



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116

John F. Quinn, J.D., Ph.D., *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEETING SUMMARY

Northeast Skate Complex Plan Development Team

webinar

July 13, 2020

The Northeast Skate Complex Plan Development Team (Skate PDT) met on July 13, 2020 via webinar at 1:00 PM to discuss Amendment 5 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan status updates, the 2020 Annual Monitoring Report, thorny skate research, and 2021 Council management priorities.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Rachel Feeney (PDT Chair); Tobey Curtis, Cynthia Ferrio, Ashleigh McCord, John Sullivan (GARFO); Jenny Couture and Lou Goodreau (Council staff); and Trish Clay, Kathy Sosebee, and Samantha Werner (NEFSC). Skate Committee Vice-Chairman Libby Etrie and about four members of the public attended.

AMENDMENT 5

The PDT reviewed the outcomes of the June Council meeting, in which the Council tasked the Skate Committee with further development of a problem statement, goals, and objectives for Amendment 5. Neither the Council nor the Committee has tasked the PDT with additional work to prepare for the August 6 Committee meeting. Although the PDT discussed how it might further describe potential effort in the skate fishery, the PDT decided to let the Committee consider the information brought to the June Council meeting prior to launching into substantial additional work. A few small updates to the Discussion Document are being made (e.g., FY 2018 revenue dependence by species).

Follow-ups

- Clay – if possible, provide figure on annual skate engagement/reliance indices for fishing communities and data on other social indicators.
- Feeney – coordinate edits to the Discussion Document and preparation of documents for the August 6 Committee meeting for distribution July 29 or earlier.

2020 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT (FOR FY 2019)

The PDT had an initial discussion to develop the Annual Monitoring Report for FY 2019, reviewing the status of the species in the skate complex, including an update to survey indices, fishery landings and discards; re-evaluation of stock status based on the updated survey indices and the FMP's overfishing definitions; determination of whether any of the accountability

measures specified under §648.323 were triggered (i.e., if a wing or bait Total Allowable Landing (TAL) was exceeded by >5% or the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) was exceeded); and changes to other FMPs (e.g., Northeast Multispecies, Monkfish, Atlantic Scallops) that may impact skate stocks, and describe the anticipated impacts of those changes on the skate fishery. Based on the recent revenue dependence by species, this section will expand to include the Loligo squid, fluke, and other Mid-Atlantic fisheries.

The stock status determinations appear to be unchanged from last year (thorny skate remains overfished) and the fishery remained within TALs. The PDT remains concerned about the status of thorny skate, which does not appear to be making progress towards rebuilding. In developing preliminary guidance to the Committee and the Council on the need to adjust measures in the Skate FMP to better achieve the FMP's objectives, the PDT noted that several of the FMP's objectives are outdated or should be made less specific.

Follow-ups

- Sullivan – Send the quota monitoring report to Feeney for incorporation into the draft.
- Ferrio – Help explain the “personal use” disposition code.
- Couture – Continue developing the section on changes to other FMPs.
- Feeney – Incorporate stock status information and other PDT comments into the draft for additional review at the next PDT meeting.

THORNY SKATE RESEARCH

Dr. Curtis briefly presented on several recent and ongoing research projects on thorny skate and fielded questions from the PDT. More in-depth presentations will follow at future PDT meetings.

2021 COUNCIL MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

The PDT developed preliminary recommendations for management priorities for 2021 and priorities that could meet Executive Order 13921. In 2021, the Council will need to develop the 2022-2023 skate specifications and the PDT will need to create the annual monitoring report. The management track assessment for skates will occur, and potentially be a Level 2 assessment occurring later in the year than usual. While this is not a Council action, it will require PDT resources. If Amendment 5 continues, it will extend into 2021. The PDT discussed the potential of removing the need to do the annual monitoring report (perhaps as an omnibus for FMP consistency) and updating the FMP goals and objectives, which have not changed from when the original FMP was created in 2003, and some were outdated by the time FMP was implemented. It was noted that the end of the 25-year rebuilding period for thorny skate is in 2028 (eight years away), and biomass is at about 4% of the target. GARFO has not notified the Council in recent history on lack of rebuilding, but this may come after the assessment update next year. The PDT and SSC have flagged concerns about thorny skate for several years.

Follow-ups

- Feeney – Prepare draft recommendations for review at the next PDT meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Skate PDT meeting will be on August 18 via webinar. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.