



## New England Fishery Management Council

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### **MEETING SUMMARY**

#### **Northeast Skate Complex Plan Development Team**

Mariner's House, Boston, MA

February 5, 2020

The Northeast Skate Complex Plan Development Team (Skate PDT) met on February 5, 2020 in Boston, MA to discuss status updates, upcoming Skate PDT work, Amendment 5 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan, and 2020-2024 Council research priorities.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** Rachel Feeney (PDT Chair); Cynthia Ferrio, Ashleigh McCord, John Sullivan (GARFO); Jenny Couture and Lou Goodreau (Council staff); Eric Schneider (RI DEM DMF) and Kathy Sosebee (NEFSC). In addition, one member of the public attended.

#### ***STATUS UPDATES AND PLANNING SKATE PDT WORK***

The Skate Framework 8 document is published and undergoing a comment period until March 6 and should be on track for setting specifications in time for the start of the fishing year. The next assessment (management track) September 2021. The Council usually takes final action on skate specifications in September, so this may need to be pushed to the December Council meeting. The 2020 skate annual monitoring report will be impacted by the change in assessment cycle, as the report has been including annual updates from the survey and assessment results. The next joint AP/CTE meeting is March 26 in New Bedford where advisors will be given an opportunity to share how the current fishing year is going, have a joint discussion with the Committee on whether to go forward with limited access or not, and discuss research priorities. The Council will decide to move forward with limited access or not during the April Council meeting.

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

- Feeney - Raise to the Council the potential need to postpone final action on specifications from September to later in 2021.
- Sosebee – Clarify how the change to the skate assessment schedule may impact creation of the 2020 annual monitoring report.

#### ***AMENDMENT 5 – DRAFT PDT MEMO ON SKATE FISHERY DATA***

The PDT discussed work to date on the October 2019 Committee tasking to provide additional fishery data. The PDT is preparing a memo to be finalized mid-March.

The PDT first discussed the intricacies of skate permits, state versus federal fishing, the regulations specific to the wing and bait fisheries, and how fishermen can land both wing and bait on a wing trip. The goal was to help ensure that PDT members have an accurate and consistent understanding and to help interpret the fishery data.

The PDT then reviewed the work to date and discussed possible additional queries and additions to the memo to address the Committee tasking. The data show a substantial amount of undeclared wing landings over the incidental limit and the PDT is largely focused on understanding those trips. The undeclared landings data can be further parsed down using an active LOA as a filter to determine whether the wing undeclared trips include bait fishing as well. The undeclared wing data can also be further reduced by removing the non-federal data.

During its October 2019 meeting, the Skate Committee discussed the possibility of limiting skate activity through changes in Days-At-Sea (DAS) use (e.g., needing to use two DAS for one skate fishing day). The PDT discussed this idea and determined that the DAS of other FMPs likely cannot be controlled via the Skate FMP.

### Follow-ups

#### *Fishery regulations*

- Ferrio – Check with the NEFSC on whether dealers report live pounds in addition to landed pounds, and at what point conversion factors are used.
- Ferrio - Check with permit office on: 1) how federal dealers record landings from vessels with a federal vessel permit but no federal skate permit that fish in state waters, 2) if vessels with federal vessel permits must sell to a federal dealer, and 3) a federal skate permit may be activated and deactivated at any time in a fishing year, but confirm whether there may only be one activation period.

#### *PDT memo revisions - certain*

- Feeney – Discuss plans with the Skate Committee Chairman and coordinate memo finalization.
- Goodreau/Couture - Create tables of skate bait landings, federal and non-federal, by permits and disposition for FY 2012, 2015, 2017, and 2018, above and below the incidental limit (use landed – 1,135 lb).
- Couture - Replicate wing undeclared data tables for FY 2017 and 2018 excluding the non-federal data and excluding permits fishing under a LOA (i.e., bait fishing).
- Goodreau/Couture - Filter the undeclared bait landings with valid LOAs at time of trip
- Goodreau/Couture - Determine if the same vessels are exceeding the possession limits for each season and fishing year
- General - future work should use the start date of the trip from the T\_SSB\_TRIP\_CURRENT table instead of the Trip\_Date. Also, FY should always be based on the first 4 digits of the Trip\_ID and never on dates.

#### *PDT memo revisions – if time allows*

- Goodreau - Determine the percent of skate dependence relative to other species landed on the trip by skate revenue by declaration (with a focus on monkfish, northeast multispecies, scallop, and undeclared declarations)

- Goodreau/Couture - Examine the degree of overage, especially above 10% over the incidental limit, to filter out trips where live=landed, landed > live, etc. if filtering the undeclared data with LOAs and federal permits does not reduce the number of undeclared landings.

***AMENDMENT 5 – IDENTIFYING KEY SKATE FISHING COMMUNITIES***

The PDT considered adding the indicators of skate fishing community engagement and reliance developed by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to the criteria that identifies primary and secondary skate fishing communities in Council action documents. The PDT supported the idea, suggesting that primary ports should have high indicator score for skate fishery engagement and reliance, and that secondary skate ports should include all medium-high indicator scores in either fishery engagement or reliance indicators, excluding the key primary skate ports. A five-year indicator score average can be used but it may be beneficial to include the latest fishing year indicator. A map showing these primary and secondary ports should also be included.

*Follow-ups*

- Feeney – provide the fishing community indicators to the AP and Committee for input.

***2020-2024 COUNCIL RESEARCH PRIORITIES***

Council research priorities were discussed and the PDT recommended condensing priorities on: skate discards mortality rates by gear type and area for any outstanding species; and the influence of physical factors and trophic interactions with the broader ecosystems research; and dropping priorities on species-specific management and identification and composition of discards and bycatch in the skate fishery. The PDT felt that the research recommendations made by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in August 2019 are more like tasks of the assessment or PDT team rather than research priorities. The PDT was reminded that the SSC would like updates on the status of thorny skate research.

*Follow-ups*

- Feeney – provide the PDT research priority recommendations to the AP and Committee for input.
- Ferrio – Invite Tobey Curtis to update the PDT on thorny skate research at a future PDT meeting.

***OTHER BUSINESS***

Next Skate PDT meeting will likely be in the February 24 – March 6 timeframe.

The meeting adjourned at about 4:00 p.m.