



New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 26, 2019

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

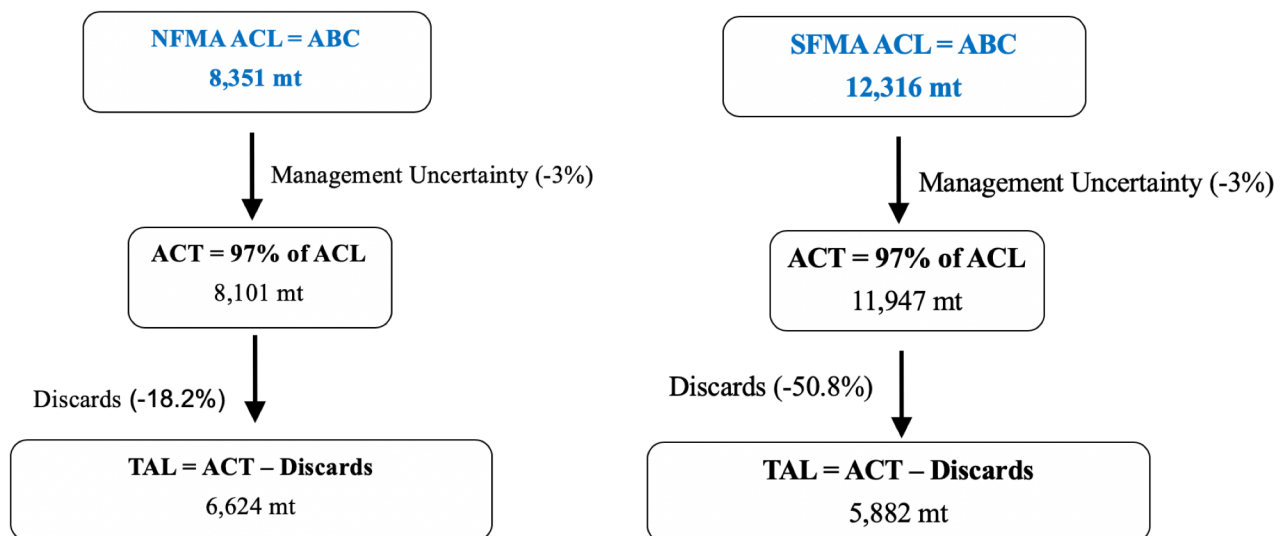
Monkfish: Council Approves 2020-2022 Fishery Specifications

The New England Fishery Management Council has approved new specifications for the 2020-2022 monkfish fishing years. The fishery operates within two areas – the Northern Fishery Management Area (NFMA) and the Southern Fishery Management Area (SFMA) – with a boundary line that roughly bisects Georges Bank. Landing limits and management measures vary by area, as do fishing practices.

The Council supported a 10% increase in the acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the northern area and status quo for the ABC in the southern area based on recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), which worked with guidance from the Monkfish Plan Development Team (PDT). Under the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan, deductions are made from the ABC to account for management uncertainty and discards in order to determine the level of total allowable landings (TAL) for each area (see flowchart below).

A new [operational assessment](#) was conducted for monkfish this summer. While the final peer-reviewed report is not complete yet, the SSC and PDT were able to use preliminary findings to develop the 2020-2022 specifications. Updated assessment data were used to determine discard levels, which are calculated

Revised 2020-2022 Specifications for Northern and Southern Fishery Management Areas in metric tons (mt)



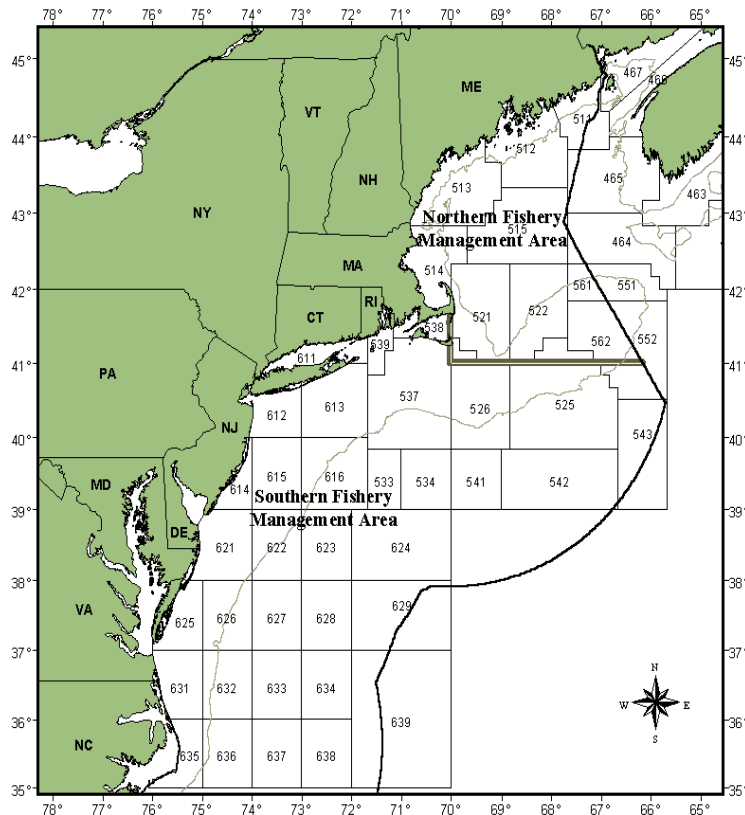
ABC = Acceptable Biological Catch
ACL = Annual Catch Limit

ACT = Annual Catch Target
TAL = Total Allowable Landings



New England Fishery Management Council

through a ratio of discards to total catch over the most recent three-year moving average. In 2016, discards in the northern area were estimated to be 13.9%. As a result of the 2019 operational assessment, discards in the north increased slightly to 18.2%. In the southern area, discards increased from 24.6% in 2016 to 50.8% in 2019. According to the PDT, one contributing factor was the large 2015 year class of monkfish, which was the largest recruitment event in almost 20 years.



The Council concurred with the PDT/SSC recommendation that “no changes” are needed to effort controls, possession limits, and day-at-sea (DAS) allocations in either region at this time.

Current measures are outlined in the:

[2017-2019 Monkfish Final Rule](#)



– NOAA Fisheries graphic

- All documents used during this meeting are available at [September 2019 Monkfish Discussion](#).
- Questions? Contact monkfish plan coordinator Dr. Fiona Hogan at (978) 465-0492, ext. 121, fhogan@nefmc.org.

The following information also is included in this management action:

- Commercial fishery statistics for monkfish were updated for 2015-2018 in the assessment. In the north, landings and catch have fluctuated around a steady level since 2009 but increased after 2015. In the south, landings and catch had been declining since around 2000, but catch increased after 2015 due to discarding of a strong 2015 year class.
- Strong recruitment in 2015 fueled an increase in stock biomass in 2016-2018, though abundance has since declined as recruitment returned to average levels. Biomass increases were greater in the northern area than in the southern area, and biomass has declined somewhat in the south.
- **Northern Area:** Landings in the north in 2016, 2017, and 2018 respectively totaled 5,447 mt, 6,807 mt, and 6,168 mt, achieving 93%, 107%, and 97% of the TAL respectively.
- **Southern Area:** Landings in the south in 2016, 2017, and 2018 respectively totaled 4,345 mt, 3,802 mt, and 4,600 mt, achieving 49%, 42%, and 51% of the TAL respectively.