



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*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 10, 2020
TO: Skate Advisory Panel (AP) and Committee
FROM: Matt McKenzie, Skate Committee Chairman
SUBJECT: Charge to AP and Committee for March 26, 2020 meeting

There will be a joint Skate AP and Committee meeting at the Fairfield Inn in New Bedford, MA, on **Thursday, March 26, starting at 8:30 AM**. However, due to the evolving coronavirus situation, the Council may decide to change this meeting to a webinar, possibly on short notice. The Council website and official Council communications are the best source for this information.

PURPOSE. The primary purpose of this meeting is to develop Amendment 5 (limited access). In addition, The AP and Committee will also discuss wind energy, 2020 skate work priorities, 2019 skate fishery performance and outlook for 2020, research priorities and other business as necessary. This is the first AP meeting since the panel has been appointed for the next three-year term (2020-2022). We will welcome new members of the Skate AP and review Council policies with the entire group.

MEETING MATERIALS. Document #1a (agenda) includes an updated AP roster and list of all meeting documents. As documents become available, they will be posted on the Council website for this meeting:
<https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/mar-26-2020-skate-joint-advisory-panel-and-committee-meeting>.

To make the most of our meeting time, you are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the documents beforehand and prepare motions in advance. Paper copies of documents will be provided at the meeting. If you have any questions about the documents or this meeting, please contact Rachel Feeney (rfeeney@nefmc.org; (978) 465-0492 x110). Travel questions may be directed to Woneta Cloutier (wcloutier@nefmc.org; (978) 465-0492 x100).

Wind Energy Updates

Michelle Bachman (NEFMC staff) will give a brief overview of the status of offshore energy development particularly in Southern New England and the Mid-Atlantic, including Council initiatives/activities, and how fishermen can be involved (Document #2a). Many of the offshore wind companies employ a fisheries liaison, and a few are planning to attend our meeting and be available for questions and discussion. This will be an opportunity to discuss how the offshore wind industry and skate fishery are intersecting.

2020 Skate Work Priorities

We will review the skate-related work priorities the Council approved for 2020 (Document #1d) with potential milestones for completion.

FY 2019 Skate Fishery Performance and Outlook for FY 2020

RECENT ACTIVITY. The Proposed Rule implementing Framework 8 includes the Council's recommendations for Fishing Year (FY) 2020-2021 specifications:

- Increasing the Total Allowable Landings (TAL) from 15,788 to 17,864 mt (34.8M to 39.4M lb); the wing TAL would increase from 10,499 to 11,879 mt (23.1M to 26.2M lb), and the bait TAL would increase from 5,289 to 5,984 mt (11.7M to 13.2M lb).
- The wing possession limits would increase from 2,600 to 3,000 lb (wing weight) in Season 1 and from 4,100 to 5,000 lb in Season 2. Barndoor skate wing possession limits would increase from 650 to 750 lb in Season 1 and from 1,025 to 1,250 lb in Season 2.
- The bait possession limit in Season 3 would increase from 12,000 to 25,000 lb (would be 25,000 lb year-round).

NEXT STEPS. On March 26, the AP will have an opportunity to provide feedback on how FY 2019 is progressing (Document #3a) and expectations for FY 2020. Discussion topics could include:

- What factors have influenced recent fishing activity and how (e.g., possession limits, market conditions, environment/ecosystem, species distribution)?
- How is the fishery expecting to adjust to the FY 2020-2021 specifications?
- What other factors may impact the fishery going forward?

Development of Amendment 5

RECENT ACTIVITY. In 2019, the AP and Committee developed objectives for Amendment 5, discussed potential options for limited access qualification criteria and tasked the Plan Development Team to describe the vessels that would meet the criteria and provide additional fishery data to understand the diverse nature of the skate fishery. At the October 2019 AP and Committee meetings, the PDT reported its progress on the tasking, but noted challenges with querying the data that were resulting in errors that were not resolved in time for the meeting. The Committee wanted to better understand the fisheries and fishermen using skates before developing limited access criteria. The PDT was tasked with resolving data challenges and providing additional analyses (See Committee meeting summary, Document #6b).

In December, the Council approved continuing work on Amendment 5 as a 2020 priority and tasked the Skate Committee to define a clear problem statement, goals, and objectives for this action.

The PDT has held three meetings (Documents #6c-e) and has resolved the data query methods such that the data provided (Document #4d) do not include any duplicative trips or doubled landings, which was occurring in the draft data provided in October 2019. To support the Committee tasking by the Council, the PDT prepared a memo (Document #4a) describing the development of Amendment 5 to date (control dates, scoping, motions, objectives, and ideas raised to date for creating a problem statement and potentially refining goals/objectives). It also supplies data related to the draft limited access qualification tiers and an analysis of potential landings that could occur under current possession limits. The PDT moved relevant tables from prior PDT memos on Amendment 5 to the draft Affected Human Environment for this action (Document #4e). Lastly, the PDT incorporated the NMFS Community Vulnerability Indicators for the skate fishery into how key skate fishing communities are identified in the Affected Human Environment (Document #4e, Section 2.1.4.1).

NEXT STEPS. On March 26, we will recap development of amendment to date, discuss how key skate fishing communities are identified, and discuss PDT work on Committee tasking. With AP input, the Committee is expected to discuss creating a problem statement, refining goals/objectives, and potentially develop alternatives.

2020-2024 Research Priorities and Data Needs

RECENT ACTIVITY. The PDT has prepared recommendations for skate-related updates for the 2020-2024 Council research priorities (Document #5a). The Council is expected to approve the entire list in April 2020. The PDT sent us the document in early March to solicit any input ahead of the March 31 meeting of the Scientific and Statistical Committee.

NEXT STEPS. On March 26, with AP input, the Committee should approve the skate-related research priorities.