

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Monkfish Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The Committee has not met since the last Council meeting. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) met on August 20th to review PDT analyses, and finalize its recommendation on Allowable Biological Catch (ABC).
- B. Amendment 6: In Amendment 6, the Councils are considering adopting catch shares management for the monkfish fishery, as well as modifications to the current management system, including a days-at-sea leasing program. The Council approved Amendment 6 Goals and Objectives at its November, 2011 meeting. The Committee and Advisory Panel are in the process of developing a range of alternatives for public hearings, including modifications to the current management system, a days-at-sea leasing option, sector management and individually transferrable quotas (ITQs). Based on discussions at the April NEFMC meeting, the Committee considered, but took no action pending input from the Advisory Panel, on whether to remove ITQs from further consideration in the amendment.
- C. Updated Assessment and Specifications for the 2014-2016 fishing years (Framework 8): The Council initiated Framework 8 at its June meeting to implement revised specifications of DAS and trip limits for FY2014-2016. At this meeting, the Council will consider approving a range of alternatives for modifications to the specification of trip limits and DAS and a proposed revision to the area boundary for the permit category H fishery. At its May 29-30 meeting, the Committee approved a number of motions outlining the options it wants the PDT to analyze for consideration in Framework 8 based on updated catch information. Pending approval of final action by both the NEFMC and MAFMC in November and December, respectively, Framework 8 will be implemented near the start of the 2014 fishing year. In the interim, current specifications will remain in effect, in accordance with the FMP regulations.
- D. 2013 Emergency Action: On February 25, 2013, NMFS published a proposed rule and request for comments (*78 Federal Register 12708*) in response to a request by the NEFMC that the agency take emergency action to alleviate the substantial social and economic harm to groundfish and monkfish fisheries and associated fishing communities anticipated under severe reductions in 2013 catch limits for some important groundfish stocks in the northern management area. The intent of the Council in making the request was to provide additional fishing opportunities to affected vessels while simultaneously achieving full utilization of the monkfish catch targets. The Council's original request, reflected in the proposed rule, was to eliminate the monkfish trip limits while a vessel is fishing on a groundfish DAS in the Northern Management Area (NMA), but NMFS, in consideration of comments received and its analysis of potential impacts of such an action, announced on April 16th that it would be removing the trip limit only while a vessel is on a monkfish DAS. At its April 23-25 meeting the NEFMC voted to request that NMFS reconsider its decision and modify the action to implement the trip limits currently applicable to vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS to all vessels fishing on a groundfish DAS in the

NMA. On April 30, NMFS published an emergency temporary rule implementing the emergency action as announced with the following changes from the proposed rule: both sector and non-sector vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS (not a groundfish DAS) are exempt from monkfish trip limits in the NMA, (*78 Federal Register 25214*) This rule is in effect for 185 days and will expire on October 27, 2013, unless extended, or modified by NMFS through the end of the fishing year, April 30, 2014. NMFS' consideration of modification and/or extension is pending

II. COUNCIL ACTION

Motion: Consider approving a range of alternatives for analysis and further consideration in Framework Adjustment 8 to the Monkfish FMP to implement revised specifications of DAS and trip limits for FY2014-2016, and other modifications to the current management plan, including changes to the boundary of permit Category H fishery.

III. INFORMATION

1. September 3, 2013 memo from the SSC to Thomas Nies - Review of monkfish biological reference points and interim ABC control rule and develop updated recommendations to Council
2. Draft Framework 8 Range of Alternatives for consideration and approval