



New England Fishery Management Council

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E.F. "Terry" Stockwell, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 19, 2021
TO: Science and Statistical Committee
FROM: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Terms of Reference for Northeast Skate Complex ABC recommendations for fishing years 2022 and 2023

Terms of Reference

Review the information provided by the Skate Plan Development Team (PDT) and considering the Council's Risk Policy Statement, recommend an acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the Northeast Skate Complex for fishing years 2022-2023 consistent with the ABC control rule for skates.

Background

The ABC control rule for the Northeast Skate Complex, established through Amendment 3 is:

The skate ABC is the median ratio of catch/biomass of each of the seven skate species multiplied by its three-year moving average stratified mean biomass (weight/tow) for skates, summed over the seven skate species in the management unit. This method is considered an interim proxy for an ABC until an OFL and its uncertainty can be quantified.

The control rule for setting the Northeast Skate Complex acceptable biological catch (ABC) uses the median catch/biomass ratio. The biomass estimate is based on the three-year moving average of stratified mean biomass derived from Northeast Fisheries Science Center trawl survey data. The PDT has developed an ABC approach (Document 2) that accounts for the recent gaps in trawl survey coverage.

In their February 11, 2009, report, the SSC concluded that an OFL "cannot be determined, because overfishing reference points are survey proxies, and estimates of fishing mortality or fishing mortality reference points are not available. Therefore, the method of determining ABC should be considered an interim proxy until an OFL and its uncertainty can be quantified, and supplemental management actions will continue to be required for individual skate species that are overfished or for which overfishing is occurring."

After recommending an ABC by the SSC, the Council will identify management measures to be adjusted in a management action. The final specifications for fishing years 2022-2023 will be approved by the Council at its September 2021 meeting and are expected to be implemented on May 1, 2022.

Information

1. Skate PDT presentation regarding setting the skate ABC
2. Memo from the Skate PDT to SSC re Northeast Skate Complex ABC for FY 2022 – 2023, July 14, 2021
3. Risk Policy Matrix for the Northeast Skate Complex
4. Northeast Skate Complex Affected Environment
5. 2020 Skate Annual Monitoring Report, including 2019 Northeast Skate Stock Status Update from the NEFSC
6. The Council’s Risk Policy Road Map (2016), which includes the Risk Policy Statement and Implementation Plan, see pp. 4-5. Available at:
https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/Risk.Policy.Road.Map_Final_063016.pdf
7. State of the Ecosystem and Current Conditions. NOAA/NEFSC. Available at:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/ecosystems/state-ecosystem-reports-northeast-us-shelf>
8. Documents from 2019 SSC meeting relevant to setting the skate ABC
 - a. PDT memo
 - b. SSC report