



New England Fishery Management Council

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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 22, 2022
TO: Monkfish Advisory Panel
FROM: Elizabeth “Libby” Etrie, Monkfish Committee Chair
SUBJECT: **Charge for May 4, 2022, meeting**

There will be a webinar meeting of the Monkfish Advisory Panel on **Wednesday, May 4 starting at 9:00 AM**. Please join the webinar ten minutes prior to test audio and to help the meeting start on-time. The meeting is scheduled to conclude by 1:00 PM without a lunch break; please plan accordingly.

PURPOSE. The purpose of this meeting is to: 1) discuss recent performance of the monkfish fishery and help the Plan Development Team write a monkfish fishery performance report; 2) develop recommendations to the Monkfish Committee for drafting a range of alternatives for Framework Adjustment 13 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) which will include Fishing Year 2023-2025 specifications and other management measures; 3) develop recommendations for 2022-2026 Council research priorities and data needs regarding monkfish and research priorities for the 2022/2023 Monkfish RSA program.

MEETING MATERIALS. To make the most of our meeting time, please read and familiarize yourself with the documents beforehand and come ready to make any recommendations. As documents become available, they will be posted on the Council webpage for this meeting:

<https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/may-4-2022-monkfish-advisory-panel-meeting>

WEBINAR REGISTRATION. To be able to view the webinar, listen and talk during it, you must: 1) register for the webinar in advance and 2) join the webinar on the day of the meeting (you can then select phone or computer for your audio connection). If you just call in using the phone number provided on the meeting notice, you will be in listen-only mode and will not be able to speak during the meeting.

QUESTIONS/TECHNICAL SUPPORT. If you have any questions about the meeting documents, agenda, or how to participate, please contact Rachel Feeney (rfeeney@nefmc.org; 978-465-0492 x110). A [Public Participation Guide](#) is available with tips on joining Council webinars. Staff would be happy to set up a practice webinar for you ahead of the meeting if that would be helpful. For technical support during the meeting, please email helpdesk@nefmc.org or call 978-465-0492 x111.

Fishery Performance Report

RECENT ACTIVITY. In December 2021, the Council set the following 2022 work priority:

“AP and PDT develop a fishery performance report to help the Council/Committee better understand present conditions of the fishery”

The Plan Development Team (PDT) developed a draft outline of this report, modeled after the approach the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council takes in developing fishery information documents and

fishery performance reports (examples at: mafmc.org/msb), as that approach was referenced by Committee members when this work priority was developed in September 2021. In March and April 2022, respectively, the Monkfish Committee and NEFMC approved the outline and the purpose of the report: “to help the Monkfish Committee, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Councils understand the fishery and to help interpret fishery data; it may help understand trends in and relationships between landings and abundance.” Since then, the PDT has drafted the report and included background information on the status of the monkfish fishery and recent fishery data (Document #2).

ON MAY 4. The Monkfish Advisory Panel has an opportunity to discuss the state of the fishery and answer the questions listed on page 16 of the draft report and here for convenience:

1. What factors have influenced recent fishing activity and how (e.g., domestic and foreign markets, costs, environment, fish distribution, regulations)?
2. How might these factors change in FY 2022? How do you expect the fishery to adjust?
3. How has the global pandemic changed the fishery? Do you see the fishery returning to a pre-pandemic state or is there a new normal emerging?
4. Considering the fishery data, are there specific regional or port differences in fishery performance that are important?
5. Are the current fishery regulations appropriate? How could they be improved and how would the improvements affect the fishery?
6. Have any recent regulatory changes affected the fishery and how (e.g., implemented in 2020, vessels using the Interactive Voice Response system now must submit a trip declaration within an hour of leaving port, like vessels using the Vessel Monitoring System)?
7. What would you recommend as research priorities?
8. What is hindering the use of RSA DAS to raise funds for monkfish research? How might the Monkfish RSA program improve?
9. What else is important for the Council to know (e.g., impacts of right whale regulations, offshore wind development)?

FUTURE STEPS. The PDT will compile the AP input on these questions and draft the full report. It will be reviewed by the Monkfish Committee on May 26. A social sciences sub-panel of the Scientific and Statistical Committee may review the draft over the summer, and the report will be finalized prior to the September NEFMC meeting. The report can then be provided to the SSC when they discuss specifications in October.

Framework Adjustment 13

RECENT ACTIVITY. In December 2021, the Council set the following as a 2022 work priority:

“Develop and submit action to adjust monkfish specifications for 2023-2025, including potential modifications to the discard estimation methods based on the recent work done by the PDT; consider a 12-inch minimum mesh size for monkfish gillnets; consider requiring VMS for the federal fishery, including evaluation of costs; consider measures to reduce discards in the southern monkfish management area.”

The Plan Development Team (PDT) has met a few times to begin work on this action (Documents 3 and 5b), particularly to develop background information on the 2022 monkfish management track assessment and specifications setting process, and to inform the development of the alternatives for the types of management measures identified by the Council. The Committee met on March 24 to begin development of this action which the Council formally initiated in April.

ON MAY 4. The Advisory Panel can give input on what the range of alternatives should be for this action. This meeting will focus on alternatives for: 1) setting the northern and southern area Day-at-Sea allocations and possession limits; 2) potentially requiring a 12-inch minimum mesh size for monkfish gillnets (10" mesh currently required in some exemption areas); 3) potentially requiring use of the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) across the federal monkfish fishery (certain permits currently exempt); and 4) reducing discards in Southern Fishery Management Area

In the FW13 Discussion Document (Document 3), there are text boxes with notes and lists of specific questions where your input would be helpful. The main questions are also listed here:

Discussion questions (see Document 3 for details):

- Effort controls
 - Should alternatives for the DAS allocation for limited access permits be developed? If so, which? Note: only a small subset of vessels has used most of its DAS allocation recently.
 - Should alternatives for the possession limits should be developed? If so, which?
- Gillnet mesh size
 - Should an alternative to increase from the current 10" gillnet mesh requirement in exemption areas to 12" be developed? If so, should the mesh size increase:
 - Apply to all vessels with a federal monkfish permit or a subset (e.g., vessels fishing on a monkfish-only DAS)?
 - Apply in all exemption areas or certain ones?
- Vessel Monitoring System
 - What alternatives for requiring VMS across more of the federal monkfish fishery should be considered? Note: The PDT recommends not applying this to open access vessels.
 - Rather than VMS, should an alternate electronic vessel tracking device be considered, like the device the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is recommending for the federal lobster and Jonah crab fisheries?
- Southern area discards
 - What alternatives for reducing southern area discards should be considered? Note:
 - It may be more appropriate to consider some ideas through a future joint action with other FMPs.
 - The NEFMC has recommended to the NEFSC that recent discard mortality research be considered when updating discard data in the 2022 monkfish assessment. The assumed discard mortality rate is 100% across all gear types, but research suggests that discard mortality in dredge gear may be lower.

FUTURE STEPS. The Monkfish Committee will meet on May 26 to develop alternatives for this action and will be informed by the AP input. The monkfish assessment will be peer reviewed in September, so alternatives for specifications will be developed later in the year. Final action on Framework 13 is scheduled for December 2022.

2022-2026 Research Priorities and Data Needs

RECENT ACTIVITY. Each year, the Council updates its list of 5-year research priorities and data needs. The last update occurred in June 2021 and is available on the [Council's website](#). The PDT has recommended monkfish-specific updates for the 2022-2026 Council Research Priorities and Data Needs (Document 4). These were reviewed and approved by the Committee on March 24 (Document 5a).

ON MAY 4. The Advisory Panel can review the list and make any recommendations for revisions.

FUTURE STEPS. If the AP recommends revisions, Committee review of this input will occur either via email correspondence, or during the May 26 Committee meeting. The Council is expected to approve the entire list in June 2022.

Other Business – Monkfish RSA Priorities

RECENT ACTIVITY. NMFS, in coordination with the Council, usually solicits proposals on a two-year cycle for monkfish research to be conducted under the Monkfish Research-Set-Aside (RSA) Program. The last proposal solicitation was in 2019 for the 2020-2021 program (research priorities are listed in Document 5). There was no proposal solicitation in 2021 due to concerns that existing projects were having difficulty with raising the needed revenue through fishing on RSA Days-At-Sea. Instead, the projects approved for 2020-2021 were issued an extension. More information on the RSA program is in Document 2.

ON MAY 4. If a Monkfish RSA Request for Proposals is issued for 2023-2024, research priorities should be identified by the Council. Advisory Panel can review the list of 2020-2021 priorities and make any recommendations for updates. The AP could identify a subset of the draft list of 2022-2026 Council Research Priorities and Data Needs to recommend.

FUTURE STEPS. On May 26, the Committee is expected to recommend Monkfish RSA research priorities, informed by any AP input. The Council will approve Monkfish RSA priorities in June.