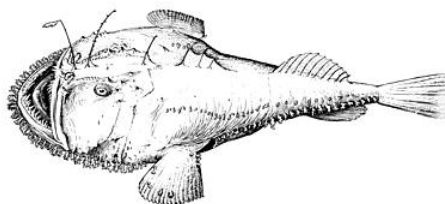


DECISION DOCUMENT

Monkfish Fishery Management Plan

Framework Adjustment 13



This document was developed to help the NEFMC select preferred alternatives for Framework Adjustment 13.

December 1, 2022

Version – NEFMC

Anticipated Council Action:

Prior to selecting final preferred alternatives, Council staff will present the measures under consideration in Framework Adjustment 13 and their draft analyzed impacts on target species, non-target species, protected resources, physical environment (EFH), and human communities (economic and social impacts). Council staff will also answer questions, as needed, about the document.

1. Select *preferred alternatives* in each of the actions in Framework Adjustment 13
 - a. Action 1: Fishing Year (FY) 2023-2025 specifications
 - b. Action 2: Effort controls (Days-at-Sea and incidental possession limits)
 - c. Action 3: Monkfish gillnet mesh size
2. Motion to submit Framework Adjustment 13 to NOAA Fisheries.

Note: Monkfish is managed under a joint management plan with the MAFMC. The MAFMC will select preferred alternatives during its meeting December 12-15, 2022.

Per the monkfish fishery [regulations](#):

“Management adjustments made to the Monkfish FMP require majority approval of each Council for submission to the Secretary”

“If either the NEFMC or MAFMC has rejected all options, then the Regional Administrator may select any measure that has not been rejected by both Councils and that meets the Monkfish FMP's goals and objectives.”

“If the Councils fail to submit a recommendation to the Regional Administrator by February 1 that meets the goals and objectives of the Monkfish FMP, the Regional Administrator may implement through rulemaking in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act one of the options reviewed and not rejected by either Council, provided the option meets the goals and objectives of the Monkfish FMP, and is consistent with other applicable law.”

Action 1 – FY 2023-2025 Specifications

Section 4.1 – Action 1 – FY 2023-2025 Specifications <i>Choose one alternative</i>		Preferred by	
		AP	Committee
Alternative 1 (Sec. 4.1.1)	No action OFL = 0 mt; ACL = 0 mt; TALs = 0 mt		REJECT
Alternative 2 (Sec. 4.1.2)	Status Quo North: OFL = 17,805 mt; ACL = 8,351 mt; TAL = 6,624 mt South: OFL = 23,204 mt; ACL = 12,316 mt; 5,882 mt Discard deduction = 3-year mean discard:catch	√*	REJECT
Alternative 3 (Sec. 4.1.3)	Updated Specifications (SSC recommendation) North: OFL = undetermined; ACL = 5,526.0 mt; TAL = 4,631.7 mt South: OFL = undetermined; ACL = 3,766.0 mt; 1,448.5 mt Discard deduction = 10-year median discards		REJECT**
Decisions/Questions/Information to Consider			
<p>* The AP recommends that the 2022 assessment be remanded and the MAFMC SSC be included in the science and model development for this fishery.</p> <p>** The Committee recommends that the SSC reevaluate the FY 2023-2025 ABCs recommendations.</p> <p>The 2022 management track assessment report and peer review report are provided under Tab 1.8.</p> <p>The SSC memo to the NEFMC on recommendations for specifications is provided under Tab 12.</p> <p>The NEFMC Operations Handbook includes a policy on remanding ABC recommendations back to its SSC (See page 20, also listed in staff slides). A remand needs to meet one of the four criteria listed.</p> <p>Should the Council approve a remand, then the Council would not be selecting a preferred alternative for Action 1 at this meeting.</p> <p>The NEFMC is the lead Council for the Monkfish FMP, and the lead Council takes final action first. If the NEFMC takes final action in January 2023, the MAFMC could take final action in February. If this is not possible, then the next regular Council meetings to take final action would be the NEFMC in April followed by the MAFMC in June. However, either Council could call a special meeting for this purpose. There could be operational issues with starting the fishing year on May 1 with delays in final action.</p> <p>There are no default specifications for the monkfish fishery. Without specifications, the fishing year starts on May 1 with an ABC and Annual Catch Limit of 0 mt. The accountability measure would still be in place: a pound-for-pound deduction from the Annual Catch Target in the second year following the year that catch (landings and discards) exceeds the ACL. During the NEFMC meeting, NOAA Fisheries is being asked to clarify if and what catch would be allowed under this scenario and the conditions that allow the Secretary of Commerce to take administrative action to implement specifications.</p>			
Other important Considerations/Draft EA References			
<p>Document #2a is the draft environmental assessment (summary table of impacts on p. 6 of decision document):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target species impacts: Section 6.2.1 (p. 84) • Non-target species impacts: Section 6.3.1 (p. 88) • Protected resource impacts: Section 6.4.1 (p. 91) • Impacts on physical environment and Essential Fish Habitat: Section 6.5.1 (p. 95) • Human community impacts: Section 6.5.1 (p. 98) 			

Action 2 – Effort Controls

Section 4.2 – Action 2 – Effort Controls		Preferred by	
<i>The Council may choose Alternative 2 and 3. Within Alternative 2, choose one option for North and one option for South. Within Alternative 3, choose one option.</i>		AP	Committee
Alternative 1 (Sec. 4.2.1)	No action 46 (45.2 after RSA deduction) DAS for each limited access monkfish permit, 37 of which may be used in the South	√	REJECT
Alternative 2 (Sec. 4.2.2)	Separate monkfish DAS allocation by area, reduce DAS allocation North DAS options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option A = 20 DAS • Option B = 10 DAS • Option C = 0 DAS South DAS options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option A = 20 DAS • Option B = 10 DAS • Option C = 0 DAS 		REJECT
Alternative 3 (Sec. 4.2.3)	Reduce NFMA permit category C and D incidental possession limits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option A = 20% reduction • Option B = 40% reduction 		REJECT
Decisions/Questions/Information to Consider			
Document #2a is the draft environmental assessment. Section 6.1.1 includes analyses for how these effort control options would have reduced recent fishery landings and compares these reductions to the landings reduction that would be necessary to keep landings within the FY 2023-2025 TALs proposed under Action 1, Alternative 3.			
Other important Considerations/Draft EA References			
Document #2a is the draft environmental assessment (summary table of impacts on p. 6 of decision document): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target species impacts: Section 6.2.2 (p. 85) • Nontarget species impacts: Section 6.3.2 (p. 89) • Protected resource impacts: Section 6.4.2 (p. 93) • Impacts on physical environment and Essential Fish Habitat: Section 6.5.2 (p. 96) • Human community impacts: Section 6.6.2 (p. 100) 			

Action 3 – Monkfish Gillnet Mesh Size

Section 4.3 – Action 3 – Gillnet Measures		Preferred by	
<i>If the Council chooses Alternative 2, choose one option.</i>		AP	Committee
Alternative 1 (Sec. 4.3.1)	No action 10" minimum mesh size when on a Monkfish-only DAS, also in the GOM/GB Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area.		
Alternative 2 (Sec. 4.3.2)	Increase gillnet mesh size Increase minimum mesh size when on a Monkfish-only DAS, also in the GOM/GB Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area. Two-year implementation delay (FY 2025). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option A = Increase to 11" • Option B = Increase to 12" 	√* (Option B)	√** (Option B)
Decisions/Questions/Information to Consider			
<p>This would not impact vessels fishing only for dogfish in the GOM/GB exemption area (Document #4a, p. 17).</p> <p>* The AP requests delayed implementation until FY 2026 to allow more impacted vessels to adjust.</p> <p>** The Committee recommends delayed implementation until FY 2026.</p>			
Other important Considerations/Draft EA References			
<p>Document #2a is the draft environmental assessment (summary table of impacts on p. 6 of decision document):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target species impacts: Section 6.2.3 (p. 87) • Nontarget species impacts: Section 6.3.3 (p. 90) • Protected resource impacts: Section 6.4.3 (p. 94) • Impacts on physical environment and Essential Fish Habitat: Section 6.5.3 (p. 97) • Human community impacts: Section 6.6.3 (p. 105) 			

Table 1 – Summary of potential impacts of the alternatives under consideration in Framework 13 across the valued ecosystem components.

Actions & Alternatives			Direct and Indirect Impacts				
			Target Species	Non-target Species	Protected Resources	Physical Env. (EFH)	Human Communities
Action 1: ABC, ACL, TAL	Alt. 1: No Action		Uncertain or moderate +	Positive	Slight + to moderate +	Slight +	Economic: High - Social: High -
	Alt. 2: Status Quo		Uncertain or slight -	Slight +	Slight – to slight +	Slight -	Economic: Moderate + Social: Moderate +
	Alt. 3: Update (SSC Rec.)		Uncertain or moderate +	Moderate +	Slight – to moderate +	Slight -	Economic: Negative Social: Moderate -
Action 2: Effort Controls	Alt. 1: No Action		Slight -	Negligible	Slight – to slight +	Slight -	Economic: Negligible Social: Slight -
	Alt. 2: Separate DAS Alloc. by area, Reduce DAS	Option 2A: 20 DAS	Slight +	Slight +	Slight -	Slight -	Economic: Negative Social: Slight -
		Option 2B: 10 DAS	Slight + to moderate +	Slight + to moderate +	Slight – to moderate +	Slight -	Economic: Negative Social: Slight -
		Option 2C: 0 DAS	Moderate +	Moderate +	Moderate +	Slight -	Economic: Negative Social: Slight -
	Alt. 3: Reduce NFMA Incidental Limits	Option 3A: 20% reduction	Negligible to slight +	Negligible to slight +	Slight – to slight +	Slight -	Economic: Negative Social: Slight -
		Option 3B: 40% reduction	Negligible to slight +	Negligible to slight +	Slight – to slight +	Slight -	Economic: Negative Social: Slight -
Action 3: Monkfish Gillnet Mesh Size	Alt. 1: No Action		Slight -	Slight -	Slight – to slight +	No impact	Economic: Negligible Social: Slight +
	Alt. 2: Increase Mesh Size	Option A: Increase to 11”	Slight +	Slight +	Slight – to slight +	No impact	Economic: Slight - Social: Slight +
		Option B: Increase to 12”	Slight +	Slight +	Slight – to slight +	No impact	Economic: Slight - Social: Slight +