



New England Fishery Management Council

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DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Groundfish Oversight Committee

Hilton Garden Inn, Warwick, RI

June 4, 2015

The Groundfish Committee (Committee) met on June 4, 2015 in Warwick, Rhode Island to discuss: (1) the development of Framework Adjustment 55 (FW55), an action to set specifications for all stocks in the Northeast Multispecies (groundfish) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for FY 2016 – FY 2018 including US/CA stocks for FY 2016, (2) a management action to address industry concerns about their ability to cover the cost of the At-Sea Monitoring (ASM) program, (3) Groundfish Framework Adjustment 54/Monkfish Framework Adjustment 9 (GF FW 54/MF FW 9), a joint action to increase flexibility and access to quota for the monkfish fishery, (4) a brief update on Amendment 18 (fleet diversity and accumulation limits) progress, and (5) other business as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Mr. Frank Blount (Chairman), Dr. David Pierce (Vice Chair), Mr. Terry Alexander, Mr. David Preble, Ms. Ellen Goethel, Ms. Libby Etrie, Mr. John Pappalardo, Mr. Vincent Balzano, Ms. Laurie Nolen (MAFMC) and Mr. Howard King (MAFMC) Ms. Kelly Denit (NMFS - GARFO), Mr. Mitch MacDonald (NOAA General Counsel), Mr. Terry Stockwell (Council Chair), Ms. Jackie Odell (GAP Vice-Chair); Dr. Jamie Cournane, Dr. Fiona Hogan, Ms. Rachel Feeney, Mr. Jonathon Peros (NEFMC staff); Mr. Mark Grant, Ms. Sarah Heil, Ms. Aja Szumylo (NMFS GARFO staff), Ms. Amy Martins, Ms. Wendy Gabriel, Mr. Greg Ardini and Mr. Chad Demarest (NEFSC). In addition, approximately 9 members of the public attended, including members of the Groundfish Advisory Panel.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION: Discussions were aided by the following documents and presentations: (1) meeting memorandum, May 31, 2015; (2) Meeting agenda; (3) Draft Action Plan for FW55; (4a) Groundfish FMP Goals and Objectives; (4b) Monitoring Alternatives from A16; (4c) Monitoring Goals and Objectives and Alternatives from FW48; (5) Plan development team (PDT) memo to the Groundfish Committee re: PDT Meeting Report from meeting on May 16, 2012; (6) PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re: PDT Meeting Report from meeting on July 25, 2012; (7) Summary of analyses conducted to determine at-sea monitoring requirements for multispecies sectors FY2015, GARFO; (8a) PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re: ASM, June 2, 2015; (8b) Staff Presentation; (9) Preliminary draft analysis of industry costs for ASM, NMFS (only hard copies distributed at the meeting) (10a) Monkfish FW9 draft alternatives; (10b) Staff presentation; (10c) Draft Monkfish Committee Motions, May 26, 2015; (11) Memo from Groundfish PDT to Monkfish PDT re GF FW54/MF FW9, June 1, 2015; (12) A18 Action Plan v17, May 15, 2015; (13) Groundfish Advisory Panel meeting summary, March 25, 2015; (14) Groundfish Committee meeting summary, March 26, 2015; (15) Correspondence.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- The Committee recommended that the Council request that NMFS take emergency action to suspend the At-Sea Monitoring (ASM) program for the groundfish fishery.

- The Committee recommended to the Council that an evaluation on the effectiveness of the ASM program be conducted, and requested specific analyses be completed by the PDT.

The meeting began at 9:32 am.

The Groundfish Committee Chairman opened the meeting by asking if there were any suggested changes to the agenda. None were suggested.

Framework Adjustment 55 - Specifications for FY2016 – FY2018 (Dr. Jamie Cournane): Council staff reviewed the draft action plan for Framework 55 (Document #3), and explained that the scope of this framework would be to incorporate any status changes for groundfish stocks and to set specifications for all (20) groundfish stocks. The objective of the framework would be to meet regulatory requirements to prevent overfishing, ensure rebuilding, and help achieve optimum yield in the fishery. The range of alternatives is likely to include updates to status determination criteria and changes to annual catch limits. If the Council were to initiate this framework at its June meeting, final Action would likely be taken at the December meeting. Staff explained that the operational assessments would take place before the September Council meeting, and that the Council's Science and Statistical Committee is meeting in October to discuss OFLs and ABCs prior to December Council meeting.

Questions and Discussion on the Presentation: One Council member felt that the timing of the Operational Assessments (in September) represented a new process and procedure, explaining that the Council usually has two full meetings to discuss specifications (September and November). The Committee was interested when they would be able to weigh in on the outcome of the assessments and SSC recommendations. Council staff pointed out if final action on specifications was postponed until January, it would cause a delay in rulemaking and implementation of the framework would likely be well past the start of the fishing year (May 1). Staff noted that default specifications published in the final rule for Framework Adjustment 53 (FW53) would ensure that fishing could begin on May 1st in the event of a delay in rulemaking.

The Committee discussion transitioned to the upcoming operational assessments for all 20 groundfish stocks. One Committee member was interested if new information on discard mortality could be used in the assessments, noting that recent studies have examined the discard mortality of halibut, wolfish, and cod. Staff explained that the NRCC had discussed the scope of information that may be included in an update assessment, and expected that additional information would be shared with the assessment oversight panel (AOP) prior to their July meeting in Woods Hole. The Committee noted the balancing act of using the best available science with the need to complete assessments in a timely manner. One committee member stated that they would like to see the upcoming operational assessments incorporate the best available science and updated discard mortality information.

Dr. Pierce noted that Groundfish Plan Development Team membership has recently changed –Mr. Steve Correia, a long time PDT member and Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MADMF) staff member had recently retired. Dr. Pierce acknowledged Steve's contribution to fishery management though his work on numerous PDTs and the SSC, and felt that his retirement would leave a void on the PDT that will be difficult to fill.

The Committee recommended that the NEFSC hold a pre-meeting with industry prior to the AOP and the 2015 operational assessments. The Council chair noted that this recommendation was made at the Northeast Regional Coordinating Committee meeting in May.¹

Consensus Statement #1:

The Groundfish Committee recommends that the Council requests that the Science Center meet with the fishing industry prior to the 2015 Groundfish Assessment updates (i.e., prior to the Assessment Oversight Panel meeting).

At-Sea Monitoring Presentations and Discussion – Dr. Jamie Cournane: Council provided an overview of the GF PDT memo (document #8a) to the Committee in a presentation. Staff reviewed the [ASM motion from the April 2015 Council](#) meeting:

That the Council:

1. Request that NMFS prepare an estimate of the cost/revenue ratio for the at sea Sector monitoring based on the current approach (e.g., in terms of CVs and methodology) for fishing year 2015 (i.e., taking account of reduced ACLs for some species and likelihood a reduction in the number of trips);
2. Initiate a framework to address the perception (to be confirmed or rejected based on number 1) that the fishery will not be viable under the current approach for at sea monitoring.

Staff explained that the first part of the motion requested an analysis by NMFS to understand if the at-sea monitoring program would allow the fishery to remain viable. The focus of the motion was on FY 2015, recognizing recent reductions in ACLs and the announcement that industry will be required to cover the cost for ASM monitoring part way through the fishing year. The second part of the motion is to initiate a framework action to address the perception that the fishery will not be viable. Staff noted that work on other 2015 groundfish priorities have been put on hold – namely the recreational management measures process improvement and a developing a windowpane white paper. The PDT met two times in May to work on this Council motion, and is seeking additional guidance from the Committee on the motion, and including goals and objective of an ASM action.

The PDT memo outlined three overarching approaches to for the Committee to consider when discussing ASM, though the PDT did not endorse any of these approaches. One approach would be to not change to the monitoring goals or objectives of the ASM program, and to pursue other ways to achieve the current CV30 standard while reducing total program costs. Another approach would be to not change the monitoring goals and objectives, but to pursue a ‘tuning’ of the ASM program. The PDT also noted that the Committee could focus work on modifying of groundfish monitoring program, including revisions to the existing goals and objectives.² The PDT brought forward several potential ideas for changing ASM for the purpose of discussion. Some of these ideas included redefining a sector trip, increasing the CV standard, or using a combination of monitoring tools to achieve monitoring goals.

Questions on the Presentation: The Committee asked if the PDT had evaluated the effectiveness and benefits of ASM? Council staff explained than an evaluation of the effectiveness and benefits of the program would require the development of criteria and parameters to base the evaluation on and that

¹ A pre-TRAC industry meeting will be hosted by the NEFSC on July 1st, 2015 at the New Bedford Public Library from 9:30am to 11:30am. The most recent information on U.S./Canada stocks (eastern Georges Bank cod and haddock, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder) will be discussed.

² For the current list of NE multispecies monitoring program goals and objectives, [see §648.11](#) in the Federal Register.

would require additional PDT analysis then what was presented. Several committee members weighed in on what constitutes “viability.” One committee member suggested that viability should be defined as the ability to pay the bills and feed one’s family, and felt that analyses should be completed at the vessel level. Another Committee member felt that an analysis of sector viability should attempt to account for the ability of the sector membership to cover the cost of ASM. Another Committee member suggested that the MADMF had previously defined viability in their break-even analysis of Northeast Fisheries Sector 10, stating that this work had looked at individual vessels, and that in 2010, 50% of all vessels were not breaking even. This Committee member suggested that if a business is not breaking even, it is not viable.

The discussion shifted back to the effectiveness of the ASM program, with several committee members questioning the utility of the current ASM program. One Committee member suggested that in FY2012, there were significant observer selection effects, and subsequently observer effects. Another committee member questioned what fishermen and the groundfish sectors were getting out of the ASM program. Another Committee member suggested that the goals and objectives of the ASM program need to be revisited, and asked when and how this process would begin. Council staff explained that revisiting the ASM program could begin at this meeting through a Committee discussion around the direction of the action, and that the PDT would need a scope of the action, goals, and objectives to move forward.

Some Public Comment Included:

John Hour, Chatham. There is not one boat in Chatham that is viable. We don't have any fish. We have a seal situation. Viable is not even a consideration. We are targeting skates and dogs in the gillnet fleet. I didn't sell a single cod last year and I have the biggest quota in Chatham. It is not because I don't want to fish, they are just not there. I hate skate fishing, but that is the only viable option I have. If you want me to pick up the cost of observer coverage, forget it. The best you can do on skates and dogs is \$1300 a trip. We paid a \$500,000 dollars in observer coverage in Chatham to land 800lbs of groundfish and 10 million pounds of skates and dogs. Is that viable? The whole system is broken. This isn't about fishing anymore, this is about money for the observer companies. Last summer we had 11 boats leave the dock to target skates and dogfish and 7 had observers. This is going to cripple the fishing industry in Chatham.

Overview of an analysis of industry costs for ASM, Mr. Chad Demarest, NEFSC, SSB.

Mr. Demarest acknowledged his colleagues who collaborated with him, and explained that the results were still in draft form. Mr. Demarest noted that the analysis was in response to the ASM motion at the April Council meeting. The analysis examined the cost/revenue ratio for the groundfish sector fishery, particularly as it relates to industry covering the cost of ASM sometime in FY2015. The analysis utilized the results of the quota change model (QCM) for FY2015 to estimate the number of ASM days needed to achieve the target coverage rate for the fishing year. Profits were discussed as ‘returns to owner’, which were accounted for by subtracting crew shares, variable costs, fixed costs, and sector costs from reported revenue. The analysis assumed that cost of an ASM sea-day is \$710 dollars, and revenue values were from the catch of all species on a groundfish trip. In general, ASM costs represent a large proportion of the total revenue in the fishery. Updated results of the analysis of industry costs for ASM are expected to be provided by NMFS at the June Council meeting.

Questions and Discussion on the Presentation: Committee questions on the presentation ranged from how the analysis defined groundfish trips, to sector-level cost/revenue questions, and if the results had been verified with industry. One Committee member noted that the cost of leasing quota was not included in the analysis, and felt that lease prices should be factored into the final analysis. Mr. Demarest noted ‘viability’ can be looked at in different ways from an economic perspective, suggesting that accounting

profit or economic profit could be used. Another Committee member explained that sectors do not track revenue at the sector level. In response to a question about which trips were used in the analysis, Mr. Mark Grant from the Sustainable Fisheries Division at GARFO explained to the Committee that in the DMIS system a groundfish trip is defined as a trip which is declared as a groundfish trip prior to sailing.

Some Public Comment Included:

Maggie Raymond, Associated Fisheries of Maine. The Sustainable Harvest Sector does not collect revenue information on its members, and is not likely to. The information in this report look pretty dismal, and pretty accurate, in terms of what is the economic viability of the fishery. I wanted to say that in terms of viability, fishing boats need to make some money. You don't take all this risk and invest all this money, potentially risk your home and your own personal safety, because you don't want to be on shore. While that may be part of it, you need to make money. Another reason people are going in the red is because for the past 5-years, those who have stayed in the fishery have borrowed money to stay in the fishery. My businesses are working to pay the bills so we can stay in the fishery.

George Peterson, Commissioner of Massachusetts Fish and Game. I was a commercial fisherman in Gloucester before 10 years in local government and 20 years in the Massachusetts legislature. What little I have heard from the discussions today, I question as to whether the ASM program should even continue. I think that there needs to be a serious discussion about the science and how good the science is that is coming from the ASM program. It is one thing to have the federal government pay for it, but it is another to have sectors or individual boats pay for these costs. I don't see how anyone could say this program should be continued until a thorough discussion on the effectiveness of this program is worth the cost – whether it is paid for by the federal government or fishermen. I would hope that the Council could make the recommendation that if the federal government is not going to continue the funding for the ASM program, that at a minimum it be suspended, a serious look is taken at the effectiveness, viability, and reasonability of the information that is gathered.

The Committee discussed questions posed in the PDT memo. Council staff suggested that the discussion focus on what the plan for an ASM action would be going forward, including the scope, goals, and objections of an action. Several members of the Committee supported suspending the ASM program and revisiting ASM goals and objectives. Concern was expressed about how much of the data collected through the ASM program is being used in stock assessments. One Committee member felt that irrespective of who pays for ASM, the program needed to be evaluated. Another Committee member explained that a driver for the development of the ASM program through Amendment 16 was the need for a level of accountability and compliance with quotas; the focus was not on the collection of data for assessments. The use of dockside monitors was floated as a way to collect data streams lost if the ASM is suspended. The Committee also noted that the anticipated NEFOP coverage for the groundfish industry was reduced from 8% in FY2014 to 4% in FY2015.

NOAA General Council (GC) explained that ensuring catch accountability was a key component of Amendment 16, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act requirement to prevent overfishing. NOAA GC felt that a replacement to ensure catch accountability during the suspension of a program would be important. NOAA GC went on to say that industry funding of the ASM of the ASM program had been has long-standing administrative problem that has not been addressed, and this may make it difficult to use an Emergency Action.

Motion #1 – (Pierce/Pappalardo):

The Groundfish Committee recommends that the Council requests an emergency action of NMFS to suspend the At-Sea Monitoring (ASM) program. During the suspension, the program will be evaluated for its effectiveness in support of stock assessments and its total costs to the groundfish fishery (e.g., returns to owner vs. ASM costs).

Rationale: Based on the information examined, the costs to the groundfish fishery would be tremendous and further perpetuate the current groundfish fishery disaster - which is non-defensible. Evaluation of effectiveness of program is needed. We must be in a better position to have the data benefit the fishery and resource.

Discussion on the Motion: Speaking in support of the motion, several Committee members reiterated earlier statements around the need to evaluate the ASM program. One Committee member felt that discard data gathered by the ASM program could be collected electronically at a lower cost. In light of the motion, the Committee sought clarification on how the ASM program relates to, and intersects with, the standardized bycatch reporting methodology (SBRM) requirements. More specifically, the Committee asked if both programs are necessary to monitor the fishery from a legal perspective, and whether or not the coverage levels set by SBRM are enough. NOAA GC explained that the SBRM sets monitoring requirements at the species level, while the ASM program is designed to collect information at the stock level, as well as area fished, and gear type. NOAA GC went on to note that NOAA Fisheries has argued in court that the combination of SBRM (NEFOP) coverage and ASM coverage is sufficient to meet coverage standard specified in A16 (CV30), and that the Court considered the entirety of the monitoring program (NEFOP and ASM in combination) in its decision. The NMFS representative on the Committee stated that while the level of NEFOP coverage has been stated as 8%, the actual level of coverage has been closer to 4%. They went on to say that the key from the agency perspective is to be able to ensure that ACLs are not exceeded and that the fishery is achieving conservation goals laid out in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Cost cannot be prioritized over conservation objectives. Ms. Amy Martins, Chief of the Fisheries Sampling Branch at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, explained some of the differences between ASM and SBRM to determine the coverage that is needed. The ASM program is looking at catch and discards at the stock level by gear type, while the SBRM uses groups of species, and different gear characteristics (e.g. trawl, large mesh, northeast). NMFS ultimately estimates how many of the SBRM days will ultimately be used to cover sector fisheries. The 8% is not the target, the target is the number of sea days that are generated through the SBRM. Circling back to the motion on the board, a Committee member offered that the primary purpose of the ASM program is for catch accounting, and suggested that the any evaluation of the program take into account the reporting and reconciliation processes in place for the sector system. Other Committee members suggested that evaluation include a cost/benefit analysis of the program, and that the goals and objectives of the program.

Motion #1A as perfected (Pierce/Pappalardo):

The Groundfish Committee recommends that the Council requests an emergency action of NMFS to suspend the At-Sea Monitoring (ASM) program. During the suspension, the program will be evaluated for its effectiveness in support of stock assessments, its total costs to the groundfish fishery (e.g., returns to owner vs. ASM costs), and whether it is actually ensuring catch accountability.

Some Public Comment Included:

Gib Brogan, Oceana. *On the use of Emergency Action, it is not justified by the criteria laid out by the Agency, it is not recent or unforeseen. The industry payment for ASM was*

anticipated in A16. We've known since 2009 that this was coming. One criterion is that there is a serious conservation and management problem. This is a core part of the catch share fishery – to have ASM at a high level for in-season quota monitoring. The SBRM is explicit in saying that it is not designed for in-season quota monitoring. Looking at other catch share fisheries around the country, the monitoring levels are much higher, in some cases 100%. Those are the kinds of monitoring coverage that are required for catch shares. Catch share fisheries are expensive to administer. Catch shares are the Cadillac, and you got free gas for your Cadillac for the first couple of years, but it is expensive. If you want to continue with a catch share model, with all of the quota markets that are out there for buying and selling quota, and accounting for all catch from all boats, this requires robust data. To suspend ASM goes against Magnuson, and the intent of the catch share model. This is the wrong way to go and does not ensure catch accountability. Back in 2012 the PDT expressed concern that with the quota levels, low monitoring levels would create incentives to discard on unobserved trips. The incentive to discard on unobserved trips has never been higher. This is not the time to ratchet down monitoring levels. Moving forward with the first part of this motion is wrong, but I agree that a revision is in line for ASM as well as SBRM.

Maggie Raymond, Associated Fisheries of Maine. Speaking in support of the motion. Howard had a good point about requesting a cost/benefit analysis. I hope that it would include an evaluation of all the goals in FW48. People need to think about what the effect will be on the stock assessment when the fleet ties up because they can't afford to go fishing. That is a real possibility. People may fish like crazy until August and just tie up when the sector manager hands them the bill. It would be important for the Committee to look at why the Agency did not approve removing the requirement for industry-funded ASM for FY2013, and craft a strong rationale for suspending the program.

Jackie Odell, Northeast Seafood Coalition. NSC supports the motion on the board. When A16 was passed, there were discussions about industry beginning to pay for ASM. Industry did not know that there would be a groundfish disaster. We didn't know that the operational assessments would substantially reduce ACLs for key groundfish stocks. Saying that we knew that this would occur – I disagree with that statement. When the Council was developing policies for A16, it had no idea that this would occur in the fishery. This is an emergency. I think a cost/benefit analysis is very important. What is the value of this program? What are we getting out of it? NSC would encourage you to have a discussion around that.

The Committee was reminded that the Groundfish Advisory Panel had made a recommendation at its [March 2015 meeting](#) that the Committee review the mandatory ASM requirement to determine if the level of coverage is appropriate.

Before calling the question, the Chair suggested that the motion be split at the Council meeting . The Committee did not object to this approach.

The motion **carried** on a show of hands (8/1/2).

The Committee then discussed ways to evaluate the ASM program, expressing interest in reviewing management uncertainty buffers before and after the implementation of A16, the definition of a sector trip, and observer selection bias. Committee members recommended conducting a backwards looking analysis to better understand any potential benefits the fishery had received from the increased ASM

coverage to date since 2010. The Committee was also interested in an analysis to understand how of discards have changed since the start of sectors and implementation of ASM.

Motion #2 – (Etrie/Pappalardo):

To task the PDT to conduct a cost benefit analysis that includes identification of what data is collected under the ASM program and how that data is used both for sector ACE management and for stock assessment purposes and the corresponding cost. As it relates to assessments, the PDT should clearly identify on a case by case basis when ASM data has been used, what ASM data was used, how it was used (e.g., mortality, relative abundance, etc.), and what subset of trips compared to overall ASM trips observed generated the base data. Additionally, PDT analysis should clearly identify what additional data sets are collected that could be used to satisfy some of the data elements from ASM identified (e.g., Port Sampling – length frequency).

Rationale: The intent of this motion is to further identify aspects, in addition to those referenced above, of an ASM evaluation that would better inform the Committee on measures necessary for the ASM framework. Specifically, what data is being collected both for ACE management (accounting of catch) and what specific data is being collected for stock assessment purposes. The evaluation should clearly show on a case by case basis when ASM has been used in specific stock assessments, what ASM data was used, how it was used and how this data generated on ASM observed trips and extrapolated out for unobserved trips compares to NEFOP generated data (clearly identify data generated by observations and data generated by extrapolation). Finally, identification of additional programs that are used to collect data (e.g. portside sampling etc.) which could satisfy some of the data elements for ASM should be provided in order to better evaluate costs – benefits and direct ASM framework measures necessary. This analysis should be independent from the evaluation of whether the industry can afford to pay for this program, which has already been shown that they cannot. Instead it should focus on the technical aspects of the program and whether the program is actually worth the money. This analysis will enable Committee/Council to revamp the ASM program to truly make the benefits justified by the costs.

Discussion on the Motion: There was no Committee discussion on the motion.

Motion **carried** on a show of hands (9/0/1).

Council staff recapped the motions and discussion, and explained which motions would be brought forward to the June Council meeting.

A Committee member asked what the industry does in the meantime regarding ASM costs in FY2015. There were brief statements made about the potential to use disaster relief funds being distributed by the states to cover the cost, though a particular preference was not stated.

Update on Amendment 18 (A18), Ms. Rachel Feeney:

Staff explained that the A18 preliminary DEIS was submitted to the Regional Office on May 21st. The public comment period for the action will likely be July 17th to August 31st of 2015, and the Council plans to schedule in-person hearings in Portland, Portsmouth, Gloucester, New Bedford, and Mystic along with one webinar. The Council is scheduled to take final action on A18 at the September Council meeting.

Groundfish FW54/Monkfish Framework 9 (FW54/FW9), Dr. Fiona Hogan:

The objective of GF FW54/MF FW9 is to revise existing management measures to achieve catch limits in the monkfish fishery. The alternatives contained in this joint action promote greater operational flexibility in the monkfish fishery. Council staff provided the Committee with a summary of the draft alternatives and impact analyses of the joint action. The Monkfish Committee and Monkfish Advisory Panel

discussed the alternatives and impacts at their joint meeting on May 26th, 2015 and recommended preferred alternatives for consideration by the Councils. . Alternatives include allowing vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS while at sea, allowing vessels in the Southern Fishery Management Area (SFMA) to declare a monkfish DAS while at sea, modifying the DAS/trip limit allocation for Category F vessels, allowing vessels to re-declare from a monkfish DAS to a RSA DAS, eliminating the Northern Fishery Management Area (NFMA) trip limit while on a NE multispecies DAS, and allowing the use of 5-7" mesh standup gillnet while on a monkfish DAS. Staff reviewed the existing exemption area regulations in the SFMA and outlined potential strategies for the AP and Committee to consider. The Monkfish Committee recommended only modifying minimum mesh requirements for standup gillnets in the SFMA because of potential interactions with groundfish in the NFMA. The GF PDT provided comments on the alternatives through a June 1 memo to the Monkfish PDT.

Discussion on the Presentation: A Council member serving on both the Groundfish and Monkfish Committees explained reasons why the monkfish TAL was not being achieved in the NFMA, which included low ACLs for flatfish which are co-caught with monkfish. They went on to say that the groundfish fleet spent time avoiding flatfish, which is a reason that the monkfish TAL is not being caught.

Some Public Comment Included:

Maggie Raymond, Associated Fisheries of Maine. The Monkfish Committee is saying No Action on almost every single option they developed to achieve the objective of the framework. The only catch that will likely increase through this framework is dogfish. There is absolutely no reason why we should only be catching 50-60% of the TAL. This is already a very conservative plan which includes huge buffers between the ACL and the TAL.

Another Council member serving on both the Groundfish and Monkfish Committees explained that a big issue discussed at the last Monkfish Committee meeting was a desire to address latent effort - while the TAL is not being caught and all monkfish DAS are not being used, those who are active in the fishery are using all of their days. Fishermen active in the SFMA informed the Monkfish Committee that they are fishing more nets to catch the trip limit and that the resource is not in as good a shape as the assessment indicates.

One Committee member expressed concern that the ability to declare a groundfish DAS while at sea could create a loophole to bypass the pre-trip notification system (PTNS).

Some Public Comment Included:

Maggie Raymond, Associated Fisheries of Maine. To the issue of removing the trip limit in the Northern Fishery Management Area, there is no need to have a trip limit. We are catching about 60% of the TAL and have a huge amount of precaution built into the plan. It is the only fishery that has a TAL that is less than the ACL. I understand that there are concerns that effort will shift to the SFMA, but that has not happened to-date, and is not likely to happen. If that did occur, it could always be addressed in a future action. I hope the Groundfish Committee and NE Council will vote against that recommendation for No Action on the issue.

The Groundfish Committee recapped the Monkfish Committee's discussion on this alternative from their May 26th meeting. At the Monkfish Committee meeting, it was felt that the 600lb a day trip limit while on a groundfish DAS was not limiting monkfish catch. The Committee discussed some of the potential impacts of removing a monkfish trip limit while on a groundfish DAS, noting that this would negate the

need to use a MF DAS in the NFMA, and which may allow effort to shift from the NFMA to the SFMA. There was disagreement on what the impact of such an action might be. The Committee had a lengthy discussion on how a trip limit could be removed in the NFMA while addressing the potential for redirection of effort while on a MF DAS.

Consensus Statement #2:

The Groundfish Committee supports the alternatives in Section 4.1.1 (“Allow vessels to declare a Northeast Multispecies Day-at-Sea at sea” Option 3 (4.1.1.3 “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”) as a better preferred alternative, as it would limit the alternative to sector vessels only.

Statement of Support #1

The Groundfish Committee strongly supports but cannot come to consensus on removing the trip limit in the Northern area (Option 2 “Eliminate the Trip Limit on a NE multispecies DAS” in Section 4.2.1 “Northern Area Monkfish Trip Limit on a Groundfish DAS”).

Other Business:

Council staff requested that the Committee provide guidance on where ASM issues ranks among other Groundfish Priorities. Multiple Committee members felt that ASM should be a top priority.

The meeting adjourned at 4:01pm.