



## New England Fishery Management Council

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

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** August 19, 2022  
**TO:** Monkfish Advisory Panel and Committee  
**FROM:** Elizabeth “Libby” Etrie, Monkfish Committee Chair  
**SUBJECT:** **Charge for August 30, 2022, meetings**

**On Tuesday August 30,** there will be a meeting of the **Monkfish Advisory Panel starting at 8:30 AM,** followed by a meeting **Monkfish Committee starting at 1:00 PM.** The meetings will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn Logan Airport in Boston, but a webinar option will be available for those unable to travel to the meeting. If you are joining via webinar, please join the webinar ten minutes prior to test audio and to help the meetings start on-time.

**PURPOSE.** The purpose of both meetings is to: 1) help finalize the monkfish fishery performance report; 2) develop recommendations for Framework Adjustment 13 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) which will include Fishing Year 2023-2025 specifications and other management measures; and 3) develop recommendations for 2023 Council management priorities regarding monkfish.

**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 webpages for each meeting:

*Advisory Panel:* <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/aug-30-2022-monkfish-advisory-panel>

*Committee:* <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/aug-30-2022-monkfish-committee>

**WEBINAR REGISTRATION.** For those joining remotely, 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](mailto:helpdesk@nefmc.org).

### Fishery Performance Report

**RECENT ACTIVITY.** After the Monkfish Advisory Panel had an opportunity on May 4 to discuss the state of the fishery and answer questions of the Plan Development Team (PDT), the PDT presented the draft performance report to the Monkfish Committee on May 26. Because this is the first performance report for the NEFMC to write, the draft was also reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on

June 7. The PDT has updated the draft to reflect the input received by these committees and has included additional data that have since become available (Document #2, key updates are highlighted).

**ON AUGUST 30.** The AP will have an opportunity to review the new information added to the document and give any last input before the document is finalized. The Committee will receive an update on document progress and have any further discussion.

**FUTURE STEPS.** The report will be finalized and presented to the Council in September.

### **Framework Adjustment 13**

**RECENT ACTIVITY.** The (PDT) has met a few times over the summer to support the ongoing 2022 monkfish management track assessment, to develop alternate methods for setting the discard deduction from the annual catch target, to write alternatives for effort controls and gillnet mesh size, and to develop background information that will support impacts analysis. The SSC had been scheduled in early August to review the PDT work on discard deduction methods, but that meeting has been postponed until October.

**ON AUGUST 30.** Staff will provide an update on the development of this action. Notably, the preliminary indication from the assessment is that trawl survey indices have declined for both stocks. After discussion, the Advisory Panel and Committee can give any further input and recommendations on what the range of alternatives should be for this action. In the 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 notes and questions (see Document 3 for details):

- **Effort control alternatives (Section 4.2):**
  - There has been some conversation at AP and Committee meetings about the results of the monkfish assessment driving opinions about how effort controls should change. The preliminary indication from the assessment is that trawl survey indices have declined for both stocks, thus a subsequent decline in the Acceptable Biological Catch for FY 2023-2025 is a distinct possibility. Does the current range of effort control alternatives hold under scenarios of both positive and negative change in the assessment?
  - Alternatives 2-4 are written as packages of effort control adjustments, progressively following the order of the Committee's bullets (above). In case the Committee wants to only adjust possession limits, the PDT added Alternative 5.
  - Although the Committee is focused on adjusting SFMA effort controls, the PDT wrote the DAS overage adjustment (Bullet #1) to apply to the NFMA as well. The current regulations on this apply to both areas and the PDT assumed that the Committee would prefer to keep this consistent between areas.
  - The Committee should confirm consent with this range of alternatives, including the specific percentages of possession limits.
  - Section 6.1.1 includes preliminary PDT work to analyze these alternatives. There is no model for how the fishery may adjust to changes in effort controls. The PDT has identified which vessels may be more likely to change their effort in response to the alternatives, but there are several assumptions and uncertainties noted.
  
- **Gillnet mesh size alternatives (Section 4.3):**
  - The regulations at 50 CFR 648.91(c)(1)(iii) state that gillnet vessels on a monkfish DAS must use a minimum of 10" inch mesh. Where the exemption areas are described, the regulations state that a monkfish-only DAS may only be used in the exemption areas. Although the Committee's consensus statement is specific to the exemption areas, the

PDT recommends having the alternatives in this section indicate that the mesh size increase is applicable to the use of monkfish DAS. This would help clarify the intent and keep regulations consistent. The way the regulations are written, the PDT recommends specifying a mesh size increase only in the GOM/GB dogfish and monkfish area (see below), though it effectively would apply to the SNE monkfish and skate area too. Please confirm if this is acceptable.

- For the [GOM/GB dogfish and monkfish gillnet exemption area](#), there is a separate regulation that vessels targeting dogfish may use a 6.5” gillnet (catch of other species must be under 10%). It would be straightforward to revise the 10” gillnet mesh requirement in this area given the minimum mesh size of 10” is defined separately from dogfish (i.e., any changes to the minimum mesh size for vessels targeting monkfish would not affect the dogfish fishery).
- For the [SNE monkfish and skate gillnet exemption area](#), the regulations state that all gillnets must have a minimum size of 10”. If the minimum mesh size is changed for this exemption area, it would apply to all the trips that are authorized under this exemption area. That includes monkfish-only DAS trips and trips with a Letter of Authorization to fish for skate bait. If it is the Committee’s intent to only impact the monkfish-only DAS trips (not the skate bait vessels), then the PDT recommends not changing the minimum mesh size in this area. Monkfish DAS gillnet vessels fishing in this area would need to conform to the minimum mesh size for monkfish DAS, so effectively, the alternatives in this action would apply to this area. The alternatives were written assuming this is the intent. Please confirm if this is acceptable.
- Section 6.1.2 includes preliminary PDT work to analyze these alternatives.

***FUTURE STEPS.*** The monkfish assessment will be peer reviewed on September 20. The Council will receive an update on Framework 13 during its September 27-29 meeting. On September 27 (during the Council meeting), the PDT is meeting to develop recommendations for specifications for the northern and southern management areas. The SSC is meeting either on October 12 or 26-27 (to be determined) to recommend overfishing limits and acceptable biological catches and to recommend a method for setting the discard deduction. There will be AP and Committee meetings later in the fall to make final recommendations. Final action on Framework 13 is scheduled for December 2022.

### **2023 Council Management Priorities**

***RECENT ACTIVITY.*** At its July 20 meeting, the PDT developed recommendations for 2023 Council management priorities (Document #53). Also, the NEFMC has commented (Document #6a) on the NOAA Fisheries draft *Action Plan to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch in Federal Large Mesh Gillnet Fisheries* (Document #4).

***ON AUGUST 30.*** The AP and Committee can make recommendations on what the Council should work on in 2023 regarding monkfish, including any ranking of priorities. This could include consideration of actions recommended in the sturgeon draft action plan.

***FUTURE STEPS.*** In September, the Council will develop an initial list of management priorities for 2023 and finalize it in December.