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New England Fishery Management Council
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 27, 2026

TO: New England Fishery Management Council

FROM: Monkfish and Skate Plan Development Teams

SUBJECT: **2025 Experiences in Coordinated Management of Monkfish and the Northeast Skate Complex**

This memorandum summarizes coordinated monkfish and skate management activities in 2025, including feedback from members of the Monkfish and Skate Plan Development Teams (PDT), Advisory Panels (AP), Committees, and Council leaders. This will be important for informing whether joint monkfish and skate management should continue and potentially be formalized and can provide insights into joint management within the Council more broadly. In this document, "joint" refers to monkfish and skate groups meeting together and aligning work, unless otherwise noted. Furthermore, it is worth noting that some comments in the report may help inform decisions on the joint management of these two fishery management plans, while other comments may be more applicable to the Council process more broadly.

The coordinated management approach stemmed from these 2025 Council priorities:

1. Monkfish: "Develop 2026-2028 monkfish fishery specifications,"
2. Skate: "Develop 2026-2027 skate fishery specifications," and
3. Monkfish/Skate: "Coordinate Committee and Advisory Panel activities and review effectiveness of joint planning (multiyear, initiate in 2025)."

The priority for coordination between fishery management plans emerged from discussions during prior Monkfish and Skate AP and Committee meetings, where overlaps between monkfish and skate wing fisheries were identified. One concern from industry members targeting monkfish is that they can incidentally catch large amounts of skates and reach skate wing possession limits before monkfish possession limits on a trip, ultimately reducing monkfish landings. The prevalence of skates can be unpredictable but seems to be increasing in recent years, per industry input.

Over the years, there had been some common members on Council staff, PDTs, and APs, and, to a lesser extent, the Committees; however, there was very minimal coordination amongst the respective monkfish and skate groups. Separately, the Monkfish and Skate APs developed ideas for how to manage the fisheries more effectively, but sometimes recommendations from these groups were contradictory. In prioritizing coordination, the Council hypothesized that meeting jointly would provide opportunities for collaborative development of solutions to address this challenge. For 2025, the NEFMC assigned the same NEFMC members to the Monkfish and Skate Committees to facilitate coordination, though different GARFO staff and MAFMC members sat on these groups (Table 1).

Table 1. Size and degree of overlap of monkfish and skate groups, as of January 2026.

Council Group	Total	Monkfish only	Skate only	Monkfish & Skate
Monkfish and Skate PDTs*	20	8	8	4
Monkfish and Skate APs	15	3	5	7
Monkfish and Skate Committee	15	6	2	7
*PDTs include Council staff and NOAA staff supporting PDTs.				

Additionally, the coordinated approach was designed to inform the Council's Cross-Jurisdictional Governance Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) projects, which have the following objectives:

- Evaluate advisory body structure, use, and decision-making; consider representativeness of membership given shifting species distributions (IRA 4.1).
- Evaluate joint management approaches and consider the need to more clearly document and revise them (IRA 4.2).
- Evaluate opportunities to combine fishery management plans within or across Councils and consider the benefits and costs of doing so (IRA 4.2).
- Collaborate with partner organizations to develop regionally consistent approaches where possible (IRA 4.1 and IRA 4.2).

Staff conveyed to the Monkfish and Skate APs and Committees that having joint meetings served a dual purpose. The near-term goal of joint meetings in 2025 was to support development of the specifications actions, and in the longer-term, having joint meetings was a stepping-stone to consider whether joint management should continue in the future and be more formalized (e.g., potentially combining the Monkfish and Skate Fishery Management Plans). The feedback in this memo can inform the cross-jurisdictional governance discussions that are continuing as part of the IRA work.

METHODS FOR SEEKING INPUT

Council staff held individual and small-group interviews during January 2026 with current members of the PDTs, APs, and Committees. All members of these groups were invited to be interviewed and staff met with all who responded (Table 2). In all, 11 PDT members (including three Council staff), 10 AP members, and four Committee members were interviewed across monkfish and skate groups. Drafts of this report were presented and discussed at meetings of the Joint Monkfish-Skate PDT meeting in February 2026 and the Joint Monkfish-Skate AP and Committee meeting in March, and input received has been incorporated. Thus, this memo was informed by a wider group than just the individual informants.

Table 2. Informants for feedback on joint meeting processes.

Council Group	Total Informants	Monkfish only	Skate only	Monkfish & Skate
Monkfish and Skate PDTs	11	4	3	4
Monkfish and Skate APs	10	2	3	5
Monkfish and Skate Committee	4	0	0	4
Council leaders	2	n/a	n/a	n/a

Questions asked of the informants included:

- *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?*

OVERVIEW OF 2025 COORDINATION

The 2025 Council priority on coordination involved joint meetings of the Monkfish and Skate PDTs, APs, and Committees to develop monkfish and skate specifications actions and to inform any changes in effort controls (Table 3). There were also a few individual PDT meetings throughout 2025.

Table 3. Schedule of joint monkfish and skate meetings in 2025.

Meeting	Objectives / Tasks Completed
February 6 – Skate PDT	• Develop input on 2025 Skate Management Track Assessment plans • Discuss Fishing Years 2026-2027 specifications action • Other updates (thorny skate research, data workflow, discards, etc.)
February 13 – Monkfish PDT	• Develop input on 2025 Monkfish Management Track Assessment plans • Discuss Fishing Years 2026-2028 specifications action & other updates
March 3 – Joint PDT	• Recap individual PDT meetings • Discuss March 12th Joint PDT memo to joint AP and Committee with background information on monkfish and skate fisheries and possible analyses to inform specifications actions
March 19 – Joint AP	• Reviewed memo, recommended analyses to identify overlap between monkfish and skate fisheries
March 20 – Joint Committee	• Reviewed memo, tasked PDT with analyses to identify overlaps
May 29 – Joint PDT	• Reviewed Committee tasking for joint analyses; developed work plan to complete tasking
August 7 – Monkfish PDT	• Discussed FY 2024 catch accounting • Discussed 2025 monkfish data update of NEFSC • Developed FY 2026-2030 specifications
August 8 – Skate PDT	• Discussed FY 2024 catch accounting • Discussed 2025 skate data update of NEFSC • Developed FY 2026-2030 specifications
August 21 – Joint PDT	• Reviewed SSC meeting outcomes • Reviewed PDT work on Committee tasking • Developed recommendations for effort controls
September 16 – Joint AP	• Receive presentation on PDT analyses, recommend monkfish and skate specifications/effort controls
September 17 – Joint Committee	• Receive presentation on PDT analyses (Sept. 9th Joint PDT memo), recommend monkfish and skate specifications (ABC/ACL, effort controls)
September 24-26 – NEFMC	• Council takes final action on monkfish and skate specifications
October 7-9 – MAFMC	• Council takes final action on monkfish specifications

FEEDBACK ON JOINT MEETING STRUCTURE

Advantages

Improved efficiency

Overall, informants felt that the joint process was an improvement to fisheries management, recognizing the overlap in participation between the monkfish and skate wing fisheries, particularly in southern New England. It was more efficient to have joint meetings where members of both monkfish and skate PDTs, APs, or Committees could provide input at one meeting and have more direct conversations rather than reporting back to different groups. There were a variety of interests represented (skate wing and bait fisheries, northern and southern area monkfish fisheries, gillnet and trawl fisheries) at any given meeting. The monkfish and skate wing fisheries have the most overlap in the southern New England gillnet fishery, and it was valuable to hear both the monkfish and skate perspectives to provide context for the joint data analyses and why the data did not lead to a clear conclusion of fishery overlaps/impacts. These joint discussions also provided broader perspectives for those who only participate in one fishery and helped people better understand fisheries they are not directly involved with. One participant provided the example of Skate Amendment 5 (in which the Council considered developing a skate limited access permit), which was challenging, because there was a lack of input from the monkfish fishery. An advantage of joint meetings is to more thoroughly consider recommendations for management changes. For example, skate specifications actions as recent as FY 2024-2025 changed skate possession limits consistent with only Skate AP recommendations, though these were disagreed with by the Skate AP shortly thereafter and did not include input from the Monkfish AP.

With fewer scientific inputs to develop specifications in 2025, (i.e., data updates vs assessments), it was helpful to have and hear conversations from the Advisory Panels. AP and Committee members were encouraged to attend PDT meetings, and it was helpful to have their input (from whomever decided to attend and offer input), though it is important to balance facilitating this discussion with completing PDT tasks (i.e., planning for or evaluating data analyses).

The joint process created efficiencies for planning, especially for those who were members of both Monkfish and Skate PDTs, APs, or Committees. While some PDT members were able to attend AP and Committee meetings, it was helpful to have an overview of the joint discussion and outcomes at subsequent PDT meetings for awareness. Previously, only outcomes of Monkfish AP and Committee meetings were provided to the Monkfish PDT, and likewise with the skate groups. It was also helpful to have a NOAA representative on each plan participate to ensure agency coverage of all meetings in case of scheduling conflicts.

Improved engagement, attendance

The joint meetings and process was a good way to build trust and connect information from the industry with science products. The hybrid or fully webinar format of the meetings worked well – having a webinar option is beneficial because more people can attend, though in person discussions are valuable. Some informants felt that attendance and engagement improved with the joint meetings.

Disadvantages:

Not inclusive / representative

There were challenges with having a wide variety of stakeholders involved in the joint process. Some participants disengaged during discussion of matters that were not pertinent to their fishery of interest, feeling that those portions of a meeting were not an efficient use of their time. Some stakeholders who are less or not involved in the overlapping fisheries may have felt less impactful on the process due to the focus on joint discussions. There was some concern that the bait skate group was less engaged or possibly disengaged at various points in the process given that the conversations were largely focused on the joint

fishery perspective, though the Advisory Panel chairs did work to ensure those voices were not overshadowed. However, there was not a desire to see the bait skate discussion split off from the rest of the Advisory Panel, with an informant noting the importance of having multiple viewpoints represented in meetings. It was also noted that there is a lack of representation of the Gulf of Maine skate fishery on the Skate AP. There were some logistical challenges in running joint meetings, including confusion around voting protocols when there are different representatives from NOAA on the Committees.[1]

Mismatch of expectations

Early in 2025, there was a mismatch between the expectations of some AP and Committee members and what could be accomplished given the scope of the Council's priorities. There was confusion around the goals and potential outcomes of the joint meeting process, with some participants expecting quicker decisions on the future of joint monkfish and skate management than the IRA project timelines identified. This made it challenging to keep discussions focused on the near-term goal of supporting the development of the specifications actions.

With larger meetings and more diverse participants, some informants felt that there was more tendency for AP and Committee discussions to lose focus due to how meetings were facilitated. For example, there were lengthy discussions that were unrelated to the overall meeting goals, which resulted in meetings getting off track and going off on tangents. Over the course of the year, there were emerging limitations on what could be accomplished in the joint work due to mid-year reductions in federal resources. The expectation at the March meeting was that September management track assessments would be used to complete specifications actions for final decisions at the December Council meetings. By late spring, the assessments were cancelled (data updates provided instead) and the timeline for completing the specification actions moved from December back to September.

Utility

It was observed that there was inconsistency across the meetings in 2025 in identifying a problem that adjusting skate possession limits would resolve. Specifically, the AP and Committee motivations for revising skate possession limits varied between the March and September AP and Committee meetings, such that the focus of the analyses tasked to the PDT in March ended up being less useful than anticipated. In March, the focus and tasking was on maximizing skate limits to lessen constraints on monkfish landings, but in September, more modest skate increases were recommended to prevent market floods that would decrease skate prices. Ahead of the March meetings, the PDT had offered to provide economic data to inform the development of possession limits, but the Committee had rejected that idea. In September, the PDT worked quickly between the September Committee and Council meetings to give more economic data that the Committee could have considered earlier in the process. Reflecting on this shift in focus, informants recalled that the potential for drops in skate prices became more of a concern by the fall, so sometimes the meeting discussions are influenced by time of year as well as who attends.

While informants generally felt that the joint process was helpful, there was concern that the final 2026 Council work priorities did not align with the recommendations of the joint AP and Committee. In September, the Committee recommended a list of 2026 priorities based on AP input, noting that a peer-review of the monkfish catch per unit effort (CPUE) projects was the highest priority, followed by: 2) exploring options for moving from skate possession limits that are per trip to limits based on the number of DAS that a trip is charged; 3) creating a skate wing RSA program to provide research opportunities for relevant fisheries; and 4) developing a three-season approach for managing the skate wing fishery (September 17 Joint Committee meeting summary). During the December Council meeting, the Council voted to prioritize a review of the CPUE projects and to scope for an Individual Fishing Quota program for monkfish and/or skate wing fisheries and to drop the second and third Committee recommendations. While the Council is not bound by the recommendations of an AP or Committee, it was felt by some that

[1] This was resolved by having the individual APs and Committees vote only on motions related to their FMP.

one purpose of having joint discussions was to build stronger consensus around issues that the Council should be addressing, and it was discouraging that this consensus did not have traction at the Council meeting.

Suggestions for improvement

Meeting prep / materials

In future iterations of this joint effort, several improvements can be made to clarify and streamline the process. First, clearly outlining the purpose, goals, process, and expectations of any joint endeavors is essential. In 2025, there was some confusion around the relationships between a variety of efforts being undertaken, including the monkfish and skate specifications actions, the Council's IRA project on joint governance, the monkfish measures outlined in EO 14276 Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness (focused on monkfish management modifications; additional details and context can be found here), and the 2023 Monkfish Research Set Aside Working Group recommendations (final report with recommendations and working group context can be found here), and how these efforts tied into the idea of joint management. Clarification on the goals and scope of a future joint effort could avoid confusion when there are multiple simultaneous projects. Clarification on the roles and responsibilities of the PDT, AP, and Committee in the process, including the types of input that can be provided by each group, would be beneficial. Also, establishing where, when and how AP and Committee input will be solicited and incorporated into the process would improve the workflow. Additional background information would also be helpful given recent and future turnover within NOAA as well as others involved in the Council process. Finally, continuing to share email updates across groups for the monkfish and skate plans will help to keep all participants engaged and informed.

Meeting structure

There are changes to meeting structures that could improve a future joint process. As the PDT develops data analyses to present to the AP and Committee, it may be appropriate to have additional closed meetings of a PDT subgroup to have more focused discussions on feedback received, data availability, planning, and other considerations/constraints before receiving additional input from a wider audience. This approach would allow the PDT to set reasonable expectations in terms of data availability and capacity and help the PDT to balance completing technical work with collecting and integrating input from AP and Committee members as well as other stakeholders. Note that there were a few meetings between Council staff and a few PDT members in 2025, though in the future, there is a desire to involve a larger subset of the PDTs and on a broader range of topics than what occurred. It may also be helpful to have joint monkfish and skate PDT and AP meetings with the joint Committee members invited to join as audience members if desired to help prepare input for stock assessments, SSC reviews, and other purposes. There may be more engagement if conversations around joint management more broadly were separated from regulatory topics such as effort controls.

There was a suggestion to consider changing meeting structure/organization to allow participants to engage on only their topics of interest or hold FMP-specific meetings to focus on particular topics (i.e., thorny skate conservation, skate bait management, monkfish CPUE project updates). Adding more detail to meeting agendas such as the specific fishery being discussed (skate bait, skate wing, northern monkfish trawl, etc.) could also help stakeholders identify which items may be relevant and would ensure that sectors of the fishery that are not the focus of joint management have dedicated time on the agenda. It may also assist attendees in planning if they are only available for a portion of the scheduled meeting time. However, this could pose some issues with establishing and maintaining a quorum during meetings. In addition, AP and Committee meetings are typically scheduled for at least a half day (with more flexibility for PDT meetings); thus, it would be inefficient to plan these meetings by topic given how much effort it is to schedule the meetings.

FEEDBACK ON JOINT DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Advantages:

It was helpful to hold FMP-specific PDT meetings at the beginning of the year to discuss work priorities and other FMP-specific topics before moving into joint meetings. Within the joint PDT, the delegation of tasks went smoothly, with a few PDT members completing data pulls and the rest of the PDT reviewing results. It was efficient to have one person pulling both monkfish and skate data. A PDT member noted that the joint process helped answer questions about monkfish being restricted by skates from an economic perspective. The PDTs conducted a prioritization exercise of the tasked analyses based on available resources, which was helpful for developing a work plan, particularly as the group adjusted to a new action timeline.

Disadvantages:

General approach

There were some challenges with the data analysis process, including a wide scope of PDT tasking partly due to convening the groups jointly for the first time, moving up specifications actions timelines due to external factors unrelated to joint efforts, and varying interests. Partway through the year, the timeline for the monkfish and skate specifications actions was shortened, which left the PDT with a substantial amount of work to complete in a short amount of time. There were also staffing reductions at NOAA that increased near-term workloads of PDT members. The PDT had to react in real time during meetings to set expectations of what could be done, and some questions came up that could not be addressed in the allotted time. The PDT analyses also had a wide scope, and it would have been helpful to better focus and prioritize tasking. Some of the work did not necessarily lead the PDT/AP/Committee anywhere or address the questions being asked, which was an inefficient use of time and effort. Some participants noted that the initial PDT memo was too detailed and technical, but some used the document as a springboard for discussion with industry members or to provide context as needed. There were some varying interests with regards to the tasking, and some tasks felt redundant or too specific to one species.

Utility of joint analyses

The joint analyses and data did not consistently match the perception from a few industry representatives who were vocal on the idea that an overabundance of skates were inhibiting the ability to harvest monkfish. The data and a few other participants noted that the interaction between the southern monkfish and skate wing fishery varies by trip, season, and year due to changing environmental and market conditions, and suggested that there are times where an overabundance of skates may be limiting monkfish harvest but that there are other cases where this does not appear to be a key factor. For example, when examining monkfish DAS trips landing 75-100% of the skate possession limits in the Southern monkfish management area, monkfish landings varied substantially across permit categories and months, with the average percent of monkfish possession limits landed ranging from 13% on B and D permits in November to 106% in May on D permits. Furthermore, a few stakeholders were concerned about the perception that the presence of skates is inhibiting monkfish catch, which could incorrectly result in an increase in skate trip limits and increased effort on the monkfish stock, which may not be appropriate given the uncertain condition of the monkfish resource and possibility of increased effort on some skate species that have only recently been considered rebuilt.

Some stakeholders thought that the PDT memos were too detailed and included very specific analyses that were not helpful for improving separate or joint management of the fisheries. The AP and Committee interests shifted over time, diminishing the utility of completed joint analyses and PDT tasking and the need for last-minute analyses in time for decision-making.

Suggestions for Improvement on Joint Analyses:

General approach

Several individuals suggested more focused PDT tasking by the Committee that is intended to answer specific questions instead of evolving tasking that is more haphazard and off-topic. This can be accomplished by:

- Council staff working more closely with Committee Chairs on meeting direction.
- Improved meeting facilitation by Committee Chairs to avoid unproductive and unfocused discussions.
- Prior to tasking, ensure that clear goals and expectations are set, especially as it relates to joint management, with a clear timeline and outline of how tasking supports the goals.
- The PDT potentially learning from the AP and Committee first, before examining the data and conducting analyses on trends in fishery performance.
- Analyses that account for different fishing behavior between Gulf of Maine, Southern New England, and Mid-Atlantic, specifically different day-at-sea use, adding/dropping a federal skate permit, target species, etc.

To better engage stakeholders throughout the Council process, there was interest in better identifying and describing the goals of coordinated efforts. A few industry representatives suggested including more approachable informational materials to explain the science, data, assessment approaches, etc. before any decision-making. This could include recordings of presentations that can be viewed post-meeting, short informational videos (e.g., MAFMC scup and essential fish habitat actions), a one to two day workshop with mock data and models, and other approachable materials to help improve understanding and participation and feedback from the fishing industry. One person referenced the 'squid squad' meetings as something to consider; during these weekly meetings, stakeholders are invited to attend to ask questions, provide input and feedback on the science and fishery, and be more involved in the fishery science and management process.

Data

Several PDT members suggested focusing on simpler data analyses and trends in fishery performance first and foremost, as determined and informed by a subset of the joint PDT. Note that this suggestion is not consistent with other feedback received suggesting starting with Committee tasking first. This would be helpful to determine what is feasible and most sensible from an analysis standpoint before conducting more detailed analyses that may not be necessary. This could also help reduce shifting AP and Committee priorities tasking, which the PDTs experienced in 2025 where earlier in the year economic analyses were the focus and then this work was sidelined for other types of analyses later in the year. This became hard to manage. By having the PDTs convene first and focus on developing basic biological and socioeconomic analyses across both fisheries, joint data analyses could be improved upon and reduce unnecessary analyses that are not used in decision-making. The Northeast Fisheries Science Center is working to improve its performance metrics data products and to create species report cards (example report card with a species snapshot for bluefish and squid) that PDTs can use in the future.

PDT members also suggested creating one base dataset for all PDT members to use for all data analyses to avoid pulling and using different datasets that could result in different results. Code should be provided such that data pulls and analyses can be reproduced in the future by other PDT members.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR POTENTIAL JOINT MANAGEMENT OF MONKFISH AND SKATE WING FISHERIES IN THE FUTURE

IRA Project 4.2 includes an evaluation of opportunities and tradeoffs of combining the Monkfish and Skate FMPs. This memo includes a summary of factors to consider as part of this evaluation based on experiences with the joint meeting structure and analyses in 2025.

Overall, informants felt that there were improved efficiency and attendance for individuals involved in both fisheries, particularly the southern monkfish gillnet fishery and skate wing fishery off Southern New England. However, given the joint meetings tended to inherently focus on the overlap of these two segments of the fisheries, people involved in other fishery components (e.g., bait skate fishery) felt the joint meetings were mostly irrelevant and not applicable. Furthermore, some informants believed that the joint meetings created a hierarchy of species, where the southern monkfish and winter skate took high priority while all other species and stocks became secondary. This type of approach could adversely affect winter and barndoor skates in the Gulf of Maine, for example, because the impacts on those fisheries are either diminished or because we do not have advisors who are knowledgeable about those species and/or fisheries. Specifically, important issues related to management of those species as part of the skate complex are underemphasized in the joint monkfish and skate process. More critically, some industry representatives felt their input was diminished and did not believe it was worth their time for participating in meetings focused on the overlap of fisheries they are not involved in. Overall, informants from these other segments of the monkfish and skate fisheries had mixed opinions as to whether the joint meetings were beneficial. This was because the joint meetings focused to a greater degree on more diverse segments of the fishery relative to non-joint meetings that inherently have fewer fishery subcomponents.

During the 2025 joint meetings, key sectors in both the APs and the Committees were absent (from meetings and from representation on the Council groups), notably the northern trawl fishery and the dragger skate fishery on a Northeast Multispecies day-at-sea in the Gulf of Maine. If the Council is interested in continuing with joint monkfish and skate meetings in the future and potentially combining FMPs, a large AP (i.e., potentially ~15-18 members) will be needed given the scope of both fisheries and the desire to have representation of various subcomponents and for information sharing.

Informants gave several ideas for more effective management of the monkfish and skate fisheries, that would more closely align regulations across both fisheries. Potential outcomes of regulation alignment includes more consistent use of monkfish, Northeast Multispecies, and Scallop days-at-sea; skates managed by possession limits per DAS instead of per trip; the ability to declare a landing overage while at sea, which is permitted for monkfish but not skates; and so on. Furthermore, to allow for more consistent and holistic management across the FMPs, there should be consideration for consistent types of information and schedule in which science and data are provided; this is particularly important with fewer resources available and an overall reduction in science capacity. Note that there are many other external factors that impact the ability to land monkfish and/or skates including protected resource issues (i.e., Atlantic sturgeon) and offshore wind, though management should be more proactive in aligning regulations rather than reactive to allow for more flexibility to adapt to these external factors.

IRA project 4.1 includes an evaluation of advisory body structure, use, and decision-making and consideration of the representativeness of membership given shifting species distributions. This evaluation should address whether monkfish should still be jointly managed with MAFMC or if skates should be jointly managed with the MAFMC. Only having monkfish jointly managed with MAFMC and not skates creates challenges when considering joint management of the FMPs. Under the joint approach, NEFMC management decisions would apply to monkfish and skate together, which would account for any issues across the two sets of species. However, MAFMC would only be voting on monkfish issues. This could result in the MAFMC taking a more siloed approach as it pertains to the southern monkfish stock; there are sometimes interactions with the skate wing fishery that could receive less focused consideration by MAFMC.

As noted above, the fishery data do not show consistent patterns of overlap of and interaction between the southern monkfish fishery and the Southern New England skate wing fishery. There is a lot of variation and unpredictability with external factors (e.g., environmental conditions, market conditions, safety concerns) in a given season and/or year that affects the degree of overlap of these two segments of the fisheries. This impacts the degree of utility of a joint management approach between monkfish and skate fisheries. A few informants preferred focusing on addressing a loss in fishing grounds due to offshore wind development versus this joint management approach. This could include potentially expanding the boundaries of skate exemption areas to compensate for the loss of fishing grounds from wind development.

Other considerations for a joint management approach include:

- If the APs and Committees are merged, there should be just one AP Chair and one Committee Chair representing both monkfish and skate fisheries versus two chairs who each represent a fishery.
- Joint meetings may affect quorum if a subset of AP stakeholders only participate for portions of the meeting that are most relevant to their sector, thereby reducing the ability to make motions.
- Managing skates as a complex of seven species adds to the complexity of skate management and would add additional challenges if managing with the monkfish fishery and the ability to understand the impact to a given species, such as barndoor skate.