



New England Fishery Management Council

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

Eric Reid, *Chair* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 13, 2023
TO: Scientific and Statistical Committee
FROM: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director
SUBJECT: **Terms of Reference – Acceptable biological catches for monkfish, 2023 through 2025**

Terms of Reference

- A. Consider the remand of the New England Fishery Management Council to reconsider the October 2022 recommendation of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) for setting acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for monkfish in both the northern and southern management areas for fishing years (FY) 2023-2025.
- B. Consider all relevant information about the status of monkfish provided by the 2022 Management Track Assessment, Peer Review Report, and the Monkfish Plan Development Team (PDT) focusing on this latest request of the Council.
- C. Recommend monkfish ABCs that will prevent overfishing, meet the objectives of the fishery management plan, and consider the Council's Risk Policy Statement. Specifically, the Council requests the SSC consider an approach that uses an average of the approach taken for setting FY 2020-2022 ABCs and the October SSC recommendation.

Background

After the October 26, 2022, SSC meeting, at which the SSC recommended overfishing limits, ABCs, and discard deduction methods for monkfish specifications for FY 2023-2025, the PDT met on November 2 to finalize the range of alternatives and impact analyses for Framework Adjustment 13 (FW13). The Advisory Panel and Committee met on November 28 and 29 and raised concerns about the monkfish assessment, the reliance on the I-Smooth method for setting catch advice and the potential fishery impacts of the SSC-recommended ABCs. In December, the NEFMC did not take final action on FW13 as planned but decided to ask the SSC to consider another approach to setting the ABCs. The following week, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council supported this remand.

This is the motion that passed at the NEFMC meeting:

Accept the SSC ABC recommendations for FY 2023-2025 (for both areas) and to remand the Monkfish ABCs for both areas back to the SSC to facilitate a transition to the appropriate application of I-Smooth for monkfish stocks. Specifically, we request that the SSC consider setting ABCs for the FY 2023-2025 as the average of the I-Smooth approach (multipliers applied to recent 3-year catch) and the recent ABC approach (Multipliers applied to the recent ABCs).

Further, the Council notes that application of I-Smooth multipliers should be revisited during the next monkfish assessment.

Prior to this motion, the Council decided to suspend its rules for the conditions that must be met for when the Council may remand back to the SSC the SSC's recommendations. During discussion of this motion, the Monkfish Committee Chair (the maker of the motion) articulated that the Council understood that this request meant the Council was willing to accept a higher level of risk of overfishing in making the transition to the correct use of the I-smooth method for setting catch advice. It was also confirmed that the Council would be willing to have the SSC consider an alternate ABC-setting approach should the specific request be deemed inappropriate.

The PDT has developed ABCs based on this request. The SSC is provided much of the information provided at its October meeting and other background information to support the SSC deliberations.

Information

1. Presentation: Monkfish PDT report (NEFMC staff)
2. Memo from Monkfish PDT to SSC re ABCs for FY 2023 – 2025, January 12, 2023
3. Framework Adjustment 13 draft environmental assessment, January 13, 2023
4. Memo from SSC to NEFMC re monkfish OFLs and ABCs, November 21, 2022

Background Documents

1. The Council's Risk Policy Road Map (2016), that includes the Risk Policy Statement and Implementation Plan, see pp. 4-5 and 10-12.
2. State of the Ecosystem and Current Conditions. NOAA/NEFSC. Available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/ecosystems/state-ecosystem-reports-northeast-us-shelf>
3. Memo from Monkfish PDT to SSC re OFLs and ABCs for FY 2023 – 2025, October 19, 2022 (typos later corrected)
4. Monkfish stock assessment
 - a. Draft 2022 monkfish stock assessment report
 - b. 2022 monkfish stock assessment peer review report
 - c. 2016 monkfish stock assessment and peer review report
 - d. 2019 monkfish stock assessment and peer review report
5. Index-Based Methods Work Group
 - a. Draft report and three individual peer review reports. Available at: <https://www.noaa.gov/information-technology/index-based-methods-working-group-id437>
 - b. Legault et al manuscript
6. Risk Policy Matrix for Monkfish
7. 2022 Monkfish Fishery Performance Report
8. Monkfish AP meeting summary, November 28, 2022
9. Monkfish Committee meeting summary, November 29, 2022

Note: all materials from prior meetings of the Council are available on the Council’s website.

Materials from the October 26, 2022, SSC regarding monkfish specifications:

<https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/oct-26-27-2022-ssc-meeting>.

Materials from prior meetings or the Monkfish Plan Development Team, Advisory Panel, and Committee:

<https://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/monkfish>.

Materials from the 2022 Monkfish Management Track Assessment are available on the website of the

Northeast Fisheries Science Center: <https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi.php>