

To: Terry Stockwell, Chairman of NEFMC
From: Ted Platz
Subject: Skates/Priority Setting Process
Date: Friday, December 09, 2013

Dear Terry,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the undersigned fishing industry members.

We believe it is imperative that the New England Council make skate management a priority in 2013, based on our concerns about the health and future of this critical stock. A sufficient abundance of winter skate is critical to three major New England and Mid-Atlantic fisheries, which include scallop, groundfish, and monkfish. It is quite possible that some of these fisheries could be required to substantially curtail fishing activity in the future, should a particular skate species become overexploited, and or overfished. These fisheries cannot be conducted without a healthy skate resource, since all of the fisheries have significant directed and by-catch skate components, primarily winter skate.

We all see the decline in the stock that the science is declaring. We also see, on a daily basis, the increase in effort on winter skate through both monkfish DAS and groundfish DAS. Skate prices have been setting record highs all year, with the current price being about a dollar a pound, a previously unheard of price at this time of year. In particular the undersigned depend on a sufficient abundance of winter skate to prosecute the directed monkfish fishery, since winter skates make up so much of the income for most trips. We therefore believe the time to act is now, and not after the problem occurs since it takes so long to implement changes in any FMP

One of our primary concerns is that the 18,000 unused DAS in the groundfish fishery can be used to target various skate species, in particularly winter skate. These DAS can be leased for as little \$10.00 per DAS, which is not an impediment to entry. Because of this condition there is no effective control of effort in the skate fishery. Yes we have a TAC, and various response mechanisms and triggers, but these mechanisms generally get implemented after a problem occurs. The Council and industry cannot afford to have three fisheries get wrapped into a situation similar to what has developed between scallop and yellowtail.

The directed skate fishery, the monkfish fishery, and the scallop fishery can thrive if this Council has the prudence and the vision to act in a timely manner on this issue. Given that one of the main flaws of the Council management process is that the system moves slowly, it is imperative that we begin to deal with the current over-fished status of winter skate now, preventing a further serious deterioration of the stock, due to redirected effort from the groundfish fishery. If we make skates a priority, it will be two fishing years before we can put new management measure into place.

We have all seen this pattern before; as the abundance of a stock decreases, the price goes up and attracts more effort. Fishing pressure on the stock continues to increase despite the fact that CPUE is dropping. Ultimately, this downward spiral will lead winter skate right into the same

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box in which groundfish management is currently flailing. We do not want to see this happen with winter skate. We implore the council to demonstrate that it has learned from the mistakes of previous Councils by taking action on this stock in a timely fashion, now.

While we recognize that staff resources are limited, we cannot help but see that managing skate now will be far less costly, and far more beneficial, than the cost of managing skate later. It is clear to all that this resource needs management attention. The desire to maximize the utility of the Council's resources obviates the merit of managing skate sooner at a lower cost and for a greater benefit, than waiting until it is too late and managing it at far greater cost to significantly lesser and more delayed benefits.

We fishermen have heard the SSC twice recommend that the Council look at other ways to manage the skate complex, which should include making winter skate part of the monkfish FMP. We see daily, the increase of effort on this declining resource. We see the dropping catch rate and the rising prices. We see all these flashing lights, these warning signals; and we wonder if the Council will act or if it will repeat the mistakes of the past. By managing skate now, this Council can put the directed skate fishery and the directed monkfish fishery on a glide path to success, while guaranteeing that the scallop fishery can continue to be the success that it presently is. We believe this is the prudent, cost effective choice for this Council.

At a minimum we believe that the Council should make skate management a priority in 2014, establish a limited access program for the fishery, publish a control date to discourage new effort from entering the fishery, and begin exploratory action regarding the twice made SSC recommendations to manage the skate complex differently.

Please don't wait until it's too late.

The undersigned individuals and vessels support this request:

F/V

Name:

Port:

Vessel:

Name:

Port:

- | Vessel: | Name: | Port: |
|-------------------|----------------|---|
| 1. Dratie | Charlie Borden | Westport, Me. |
| 2. Thistle | Greg Mataronas | Little Compton, R.I. |
| 3. Argo | Ian Parente | Little Compton, R.I. |
| 4. Odyssey | Ian Parente | Little Compton, R.I. |
| 5. Seamus + Liam | Mevin Sullivan | Little Compton, R.I. |
| 6. Mad Monk | Gary Hall | Block Island, R.I. |
| * 7. Griswold | Tim Caldwell | Fiverston Point Judith, R.I. |
| 8. Finast Mind II | Robbie Walz | Tiverton, R.I. |
| 9. Ami Elizabeth | Robbie Walz | Tiverton, R.I. |
| 10. Excalibur | Jim Violet | Newport, R.I. |
| 11. Sweet Misery | Todd Sutton | Newport, R.I. |
| 12. Redemption | Todd Sutton | Newport, R.I. |

* signifies past or present advisor

Vessel:	Name:	Port:
* 1. Gertrude H.	Ted Platz	Newport, R.I.
2. Louise	Rory O'Donnell	Newport, R.I.
3. Last Fling	Ted Platz	Newport, R.I.
* 4. Bout time.	Chris Hichman	Hatteras, N.C.
* 5. Krista, Maleb, Morgan	Chris Walter	Chincoteague, Va.
6. John Shirtsleif	Patty L.	Chincoteague, Va.
* 7. Miss Dolores	Brad L Morgan	Bath, N.C.
8. Maty Rve	Benson Breen	Rye, N.H.
9. Gotta Go	Tom Edward Newman	Swans Quarter, N.C.
10. Pappas Girl	F.G. Gibbs	Swans Quarter, N.C.
11. Scott + Nathan	Jim Brindley	Barnegat Light, N.J.
12. Showboat	Jim Heims	Barnegat Light, N.J.

* signifies past or present advisor

Vessel:

Name:

Port:

- | Vessel: | Name: | Port: |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Kristian Lynn | Bill Leach | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| 2. Different Approach | Darrell March | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| 3. Endeavor | Mitte March | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| 4. Southern Hunter | George Mitvletzky | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| 5. Risky Business | Hunter Mitvletzky | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| 6. Sea Farmer | Mitte Johnson | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| 7. Compromise | Tim Triggsman | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| * 8. Annice Marie | Chris Raignone | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| 9. Traveller II | Rich Levdthe | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| * 10. Dana Christine | Kevin Warr | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| * 11. Francis Anne | Rich Mears | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| * 12. Monica | Dan Mears | Barneget Light, N.J. |
| 12+1. Villing Village Fishing Dock | | Barneget Light, N.J. |

* signifies past or present advisor