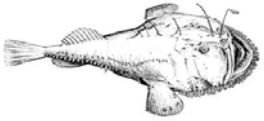
Monkfish Advisory Panel and Committee Meetings

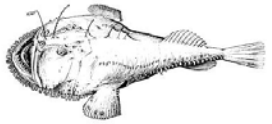
August 30, 2022
8:30 AM – Advisory Panel
1:00 PM - Committee
Boston, MA and via webinar

New England
Fishery Management Council

Webinar technical assistance: helpdesk@nefmc.org



Introductions



Monkfish Advisory Panel	Monkfish Committee
Greg DiDomenico, NJ (Chair)	Elizabeth "Libby" Etrie, Chair
James Dopkin, NJ	Peter Hughes, Vice Chair
Timothy Froelich, NY	Pete Christopher, GARFO
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Ted Platz, RI	David Stormer, DE DNREC
Christopher Rainone, NJ	Alan Tracy, ME
	Kelly Whitmore, MADMF
Council Staff	
Jenny Couture	Rachel Feeney, PDT Chair

Agenda – Advisory Panel

8:30 AM	**Introductions, approve agenda, review timelines**
8:45	**Monkfish Fishery Performance Report**
9:30	**Monkfish Framework Adjustment 13**
11:00	**2023 Council monkfish priorities**
12:15 PM	**Other business**
12:30	**Adjourn**

Any revisions?

Agenda – Committee

1:00 PM	Introductions, approve agenda, review timelines
1:15	Monkfish AP Report
1:30	Monkfish Fishery Performance Report
2:00	Monkfish Framework Adjustment 13
3:45	2023 Council monkfish priorities
4:45	Other business
5:00	Adjourn

Any revisions?

Monkfish timeline - 2022

Doc #1d

	Framework 13	Performance Report	Assessment	2022-2026 Council Research Priorities	2023 Management Priorities	MEETINGS
Feb	PDT planning	PDT planning		PDT drafting updates		2/28 PDT
March	Cte begins work on framework, develops alternatives	Cte identifies purpose, reviews outline and questions for AP		Cte drafts updates		3/24 Cte
April	PDT develops alternatives, discard methods, tasking	PDT develops report	NEFSC preparing in spring for AOP, PDT support			4/4 PDT
	MAFMC short update	MAFMC short update				4/5-7 MAFMC
	NEFMC receives update, initiates action	NEFMC receives plan				4/12-14 NEFMC
May	AP input on alternatives	AP input/response to questions		AP input, Cte review via email		5/4 AP
	PDT work cont.	PDT draft full report				5/12 PDT
			AOP sets scope			5/24 NEFSC
	Cte develops alternatives	Cte receives draft report	Cte receives update	review AP input		5/26 Cte
June		SSC sub-panel review		SSC reviews updates		6/7 SSC
	PDT work cont.	PDT refines report				6/21 PDT
	NEFMC receives update	NEFMC receives update	NEFMC receives update	NEFMC approves		6/28-30 NEFMC
July	PDT work cont.	Complete final report	NEFSC does assessment over summer, PDT support		PDT input	7/15&20 PDT
Aug	MAFMC receives update	MAFMC updated	MAFMC updated			8/8-11 MAFMC
	AP input on alternatives	AP review final draft			AP input	8/30 AP
	Cte develops alternatives	Cte receive final report			Cte drafts	8/30 Cte
Sept			Assessment peer review			9/20 NEFSC
	PDT develops ABC and flowchart, impacts analysis		PDT receives update			9/27 PDT
	NEFMC receives update	NEFMC receives final report	NEFMC receives update		NEFMC sets draft	9/27-29 NEFMC
Oct	MAFMC receives update	MAFMC receives final report	MAFMC receives update			10/4-6 MAFMC
	TENTATIVE: SSC recommends OFL and ABC, reviews discard deduction methods	TENTATIVE: SSC receives final report				10/12 SSC
	Alternate SSC mtg date	Alternate SSC mtg date				10/26-27 SSC
Nov	PDT impacts analysis				PDT input	early Nov PDT
	AP recommends prefered alts				AP input	Mid Nov AP
	Cte recommends prefered alts				Cte input	late Nov Cte
Dec	NEFMC final action				NEFMC finalizes	12/6-8 NEFMC
	MAFMC final action					12/12-15 MAFMC

We are here

Monkfish timeline – near term

Month	Day	Meetings and Milestones
Sept	15	PDT: Documents due for Council meeting
	20	Monkfish Assessment Peer Review
	27	PDT mtg: develop ABC recommendation, discard deduction method, impacts analysis
	27-29	NEFMC – FW13 updates, receive performance report, draft 2023 priorities
Oct	4-6	MAFMC - updates
	5	PDT: Documents due for SSC meeting
	12	TENTATIVE SSC mtg: recommend ABC and discard deduction method
	26-27	Alternate SSC mtg date

- PDT has 2 weeks from today to get documents ready for Councils.
- Final assessment report will not be ready to present at Council meetings. Staff to give preliminary report.

FY 2022 landings (as of July, 25% of year complete)

FY2022 Preliminary Commercial Monkfish Landings by Stock Area and Gear Type: May, 2022–April, 2023

	MAY - 2022	JUN - 2022	JUL - 2022	July FY2022		FY 2022*		FY 2021*	
				Metric Tons	Percent of Area	July, 22 as a % of Target TAL	Target TAL Metric Tons	July, 21 as a % of Target TAL	Target TAL Metric Tons
NORTHERN	**225**	**358**	**385**	**968**	**47%**	**15%**	**6,624**	**11%**	**6,624**
OTTER TRAWL	203	199	178	580	28%	9%		**9%**	
GILLNET	10	124	160	294	14%	4%		**2%**	
DREDGE	0	1	4	5	0%	0%		**0%**	
OTHER GEARS	12	34	43	89	4%	1%		**0%**	
SOUTHERN	**562**	**477**	**36**	**1,075**	**53%**	**18%**	**5,882**	**15%**	**5,882**
OTTER TRAWL	11	12	4	27	1%	0%		**1%**	
GILLNET	480	428	13	921	45%	16%		**12%**	
DREDGE	18	18	15	51	2%	1%		**1%**	
OTHER GEARS	53	19	4	76	4%	1%		**1%**	
ALL AREAS	**787**	**835**	**421**	**2,043**	**100%**				
OTTER TRAWL	214	211	182	607	30%				
GILLNET	490	552	173	1,215	59%				
DREDGE	18	19	19	56	3%				
OTHER GEARS	65	53	47	165	8%				

More landings in Southern area than Northern

Landings so far:
15% of Northern TAL
18% of Southern TAL

Landing rates like FY 2021

Table from GARFO Monthly Quota Monitoring Reports

DRAFT 2022 Monkfish Fishery Performance Report

Purpose

- Review new information.
- Add any final input.

Relevant documents

2 – draft report

Webinar technical assistance: helpdesk@nefmc.org

Doc #2

New/updated parts of report

- Stock status has been "unknown" since 2016, rather than not overfished, overfishing not occurring (p. 2).
- Methods for calculating catch now described (p. 6).
- Updated data with FY 2021: year-end catch accounting relative to ACL (84% in north, 43% in south), landings relative to TAL (79% in north, 34% in south), revenue, revenue dependence.
- New data: discards by gear type, monthly price per pound.
- Added footnotes: development of Korean market in 1990s; clarified regulatory changes, protected species issues, interaction with skate fishery; research project, etc.

Discussion: Any comments on updates or final input?

Framework Adjustment 13

Purpose

Review progress. Confirm range of alternatives for this action.

Relevant documents

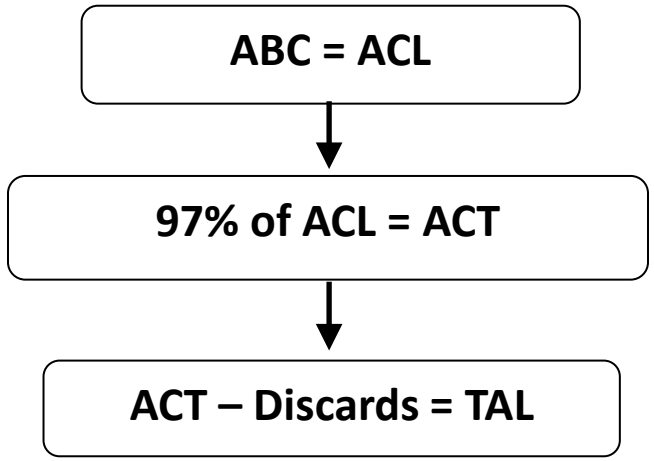
3 – Discussion Document

Webinar technical assistance: helpdesk@nefmc.org

Update on specifications

Setting Acceptable Biological Catch and Flow Chart

Doc #3



ABC setting	• "Plan B" assessment = use a multiplier (change in survey index over the most recent three years) applied to last three years of catch. Hasn't been used. • FY 2017-19 ABC = no action since FY 2011. SCALE model had failed in 2016 assessment; cautious to change ABC. • FY 2020-22 ABC = multiplier applied to the FY 2017-19 ABC, not catch.
Discard deduction	• Current = latest 3-year (calendar year) mean discard/catch ratio applied to ACT.

Doc #3

Action 1: FY 2023-2025 Specifications

- September:
  - Assessment peer review on 9/20. Report won't be ready to present to Council (normal).
  - PDT develops ABCs based on assessment results.
  - PDT finishes analysis of alternate methods for setting the discard deduction.

- October:
  - SSC to recommend ABCs and method for discard deduction.
  - PDT to set ABC flow chart (TALs); analyze impacts.

- November:
  - AP and Committee review and recommend preferred alternatives.

Assessment PREVIEW:
Recent trawl survey indices for monkfish are trending downward.

POTENTIAL implication:
Monkfish ABCs may be lower in FY 2023-25 relative to current.

Today's question: Are you comfortable with the range of FW13 alternatives?

Doc #3

Action 2: Effort Controls

Committee Consensus Statement #1 from May

Problem statement effort control alternatives would address:
Monkfish quota use has been low in the SFMA. Adjusting DAS allocations and/or possession limits may help optimize landings. In addition, there are discards that could be turned into landings in the incidental fishery. Effort control alternatives will focus on the SFMA in this action.

Effort Controls:

Committee Consensus Statement #2

Doc #3

The Committee recommends the following for effort control alternatives. Ideally, options would help optimize landings at 90% of TAL.

- Allow for the **declaration and use of additional DAS, up to three**, for a trip which would otherwise be charged a single DAS. Such a trip would be subject to a trip limit equal to the trip limit for a single day multiplied by the number of DAS which were declared and used.
- To **remove the restriction on DAS use in the SFMA** (currently, 46 are allocated, permits receive 45.2 due to RSA deduction, but only 37 can be used).
- **Increase incidental limits for vessels not under a DAS program**, options to include an increase of up to 50%.
- To optimize at 90% of TAL, after above adjustments, **increasing possession limits** in the SFMA by percentages and applicable to all limited access permits.

Overview of Effort Control Alternatives

Doc #3

Table 2. Summary of effort control alternatives under consideration.

	Increase DAS overage adjustment	Remove DAS use restriction in SFMA	Increase SFMA possession limits	
			Incidental	Limited access
No Action				
Alternative 2	√	√		
Alternative 3	√	√	+ 25%	+ 15%
Alternative 4	√	√	+ 50%	+ 25%
Alternative 5			+ 50%	+ 15%

PDT added

DAS overage adjustment would allow an extra DAS to be used/trip

- Trips ≤ 24 hours: can land up to 3 DAS' worth of monkfish, charged up to 2.0007 DAS
- Trips > 24 hours and ≤ 48 hours: land up to 4 DAS' worth of monkfish, charged up to 3.0007 DAS (72 hours and 1 minute)
- Etc.

Incidental Possession Limit Alternatives

Doc #3

Table 3. Incidental possession limits (lb, tail weight) for vessels not under a DAS program in the SFMA under each alternative.

Limit Type	No Action: no change	Alt. 2: no change	Alt. 3: +25%*	Alt. 4: +50%*	Alt. 5: +50%*
Per day	50 lb (146 lb)	50 lb (146 lb)	65 lb (189 lb)	75 lb (218 lb)	75 lb (218 lb)
Per trip	150 lb (437 lb)	150 lb (437 lb)	190 lb (553 lb)	225 lb (655 lb)	225 lb (655 lb)

Note: Whole weights given in parentheses. Adjustments to the incidental possession limits included in this action focus on vessels not under a DAS program and do not include adjustments for the MA Exemption area west of the MA Exemption Area boundary or GOM or GB Regulated Mesh Areas.

* Increases are rounded to the nearest 5 lb for tail weight and then converted to whole weight using the 2.91 conversion factor.

Rationale: Increasing possession limits could help the fishery be more flexible and reduce monkfish discards by turning more monkfish discards into landings.

Limited Access Possession Limit Alternatives

Rationale: Increasing possession limits could help the fishery be more flexible and reduce monkfish discards by turning more monkfish discards into landings.

Table 4. Limited access possession limits (lb, tail weight) by DAS and permit category in the SFMA under each alternative.

Permit Category	DAS	No Action: no change	Alt. 2: no change	Alt. 3: +15%*	Alt 4: +25%*	Alt. 5: +15%*
A	Monkfish DAS	700 lb (2,037 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)	800 lb (2,328 lb	900 lb (2,619 lb)	800 lb (2,328 lb)
	Monkfish and Northeast Multispecies DAS	-	-	-	-	-
B	Monkfish DAS	575 lb (1,673 lb)	575 lb (1,673 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)
	Monkfish and Northeast Multispecies DAS	-	-	-	-	-
C	Monkfish DAS	700 lb (2,037 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)	800 lb (2,328 lb)	900 lb (2,619 lb)	800 lb (2,328 lb)
	Monkfish and Northeast Multispecies DAS	700 lb (2,037 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)	800 lb (2,328 lb)	900 lb (2,619 lb)	800 lb (2,328 lb)
D	Monkfish DAS	575 lb (1,673 lb)	575 lb (1,673 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)
	Monkfish and Northeast Multispecies DAS	575 lb (1,673 lb)	575 lb (1,673 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)	700 lb (2,307 lb)	700 lb (2,037 lb)

Note: Whole weights given in parentheses. * Increases are rounded to the nearest 100 lb for tail weight and then converted to whole weight using the 2.91 conversion factor.

PDT Questions, Notes

- Do alternatives work for both positive and negative changes in the assessment? Trawl survey indices declined for both stocks. Lower ABCs for FY 23-25 possible.
- Alternatives 2-4 written as packages of effort control adjustments.
- Added Alternative 5 (only adjusting possession limits).
- DAS overage adjustment would apply to both management areas, like current approach. OK?

Today's question: Are you comfortable with the range of FW13 alternatives?

Sect 6.1.1 - Preliminary analysis of effort controls

Assumptions regarding DAS overage adjustment:

- NFMA: Few vessels used provision in FY18-21 → assume few vessels would use increase in overage adjustment.
- SFMA: Many vessels use provision; assume vessels that would use additional overage adjustment are:
  - Not recently using full DAS allocation (< 90% annual DAS allocation).
  - Currently using DAS overage provision.

Sect 6.1.1 - Preliminary analysis of effort controls

Assumptions regarding SFMA DAS use restriction:

- Vessels that use ≥ 90% of DAS.
- Vessels that have DAS use overages would continue to have overages.
  - 4 unused DAS carryover permitted (up to 41 DAS possible)
  - DAS use ranges from 34 to 60.7 though
    (overages range from 100-200 DAS use in NFMA)
- Each additional DAS used = one DAS worth of possession limit used

Fishery data analyzed:

- FY 2018 – 2021, pre-pandemic and more recent data
- Includes total and average number of unique vessels

Step 1: Identify actual, recent DAS use in the SFMA

Table 30. Total and average number of vessels by DAS usage (< and ≥ 90% DAS allocated) by permit category and management area, FY 2018 – 2021.

Management Area	Permit Category	Total # of Vessels (FY18-21)		Average # of Vessels (FY18-21)	
		< 90% DAS used	*≥ 90% DAS used*	*< 90% DAS used*	*≥ 90% DAS used*
Vessels fishing only in SFMA					
SFMA (37 DAS allocated per vessel per FY)	A	12	9	6	3
	B	31	8	17	3
	C	18	8	10	3
	D	40	9	17	3
	E	26	C	16	C
	TOTAL	**127**	**34+**	**66**	**12+**

Some vessels used > 37 DAS allocation (average of 40 DAS used)

- *4 unused DAS can be carried over → up to 41 DAS possible*
- *Unsure if data entry errors, regulatory violations, etc. esp. > 41 DAS use*

Step 2: Identify vessels likely to take advantage of removing the SFMA DAS use restriction

From Step 1: ~12 vessels used ≥ 90% of DAS allocation, using an avg. of 40 DAS/FY

1. These 12 vessels used ~108% of annual DAS allocation (40 DAS/37 DAS)
2. Each vessel expected to use 48.8 DAS without DAS restriction (108% * 45.2 DAS)
   (bases outcome on past behavior to not assume full 45.2 DAS use)
3. Increase in DAS for each vessel = 8.8 (48.8 – 40, DAS avg. used)
4. Increase in DAS for fishery = 106 (8.8 DAS * 12 vessels)
   a) Each permit category: avg. of 3 vessels used ≥ 90% of DAS allocation (40 DAS/FY)
   b) Each permit category would see increase of 26.4 DAS/FY (8.8 DAS*3 vessels)
5. Increase in landings:
   a) Permits A, C: 26.4 DAS * 700 lb tail weight = 18,400 lb each
   b) Permits B, D: 26.4 DAS * 575 lb tail weight = 15,180 lb each
   c) TOTAL: 67,320 lb increase in landings for fishery

Step 3: Increase DAS overage adjustment

Table 31. Number of unique vessels using overage provision by fishing year in the northern and southern management areas.

Fishing Year	# of Vessels using Overage Provision	Total # of Vessels	% of Vessels using Overage Provision during at least 1 trip
NORTH			
FY 2018	3	142	2%
FY 2019	0	129	0%
FY 2020	0	85	0%
FY 2021	0	126	0%
AVERAGE	***<1***	***121***	***<1%***

NORTH: few vessels using current DAS overage provision

- Effort unlikely to meaningfully change with more flexibility

Step 3: Increase DAS overage adjustment

SOUTH				
Fishing Year	Permit Category	# of Vessels using Overage Provision	Total # of Vessels	% of Trips using Overage Provision
AVERAGE (FY 2018-2021)	A	8 (99)	9 (224)	44%
	B	17 (163)	20 (403)	40%
	C	~6 (~94)	20 (288)	~33%
	D	~11 (~138)	32 (575)	~24%

SOUTH: many vessels using current DAS overage provision

For vessels using overage provision AND

A. Using ≥ 90% annual DAS: may use additional flexibility → no change in overall DAS usage (could improve efficiency)

B. Using < 90% annual DAS: likely to use additional DAS overage adjustment (i.e., land 3 DAS' worth of monkfish/trip)

→ Calculated avg. # of trips using overage provision with < 90% annual DAS use (see Table 32 in FW13 doc.)

Assume vessels would land one additional DAS' worth of monkfish/trip:

*Permit A: 45 trips * 700 lb = 31,500 lb*
*Permit B: 115 trips * 575 lb = 66,125 lb*
*Permit C: 56 trips * 700 lb = 39,200 lb*
*Permit D: 56 trips * 575 lb = 32,200 lb*

= 169,025 lb additional landings

Step 4: Estimate total increase in landings from relaxing DAS use restriction & increase DAS overage

Average SFMA TAL FY18-21: 5.641 M lb tail weight

Step 2: Estimated increase in DAS and landings from relaxing DAS use:

- Permits A & C: 52.8 DAS → 36,960 lb tail weight
- Permits B & D: 52.8 DAS → 30,360 lb tail weight

→ ~106 DAS → ~67,320 lb tail weight (1.2% SMFA TAL)

Step 3: Estimated increase in landings from increasing DAS overage (avg. FY18-21):

- Permits A & C: 70,700 lb tail weight
- Permits B & D: 98,325 lb tail weight

→ ~169,025 lb tail weight (3% SMFA TAL)

236,345 lb increase = 4.2% of SFMA TAL

Maine Takeaways

NORTH: Effort unlikely to meaningfully change with increase in DAS overage flexibility

SOUTH:

- Increasing DAS overage flexibility and removing DAS use restriction (use 45.2 vs. 37 DAS) would help a subset of vessels (those that use the current overage provision and use a high % of DAS allocation, resp.)

- SFMA TAL use would increase by 4.2% (= 236,345 lb tail weight)

- Relaxing DAS use restriction unlikely to have substantial impact on monkfish fishing effort (overall DAS use and landings) based on past 4 fishing years of data

Possession Limit Exploratory Analysis

Section 5.5.3.2 identifies trips landing ≥ 90% of trip limits

Limited Access Permits Exploratory Analysis:

- Historically, effort controls set using a limited time-series of data and changed according to fluctuations in landings

- Now, have data from FY 2003 – 2021 (longer time series), where effort controls have changed → Exploratory analysis of landings data

Higher possession limits led to higher monkfish landings/trip

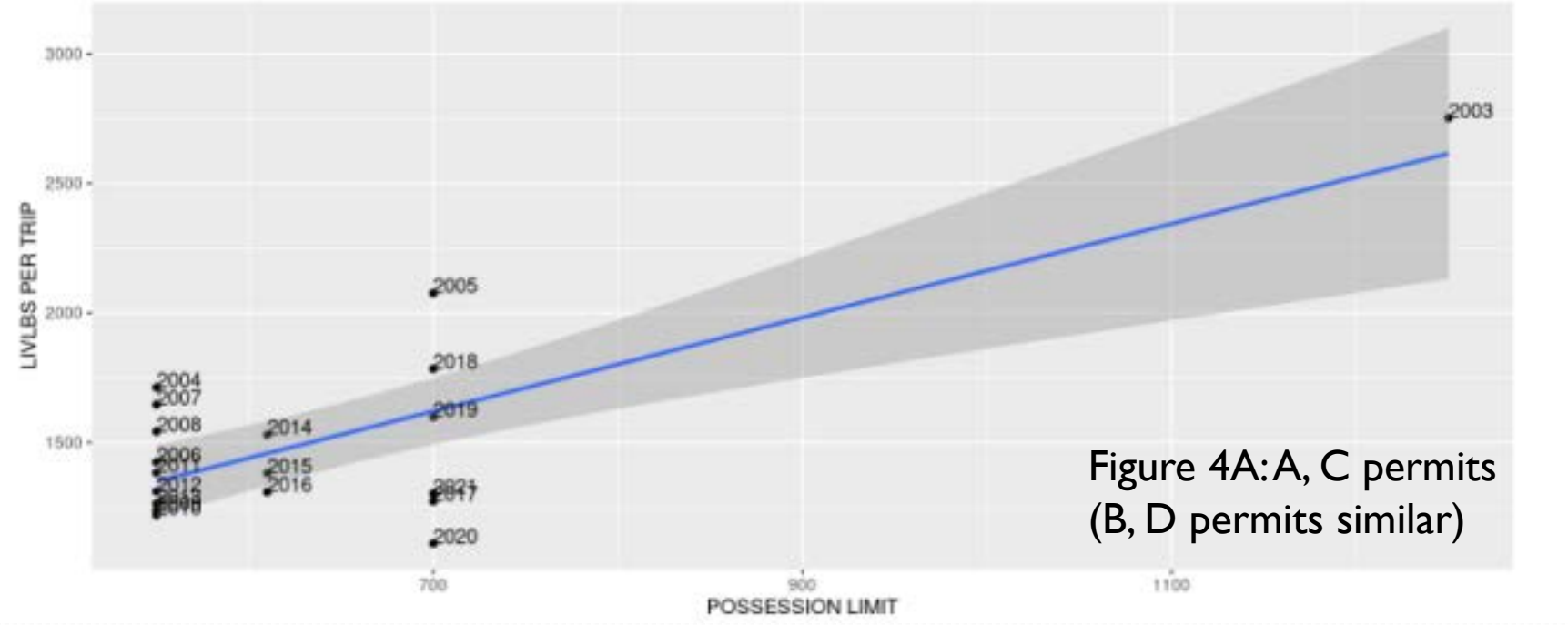


Figure 4A: A, C permits (B, D permits similar)

Higher DAS allocations led to higher monkfish landings/trip

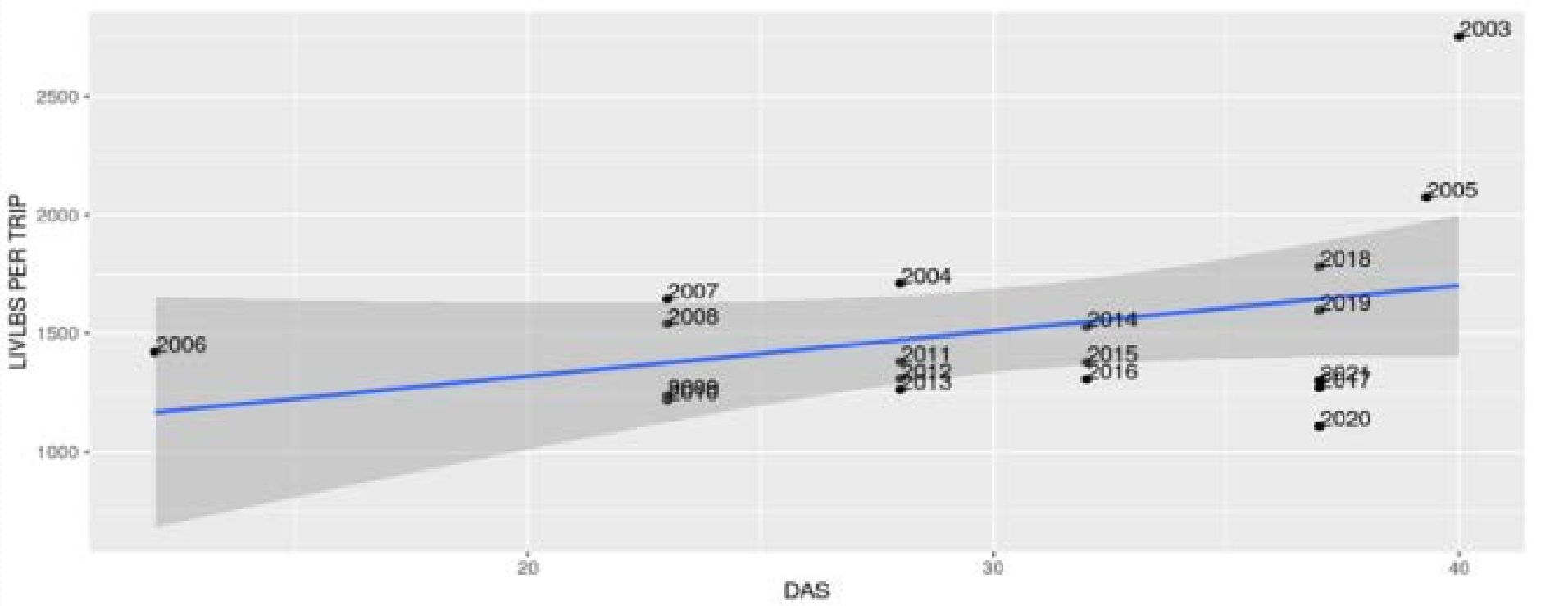


Figure 4B: A, C permits
(B, D permits similar)

Monkfish landings/trip also a function of size of monkfish population available to harvest (survey indices)

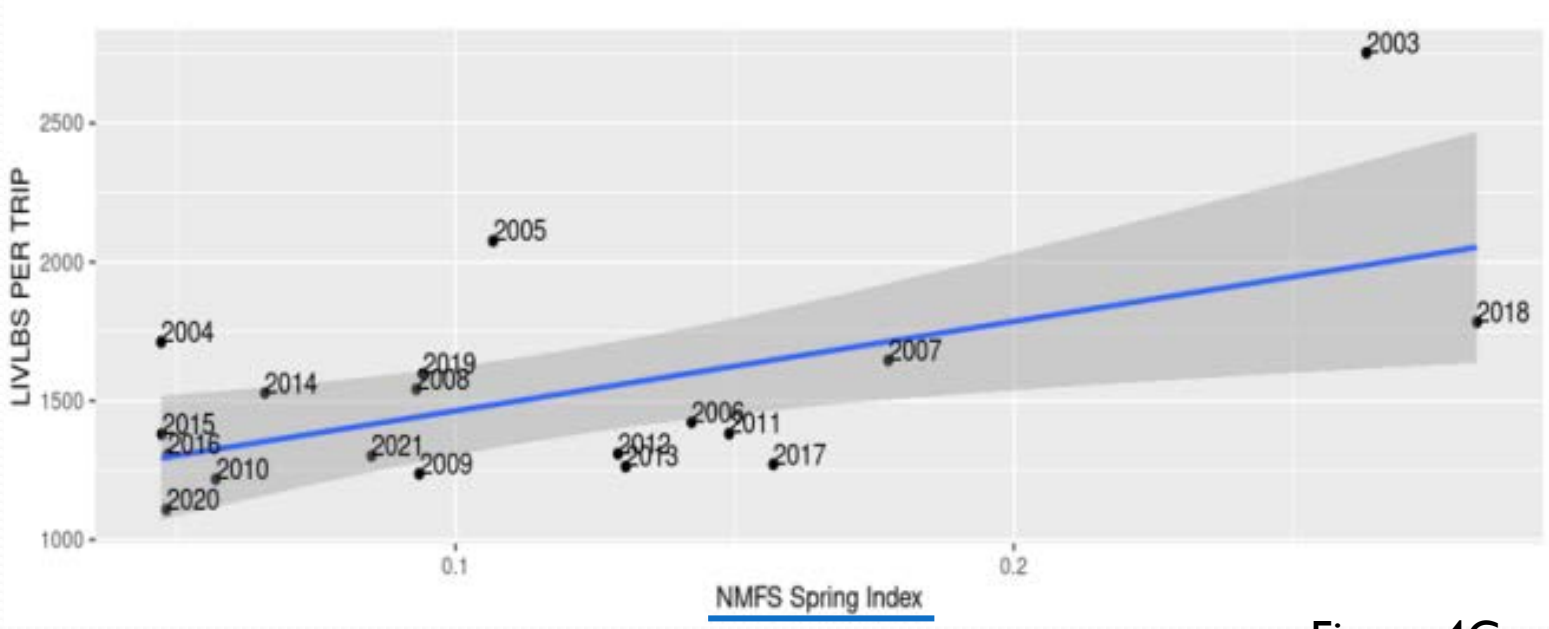
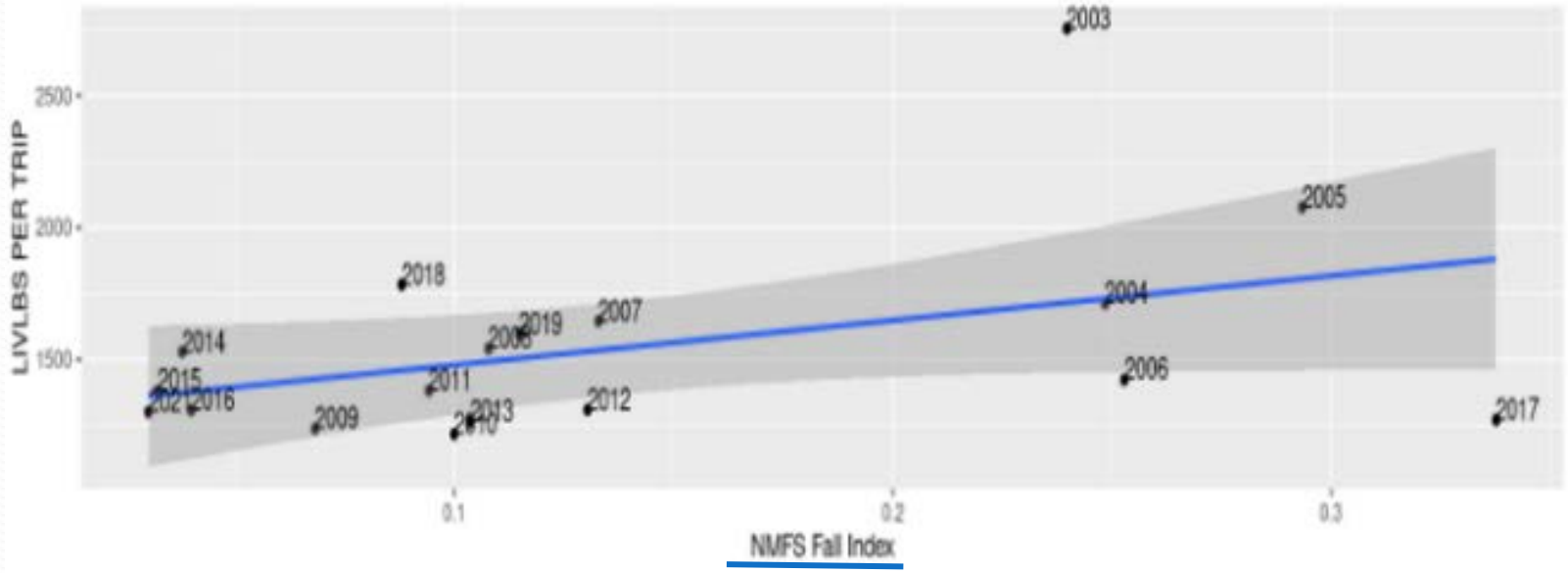


Figure 4C and D: A, C permits (B, D permits similar)



Potential Next Steps re: Possession Limit Analysis

Limited Access Possession Limits:

May be possible to develop an exploratory regression model to predict monkfish landings by permit category as a function of effort controls

→ Need little variability in relationship between landings and effort controls for model to work

→ No guarantee that this can be developed though – more exploratory work over next few months

Incidental Possession Limits:

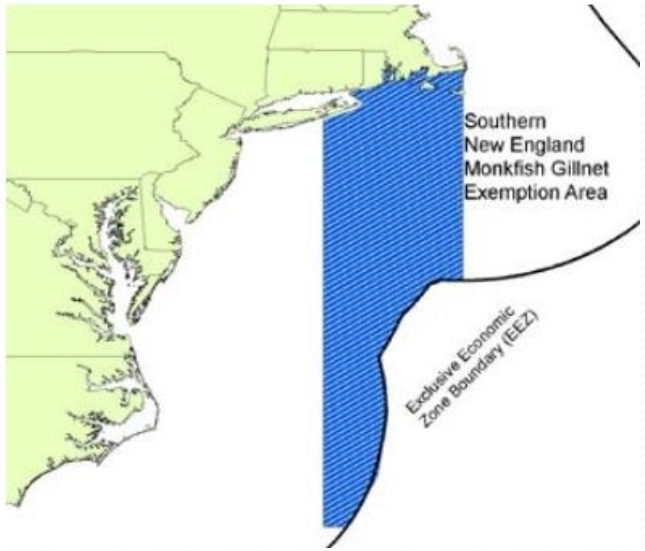
- Similar exploratory analysis can be done as presented today
- Tables 24-25 for vessels not under a DAS program show subset of trips (16%) landing ≥ 90% of incidental limits

Action 3: Gillnet Mesh Size

Committee consensus:
Include two alternatives that would require an 11" or 12" minimum mesh for gillnets in the exemption areas where 10" is required currently. The implementation of the larger mesh alternative would be delayed until FY 2025 (i.e., two years from implementation) so that the industry can adjust more smoothly.

Two areas where 10" is required

GOM/GB Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area



SNE Monkfish and Skate Gillnet Exemption Area

Action 3: Gillnet Mesh Size

- Alternatives written to increase mesh size when using a monkfish DAS and in the GOM/GB dogfish monkfish area.
  - Separate regulation that would maintain 6.5” for targeting dogfish in GOM/GB area.
  - Changing from 10” in SNE area would impact skate bait trips too.
  - Applying change to Monkfish DAS changes just monkfish trips in SNE AREA

Action 3: Gillnet Mesh Size

Preliminary fishery data (Tables 33 & 34)

- In the SFMA, at least 96% of monkfish gillnet trips (by 93%+ of vessels) used at least 11" mesh size in FY 2018-2021.
- Most landing ports by gillnet mesh size are confidential.
- Vessels using under 11" mesh are in Rhode Island and New York.

Discussion: Is it the Committee's intent to only apply the increase to monkfish-only DAS trips, not skate bait trips in SNE monkfish skate area?

2023 Council Management Priorities

Purpose

Recommend what Council should work on in 2023 for monkfish.

Relevant documents

5e – PDT mtg summary
4 – draft sturgeon plan
6a – NEFMC comments

Webinar technical assistance: helpdesk@nefmc.org

Doc #5e

PDT Comment on 2022 priorities

Priority	PDT Comment
1. 2023-2025 specifications action. Consider revising discard estimation methods, 12' gillnet mesh, VMS, and measures to reduce discards	Framework 13 underway. Final action in December. VMS removed in June.
2. AP-PDT fishery performance report	Final to be presented to Council in September.
3. Management track assessment	Peer review in September.

Doc #5e

2022 DRAFT priorities NOT approved by Council

PDT comment: Some ended up being partially addressed through Framework 13.

- "Consider gear specific discard mortality estimates based on new gear research"
- "Consider ways to increase efficiency in the monkfish fishery by 1) reducing bycatch by turning discards into landings, 2) allow either back-loading or front-loading of DAS, 3) increasing trip limits, and/or 4) allowing monkfish DAS leasing"
- "Review the rationale for recent changes to IVR regulations; consider whether concerns can be addressed through revisions to administration of trip limits and/or DAS clocking/ accounting regulations to increase efficiency and flexibility for vessels and to reduce monkfish discards."
- "Review recommendations from the RSA program review and develop measures to improve the Monkfish RSA program's effectiveness."
- "Revisit use of RSA DAS and ability to flip to a directed RSA DAS while at sea"
- "Analyze the characteristics of the fishery, including the active monkfish participants and any impacts on the entry of latent effort from other fisheries."

PDT recommendations for 2023

Doc #5e

1. Review recommendations from the Research-Set-Aside (RSA) program review and develop improvements to the Monkfish RSA program. Consider use of RSA DAS and whether additional flexibility is warranted (e.g., flip to a directed RSA DAS while at sea).

2. Address monkfish recommendations in the NOAA Fisheries Draft Action Plan to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch in Federal Large Mesh Gillnet Fisheries.

Also, the Committee should consider if and when to update the fishery performance report.

PDT rationale

Doc #5e

1. The RSA program review was conducted a few years back and the Council should take time to consider the results and how to improve the program, noting that NOAA Fisheries opted again to not issue a request for proposal due to challenges with implementing this RSA program (see performance report for challenges).

2. The sturgeon action plan will likely be finalized in the fall of 2022, which includes a recommendation that the NEFMC consider a range of potential measures to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in federal large mesh gillnet fisheries.

DRAFT Sturgeon Action Plan Overview

Doc #4

What Led to Action Plan?

2021 Biological Opinion on 10 FMPs and NEFMC's Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 required NOAA to convene working group

What's in Action Plan?

- Includes results of Atlantic sturgeon bycatch and information gaps
- Describes regulatory measures recommended by working group for NEFMC/MAFMC to consider to reduce bycatch by 2024
- Establishes timeframe for measures and post-release mortality evaluation (**Final Rule published, implemented early-mid 2024**)

NEFMC-managed Species Included in Plan?

Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab, **Monkfish**, Northeast Multispecies, Northeast Skate Complex

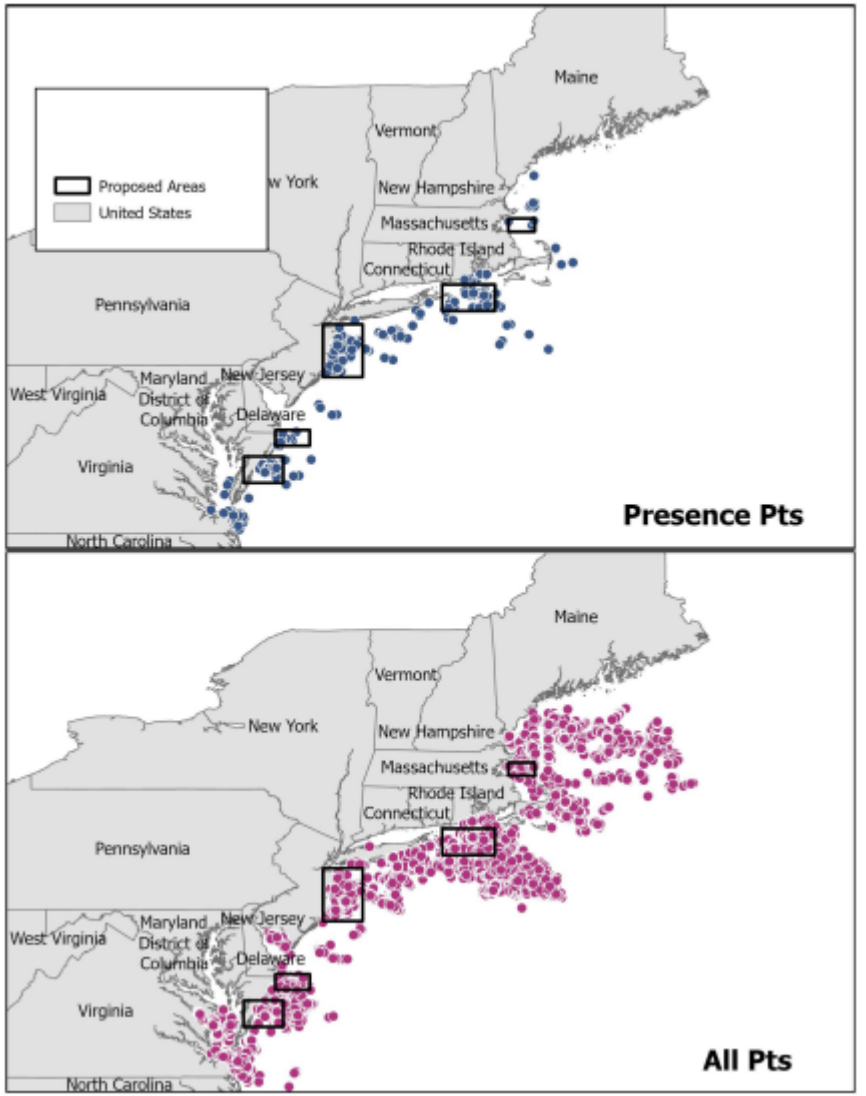
Actionable Conclusions from Information Review?

- Federal gillnet fisheries targeting monkfish, spiny dogfish, and NE multispecies with sink gillnet gear (5.5 – 10") = primary bycatch contributors
- Low-profile gillnet with reduced net height, shorter tie-down length/spacing reduce bycatch
- Soak time likely driver of bycatch rates, mortality
- Temperature, depth primary driver of sturgeon movement, abundance
- Post-release mortality not well understood

DRAFT Sturgeon Action Plan Recommendations

<u>To achieve bycatch reductions by 2024 – some combination of following:</u>

1. Modifications to gear
   - *Use low-profile gear when fishing under a monkfish DAS; in a large mesh exemption area with 10" min. mesh size; or under a NE mult. DAS in Large Mesh DAS program*
2. Modifications to fishing practices
   - *Reduce soak times for above vessels (soak times vary greatly though)*
3. Consideration of areas of focus in regions where bycatch is most common
   - *Consider small, focused, perhaps seasonal measures – need to evaluate trade-offs*



Other Business

Webinar technical assistance: helpdesk@nefmc.org