



## New England Fishery Management Council

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Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** March 12, 2026  
**TO:** Skate and Monkfish Advisory Panels (AP) and Committees  
**FROM:** Matt Gates, Monkfish Committee Chair; Scott Olszewski, Skate Committee Chair  
**SUBJECT:** **Charge for joint Monkfish / Skate AP and Committee meeting on March 19, 2026**

The purpose of this memo is to help prepare the Skate and Monkfish Advisory Panels (AP) and Committees for their joint meeting on March 19, 2026, from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm via webinar. The primary materials to read and consider ahead of these meetings are the Monkfish and Skate 2025 Joint Management Summary Report (Document 2) and the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Scoping Document (Document 3). Please join the webinar ten minutes prior to test audio and help the meeting start on time.

**PURPOSE.** The purpose of the meeting is to discuss: 1) feedback on efforts in 2025 to coordinate skate and monkfish work; 2) develop recommendations for a scoping document for a potential individual fishing quota program for the monkfish and/or skate wing fisheries; and 3) other business, as necessary.

**MEETING MATERIALS.** To make the most of our meeting time, please 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: <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/mar-19-2026-joint-monkfish-advisory-panel-and-committee-and-skate-advisory-panel-and-committee-webinar>

**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). A link to register for the webinar is posted on the above webpage. Please check that your Zoom account is updated to help ensure the software will work properly.

**QUESTIONS/TECHNICAL SUPPORT.** If you have any questions about the meeting documents, agenda, or how to participate, please contact Rachel Feeney ([rfeeney@nefmc.org](mailto:rfeeney@nefmc.org); 978-465-0492 x110) or Jennifer Couture ([jcouture@nefmc.org](mailto:jcouture@nefmc.org); 978-465-0492 x111). Staff would be happy to set up a practice webinar for you ahead of the meeting if that would be helpful.

### NEFMC Advisory Panel policies

This being the first meeting of the 2026-2028 Monkfish and Skate Advisory Panel, staff will present the Council's policies relating to its advisory panels (Document 1d).

## Recent Fishery Performance and Outlook for Fishing Year (FY) 2026

**RECENT ACTIVITY.** In recent years, the Monkfish and Skate APs have devoted time during meetings to discuss recent fishery performance and the future outlook. Committee members have noted that the insights have been informative for managing the fishery.

**ON MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup>.** The APs will again have an opportunity to discuss how the monkfish and skate fisheries are performing, focusing on Fishing Year (FY) 2025 and expectations for FY 2026. The Committees will have time to reflect on this input and ask for any input.

### Discussion questions/starters

- What factors have influenced recent fishing activity and how (e.g., environment/ecosystem, species distribution, domestic and foreign markets, costs)?
- How might these factors change in FY 2026? How do you expect the fisheries to adjust?
- Have any recent regulatory changes affected the fisheries and how (e.g., pending management measures to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch, other protected species concerns, etc.)?
- Are the current fishery regulations appropriate? How could they be improved and how would the improvements affect the monkfish and skate fisheries?
- What other factors may impact the monkfish and skate fisheries going forward?

**FUTURE STEPS.** This information could be informative for the development of future specifications, effort controls (possession limits, DAS), or other management measures.

## Summary of feedback on 2025 coordinated monkfish and skate efforts

**RECENT ACTIVITY.** In 2025, the Council approved the following joint priority for monkfish and skate: “Coordinate Committee and AP activities and review effectiveness of joint planning (multiyear, initiate in 2025)”. This priority resulted from discussions during recent Monkfish and Skate Advisory Panel and Committee meetings where some of the overlaps between these fisheries were identified. Generally, industry members commented that they are catching increasingly more skates in recent years, which can have limitations on targeting monkfish. Fishermen targeting monkfish are catching large amounts of skates and reaching skate possession limits before reaching monkfish possession limits, which can lead to decreased monkfish landings. Joint monkfish and skate meetings were held in 2025 to develop specifications and better understand fishery overlaps.

During the end of 2025 and beginning of 2026, Council staff held small group and individual meetings to understand what did and did not work well with the joint meeting structure and data analysis, ideas for improvement, and considerations for potential joint management of monkfish and skate wing fisheries in the future (Document 2).

**ON MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup>.** Staff will present a recap of the feedback received to date. After reviewing the summary report, the Joint AP and Joint Committee can provide any additional input before the summary report is finalized for the April Council meeting.

### Discussion questions/starters

These were the questions asked during the interviews. AP and Committee members are encouraged to review the report with these in mind and offer any further input during the meeting.

- Overall, how do you think the joint process went, coordinating meetings and analyses for monkfish and skate fisheries? Did this coordination help inform any changes to monkfish and/or skate possession limits and other management measures?

- Were the joint monkfish and skate AP / Committee meetings efficient and effective? What were the pros and cons of meeting jointly?
- How can we improve this joint process if/when it occurs again? This can include meeting format, topics that are more appropriate to be discussed jointly vs separately (i.e., any discussions that are more appropriate for just one group?), etc.
- Is there any other feedback you'd like to share?

### **Draft scoping document for a potential IFQ program**

**RECENT ACTIVITY.** On [September 17, 2025](#), the Monkfish and Skate APs and Committees met and recommended priorities for Council work in 2026. The Committee consensus statement was:

The Monkfish and Skate Committees recommend to the Council the following for 2026 Council work priorities to consider:

*Highest Priority (in priority order)*

1. Have the monkfish CPUE research peer-reviewed.
2. Explore options for moving from skate possession limits that are per trip to limits based on the number of DAS that a trip is charged. This could allow more trip efficiency and improve access to the skate and monkfish fisheries.
3. Create a skate wing RSA program to provide research opportunities for relevant fisheries. This would help forward research such as on discard mortality rates.
4. Develop a 3-season approach for managing the skate wing fishery.

*Lower Priority (not in order)*

5. Explore options for ways to reduce latent effort in the monkfish fishery.
6. Explore if the boundary of the Southern New England Skate Bait Trawl Exemption Area could be moved to the south (increasing the area).
7. Create skate wing DAS to replace Northeast multispecies DAS for fishing on skate wings.
8. Create a DAS leasing program for monkfish and skate wings to allow flexibility (once skate DAS are created).
9. Create an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)/sector management program for the monkfish and wing skate fisheries.

*Note: For priorities #2, 5 and 6, the Committee does not recommend initiating an action in 2026 on these topics. Priorities #2 and 5 were recommended by the Joint AP.*

In December 2025, the Council was presented recommendations of the Executive Committee that considered available staff resources and other constraints across all fishery management plans. The Executive Committee recommended a combination of the Priorities #1, 2 and 4 above. In addition to Priority #1, the Council ultimately [approved](#) the following priority: “scope an IFQ program for monkfish and/or skate wing fisheries; consider EO14276 response related to monkfish management modifications.”

The audio recording of the monkfish and skate priorities discussion at the Council meeting is posted at: [https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/14\\_2026-Council-Priorities-and-Planning.mp3](https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/14_2026-Council-Priorities-and-Planning.mp3), starting at about 3:18:30 of the recording. You are encouraged to listen to better understand the final decision of priorities.

Council staff have developed a draft scoping document, which includes the timing/locations for the scoping meetings, why the Council is conducting scoping, what the Council is considering, what comments should address, what the process is, and background information on the monkfish and skate wing fisheries (Document 3). A section that needs more development is the Council's rationale for scoping. Staff leaned on statements of individual Council members from the December 2025 Council meeting (further described in the staff slides, Document 1c), but ultimately, the NEFMC and MAFMC will need to approve the scoping document in April with a strong statement of rationale.

***ON MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup>***. Staff will present the draft scoping document, and the Committee Chairs will facilitate a discussion to solicit input on the document, including recommendations for the rationale for scoping to be incorporated into the IFQ scoping document if approved by the Councils. The Joint Monkfish and Skate AP and Committee are welcome to ask any questions and provide additional input for the draft IFQ scoping document before the document is reviewed and approved during the April MAFMC and NEFMC meetings.

*Discussion questions/starters*

- Why may an IFQ program for the monkfish and/or skate wings fisheries be needed?
- How could an IFQ program address issues in the monkfish and skate wing fisheries?