



New England Fishery Management Council

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

John F. Quinn, J.D., Ph.D., *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEETING SUMMARY

Skate Advisory Panel Holiday Inn, Mansfield, MA June 12, 2017

The Skate Advisory Panel met on June 12, 2017 in Mansfield, MA to: review PDT analyses for Framework 4, to adjust bait skate possession limits, and to select preferred alternatives.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Mr. Dave Wallace (Chair), Mr. Charlie Dodge (Vice Chair), Ms. Andrea Incollingo, Mr. William McCann, and Mr. Dan Nordstrom; Dr. Fiona Hogan (NEFMC staff); Dr. Matthew McKenzie (Skate Committee Chair). In addition, approximately 1 member of the public attended.

Quorum was not reached at this meeting; any recommendations made only reflected the opinions of the AP members present.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- The AP members present developed an additional option for consideration in Framework 4 that reduced the skate bait possession limit in Season 3 to 12,000 lb, reduced the Season 3 trigger to 80%, set the incidental possession limit at 8,000 lb, and implemented a closure when 100% of the TAL was achieved.
- The AP members present intended the option developed at the meeting to be their preferred alternative.

PRESENTATION: SKATE FRAMEWORK 4

Staff provided the AP with an overview of the options contained within Framework 4 to adjust bait skate possession limits. In addition to the no action alternative, the PDT developed 2 options that modified skate bait effort controls. The options were primarily based on a skate bait possession limit analysis that examined fishing patterns in previous fishing years to estimate an appropriate range of possession limits for Season 3. The analysis indicated that a 12,000 lb possession limit in Season 3 would be expected to fully harvest the TAL in FY2017, based on consistent fishing behavior that would leave roughly 3 million lb of the TAL available for Season 3. The two options also included a closure once 100% of the TAL was achieved. One of the options redefined the incidental possession from its current definition, which ties it to the wing possession limit. After Framework 4, the PDT will begin work on Framework 5, which would include specifications for FYs 2018 and 2019, skate wing and bait possession limits, and removing the prohibition on landing barndoor skate.

AGENDA ITEM #1: SKATE FRAMEWORK 4

An AP member confirmed that any changes to the trigger should be applied only to Season 3. The AP member reiterated that the bait skate incidental possession limit should be independent of the wing fishery possession limits. Staff clarified that the way the PDT had initially grouped the alternatives, Option 2 did not disconnect the two fisheries but the AP members present could provide an alternate option for consideration. The AP members present, representing both the wing and bait fisheries, were in agreement that the fisheries should be independent of each other so the wing fishery can't affect operations in the bait fishery. An AP member was in favor of the 12,000 lb possession limit in Season 3, a reduction in the trigger to 80% in Season 3, and setting the incidental possession limit at 9,300 lb. Another AP member wanted to fully disconnect the bait fishery from the wing fishery and set the incidental possession limit at a completely independent number. This was supported by the other AP members present because the issue had been discussed at previous meetings and the intent was to separate these two fisheries via the incidental possession limit.

The AP members present proposed adding an additional alternative for consideration in Framework 4. This option would maintain the 25,000 lb possession limit and 90% trigger in Seasons 1 and 2. It would reduce the Season 3 possession limit to 12,000 lb, reduce the trigger in Season 3 to 80%, and implement a closure once 100% of the TAL was achieved. This option would also redefine the incidental possession limit to be 8,000 lb in all seasons, which would remove the incidental possession limit link between the two fisheries. The rationale for the incidental possession limit was to recognize the difference between the two fisheries and end the possibility of the wing fishery affecting bait fishery operations.

The issue of species specific management arose out of the discussion to treat the bait and wing fisheries separately. An AP member strongly opposed species specific management but was in favor of other measures, such as independent possession limits, that could be implemented within the overall structure of the complex.

Staff explained that the closure, contained in the proposed alternative, would prevent bait fishing once 100% of the TAL was achieved. It was unknown whether some of that effort would then shift to the wing fishery, provided that the wing incidental possession limit was not in place.

All the features of the proposed alternative were thought to minimize impacts of any closures by reducing the duration of such a closure. The 8,000 lb proposed incidental possession limit was considered low enough to discourage some trips from occurring, therefore reducing effort. An AP member wondered whether the proposed alternative would allow the possession limit to go back up to 25,000 lb if the TAL was not being achieved. Another AP member did not think that would be worth adding given that it might only happen for a week. Staff explained that the flexibility for the Regional Administrator to only implement incidental limits when the TAL was projected to be exceeded would help prevent the TAL from being achieved by these measures. The Committee chair noted that this approach seemed to be supported by fishermen he had spoken to outside of the meeting.

The Committee chair agreed to inform the Committee about this proposed alternative, with the caveat that quorum was not reached, and that both wing and bait fishery participants supported it.