



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Committee to Continue Working on Three-Year Monkfish Specs

The New England Fishery Management Council today initiated a framework adjustment to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan to develop 2017-2019 fishing year specifications for both the Northern and Southern Fishery Management Areas. The Monkfish Committee will continue to work this fall on specifications and any other needed measures for the fishery. The Monkfish Plan Development Team (PDT) will conduct the necessary days-at-sea and trip limit analyses. The Council is scheduled to approve the framework with final specifications during its Nov. 15-17 meeting in Newport, Rhode Island.

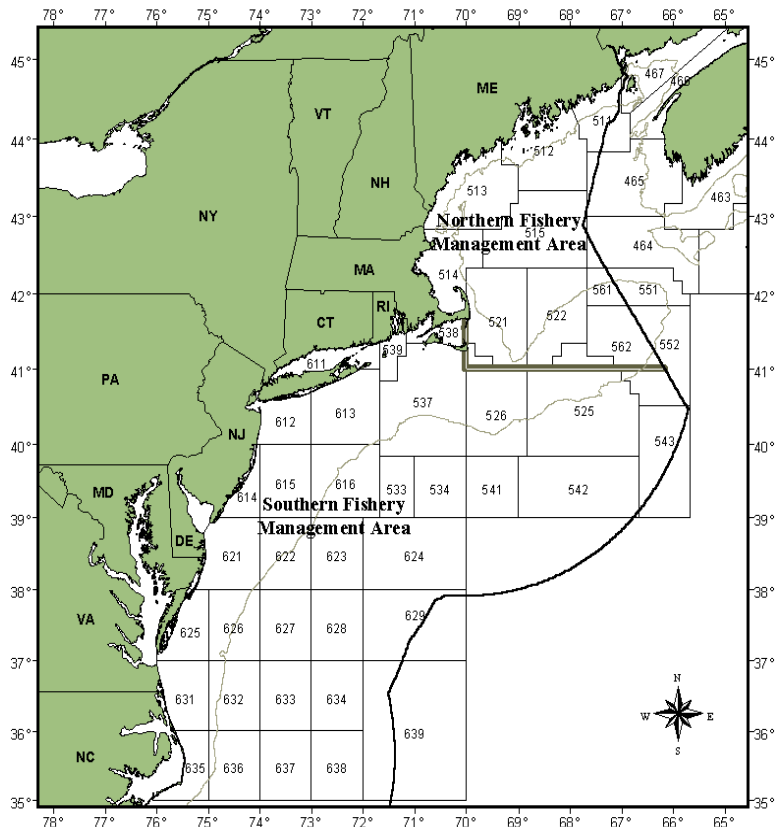
The Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) has recommended “status quo” area-specific acceptable biological catches (ABCs) and overfishing limits (OFLs) for 2017-2019 as follows in metric tons (mt):

- Northern Area ABC – 7,592 mt
- Northern Area OFL – 17,805 mt
- Southern Area ABC – 12,316 mt
- Southern Area OFL – 23,204 mt

The SSC reviewed the new 2016 index-based operational stock assessment for monkfish before making these recommendations, which followed PDT advice.

The full range of specifications will include area-based caps on total allowable landings (TALs), days-at-sea allocations, and trip limits.

Under current monkfish regulations, the northern and southern ABCs are reduced by 13.5% and 6.5% respectively to account for



“management uncertainty.” The PDT will analyze a lower deduction of 3% in both areas since TALs have not been reached in recent years. The Council is striving to maximize fishing opportunities in both areas while simultaneously providing adequate stock protection.



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On a related note, Northeast Fisheries Science Center surveys – namely the scallop survey and fall bottom trawl survey – signaled “an above average recruitment event” in 2015 for monkfish. While the news is welcoming, the SSC cautioned that it was “unclear as to whether this large recruitment event would transfer into the fishable population.”



*“Not all recruitment events observed in the past have recruited to the fishery. It is important to track the 2015 recruitment event as it has important implications for management during the multiyear specification period. Therefore, the SSC requests a data update in 2017 to determine if the year-class is indeed recruiting and to provide updated advice if warranted.”*

– SSC

Young of the year monkfish caught on a Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) scallop dredge survey cruise.

– VIMS photo

The Monkfish PDT will closely monitor the progress of the 2015 recruitment event and report back to the Monkfish Committee and Council when additional information is available.

The Council’s Monkfish Advisory Panel will meet Oct. 12 and the Monkfish Committee will meet Oct. 18 to continue discussing the framework. Meeting details will be announced in the near future.

For more information, contact Monkfish Plan Coordinator Dr. Fiona Hogan at (978) 465-0492 ext. 121, email [fhogan@nefmc.org](mailto:fhogan@nefmc.org). Or visit the Council’s monkfish webpage at <http://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/monkfish>.



– Mark Dixon, NEFSC photo