

## New England Fishery Management Council

### SUMMARY

Monkfish Oversight Committee Meeting  
Embassy Suites, Philadelphia, PA  
**November 4, 2011**

Committee members: Alexander (chair), King (vice chair); NEFMC: Avila, Dempsey, Libby (absent) Odlin, Preble; MAFMC: Himchak, Berg, Nolan, Shafer.  
Staff: Haring (NEFMC) and Armstrong (MAFMC)  
Advisory Panel Chair: Raymond

The primary purpose of the meeting was to review the Plan Development Team's (PDT) Problem Statement, and to develop a recommendation on Amendment 6 goals and objectives. The agenda also included a closed session to discuss Advisory Panel matters.

The Council staff presented the PDT's problem statement which was based primarily on the list of issues and problems in the fishery developed over the past year by the Committee and Advisory Panel. The PDT concluded that there are no major fishery-wide issues necessitating immediate action or wholesale changes to the fishery management plan (FMP). It noted that all of the issues identified to date could be addressed through revisions to existing measures under the current management regime. There do not appear to be any issues that conflict with the legal requirements and national standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, nor with the stated goals of the FMP. The PDT commented, however, that this situation does not preclude the Councils from considering more substantive changes to the management program, including catch shares, to address issues and concerns, or to achieve other management objectives. The choice of a management system depends on the Councils' policy objectives and goals, including social, economic, ecological or administrative objectives, provided they are consistent with the national standards.

Following questions and answers, the committee considered and discussed the following strawman set of goals and objectives:

*The original FMP specified the following management objectives:*

1. *To end and prevent overfishing; rebuilding and maintaining a healthy spawning stock;*
2. *To optimize yield and maximize economic benefits to the various fishing sectors;*
3. *To prevent increased fishing on immature fish;*
4. *To allow the traditional incidental catch of monkfish to occur.*

*The goals and objectives for this Amendment 6 are to supplement the basic FMP objectives. Specifically:*

**GOAL:** *Maximize yield and profitability in the monkfish fishery while minimizing changes in relative fleet distribution and composition, preserving monkfish bycatch*

*allowances necessary to prosecute other fisheries, and minimizing impacts on protected species.*

*Sub-goal 1. Increase yield to as close to the OFL as practicable.*

*Objective 1. Implement measures to reduce the ratio of discards to pounds landed.*

*Objective 2. Implement measures to ensure the full utilization of the TAL.*

*Sub-goal 2. Increase profitability in the fishery.*

*Objective 3. Implement measures that allow vessels to more efficiently, economically and opportunistically target monkfish.*

*Objective 4. Implement measures that allow vessels to better utilize monkfish bycatch on non-directed trips.*

*Objective 5. Implement measures that provide increased flexibility through better integration of Monkfish management measures with the Multispecies and Scallop FMPs.*

*Objective 6. Implement measures that allow limited and controlled fleet consolidation within the constraints of Sub-goal 3.*

*Objective 7. Implement measures to consolidate the category H permits with category B permits.*

*Sub-goal 3. Minimize changes to current fleet distribution and composition and fishing community structure.*

*Objective 8. Implement accumulation limits if some sort of catch shares are implemented.*

*Sub-goal 4. Maintain the monkfish bycatch allowances necessary to sustain the yield of other fisheries*

*Objective 9. Implement specifications/measures that quantify and allocate monkfish bycatch to other fisheries.*

*Sub-goal 5. Minimize the impacts on protected species.*

*Objective 10. Implement reasonable and prudent measures to reduce Atlantic sturgeon mortality in the monkfish fishery (if necessary).*

*Objective 11. Implement Objective 7 to relocate Category H effort away from harbor porpoises, bottlenose dolphins and sea turtles.*

With regard to the primary goals statement, a Committee member suggested adding a statement in the goals about simplifying the regulations, since one of the identified issues is the complexity of overlapping regulations, especially between the groundfish and monkfish plans. Another issue identified previously is that of inefficient vessel operations, and, one member suggested replacing “profitability” with “efficiency”. Members also discussed how, with regard to fleet distribution and composition and fishing communities, fisheries are constantly evolving, and that some “change” is

inevitable and not necessarily undesirable. They agreed that minimizing “disruption” is more appropriate as a goal than minimizing “change”.

In working down the goals and objectives outline, the Committee agreed that the sub-goals in the statement should parallel the main goals statement, and that the objectives reflect more specific aspects of the goals, rather than specific measures. In other words, the objectives will drive the specification of alternatives, rather than being specific measures themselves. Therefore, the Committee agreed to reword or remove those objectives that describe specific management measures, such as “implement accumulation limits” in Objective 8. The sub-goal of “minimizing disruption to current fleet distribution and composition, ...” provides the framework within which accumulation limits could be considered, if appropriate. Similarly, the Committee agreed that Objective 6, allow limited consolidation, could be subsumed into the more general objective of enabling more efficiency in harvesting (final Objective 4). Furthermore, on the subject of accumulation limits, NOAA General Counsel advised that if the Councils are considering those alternatives, then they should publish a control date to notify the public that transactions, such as permit purchases, after the control date may exceed the limits adopted by the Councils. A Committee member responded that publication of a control date has a downside to consider, and that is that permit holders who want to exit the fishery cannot sell out because potential buyers are reluctant to make purchases with an impending, but unspecified limit.

The Committee discussed the AP recommendation to transfer the permit category H permits into the permit category B, which was specified in Objective 7 in the initial strawman. Since the Committee agreed to adopt another sub-goal, “simplify regulations”, members decided to include this objective within that sub-goal, and also to express the objective in more generic terms, rather than as a specific management measure.

Much of the meeting was spent drafting the final set of goals and objectives with consistent wording and structure throughout. The Committee recognized that while these are the stated goals of Amendment 6, there may be a reason to address some of these in a separate action, particularly if Amendment 6 is to contain a LAPP (requiring a referendum). For example, the Councils may need to take action to address Atlantic sturgeon bycatch, or if a stock assessment indicates a change in status (overfishing or overfished).

### **Motion**

To recommend the Council approve the Amendment 6 goals and objectives as developed at this meeting (text below). (Preble/Dempsey, **motion passed unanimously**).

*The original FMP specified the following management objectives:*

- 1. To end and prevent overfishing; rebuilding and maintaining a healthy spawning stock;*
- 2. To optimize yield and maximize economic benefits to the various fishing sectors;*
- 3. To prevent increased fishing on immature fish;*
- 4. To allow the traditional incidental catch of monkfish to occur.*

*The goals and objectives for Amendment 6 are to supplement the basic FMP objectives. Specifically:*

**GOAL:** *Maximize yield and efficiency, and simplify regulations in the monkfish fishery while minimizing any resulting disruption in relative fleet distribution and composition, preserving monkfish bycatch allowances necessary to prosecute other fisheries, and minimizing impacts on protected species.*

*Sub-goal 1. Maximize yield.*

*Objective 1. Implement measures to reduce the ratio of discards to pounds landed.*

*Objective 2. Implement measures to provide incentives to reduce discards of undersized monkfish.*

*Objective 3. Implement measures to ensure the full utilization of the ACT.*

*Sub-goal 2. Maximize efficiency in the fishery.*

*Objective 4. Implement measures that allow vessels to more efficiently, economically and opportunistically harvest monkfish.*

*Objective 5. Implement measures that allow vessels to better utilize monkfish bycatch on non-directed trips.*

*Sub-goal 3. Simplify regulations.*

*Objective 6. Implement measures that provide increased flexibility through better integration of Monkfish management measures with other FMPs.*

*Objective 7. Address existing geographic constraints on permit categories.*

*Sub-goal 4. Minimize disruption to current fleet distribution and composition and fishing community structure while allowing the fishery to evolve.*

*Sub-goal 5. Maintain the monkfish bycatch allowances necessary to sustain the yield of other fisheries*

*Objective 8. Implement specifications/measures that quantify and allocate monkfish bycatch to other fisheries.*

*Sub-goal 6. Minimize the impacts on protected species.*

*Objective 9. Implement measures to reduce Atlantic sturgeon mortality in the monkfish fishery (if necessary).*