

# **DRAFT**

## **Monkfish Fishery Management Plan Framework Adjustment 9 Groundfish FMP Framework 54**

### **Alternatives under Consideration As edited by the Monkfish Committee on May 26, 2015**

Committee Edits not yet reviewed by PDT

Groundfish Committee Meeting

June 4, 2015

## **1.0 Alternatives under Consideration**

### **1.1 Modifications to Current Monkfish Days-at-Sea and Trip Limits**

#### **1.1.1 Allow vessels to declare a Northeast Multispecies Day-at-Sea at sea**

In order to land more than incidental amounts of monkfish, vessels must be fishing under a monkfish DAS, a Northeast (NE) multispecies day-at-sea (DAS), an Atlantic sea scallop DAS, or a combination of both monkfish and NE multispecies DAS or scallop DAS. Permit Category C and D vessels (i.e., those also issued a limited access NE multispecies DAS permit) can declare a monkfish DAS while at sea in the NFMA. However, the vessel operator must first declare his/her intent to fish on a NE multispecies DAS and later possibly declare a monkfish DAS while at sea (also known as declaring the “monkfish option”) prior to leaving port at the start of its trip. Similar flexibility does not currently exist to allow such vessel operators to also declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea.

The following options consider revising when and by whom a NE multispecies DAS can be declared to reduce monkfish discards, increase allowable monkfish landings, and increase operational flexibility by allowing vessels to also fish outside of existing monkfish exempted fisheries.

##### **1.1.1.1 Option 1: No Action**

Existing regulations do not allow a vessel operator to declare a NE multispecies DAS while at sea. Therefore, if the operator of a limited access monkfish Category C and D vessel began a NE multispecies sector trip without also declaring his/her intent to fish under a NE multispecies DAS, he/she could not land more than an incidental amount of monkfish. Further, the operator could not declare a NE multispecies DAS after leaving port to land a higher incidental amount of monkfish allowed when fishing under a NE multispecies DAS. While vessels may declare a monkfish DAS at sea if the monkfish incidental limit is exceeded, there is no such provision in the multispecies plan. Therefore, vessels must start the trip on a groundfish DAS to allow the use of the at-sea monkfish DAS declaration provision.

##### **1.1.1.2 Option 2: Allow all limited access Monkfish Category C and D vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in the Northern Fishery Management Area (*Monkfish Committee Preferred Alternative*)**

The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C and D vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non-DAS trip or under a monkfish-only DAS in the Northern Fishery Management Area (NFMA) may declare his/her intent to use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change the DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels’ vessel monitoring system (VMS) unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.

*Rationale:* Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at-sea (i.e., the monkfish “option”), this would allow NE multispecies DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if NE multispecies DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also

increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish-only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a NE multispecies DAS at sea. This option focuses on the NFMA only because incidental limits have been shown to be more likely to be exceeded there (FW 4).

**1.1.1.3 Option 3: Allow only groundfish sector vessels holding limited access Monkfish Category C, and D permits to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in the Northern Fishery Management Area**

The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C and D sector vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non-DAS trip or under a monkfish-only DAS in the NFMA may declare his/her intent to use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change the DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels' VMS unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.

*Rationale:* Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at-sea (i.e., the monkfish “option”), this would allow NE multispecies DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if NE multispecies DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish-only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a NE multispecies DAS at sea. This option focuses on the NFMA only because incidental limits have been shown to be more likely to be exceeded there (FW 4).

**1.1.2 Southern Management Area at-sea Monkfish DAS declaration**

**1.1.2.1 Option 1: No Action (*Monkfish Committee Preferred Alternative*)**

The provision that allows a vessel on a groundfish, but not a monkfish DAS, to declare a monkfish DAS at sea prior to returning to port in the event the vessel exceeds the monkfish incidental limit currently only applies in the Northern Management Area. Vessels in the Southern Management Area must start the trip on a monkfish DAS to be able to land more than the incidental limit.

**1.1.2.2 Option 2: Allow at-sea Monkfish DAS declaration in the Southern Fishery Management Area**

This alternative would allow Category C, D, and H permitted vessels on a groundfish DAS in the Southern Fishery Management Area (SFMA) to declare a monkfish DAS at sea prior to returning to port in the event the vessel exceeds the monkfish incidental limit.

*Rationale:* Vessels fishing for monkfish in the SFMA must be on a groundfish DAS to land more than the incidental limit of monkfish. In some cases, while fishing for monkfish, vessels catch more than the applicable monkfish incidental limit and must discard the overage. This provision would enable those vessel to land monkfish up to the applicable monkfish DAS trip limit by allowing those vessels to declare a monkfish DAS prior to returning to port. Adopting this provision will make the SFMA fishery more consistent with the NFMA fishery which already has the at-sea declaration provision.

**1.1.3 Modify DAS/Trip Limit Allocation for Category F (offshore) Vessels**

**1.1.3.1 Option 1: No Action (*Monkfish Committee Preferred Alternative*)**

Category F vessels may possess 1,600 pounds (tail weight) and their DAS usage is prorated, depending on what standard monkfish permit the vessel has been issued. A Category F permit’s monkfish DAS allocation will be calculated based on the existing formula as follows:

$$\text{Monkfish DAS allocation} = [\text{applicable SFMA trip limit for original permit category}/1,600] \times [32 \text{ monkfish DAS} + \text{carry over DAS}]$$

**1.1.3.2 Option 2: Increase the trip limit**

Under this alternative, the trip limit applicable to Category F vessels would be increased. *The PDT analyzed three potential trip limits: 1,600 (status quo), 1,800, and 2,200 lb/DAS. The trip limits analyzed were selected based on preliminary guidance from the Committee and limited observer data confirming the relevancy of the analyzed range.*

*Rationale:* This provision would help to improve the profitability and safety of Offshore Area trips by allowing vessels to land more monkfish per DAS fished and return to port without having to remain at sea until sufficient time has elapsed to account for the amount of monkfish retained on board.

**1.1.3.3 Option 3: Adjust monkfish DAS allocation**

The number of DAS that would be allocated for the year would be based on either the existing DAS allocation calculation, or a revised DAS allocation calculation, as follows:

Sub-Option 1 (existing DAS calculation):  $\text{Monkfish DAS allocation} = [\text{the applicable SFMA trip limit for original permit category} \div \text{monkfish Category F trip limit}] \times [32 \text{ monkfish DAS} + \text{carry over DAS}]$  (see Table 1)

Sub-Option 2 (revised DAS calculation):  $\text{Monkfish DAS allocation} = \text{monkfish Category F trip limit} \div \text{the applicable SFMA trip limit for original permit category}$  (see Table 2)

*Rationale:* This provision would help to improve the profitability and safety of Offshore Area trips by allowing vessels to land more monkfish per DAS fished and return to port without having to remain at sea until sufficient time has elapsed to account for the amount of monkfish retained on board.

*Options 2 and 3 could be combined resulting in the following options for consideration, as listed in Tables 1 and 2:*

**Table 1- Monkfish DAS Allocation and Potential Maximum Monkfish Landings from the Three Proposed Trip Limit Options (Option 2) Applied to the Current DAS Allocation Formula (Option 3, Sub-option 1).**

Proposed Possession Limit (lb tail weight/DAS)	Permit Type	Carry Over	DAS Allocation	Calculation	Potential maximum landings (in lbs)
1,600	A & C	Max	13.73	(610/1600)(32+4)	21,960
		None	12.20	(610/1600)(32+0)	19,520

	B & D	Max	11.25	(500/1600)(32+4)	18,000
		None	10.00	(500/1600)(32+0)	16,000
1,800	A & C	Max	12.20	(610/1800)(32+4)	21,960
		None	10.84	(610/1800)(32+0)	19,520
	B & D	Max	10.00	(500/1800)(32+4)	18,000
		None	8.89	(500/1800)(32+0)	16,000
2,200	A & C	Max	9.98	(610/2200)(32+4)	21,960
		None	8.87	(610/2200)(32+0)	19,520
	B & D	Max	8.18	(500/2200)(32+4)	18,000
		None	7.27	(500/2200)(32+0)	16,000

Table 2 - Monkfish DAS Allocation and Potential Maximum Monkfish Landings from the Three Proposed Trip Limit Options (Option 2) Applied to an Alternative DAS Allocation Formula (Option 3, Sub-option 2).

Proposed Possession Limit (lb tail weight/DAS)	Permit Type	Carry Over	DAS Allocation	Calculation	Potential maximum landings (in lbs)
1,600	A & C	Max	2.62	(1600/610)	4,197
		None	2.62	(1600/610)	4,197
	B & D	Max	3.20	(1600/500)	5,120
		None	3.20	(1600/500)	5,120
1,800	A & C	Max	2.95	(1800/610)	5,311
		None	2.95	(1800/610)	5,311
	B & D	Max	3.60	(1800/500)	6,480
		None	3.60	(1800/500)	6,480
2,200	A & C	Max	3.61	(2200/610)	7,934
		None	3.61	(2200/610)	7,934
	B & D	Max	4.40	(2200/500)	9,680
		None	4.40	(2200/500)	9,680

#### 1.1.4 DAS requirements for RSA vessels when on a monkfish DAS

##### 1.1.4.1 Option 1: No Action (*Monkfish Committee Preferred Alternative*)

Vessels participating in the RSA program are allocated additional monkfish RSA DAS. A vessel must declare their intent to use a monkfish RSA DAS prior to leaving the dock.

##### 1.1.4.2 Option 2: Allow monkfish vessels to re-declare from a monkfish DAS to a monkfish RSA DAS while at sea

Vessels that exceed existing monkfish trip limits while on a monkfish DAS would be allowed to switch to a monkfish RSA DAS, while at sea, to land additional monkfish. Such a declaration must occur before returning to port, and comply with applicable reporting requirements for the monkfish RSA program and applicable EFP conditions.

*Rationale:* This measure would reduce discards and increase operational flexibility by allowing vessels to land monkfish in excess of existing monkfish trip limits while under a DAS.

## **1.2 Modifications to Monkfish Possession Limits**

### **1.2.1 Northern Area Monkfish Trip Limit on a Groundfish DAS**

#### **1.2.1.1 Option 1: No Action (*Monkfish Committee Preferred Alternative*)**

Under current regulations, vessels on a monkfish DAS are subject to a trip limit, and when on a groundfish, but not a monkfish DAS they in the Northern Management Area have an incidental limit of 600 lbs. tail wt. per DAS.

#### **1.2.1.2 Option 2: Eliminate the Trip Limit on a NE multispecies DAS**

This alternative would eliminate the monkfish trip limit when a Category C and D vessel is on a NE multispecies DAS in the NFMA, effectively eliminating the need to use a monkfish DAS.

*Rationale:* Eliminating the monkfish trip limit in the NFMA is intended to increase monkfish landings to more fully utilize the ACT in the NFMA. This could provide additional fishing revenue for groundfish vessels to help offset expected fishing revenue reductions associated with reduced groundfish quotas in NFMA in the near future, and minimize the potential for effort to shift from the groundfish fishery in the NFMA to the monkfish fishery in the SFMA. This alternative could be implemented in conjunction with alternative 1.1.1, which would allow Category C and D vessels to go from the no DAS monkfish possession limit to no trip limit if a NE multispecies DAS was declared at sea.

## **1.3 Modifications to gear requirements while on monkfish DAS**

### **1.3.1 Modification to mesh size requirements on a monkfish DAS**

#### **1.3.1.1 Option 1: No Action**

Vessels fishing under monkfish DAS must fish with trawls having mesh no smaller than 10-inches square or 12-inches diamond in the codend, unless the vessel has a Category C or D permit and is also fishing under a NE multispecies DAS. If a vessel is fishing on a NE multispecies and monkfish DAS, a trawl must have mesh that conforms with the regulations for the NE Multispecies FMP. If using a gillnet during a monkfish DAS, the gillnet must have mesh no smaller than 10-inches diamond. Vessels may have smaller mesh on board if it is stowed so that it is not available for immediate use.

To accommodate situations when a vessel hauls up mesh smaller than the minimum legal size (for example, a lost or discarded small mesh net), the minimum mesh on board regulation will apply to pieces of mesh larger than three feet square. Vessel captains should take necessary steps to render the mesh unusable (e.g. cutting up large pieces into pieces smaller than three feet square, and otherwise destroying the mesh).

*Rationale:* The primary purpose of requiring large mesh is to reduce bycatch of other marine species while retaining the larger monkfish. This management measure could improve the possibility that more exempted areas would be open for targeting monkfish, if the bycatch of other species was below the legal thresholds. Monkfish size selectivity by these large mesh nets is unknown, but they could have a beneficial effect on size selection. The body shape of monkfish, however, prevents even large changes in minimum mesh size from substantially improving monkfish selectivity. The FMP, therefore, relies more on day-at-sea allocations, trip limits, and size limits to reduce fishing mortality.

### **1.3.1.2 Option 2: Allow the use of 5-7” mesh in standup gillnet on a monkfish DAS**

This alternative would allow limited access Category C and D monkfish vessels to target other species, e.g. dogfish, using mesh size between 5 and 7-inches stand-up gillnets and also retain legal-sized monkfish when fishing on a monkfish or a monkfish/NE multispecies DAS on the same trip. This would be allowed in both the NFMA and the SFMA on a year-round basis. This measure would not modify minimum mesh size requirements for trawl vessels or gillnet vessels using tie-downs. This measure would also not modify the existing regulations in the Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area, the Southern New England Monkfish, Skate, and Dogfish Exemption Area or the Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area.

*Rationale:* This alternative increases operational flexibility of monkfish operations by allowing vessels to target both monkfish and dogfish using different gear types when on a monkfish DAS.

### **1.3.1.3 Option 3: Allow the use of 5-7” mesh standup gillnet on a monkfish DAS in NFMA**

This alternative would allow limited access monkfish vessels to target other species, e.g. dogfish, using mesh size between 5 and 7-inches stand-up gillnets and also retain legal-sized monkfish when fishing on a monkfish or a monkfish/NE multispecies DAS on the same trip. This would be allowed only in the NFMA. This measure would also not modify the existing regulations in the Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area.

*Rationale:* This alternative increases operational flexibility of monkfish operations by allowing vessels to target both monkfish and dogfish using different gear types when on a monkfish DAS.

### **1.3.1.4 Option 4: ~~Allow the use of 5-7”~~ Modification of the minimum mesh requirements for standup gillnets on a monkfish DAS in SFMA (Monkfish Committee Preferred Alternative)**

~~This alternative would allow limited access monkfish vessels to target other species, e.g. dogfish, using mesh size between 5 and 7 inches stand up gillnets and also retain legal sized monkfish when fishing on a monkfish or a monkfish/NE multispecies DAS on the same trip. This would be allowed only in the SFMA. This measure would also not modify the existing regulations in the Southern New England Monkfish, Skate, and Dogfish Exemption Area or the Mid Atlantic Exemption Area.~~

*This alternative would allow vessels fishing on a combined NE multispecies DAS and monkfish DAS to use of 6.5” minimum mesh standup gillnet in the Southern Fishery Management Area.*

*Within the Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area (Figure 1), vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS would be allowed to use 5” minimum mesh standup gillnet and retain both monkfish and dogfish on the same trip. Vessels would still adhere to the regulation limiting the total number of gillnets fished (160 gillnets for monkfish*

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Category A and B permits and 150 gillnets for monkfish Category C and D permits), but this alternative would limit the number of standup gillnets fished to 50.

Within the Southern New England Dogfish Exemption Area (Figure 2), vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS would be allowed to use 6” minimum mesh standup gillnets and retain both monkfish and dogfish on the same trip only during the designated exemption season (May 1 to October 31). Vessels would still adhere to the regulation limiting the total number of gillnets fished (160 gillnets for monkfish Category A and B permits and 150 gillnets for monkfish Category C and D permits), but this alternative would limit the number of standup gillnets fished to 50.

Within the SNE Monkfish and Skate Exemption Area, vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS would be allowed to use 10” minimum mesh gillnets and retain both monkfish and dogfish on the same trip, year-round. Vessels would still adhere to the regulation limiting the total number of gillnets fished (160 gillnets for monkfish Category A and B permits and 150 gillnets for monkfish Category C and D permits).

*Rationale:* This alternative increases operational flexibility of monkfish operations by allowing vessels to target both monkfish and dogfish using different gear types when on a monkfish DAS. It is focused on the SFMA out of concerns for interactions with groundfish. A summary of the proposed modifications to the minimum mesh requirements, including the applicable changes to each exemption area, is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3 - Summary of proposed modifications to minimum mesh requirements for standup gillnet in SFMA**

	Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area	SNE Dogfish Exemption Area	NE Multispecies DAS	SNE Monkfish and Skate Exemption Area
Minimum gillnet mesh	5” for standup nets	6” for standup nets	6.5” for standup nets	10” for all nets
DAS	Monkfish	Monkfish	NE multispecies and monkfish	Monkfish
Season	Year-round	May 1 – October 31	Year-round	Year-round
Modification required to retain both dogfish and monkfish	Yes	Yes	No	Yes



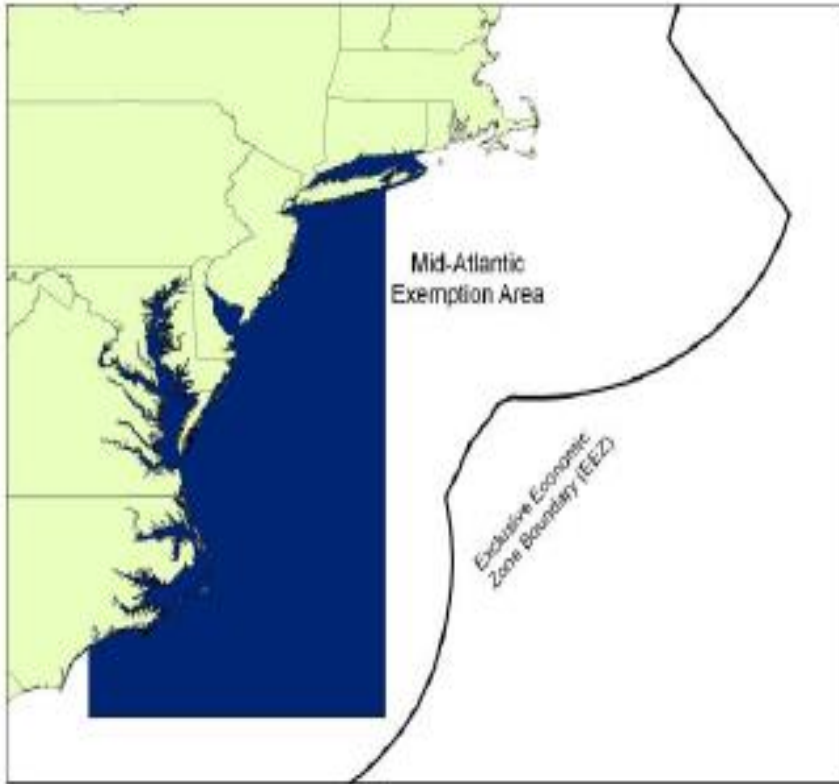


Figure 1 - Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area

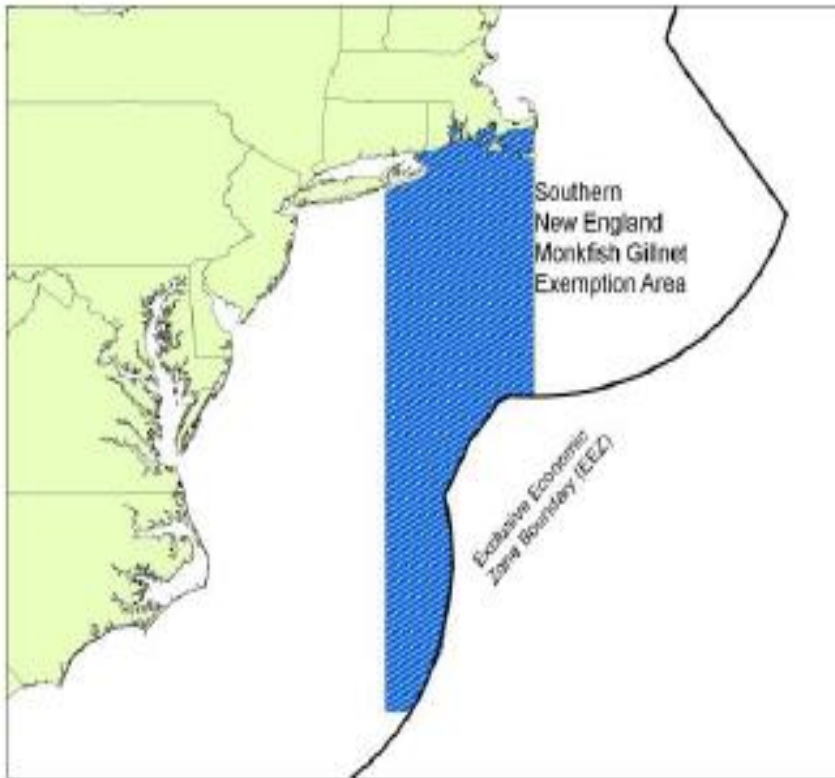


Figure 2 - Southern New England Dogfish and Monkfish Exemption Areas