



New England Fishery Management Council

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PRESS CONTACT: Janice Plante
(607) 592-4817, jplante@nefmc.org

2018-2019 Monkfish Research Set-Aside Awards Aim to Improve Species Biology and Reduce Skate Bycatch

The New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries, are pleased to announce the 2018-2019 Monkfish Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program grant recipients. They are:

- **Coonamessett Farm Foundation**, which was awarded 296 monkfish RSA days-at-sea to conduct a two-year study to test ultrasound, hormone analysis, and other non-lethal methods to create a reproductive profile for Southern New England monkfish based on sex and maturity stage, all with the intent of improving biological sampling and, thereby, management of the resource;
- **Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County**, which was awarded 303 monkfish RSA days-at-sea to conduct a two-year project evaluating a modified gillnet designed to reduce skate bycatch, important to many fishermen since monkfish vessels have a skate quota that at times can constrain their ability to harvest monkfish; and
- **University of New England**, which was awarded 401 monkfish RSA days-at-sea to conduct a two-year study to: (a) use histological aging techniques on monkfish vertebrae and illicia, the built-in “lures” protruding from monkfish “foreheads”; and (b) collect reproductive data to estimate age and size at maturity.

The three projects combined total 1,000 days-at-sea. Under the Monkfish RSA Program, 500 monkfish days-at-sea are set aside *annually* and then awarded through a federal grant competition to projects that address monkfish research priorities set by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils.

This grant cycle covered both 2018 and 2019, resulting in the award of 1,000 days.



*Amy Weissman, a student at the University of New England (UNE), tagging a monkfish during a past RSA project.
– UNE/James Sulikowski photo*



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The New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils jointly manage the monkfish fishery. The Councils created the Monkfish RSA Program and regularly set research priorities for the fishery. NOAA Fisheries, through the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, manages the RSA grant competition, oversees the research, and monitors the use of RSA days-at-sea.

In addition to the Monkfish RSA Program, the Councils and NOAA Fisheries support two other active RSA programs in the Northeast Region – one for the Atlantic sea scallop fishery and another for the Atlantic herring fishery.

“We are true partners with NOAA Fisheries in these RSA programs,” said New England Council Executive Director Tom Nies. “We appreciate the agency’s steady support in overseeing and implementing the Councils’ research priorities through these innovative and important industry-funded research programs.”

Funded by Industry

No federal funds are provided for research under RSA programs. Instead, the research is paid for by the commercial fishing industry through revenue generated from the sale of fish harvested on RSA fishing days.

RSA programs support cooperative research between fishermen and scientists that directly responds to priorities established by the Councils to better inform resource management decisions and improve stock assessments.

Read the NOAA Fisheries web story at [2018-2019 Monkfish RSA Awards Announced](#).

For more information about all of the region’s RSA programs, visit the [RSA Homepage](#).

Anyone with questions about RSA programs or the latest monkfish awards can email Ryan Silva at ryan.silva@noaa.gov or call him at (978) 281-9326.

2018-2019 Monkfish Research Set-Aside Projects

Institution	Project Title	Two-Year Days-At-Sea Allocations
Coonamessett Farm Foundation	Exploring Non-Lethal Techniques for Sex Determination and Evaluation of Maturity Stage of Southern New England Monkfish, <i>Lophius americanus</i>	Award: 296 days-at-sea Estimated Value: \$1,559,411 Research Cost: \$121,189
Cornell Cooperative Extension	Increasing Twine Thickness and Mesh Size to Reduce Skate Bycatch in Monkfish Sink Gillnets	Award: 303 days-at-sea Estimated Value: \$1,594,243 Research Cost: \$123,896
University of New England	Development of a Histological Protocol for the Age Determination of Monkfish, <i>Lophius americanus</i>	Award: 401 days-at-sea Estimated value: \$2,109,346 Research cost: \$163,927

The Regional Council monkfish webpages are at [NEFMC Monkfish](#) and [MAFMC Monkfish](#). The NOAA Fisheries Fish Watch page is at [monkfish facts](#). The NOAA Fisheries web story is at <https://go.usa.gov/xUE8D>.