

## NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

### Monkfish Committee

#### I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The Monkfish Oversight Committee has not met since the last Council meeting.
- B. Amendment 5 to the Monkfish FMP: The Council initiated Amendment 5, primarily to consider alternatives for Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Accountability Measures (AMs) pursuant to the 2007 re-authorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and to adopt multi-year specifications of target catch levels (TTACs) and associated days-at-sea (DAS) and trip limits. The current TTACs were adopted in Framework 4 for fishing years 2007 – 2009, although a provision exists for the TTACs to continue in effect until replaced through regulatory action. Amendment 5 would implement new specifications for 2011-2013, or beyond. In addition, the Council is considering in Amendment 5 modifications to administrative and other components of the current management program, specifically: an automatic adjustment to DAS accounting for trip limit overages; permit Category C and D multispecies DAS usage requirements; research set-aside program modifications; mandatory VMS; and to allow the landing of monkfish heads.

The Council approved Amendment 5 for submission to NMFS at the June meeting. Staff has completed the document which is now in pre-formal agency review. Formal review is anticipated to start before this meeting, with a target implementation for the start of the 2011 fishing year. The staff, working with NMFS' staff, has published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Assessment for Amendment 5, which constitutes a retraction of the NOI to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, because the analysis in the EA does not find significant impacts in the context of the National Environmental Policy Act.

- C. Monkfish Stock Assessment (SARC 50): The Northeast Fisheries Science Center conducted a stock assessment June 1-4, and the final report was released in July (see binder Tab 1). The status of both stock components relative to current and recommended biological reference points remains unchanged: not overfished and overfishing not occurring, although the report emphasizes the continuing high degree of uncertainty in the assessment. The SARC also recommended a revision to the biomass reference points based on proxies for maximum sustainable yield, rather than the current approach based on time series average (Btarget) and lowest point (Bthreshold).
- D. Scientific and Statistical Committee Review and Recommendations: The SSC met in August to discuss the monkfish stock assessment (see binder Tab 12). Based on the assessment, the SSC recommends revising the values of Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), as well as adopting the SARC recommended biomass reference points. Amendment 5 proposes to set ACL equal to ABC, and to set annual catch targets (ACTs) below the ACL to account for management uncertainty, and to prevent catches from exceeding the ACL, however, the new ABC value for the Northern Management Area would be below the proposed ACT. Consequently, the Council will consider initiating a framework action at this meeting to propose a new ACT and specification of associated management measures,

as well as adoption of the recommended biomass reference points.

- E. Amendment 6 (Catch Shares): While the Council considered development of a catch share management program for monkfish in Amendment 5, it split that part off so that work on the ACLs and AMs could be completed by the 2011 deadline. At the same time, it identified this work as the priority once Amendment 5 is completed. On Sept. 13, the NEFMC and MAFMC Chairs, Executive Directors, staff and Chair and Vice Chair of the Monkfish Committee held a conference call to strategize the approach to the amendment and to organize a series of scoping meetings or listening sessions to get early and broad stakeholder input. The principals agreed to collaborate in this effort, and to hold 8-10 meetings along the coast during the fall.

## **II. COUNCIL ACTION**

- A. **Initial action on Framework 7** – Consider and take action to initiate Framework 7 to adopt new biomass reference points and to revise the Northern Management Area ACT and associated management measures consistent with the revised ABC values.

## **III. INFORMATION**

1. Summary of the 9/13 conference call between MAFMC and NEFMC principals to organize the catch shares amendment
2. Supplemental Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment for Amendment 5 (retraction of the NOI to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement)
3. SARC 50 Assessment Report and Panelists' Reports are available at: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/nefsc/saw/>