

# Skate Advisory Panel Webinar Meeting

**September 10, 2020  
8:30 AM – 12:00 PM  
Webinar**



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# Introductions

Skate Advisory Panel		
Greg Connors, MA (2017)		Gregory Mataronas, RI (2014)
Charlie Dodge, MA (2017)		William McCann, MA (2017)
James Dopkin, NJ (2020)		Randall Morgan, MD (2020)
Sonja Fordham, DC (2001)		Daniel Nordstrom, MA (2011)
Andrea Incollingo, RI (2001)		Ted Platz, RI (2011)
Jeff Kneebone, MA (2020)		John Whiteside, MA (2017, Chair)
Scott MacAllister, MA (2020)		
Skate Staff		
Rachel Feeney	Jenny Couture	Lou Goodreau

# Agenda

- 8:30 am**      **Introductions/approval of agenda**
- 8:40**      **2020 Skate Annual Monitoring Report (for FY 2019)**
- Review report and discuss recent fishery performance
  - Develop recommendations
- 9:30**      **Amendment 5**
- Recap work to date on developing problem statements, goals, and objectives
  - Develop recommendations
- 11:00**      **Council priorities regarding skates**
- Develop recommendations for addressing E.O. 13921 and for 2021 management priorities
- 11:45**      **Other business**
- 12:00**      **Adjourn**

Will take a break at about 10:00 AM

*Any other business?*

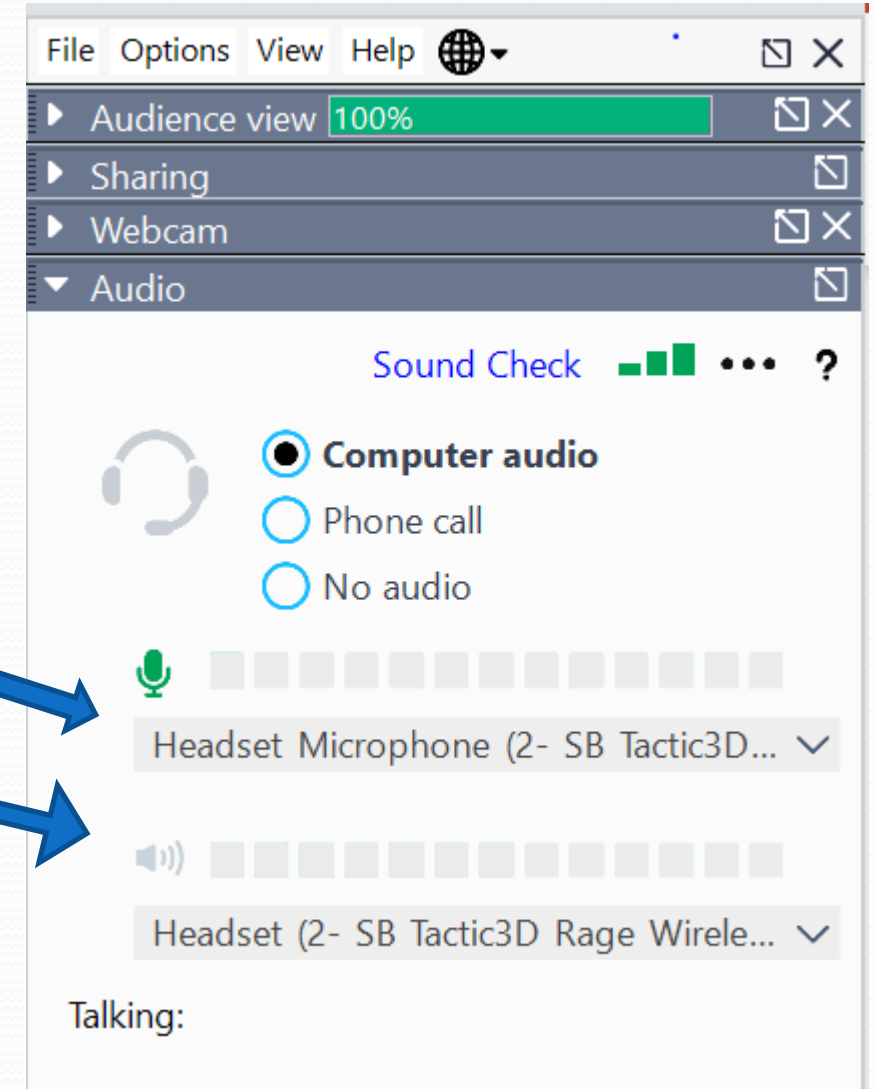


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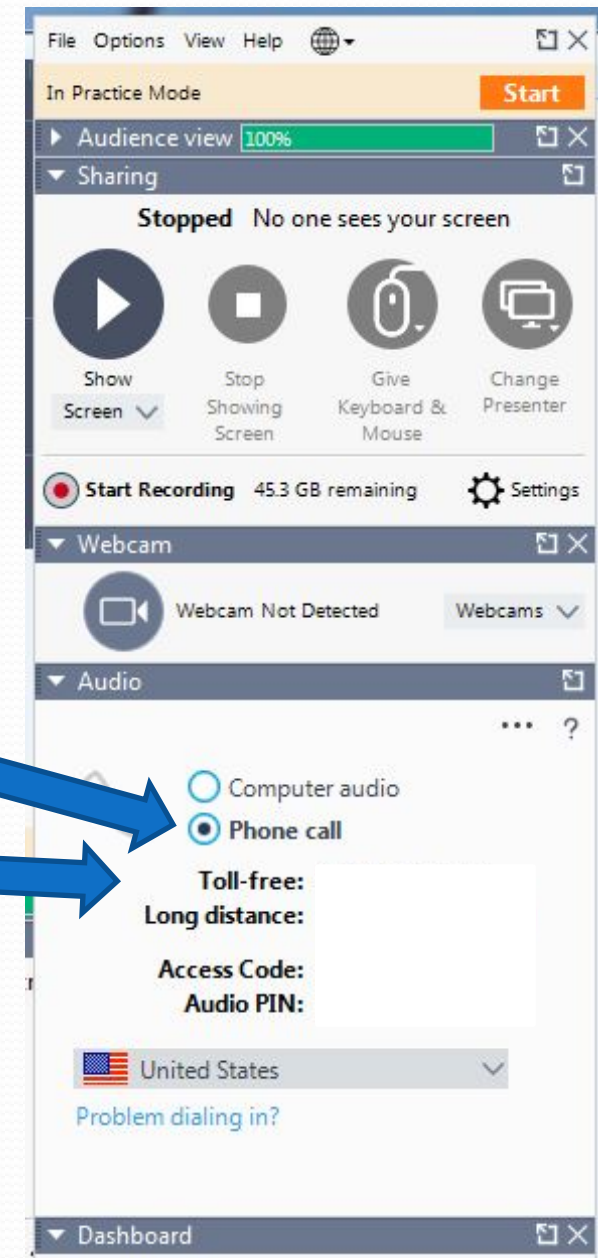


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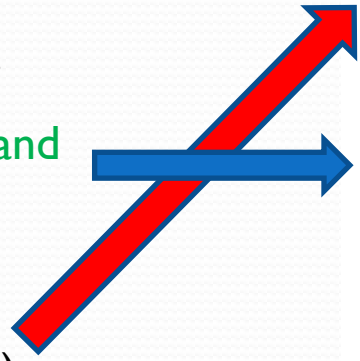


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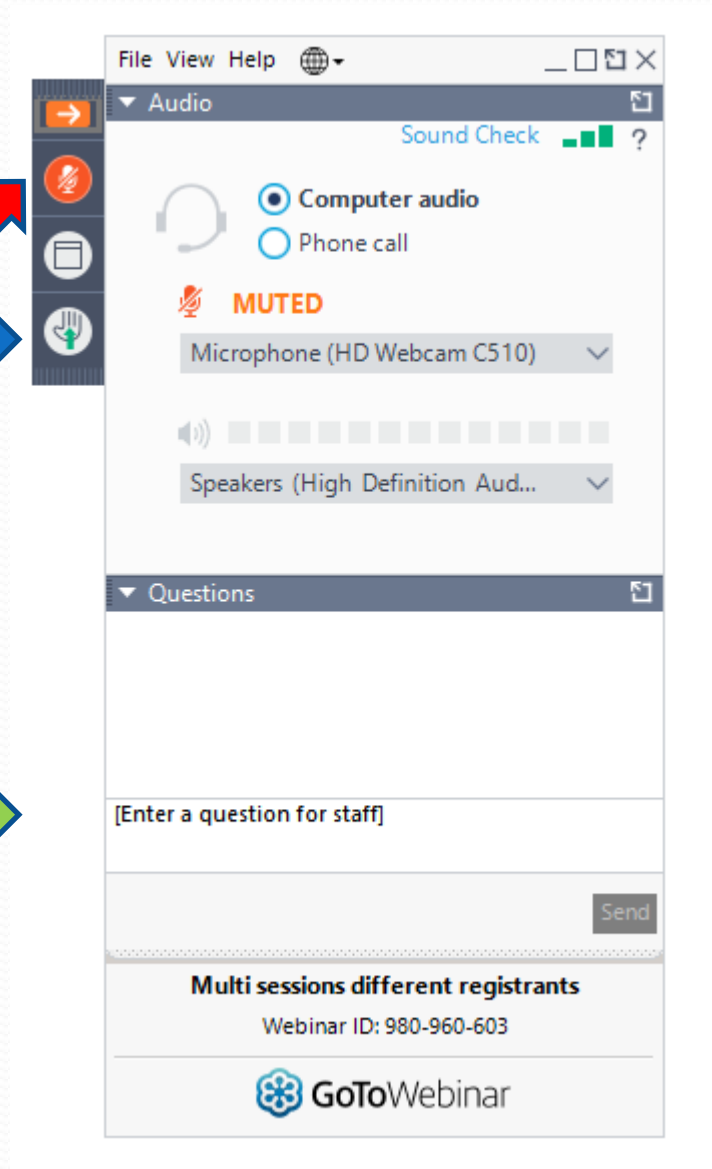
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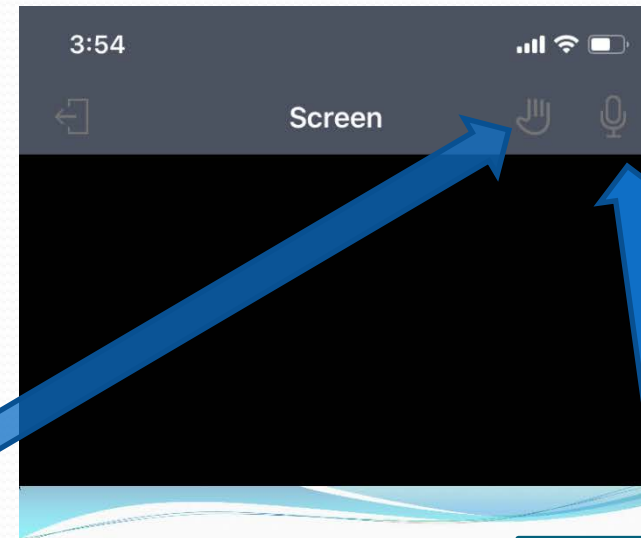


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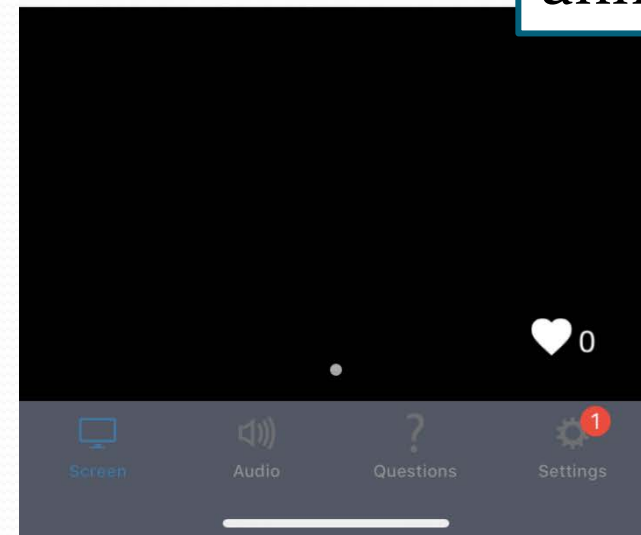
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*Any questions?*

# Ground Rules

- Meeting Chair will state when it is time to ask questions or comment, generally after presentations or motions.
- We will handle questions/discussion by the convening body first, followed by others (incl. public).
- People with “raised hands” will generally be called in the order their hand was raised.
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- All motions will be voted on by roll call.

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## Email motions:

[rfeeney@nefmc.org](mailto:rfeeney@nefmc.org)

*Any questions?*





# Skate updates and outlook

## Purpose

Review skate-related timeline

## Relevant documents

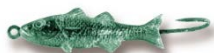
1d – timeline of skate work

# Skate timeline: 2020-2021

Doc #Id

		Skate Amendment 5	Annual Monitoring Report	Assessment	Specifications	Comments	
2020	Jan				FW8 submitted		
	Feb				Proposed and final rule developed		
	March	Skate AP/Cte mtgs re data; problem, goals, objectives					
	April						
	May				FW8 implemented		
	June	Council mtg, remand to Cte					
	July		PDT develops annual monitoring report, present in September				
	August	Cte mtg re problem, goals, objectives					
	Sept	Ap, Cte, and Council mtg				Council develops 2021 priorities in Sept., finalizes in Oct.	
	Oct	Future work TBD??					
	Nov						
	Dec						
2021	Jan				2022-23 specs developed. Final action after assessment finishes.		
	Feb						
	March						
	April						
	May						
	June						
	July		PDT develops annual monitoring report, present in September	Management track assessment, Level 2 likely.		NEFSC assessment team aware that Council normally takes final action on specifications in September and is considering ways to shift assessment timing earlier	
	August						
	Sept						
	Oct						Council develops 2022 priorities in Sept., finalizes in Dec.
	Nov						
	Dec						

We are here



# Skate timeline: near-term

Month	Day	Meetings and Milestones
Aug.	6	Skate Committee mtg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amendment 5</li> </ul>
	18	PDT mtg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Monitoring Report – finalize draft</li> <li>Priorities – finalize recommendations</li> <li>Amendment 5 - discuss any tasking from Aug 6</li> </ul>
Sept.	2	PDT posts docs for Skate AP & Committee
	10	Skate AP mtg (morning), Committee mtg (afternoon) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Monitoring Report, A5, priorities</li> </ul>
	17	PDT posts docs for Council mtg
	29-30	Council mtg
Oct	1	

We are  
here

Questions?



**8:40 a.m.**

# **Skate Annual Monitoring Report**

- Stock status updates
- Fishery landings, discards, and accountability measures
- Other fishery management plans that may impact skate
- Thorny skate research updates
- PDT recommendations

## **Purpose**

Review report, discuss FY 2019 & 2020 progress, develop recommendations

## **Relevant documents**

2 – Annual Monitoring Report  
5b & 5d – PDT mtg summaries

# Skate Annual Monitoring Report (for FY 2019)

## Charge:

Per skate regulations, the PDT meets at least annually to review the status of the species in the skate complex. At a minimum, this review includes:

- Annual updates to survey indices, fishery landings and discards;
- Re-evaluation of stock status based on the updated survey indices and FMP's overfishing definitions;
- Determination of whether any accountability measures (AMs) specified under §648.323 were triggered (i.e., if a wing or bait TAL was exceeded by >5% or the ACL was exceeded); and
- Changes to other FMPs (e.g., Northeast Multispecies, Monkfish, Atlantic Scallops) that may impact skate stocks, and describe the anticipated impacts of those changes on the skate fishery.

Based on this review, the Skate PDT provides guidance to the Skate Committee and the Council on the need to adjust measures in the Skate FMP to better achieve the FMP's objectives.



# Stock Status FY 2019

Species	Survey Years	Average Survey Biomass Index	% Change From 2016-2018	Current Status
Clearnose ( <i>Raja eglanteria</i> )	2018-2019	1.05 kg/tow	73.1%	Not overfished, No overfishing
Little ( <i>Leucoraja erinacea</i> )	2017-2019	5.32 kg/tow	13.4%	Not overfished, No overfishing
Rosette ( <i>Leucoraja garmani</i> )	2018-2019	0.05 kg/tow	6.4%	Not overfished, No overfishing
Winter ( <i>Leucoraja ocellata</i> )	2017-2019	8.61 kg/tow	19.2%	Not overfished, No overfishing
Barndoor ( <i>Dipturus laevis</i> )	2017-2019	2.02 kg/tow	11.4%	Not overfished, No overfishing
Smooth ( <i>Malacoraja senta</i> )	2017-2019	0.27 kg/tow	0%	Not overfished, No overfishing



# Stock Status FY 2019

## Rebuilding Stock Status

Species	Survey Years	Average Survey Biomass Index	% Change from 2016-2018	Current Status
Thorny ( <i>Amblyraja radiata</i> )	2017-2019	0.18 kg/tow	11.4%	Overfished, No overfishing

- Only 4.3% of  $B_{MSY}$  target; rebuilding deadline is 2028.
- In June, the Council clarified the research priority “Investigate age, growth, maturity, and fecundity of managed skate species” by adding “(esp. thorny and rosette).”



# FY2019 In-Season Skate Monitoring

Disposition	Live Skate Landings		TAL		Percent of TAL Landed
	(lb)	(mt)	(lb)	(mt)	
Wing	19,038,306	8,636	23,146,333	10,499	82.3%
Bait	8,515,179	3,862	11,660,249	5,289	73.0%
Total	27,553,485	12,498	34,806,582	15,788	79.2%

## Includes:

- Weekly, in-season quota monitoring report landings.
- Landings sold to a Federal dealer or reported solely via VTRs (incl. vessel-to-vessel transfers) by vessels with a Federal fishing permit on the day of landing.

## Excludes:

- Commercial landings from vessels without a Federal fishing permit on the day of landing.
- Research landings.





# FY2019 Year-End Annual Catch Limit Accounting

	Landed weight		Percent of ACL (31,327 mt)
	(lb)	(mt)	
Northeast skate commercial landings	29,869,783	13,549	43.2%
Northeast skate state-permitted only vessel landings	383,529	174	0.6%
Northeast skate estimated dead discards	13,144,115	5,962	19.0%
Northeast skate recreational catch (landings and dead discards from MRIP)	2,229,125	1,011	3.2%
<b>Total Northeast skate catch</b>	<b>45,626,552</b>	<b>20,696</b>	<b>66.1%</b>

- “commercial landings” - by vessels with a Federal permit any time during the fishing yr & research landings.
- “state-permitted only vessel landings” - sold to Federal dealer by vessels w/o a Federal permit at any time during the yr.
- “estimated dead discards” - differs from specifications setting, which uses the NEFSC method.
- “recreational catch” - private angler and party/charter catch.
- **Not included:**
  - Vessel-to-vessel skate transfers (reported via VTRs, 201 mt).
  - Skate for personal use/home consumption (not reported to a Federal dealer).
  - Skate landings by state-only permitted vessels not reported to the Federal database (unknown).



# FY 2019 Dealer-Reported Landings, Revenue

Disposition	Live Skate Landings		Revenue	Average price/lb
	(lb)	(mt)		
Wing	19,593,641	8,888	\$5,273,210	\$0.56
Bait	9,048,036	4,104	\$1,348,609	\$0.15
Unknown	403,120	183	\$241,885	\$0.60
Personal use/No market/Packing, only	1,135	0.5	n/a	n/a
Total	29,045,932	13,176	\$6,863,704	n/a

- “Live Skate Landings” - from Federal dealer database only and **includes**:
  - Landings by Federal permitted vessels (i.e., any vessel that had a Federal permit any time during the FY).
  - State-only permitted landings either sold to a federal dealer and/or were batched landings grouped together sent by a state.
  - Research landings.
- “Bait Landings” - dealer-reported landings and **excludes**:
  - VTR bait/home consumption landings.
  - Vessel-to vessel transfers reported only via VTRs.



# Changes to Other FMPs Impacting Skate

Northeast Multispecies	FW 59	ACLs increased, skate catch could increase
	A23	Improved data quality
Scallop	FW32	ACLs decreased, skate catch could decrease
	A21	Negligible to low positive skate impacts likely
Monkfish	FW12	TALs increase in N, decrease in S, likely not increase skate catch
	Discard Methodology Review	Negligible impact to skate
Herring	FW8	Likely negligible skate impacts
Spiny dogfish	2019-2021 Specs.	Specs. decrease, skate discards could increase
Longfin (Loligo) Squid	A20	Latent effort reduced; negative skate impacts likely
Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass	Commercial/Rec. Allocation Amendment	Commercial and sector re-allocation, negative skate impacts likely
Habitat	Clam Dredge FW	Low positive skate impacts likely



# Skate Research – focus on thorny

- Recently-completed projects
  - Evaluation of post-release discard mortality in Gulf of Maine
  - Assessment of horizontal movements and habitat use of thorny skate in GOM
  - Projection of the effects of climate change on thorny skate in NE US shelf
  - Identification of thorny skate bycatch hotspots in GOM
- Ongoing project
  - Use of high-resolution genomics to explore spatial pop. structure of thorny skate

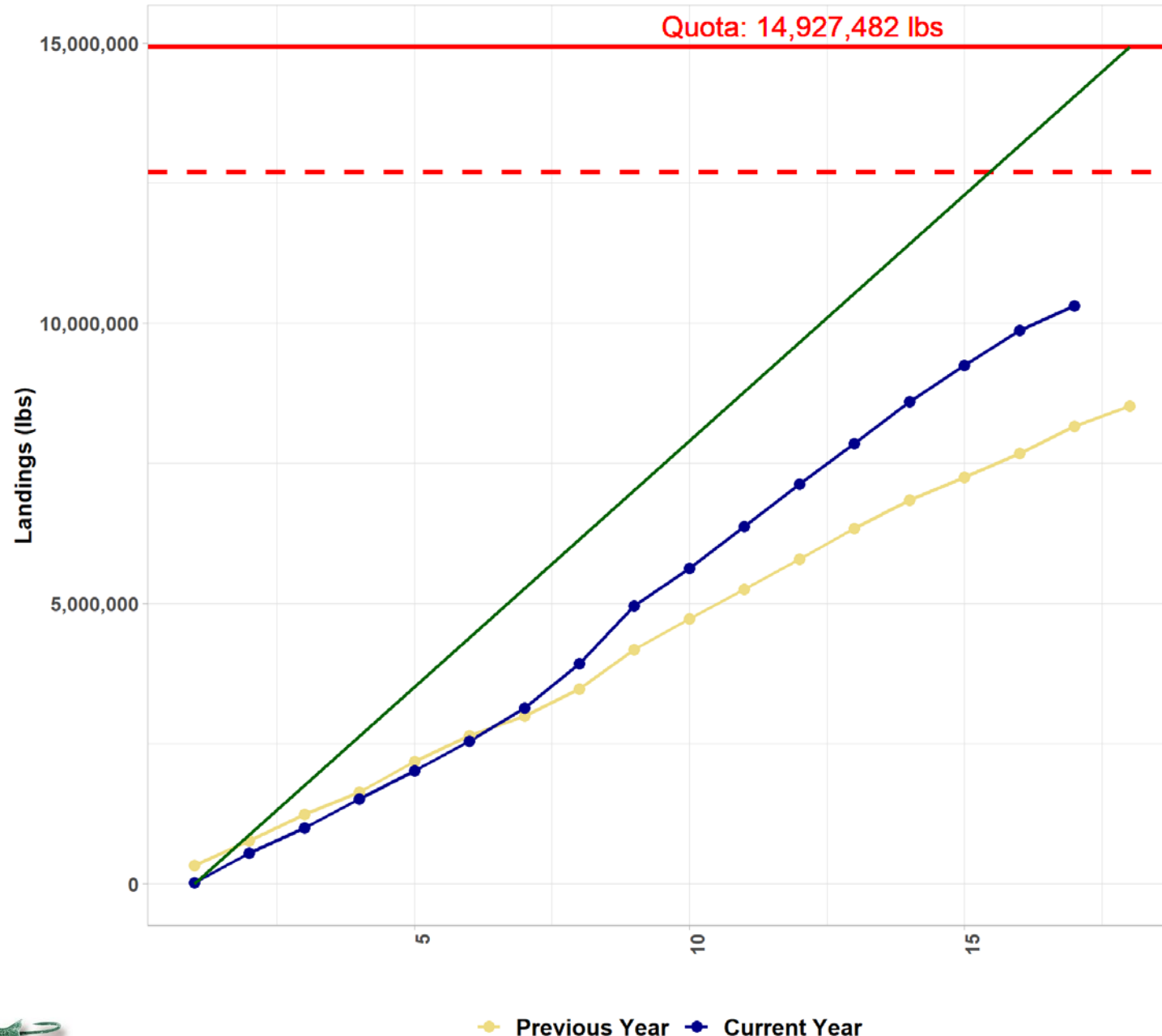


- There is a need for clearer skate quota monitoring and catch accounting.
  - Need improved communication - why the report this year details the in-season quota monitoring and year-end catch accounting methods.
  - There are a few catch components not included in year-end ACL accounting.
    - While small, they contribute to mortality.
    - Could be included in specifications (e.g., in management uncertainty).
  - The 2021 skate assessment will reexamine methods for ensuring that all catch components are included in the assessment.
- Should consider management measures, beyond the continuing possession prohibition such as addressing thorny skate discards, that will foster rebuilding.



# FY 2020 Season I (May 1 – Aug 31) wing landings

Doc #1e



69% of Season I quota  
landed as of Aug. 26

## FY 2020:

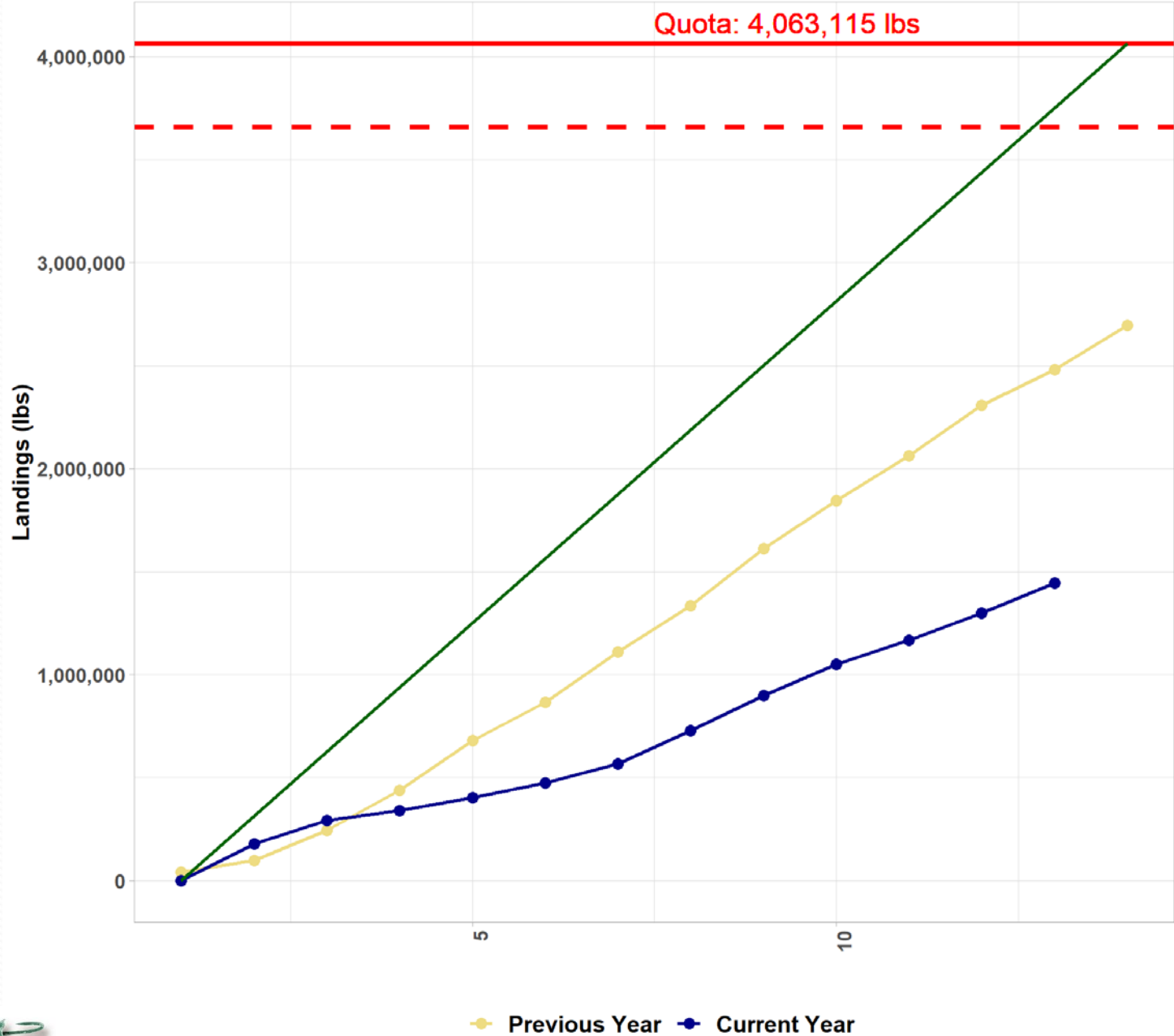
Wing TAL increased from 23.1M lb in FY 2019 to 26.2M lb (whole weight).

The wing possession limits increased 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 increased from 650 to 750 lb in Season 1 and from 1,025 to 1,250 lb in Season 2.

Figure from Weekly Quota – Landing Reports



# FY 2020 Season I (May 1 – Jul 31) bait landings



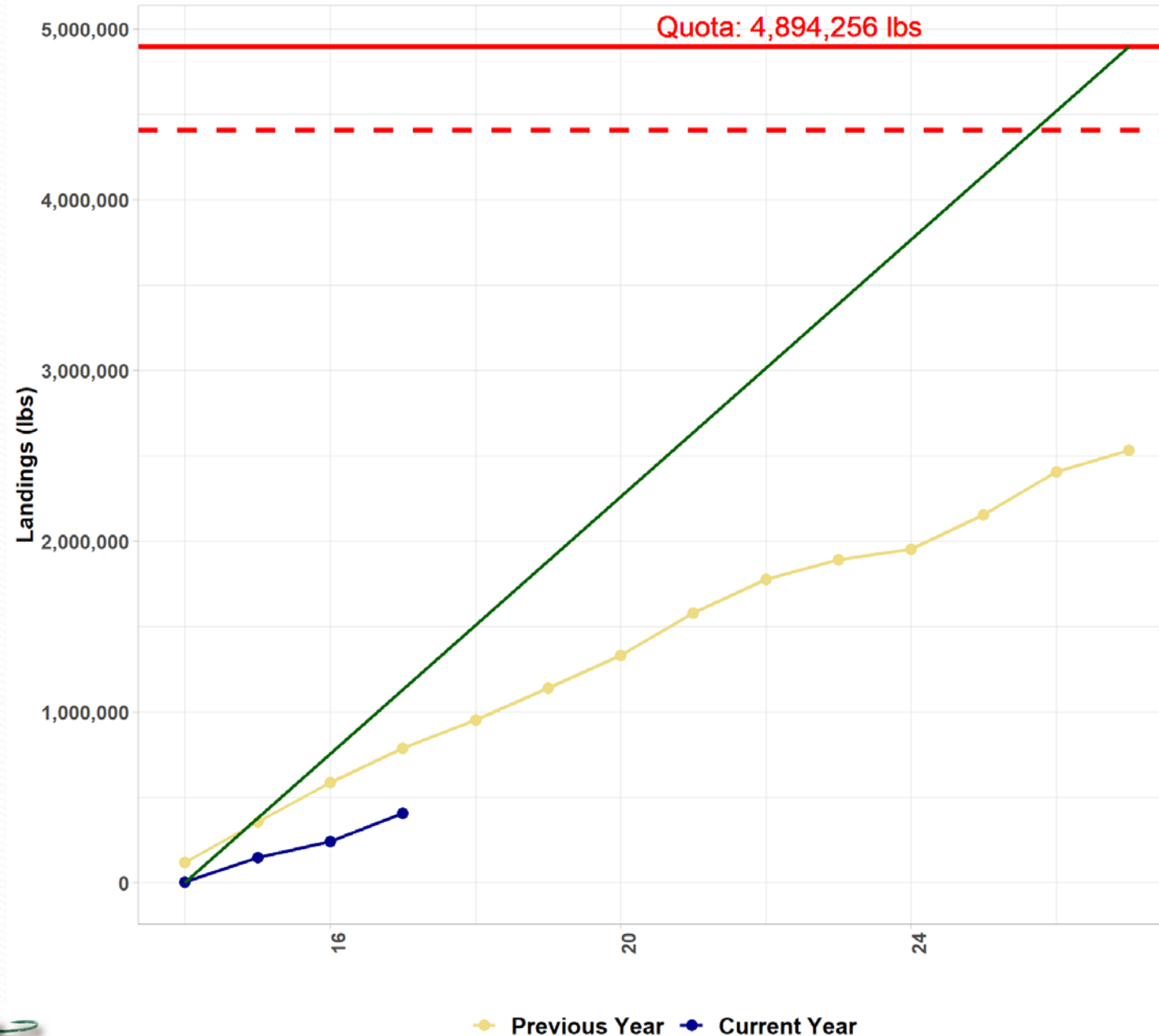
36% of Season I quota landed as of July 29

**FY 2020:**  
Bait TAL increased from 11.7M in FY 2019 to 13.2M lb.  
  
The bait possession limit increased from 12,000 to 25,000 lb in Season 3 (25,000 year-round).

Figure from Weekly Quota – Landing Reports

# FY 2020 Season 2 (Aug. 1 – Oct. 31) bait landings

Doc #1e



8% of Season 2 quota landed as of Aug. 26

## FY 2020:

Bait TAL increased from 11.7M in FY 2019 to 13.2M lb.

The bait possession limit increased from 12,000 to 25,000 lb in Season 3 (25,000 year-round).

Figure from Weekly Quota – Landing Reports



# Questions to open discussion

- What factors have influenced recent fishing activity and how (e.g., possession limits, market conditions, species distribution, environment, ecosystem)?
- What other factors may impact the fishery going forward?
- Is there a need to adjust measures in the Northeast Skate Complex FMP?

*Questions?  
Discussion?*



# 9:30 a.m.

## Amendment 5

### Purpose

Recap work on problem, goals, objectives  
Develop recommendations

### Relevant documents

3 – A5 Discussion Document  
5c – Aug 6 Cte mtg summary  
5d – Aug 19 PDT mtg summary

# Council tasking

## December 2019:

- *“Define a clear problem statement, goals, and objectives for this action.”*

## June 2020:

- Motion to accept the Committee’s problem statement failed unanimously.
- Motion to cease work on Amendment 5 also failed.
- Council agreed by consensus *“To remand this problem statement and goals and objectives back to the Skate Committee.”*

### From May 29 PDT memo (and earlier input):

**Goal** = A desired result or outcome that would solve a problem. A goal is typically broad and long-term in scope.

**Objective** = A specific, measurable action that would help achieve a goal.



- **Fishery Data (brought to June Council meeting)**

- Landings relative to TALs. In FY 2016 and 2017, when the incidental limits were triggered, the Wing and Bait TALs were 23% lower than FY 2014 and 2015. Landings were also lower, but not by as much.
- Active permits. Active permits have been declining, total and % (30% to 16%). Most active permits landed wing, combo permits increasing recently.
- Entry and exit. Annual vessel activity in the skate fishery varies; the number of new active permits has generally been <10 annually since FY 2012 (1-6%); each year, there have been 77-278 “permanent” exiters (Table 14).
- FY 2017 revenue dependence. A small number of vessels are highly dependent. For most, skates adds to the mix of landings.



# Discussion Document Updates since March

Doc #3

## Since June Council meeting:

- Plan Development Team comments on the Skate FMP goal and objectives.
- From March 2020 PDT memos:
  - Previously identified ideas for a problem statement, goals, objectives and alternatives;
  - Summary of the analysis of potential landings under FY 2020 possession limits;
  - Definition of Federal and state landings; and
  - Information on trip declarations.
- FY 2018 revenue for vessels landing skate:
  - Skate revenue dependence (by vessels landing food only, bait only or both, with over or under 10% skate.
  - Skate revenue by gear type (primarily from gillnets, 99% of bait revenue from trawls).



## 3.1. Skate FMP Goals and Objectives

*PDT note: highlighted phrases are outdated.*

**Goal:** Consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and other applicable laws, to develop a Fishery Management Plan to research and manage the Northeast Skate Complex at long-term sustainable levels.

Objective 1: Collect information critical for substantially improving knowledge of skate fisheries by species and for monitoring: (a) the status of skate fisheries, resources, and related markets and (b) the effectiveness of skate management approaches.

Objective 2: Implement measures to: protect the two **currently overfished** species of skates (**barndoor** and thorny) and increase their biomass to target levels, **reduce fishing mortality on winter skate**, and prevent overfishing of the other species in the Northeast skate complex – this may be accomplished through management measures in other FMPs (groundfish, monkfish, scallops), skate-specific management measures, or a combination of both as necessary.

Objective 3: **Develop a skate permit system**, coordinate data collection with appropriate state agencies for vessels fishing for skates or catching skates as bycatch only in state waters, and work with the fishing industry to establish a catch reporting system consistent with industry capabilities, including the use of study fleets.

Objective 4: Minimize the bycatch and discard mortality rates for skates caught in both directed and non-directed fisheries through the promotion and encouragement of experimentation, conservation engineering, and gear development.

Objective 5: Promote and encourage research for critical biological, ecological, and fishery information based on the research needs identified in the **Skate SAFE Report and scoping document**, including the development and dissemination of a skate species identification guide.

Objective 6: Minimize, to the extent possible, the impacts of skate management approaches on fisheries for other species on which New England and Mid-Atlantic fishermen depend (for example, groundfish, monkfish, scallops, and fluke), recognizing the interconnected nature of skate and other fisheries in the Northeast Region.

Objective 7: To the extent possible, **manage clearnose and rosette skates separately** from the other five species in the skate complex, recognizing that these two species are distributed primarily in the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic regions.



# Aug. 6 Committee Meeting Recap

## Committee work

- Problem statement
  - Roundtable of Committee input on current issues and which are most important to resolve. Developed problem statement (2 motions).
- Goals
  - Roundtable of Committee input on what problem resolution would look like and which resolutions are most important to see achieved. Developed goals (1 motion).
- Objectives
  - Roundtable of Committee input on approaches to achieve goals and which approaches have the greatest potential to achieve the goals. Started developing objectives (tabled motion).



# August 6 Committee meeting motions

Doc #5c

## Problem Statements (emphases added)

1. There are two modes of the skate fishery, directed and non-directed fisheries. The incidental limit has been triggered two times in the last ten years, and when it gets triggered, there are negative impacts on the directed skate fishery and on the other fisheries that incidentally harvest skate. There is a need to improve the reliability and accountability of catch reporting in the skate fishery (and other fisheries that catch skate) to ensure there is precise and accurate representation of catch (landings and discards). Accurate catch data are necessary to ensure that catch limits are set at levels that prevent overfishing and to determine when catch limits are exceeded. **(6/0/0/0)**
2. Current and potential access to the skate resource make it difficult to achieve long term sustainable management in the skate fishery. It is more difficult to prevent overfishing and predict outcomes of management when participants in a fishery cannot be defined. **(5/2/0/0)**





# August 6 Committee meeting motions

## Goals (7/0/0/0)

1. Avoid tripping the skate incidental possession limit.
2. Improve skate data, leading to improved assessments (e.g., no longer be considered data-poor) and more precise and accurate understanding of the landings and discards in different segments of the fishery.
3. Minimize bycatch and discards.
4. Better characterize the directed and non-directed fisheries.
5. Better understand the true potential for vessels to enter the fishery.
6. Minimize the impact on any other fisheries that have interactions with skates.
7. Preserve, to the extent possible, ongoing participation the fishery consistent with how past utilization has occurred.



# August 6 Committee meeting motions

**Objectives:** Types of measures to achieve goals (postponed to **TODAY**)

1. An intermediate trigger to slow the fishery (before the 85%/90% trigger).
2. Limited access, with and without tiers for different qualification criteria for permit categories.
3. Creating different TALs for the fishery segments (e.g., directed monkfish TAL with a LOA).
4. Monitoring requirements beyond NEFOP/SBRM requirements.
5. Restrict switching between state and federal fishing.
6. Gear restrictions that could reduce bycatch (e.g., number of nets, hauling gear after each trip).

After further input from the Committee and the September Council meeting, the Committee would like a PDT analysis on the potential for vessels to enter the fishery.



- The motions adequately addressed the PDT concerns with the earlier language: goals were developed, a conservation focus was added, and terms were sufficiently clear (though concepts will need further work as measures get developed in future).
- On the concern that predicting the number of fishery participants and level of effort is difficult, could consider requiring that the skate permit be year-round (not be able to add and drop the permit multiple times within a year), so that the “universe” of vessels is known at the start of the year.
- Dead discards are about equal to landings (have been higher in the past); if there were ways to reliably convert dead discards into landings, perhaps landing limits could be increased (conservation neutral).



# Questions to open discussion

- Do the Committee's motions for a problem statement match your views on the current issues that are most important to resolve?
- Does the Committee's motion for goals match your views on what the resolution to current issues would look like?
- Does the Committee's tabled motion on objectives contain the types of approaches that have the greatest potential to achieve the goals?

*Questions?  
Discussion?*



# 11:00 a.m. Skate Priorities

## Purpose

Make recommendations for addressing E.O. 13921 and for 2021 management priorities

## Relevant documents

4a – NMFS letter to Councils

4b – E.O. 13921

5d – Aug. 19 PDT mtg summary

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# Council priorities regarding skate

## E.O. 13921 on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth (5/7/20)

- Purpose
  - “to strengthen the American economy; improve the competitiveness of American industry; ensure food security; provide environmentally safe and sustainable seafood; support American workers; ensure coordinated, predictable, and transparent Federal actions; and remove unnecessary regulatory burdens”
- Request of the Council
  - By **November 2, 2020**, “...submit a prioritized list of recommended actions to reduce burdens on domestic fishing and to increase production within sustainable fisheries, including a proposal for initiating each recommended action within 1 year of the date of this order.”
  - Can include changes to regulations, orders, guidance documents, or other similar agency actions
  - Must accomplish “within existing appropriations.” No new resources for the Councils or NMFS.
  - Must comply with applicable law (MSA, ESA, MMPA, etc.).
  - “Initiate” actions by May 2021 (not implement)
- Distinct from the 2017 order to identify regulations that are unnecessary, outdated, or ineffective.
- Logistics/next steps
  - Committees/APs identify ideas
  - Consider as part of priorities process; will require expediting process to meet deadline.



# Council priorities regarding skate

- Task: Develop priorities for:
  - 2021 Council management priorities
  - E.O. 13921 on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth (to strengthen the American economy; improve the competitiveness of American industry; ensure food security; provide environmentally safe and sustainable seafood; support American workers; ensure coordinated, predictable, and transparent Federal actions; and remove unnecessary regulatory burdens)
- Timeframe: Priorities development on the fast track
  - **TODAY** is the AP/Committee's only chance to develop and prioritize recommendations (normally two bites at the apple).
  - Council to finalize in late October (normally in December).



# PDT input on priorities

## Required work

- 2022-2023 skate specifications.
- Annual monitoring report for FY 2020.

## Discretionary work

- Continue developing Amendment 5 (pending Committee/Council motions), potentially expanding the scope.

## Notes

- Skate assessment will require PDT resources in 2021.
- The end of the 25-year rebuilding period for thorny skate is in 2028 (eight years away), and biomass is at about 4% of the target.
- Revisiting the FMP objectives and the need to create annual monitoring reports requires an amendment (fold into A5?).





## Other Notes on Annual Monitoring Report

- The AMR includes redundant work in a year with an assessment or Council action.
- Skates and Small-mesh multispecies are the only FMPs that require AMRs and annual updates to stock status determinations.
- While annual updates to stock status are helpful, the Skate PDT questions whether it is appropriate to do so outside of the new assessment process and schedule. Any change to stock status would need peer review.
- PDT determinations and communication is duplicative:
  - NMFS determines the need for accountability measures, and
  - NMFS creates year-end catch data for skates, though not presently communicated on a regular basis (e.g., not posted to its website). AMR is helpful for this, but it would be more efficient and visible if NMFS posted year-end skate catch data to its website.



11:45 a.m.  
Other Business

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