawl fishery was successful. He also asked about choke species such as skates under an ITQ system. He thinks there should be an ITQ in place for skates before a monkfish ITQ program. He is in a groundfish sector, and said the costs are real and huge, and that they come right out of the bottom line. In a later comment, he also said the northern and southern quotas should be kept separate.

The previous comments sparked some responses from gillnetters. Two people said that the large offshore catches in the past caused the decline in the stocks. One said that the trip limits only make monkfish an incidental catch for the larger draggers, and that the gillnetters can be profitable under them.

The next individual said that the question of fleet diversity must be considered. She observed that in New England, many of the small, family operated boats have gone out of business under the sector program.

Another fisherman said he did not support sectors, and is not overly in favor of ITQ's either. He supports the current management system, and said it is responsible for bringing back the stocks. He feels that NMFS is trying to sell the industry on catch shares, and that the northern fishery is stuck with a program many dislike.

The next commenter said he is a crew member. He has seen DAS work over the past 10 years. He opposes sectors, but feels ITQ's might work. However, he would not like to see a new management program come along and put people out of business.

The next commenter, who is from New Bedford, and provided comments at that hearing, feels that the scoping process and document is "a pig in a poke", and that the decisions have already been made in Washington. She believes that the government is using sectors as a way to avoid a referendum, although in reality, it is akin to an ITQ. She said that catch shares will need to have enhanced monitoring, and that fishermen will have to pay for it. She observed that while catch shares have been used in other areas as a way to control fishing effort and rebuild overfished stocks, that does not apply to monkfish, which is not overfished, and overfishing not occurring. She is also concerned that NGOS (naming, Pew, Environmental Defense Fund, and the Nature Conservancy) will compete against fishermen for the purchase of quota, and that fishermen can't compete against "that kind of money". She said that when a system is put in place where money buys quota, big money will own it all. She predicts that under a catch share system, fishermen will become like tenant farmers. She said that on the West coast, the catcher boats' quota is all owned by the Japanese, and that fishermen there don't know what it means to own a fishing business.

A fish dealer was the next to comment. He agreed with previous commenters who said that the landings is inaccurate. He said that NMFS' budget continues to climb while fish revenues have declined. He is a supporter of the cooperative monkfish survey and feels that the government doesn't want to continue it because it will eliminate the uncertainty in science which is the basis for pushing for catch shares. He thinks DAS is working for monkfish, and, like others, questions why the Councils want to change it completely, rather than making incremental changes as needed. He said that sector management is economic reallocation rather than fishery management. He is concerned that all of the top officials at NMFS are from EDF and their allies. He questions how NMFS can make fine scale decisions about catch shares when there is so much uncertainty in the science. He stated that the NMFS subsidy to sectors is huge, and wondered how long it will last. He then submitted written comments on behalf of the Monkfish Defense Fund.

The last commenter requested no further development of any catch share program, including sectors, until the Councils hold a referendum. She noted that even those who might stand to succeed under catch shares are opposed to such programs.

The hearing started about 1:40 pm, and ended at 3:00.

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing
Holiday Inn, Manahawkin, NJ
February 1, 2011

Hearing Chair: Howard King

Staff: Jim Armstrong

Attendance: approx. 24

The meeting started at approximately 9:15 AM.

The first fisherman read comments into the record and stated that he will be sending them in as written comments.

A fisherman who is active in the scallop fishery stated that the scallop fishery had historically been involved in the indirect landings of monkfish. This fact needs to be kept in mind as we go forward so that the scallopers are not disenfranchised.

A third fisherman stated that he expects things to improve in May with the increased DAS and trip limits. He said that the fishery is not a derby fishery and that it is working fine, so a whole new management system isn't warranted. He had concerns about going to an ITQ system, especially with regard to net limits. He stated that allocation will be a big problem because of the issue of non-reporting that has historically occurred. He supports the referendum requirement in that it should prevent a drastic change being imposed. He is against sector management.

A scalloper stated that open access needs to be maintained. He said the system isn't broken, so why fix it? He also said that sector management is overly complicated and he is not in favor of it.

A fifth fisherman stated that he is opposed to ITQs. He said that the DAS system works as a de facto ITQ system. He cited pending lawsuits and suggested that the question of what an ITQ/IFQ is will be determined by the courts. He also said that sectors are ITQs and cost \$780/day for monitoring which can be the value of the entire catch. He said that ITQs will cause fishermen to exhaust their individual quota and then fish in other fisheries. Finally, he stated that scheduling a scoping hearing at 9 AM is inappropriate as there would be better turnout if the hearings were in the evening.

A 6th fisherman said he was against sectors and supported fish for time, where landings levels determine how many DAS he is charged. He stated that he was in favor of maintaining the N-S split in the management unit. He said that we need to invest in cooperative research.

A 7th fisherman said he is against sectors based on his experience – he has a D permit and a limited access multispecies permit. He stated that he is in favor of any system in which he doesn't have to throw back his catch.

An 8th fisherman who has a B permit stated that he supports fish for time and is against sectors. He suggested that more money needs to be put into cooperative research.

A 9th fisherman stated he did not support sector management, and that enforcement in an ITQ system would be a nightmare. He supports maintaining the N-S division and thinks that the 2/3 referendum requirement is good. He stated that monkfish should no longer be classified as a data poor stock.

A 10th commenter stated that sector management will cost deck hands money because of the expenses related to monitoring. The effect will be felt by everyone. She stated that 16 out of 230 stocks are managed in the U.S. under ITQs and we should stop there. She said that ITQs will tend to consolidate wealth toward the bigger boats. Catch shares reduce the number of boats and thus the number of jobs. She said that catch shares will reduce crew size and will therefore affect safety at sea.

An 11th commenter, a fisherman, with an A permit said he will submit written comments.

The 12th commenter, a fisherman, said he is opposed to sectors, and catch shares. He said the current system works well.

The 13th commenter, a mayor of a fishing town said that he is concerned about what will happen to communities. He doesn't want to see the icehouse get converted into apartments.

The final commenter reiterated opposition to sectors and support for fish for time.

The meeting ended at approximately 10:45 AM.

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing
Clarion Fontainebleau, Ocean City, MD
February 2, 2011

Hearing Chair: Howard King

Staff: Jim Armstrong

Attendance: 4

The meeting started at approximately 9:25 AM.

The first fisherman was an H permit holder. He stated that the restrictions on H permit holders confine them to a narrow area/timeframe. He said the full value of the H permit is not being utilized and that he worries that unused potential will be lost if historic landings are used in allocation. He listed five other H permit holders that he represents.

The second fisherman said that the current action reflects the expansion of government under the current administration. The amount of additional monitoring needed is ridiculous. He said there are far too many latent permits. There is no way he would continue in this line of work with a video camera trained on him all day. The appeal of the work is being stretched to the limit already. He stated that equal shares would also be ridiculous. He said that the way he looks at this is just more and more government intrusion and complication of his way of life. We need less government, not more.

A third commenter said he is opposed to sectors or anything that would take fish from harbors where they have traditionally been landed.

A fourth commenter said he was opposed to catch shares, especially sectors. He said that we need to keep politics out of fisheries. Forces are in play to greatly reduce the number of fishing vessels. He fears that even though we are reassuring him that the implementation of catch shares is not a foregone conclusion, it will come about some way or another. He said he lost his job in the surfclam fishery due to the implementation of ITQs. He fears that the government wants to eliminate small time fisherman. He said that the number of NMFS observer jobs will proliferate and the costs will be borne on the backs of fishermen. He stated that video monitoring takes away fishermen's liberty and treats them like common criminals.

The meeting ended at about 10:30 AM.

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing

Hilton, New Bern, NC

February 9, 2011

Hearing Chair: Howard King

Staff: Rich Seagraves

Attendance: 4

The meeting started at approximately 4:30 PM.

The first fisherman said he represents the six H permit holders. He said that he can see some benefit coming from catch shares if they allow H permit holders to make better use of their fishing potential, get their landings earlier in the year, not waste fish, and avoid negative environmental impacts. He was asked about his concerns on the allocation issue. He said he thinks trip limit x DAS might be a fair system. He was asked why he didn't suggest historic landings as a basis. He said that the history of the H permit is one of underutilization. He added that there are numerous spatial and seasonal restraints on the use of H permits that artificially constrain fishing potential.

Following, there was some discussion by Council members about the history of the FMP as it relates to fishing in North Carolina.

A second commenter addressed the constraints on the trawl fishery in North Carolina and expressed a need to acknowledge this component of the historic fishery and introduce fairness, so they are not perpetually disenfranchised.

A third commenter voiced his support for catch shares for H permit fishermen. He described some of the restraint exercised by these fishermen in carrying out their work. He said that the flexibility available under a catch share program will allow them to fish in a conscientious way that will minimize waste. He also said that the scallop fleet exploited monkfish surreptitiously during the 1990s.

A fourth commenter spoke in favor of using the Council's visioning process to explore catch shares in the monkfish fishery.

The fifth commenter, a monkfish fisherman, spoke in favor of keeping the fishery a small boat fishery. He said that consolidation of the fleet would cost jobs. He spoke in favor of a separate management approach in the southern management area. He said he has concern about catch shares since he has seen what happened in the clam fishery.

The meeting ended at about 5:20 P.M.