



## New England Fishery Management Council

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# MEETING SUMMARY

## Northeast Skate Complex Plan Development Team

webinar

October 4, 2021

The Northeast Skate Complex Plan Development Team (Skate PDT) met on October 4, 2021, via webinar at 1:00 PM to discuss the 2022-2023 fishery specifications, fishery data query methods and quality assurances, Framework Adjustment 9 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan, and 2022 Council priorities.

### ***MEETING ATTENDANCE***

Dr. Rachel Feeney (PDT Chair), Ms. Jenny Couture and Mr. Lou Goodreau (Council staff); Ms. Cynthia Ferrio, Ms. Ashleigh McCord, and Mr. John Sullivan (GARFO); Dr. Trish Clay, Ms. Kathy Sosebee and Ms. Samantha Werner (NEFSC). Skate Committee members attending were Ms. Libby Etrie (Acting Chair) and Ms. Kelly Whitmore (MADMF). A few members of the public attended.

### ***TIMELINE***

The Council took final action on specifications in September, so preliminary submission can occur as soon as possible. The Council also decided to stop work on Amendment 5 and consider the remaining items in that action via a framework adjustment action. The Council could take final action in December on the framework, depending on how quickly the framework can be prepared, if there can be a Skate Committee meeting, and the timing of other Council work priorities this fall.

### ***SPECIFICATIONS***

The PDT discussed the necessary work prior to the preliminary submission, namely the Regulatory Flexibility Act analysis and the initial Regulatory Planning and Review. Substantial additional work is not needed on other aspects of the impacts analysis.

### ***Follow-ups***

- Whole PDT – by October 15, review the draft Supplemental Information Report. Raise any issues/edits to be addressed prior to submission.
- Werner and Goodreau – meet to plan for/develop the necessary analyses. Complete work as soon as possible.
- Feeney – complete the preliminary submission.
- Ferrio – ensure that reviewers of the preliminary submission understand the scope and expectations for a supplemental information report.

### ***DATA QUERY METHODS AND QUALITY ASSURANCES***

Regarding the NMFS project to develop a database called the Catch Accounting and Monitoring System (CAMS) that unifies the databases currently held at GARFO and the NEFSC, it was reported that the 2019 data are under review and may be available for use this fall. Data for 2020-2021 should be available shortly afterwards. There was no update on training for using CAMS.

The PDT sub-group on fishery data is developing a memo describing lessons learned about querying skate data and providing some explanations for data components. The PDT also discussed that the fishery has been landing only skate racks on some trips but there is a need for more consistent reporting. Theoretically, the weight of skate wings plus racks should approximate the live weight. Racks are generally considered to be 1.27 times the wing weight. Per regulations, if racks are landed, wings must also be landed, but this is not happening consistently, and the weights do not always add up. The PDT agreed that, while having good data is essential to proper management, it will not be possible to track down the source of every skate data oddity, and that efforts should focus more on outreach and education to vessels and dealers. The PDT noted that it may be helpful to keep in touch with the Information Systems Committee of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. That group could potentially help with preventing data errors upon entry into the data systems.

#### ***Follow-ups***

- Sullivan – let PDT know when CAMS data are available and when training will occur.
- Ferrio – reach out to the port agents on how reporting may improve through better communication with dealers.
- Data sub-group (Goodreau lead) – continue developing a metadata file and identify and prioritize issues that could be addressed through outreach.

### ***FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 9***

The PDT first discussed transitioning Amendment 5 to Framework Adjustment 9. The Regional Office will need to issue a *Federal Register* notice that the Notice of Intent for preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (originally issued in January 2017) is being withdrawn and remaining issues are being considered in a follow-on action. The PDT also discussed the type of NEPA document that would be needed for Framework 9, but no decision was made. A supplemental information report is unlikely to be appropriate, given that permitting issues have not been considered in a prior action. The PDT then discussed developing an action plan and the impact analysis, which will largely focus on human community impacts, unless it is determined that effort would shift substantially. No impacts analysis is needed for updating the FMP objectives. There was some preliminary discussion of the expected impacts of the permit alternatives.

#### ***Follow-ups***

- Ferrio – prepare the *Federal Register* notice.
- McCord – give input on the type of NEPA document that should be prepared for Framework 9.
- Feeney – work with Council staff leadership to determine the timeline for this action; write the action plan and send to the PDT for review.
- Feeney – start drafting the NEPA document upon receiving further input.
- McCord – provide an example of how fishery management plan objectives were revised in the past.
- Goodreau, Werner, Feeney, Clay, Couture – meet to prepare impacts analysis.

### ***2022 COUNCIL MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES***

The PDT developed feedback to the Skate Committee on their draft management priorities for 2022. The PDT focused on the idea of revising the annual catch limit flow chart and reviewed the related issues discussed over the past few years. There is some potential that a Council action may not be necessary to

make some adjustments. The PDT also discussed the idea of revising possession limits in 2022 for implementation in 2023 but did not see sufficient justification for reversing the decisions of the Advisory Panel, Committee and Council earlier this year to not revise possession limits through FY 2022 and 2023 specifications.

Follow-ups

- Ferrio – identify which potential revision(s) to the annual catch limit flow chart and catch accounting could be adopted without Council action.
- Feeney and Couture – draft a memo to the Committee with feedback on the draft priorities.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM. The timing of the next Skate PDT meeting is to be determined, depending on how quickly Framework 9 needs to be developed.