



# New England Fishery Management Council

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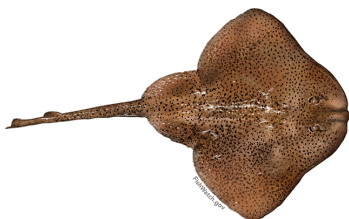
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## Council to Update Skate Plan Objectives through Amendment 8

The New England Fishery Management Council is developing Amendment 8 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to update two objectives in the [original FMP](#) that have become outdated. This amendment is the result of a process that began with Amendment 5 and led to Framework 9, which the Council debated during its [February 1-3, 2022](#) webinar meeting. Here is the sequence of events.

- **[Amendment 5](#):** The Council began work on this amendment in 2017 and went through two rounds of scoping. As part of the action, the Council considered establishing limited access in the skate wing and/or bait fisheries and other measures to prevent the triggering of incidental skate possession limits, improve the precision and accuracy of catch data, and better define skate fishery participants. In September 2021, the Council [discontinued work on the amendment](#) and concurrently [initiated Framework Adjustment 9](#) to pursue two remaining elements of Amendment 5.
- **[Framework 9](#):** This framework was initiated to: (1) update the FMP's objectives; and (2) revise conditions for federal skate fishing permits. In February 2022, the Council selected "No Action" for the permitting alternatives and agreed to update the FMP objectives through another action – Amendment 8. The rationale for the Council's decision is spelled out on the next page.
- **[Amendment 8](#):** The Council has taken final action on the updated FMP objectives. The Council now will submit these changes to NOAA Fisheries for review and implementation under Amendment 8. Updates to the FMP's goal and objectives need to be implemented through an amendment and therefore could not be accomplished through Framework 9, which is why this additional step is needed.

### Skate Fishery Management Plan Goal and Objectives



The Skate FMP's goal and seven objectives can be found on pages seven and eight of the [original plan](#). Amendment 8 would update Objectives 2 and 5. The changes are intended to better reflect current conditions in the fishery, the status of the seven stocks in the skate complex, and the focus of skate research.



*Tagged winter skate.*

– University of New England photo



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## Answers to Questions About Skate Framework 9 and Amendment 8

**Question:** Why did the Council select “No Action” for the permitting alternatives in Framework 9, which proposed to restrict the ability to add and drop federal skate permits throughout the year?

**Answer:** The Council’s rationale was two-fold.

- The existing permitting flexibility was used by a small number of vessels in recent years, on the order of 30 or less. In fishing year 2021, which is still underway, fishery landings relative to total allowable landings (TAL) have been very low. As of January 1, 2022, landings accounted for only 12% of the bait TAL and 32% of the wing TAL. Restricting permits as contemplated in Framework 9 wasn’t needed to ensure the fishery remains within its TALs.
- The Council also expressed concern that the permit office at the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office would have difficulties determining whether requests for mid-year permit cancellations were consistent with the intent of Framework 9.

**Question:** How would Skate FMP Objective 2 change under Amendment 8?

**Answer:** Objective 2 currently lists barndoor skates as being overfished. The stock is fully rebuilt. The Council updated the language of this objective to remain relevant as stock status within the skate complex changes. As updated, Objective 2 states the Council will *“implement measures to: protect any overfished species of skates and increase their biomass to target levels and prevent overfishing of the species in the Northeast skate complex – this may be accomplished through management measures in other FMPs (groundfish, monkfish, scallops), skate-specific management measures, or a combination, as necessary.”*

**Question:** How would Objective 5 of the skate plan change under Amendment 8?

**Answer:** This objective was refined to be a more overarching statement focused on skate research. As updated, Objective 5 now states the Council will *“promote and encourage skate research for critical biological, ecological, and fishery information based on the research needs identified and updated by the Council.”*



Little skate. — NOAA Fisheries photo

### Looking for More Information?

- Meeting materials used during the Council’s February skate discussion are posted [here](#).
- Visit the Council’s [skate webpage](#).
- **Questions?** Contact Dr. Rachel Feeney, the Council’s skate plan coordinator, at [rfeeney@nefmc.org](mailto:rfeeney@nefmc.org), (978) 465-0492, extension 110.

