

Idea Number	Ideas to prioritize to further consider	Reasons to include / Challenge addressed
1	Communication Improvements	
	<p>NEFMC with help from NOAA adopt a mission statement for the Monkfish RSA program; consider what's in the Council Handbook for scallops as a model</p>	<p>Role of the Monkfish RSA program is unclear; need improved transparency and program objectives/goals</p>
	<p>NOAA makes the RSA Request for Proposals (RFP) more explicit regarding expectations of how to feed results into assessment/management incl. timing of next research track assessment (participation in RSA Share Day, Monkfish AP/Cte mtgs, etc.), how to fund the research, recent performance of the Monkfish RSA program, etc.; NEFMC/MAFMC include details in the Council Handbook (to complement description of the Scallop RSA program on page 72 of handbook)</p> <p>Using the Sea Grant network, NMFS with help from NEFMC and MAFMC expand efforts to highlight RSA grant opportunities to prospective RSA applicants with explanations on how the program works along with risks; target outreach to both Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions (2019 Program Review recommendation)</p>	<p>Avoid approving projects that are ultimately not viable due to researchers unable to sell all RSA DAS, thus, not able to impact assessments; successful completion of Monkfish RSA projects could be better; lack of transparency in RFPs; current Notice of Funding Opportunity is basic and doesn't include precautionary language for risks/uncertainties</p> <p>Limited pool of RSA applicants and recipients especially in the Mid-Atlantic region and limited project scopes</p>

Using the NOAA Navigator, Commercial Fisheries News, NOAA Bulletings, etc., **NOAA with help from NEFMC/MAFMC** expand efforts to highlight when/where RSA DAS can be bought for the fishing industry; target outreach to both Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions; NEFMC/MAFMC could add PI contact information to the press releases from NOAA and Council

(https://d23h0vhs26o6d.cloudfront.net/Monkfish-Research-Set-Aside-Program-Supports-Two-2023-2024-Projects-Both-Address-a-Top-Research-Priority_2023-07-13-183553_izxy.pdf)

d

Not enough interest from the monkfish fishery for purchasing RSA DAS; helping industry connect with RSA researchers and vice versa has been a challenge with cooperative research

Once projects are selected, NOAA would create cooperative agreements between NEFSC assessment scientists and RSA project scientists to create shared ownership of the project; would entail sharing project information and progress towards achieving research results (2019 Program Review Recommendation)

e

between RSA researchers and the RSA program office (this would be beyond the progress report requirement with the intention of having more informal

f

conversations about progress, challenges, etc.)

Lacking a shared understanding of the information needed and how it can be applied between RSA and NEFSC scientists; need for improved engagement between RSA researchers and assessment scientists; RSA project goals not always aligned with needed science and management

Identify issues earlier to help troubleshoot, problem solve

NOAA and/or NEFMC holds a Share Day, forum, or port workshops for completed and ongoing Monkfish RSA projects (separate or in conjunction with Scallop RSA Share Day) including NEFSC scientists in the Northeast and (?) Mid-Atlantic region; keep separate from scallops

g

Need for improved collaboration between researchers, fishing industry, and NMFS scientists to address concerns that project results are not integrated with assessments/management, stakeholders are not aware of the program, selling RSA DAS is a challenge; need to engage with the Mid-Atlantic region

h Once a year, create time during Monkfish Advisory Panel and Committee meetings for RSA researchers to review/discuss completed and ongoing Monkfish RSA projects - likely late summer/early fall prior to the start of the Council priority setting process

Need for improved collaboration between researchers, fishing industry, NEFMC members & staff to address concerns that project results are not integrated with management; members of the public are not always aware of the program/project results

i **NEFMC/MAFMC via press releases/update emails with help from GARFO RSA program** sends out periodic emails with updates and final results of Monkfish RSA projects to monkfish fishing industry, NEFSC, research industry, and other interested parties; researchers would be responsible to meet deadlines and work with Council staff; Councils could offer to help PIs by sharing their proposals/RSA DAS for sale with Council distribution lists

Maintain connections, keep stakeholders especially the science/assessment community aware of the Monkfish RSA program and ongoing work

j NOAA creates an automated system to alert stakeholders when final RSA reports are available (not just a monkfish issue)

NOAA website no longer contains completed RSA final reports, the reports are hard to find, and stakeholders are not always aware of completed RSA project reports

2 Review monkfish RSA allocation to XX (incentivize participation of leasing RSA DAS, maximize the value of RSA DAS, or ??) -- *Monkfish AP/Committee would need to identify a specific goal*

- a Align how landings and DAS are being calculated
Each DAS is worth 4,074 lb whole weight (double the permit A/C trip limits), which could theoretically result landing more pounds than a DAS is worth given there isn't a formal agreement/regulation limiting the amount of pounds caught on an RSA DAS (could have more informal agreements between RSA researchers and industry members when purchasing RSA DAS).

- b Allocate RSA quota using a specific weight deducted from the annual catch limit (lb) vs DAS
Monkfish RSA program is overly complex; desire to enable additional flexibility for researchers to sell more RSA DAS; desire to streamline RSA awards and compensation fishing monitoring; better connected to Monkfish acceptable biological catch

- c NOAA with help from NEFMC should prepare a detailed timetable and make adjustments as needed (2019 Program Recommendation)
Delayed start dates of RSA grant awards can reduce fishing opportunities

Enable the flexibility to flip to a Monkfish RSA DAS while at sea either by: 1) operating similar to selecting the monkfish option when on a Northeast Multispecies DAS whereby if a fishermen harvests more than the incidental amount of monkfish, the fishermen would be able to declare on the VMS unit that they are flipping to a combination trip using both a Monkfish and a Northeast Multispecies DAS to have an unlimited possession limit OR 2) operating similar to the scallop fishery whereby a vessel can flip to a Scallop RSA DAS to ascribe the scallops harvested from that point on to the RSA program, which results in a trip with both non-RSA and RSA scallops.

d

RSA researchers have difficulty selling RSA DAS to the fishing industry

Allow for multi-year EFPs whereby a project is given an EFP and DAS (or pound) allocation at the start of the fishing year to be used for the duration of a multi-year project, beyond the current 2 year project limit (i.e., projects would not receive new allocations each year)

2 main ideas here:

1. Setting up a single EFP for one project to streamline allocation and EFP administration (would not change the total amount of time the project is active; would remain up to 2 years)

2. Could include idea #1 and also extent the time period that grants are provided/projects are active to allow for more funds to be generated. If this does not include idea #1, then might not necessarily improve EFP streamlining

e

Monkfish RSA program is overly complex with multiple EFPs for 2-year projects; difficult to sell RSA DAS leading to funding instability and challenge funding science

f Publish the Request for Proposals earlier, during the summer prior to the start of the fishing year

Researchers do not always have the EFPs, confidentiality waivers, etc. in place at the start of the fishing year

g Make incremental changes in DAS (or pound) allocations based on what the fishing industry can support and progress of active Monkfish RSA projects

RSA researchers have difficulty selling RSA DAS to the fishing industry, creating funding instability

h Allow Monkfish Permit Category E vessels (incidental) to buy Monkfish RSA DAS

There was previous interest in this idea to help sell RSA DAS, however, request wasn't approved by NEFMC. Competing views about ability to maximize RSA utility but not change the fishery operations

- i For Monkfish Permit Category F vessels (offshore), increase possession limits with reduced DAS allocated. Currently: Category F allows for higher possession limit (1,600 lb tail weight or 4,656 lb whole weight) in exchange for a reduction in DAS allocation and requirement to fish offshore (Vessels with Category A-D must request to switch to this category w/in 45 days of permit's effective date and could not have used any DAS for the FY; only fish Oct 1 - April 30)
- j Current Permit F trip limits don't work well for vessels using gillnet gear; need additional incentive for F permit vessels to participate

- j Create an exemption program to remove net limit restrictions for Northern Fishery Management Area vessels to participate in the Monkfish RSA program

Net limit restrictions could be limiting northern vessels from participating in the monkfish RSA program given it is not economical to pay for RSA DAS if landings are limited from net restrictions

Other

- Create a management body to oversee execution of the Monkfish RSA program and to work with RSA researchers and the fishing industry to oversee management/administration of the Monkfish RSA program
- a

Lack of clear guidance, direction, and accountability of the current program; need to improve program impact and additional program support



Ideas removed from further consideration	Reason for removal
1 Require data-sharing of RSA project results	Researchers are required to share data as needed and requested as part of the RSA program and there is no need to have a formal process to post data especially because the datasets can be large with concerns over data storage.
2 Track RSA DAS	The RSA program already tracks both DAS and landings and sends a weekly report to researchers.
3 Standardized format for RSA final reports	A specific format cannot be legally required for final reports (this can only be done for progress reports).
4 Equally distribute DAS/pound allocation across projects	Projects have different needs so equal awards would be inappropriate.
5 Requirement to include letters of interest and support from the fishing industry	Fishing industry already voluntarily provides letters of support so this would be unnecessary.
6 Limit RSA DAS awards based on what the fishing industry can support	Difficult and hard to predict given proposals are solicited before the fishing year begins and it is hard to gauge interest levels for buying RSA DAS.
7 Create a third-party broker to bridge researchers doing the science with the fishing industry negotiating a DAS price	Various issues including workload concerns, likely not logistically feasible, industry could pay more for RSA, etc.

	Establish an auction for RSA DAS / "DAS store"	
8	Compensate fishing industry for their time and intellectual capital for their involvement in RSA proposal review and involvement with the Monkfish AP and	Agreement that this is likely not doable, however, there was interest in helping researchers sell RSA DAS and for fishermen to buy the DAS. This could include greater flexibility for how RSA DAS are used, incremental reductions to RSA allocations, streamlining the administrative process, etc.
9	management process	This is a broader discussion across all Council fisheries given the issue is not unique to Monkfish RSA program.

Idea Number	Summary of pros	Summary of cons	Working Group Ranking ('High', 'Medium', 'Low', or 'Do Not Consider')
1			
a	Easy; could help provide direction/guidance to the Council during priority setting process	Might not have meaningful impact if the mission statement is overly broad	
b	Helps ensure projects that are unlikely to be feasible are not approved; helps align science with management needs; reduces burden on new applicants to understand how the Monkfish RSA program works; more clearly communicates risks and uncertainties; a thorough review process has the ability to vet which proposals are viable	Extra time, effort; unclear whether adding more info to the NOFO/RFP actually addresses the highlighted challenges of risk and uncertainty	
c	Easy, inexpensive, could increase researcher participation in the program and increase choices of projects/competitiveness, could indirectly increase industry participation, increased communication is never a bad idea; relatively easy to expand distribution of RFP and communication of program	Communication is not targeted, require additional staff time, diminishing returns if most monkfish industry participating, new applicants could face higher risk of failure given funding challenges	

d Easy, inexpensive, requires limited work, better communication is always helpful, could improve transparency re: available compensation fishing opportunities

Would need to ensure equity across projects to avoid promoting one project over another; may not be needed given successful projects are typically proactive in identifying industry partners; need to ensure not inadvertently directing effort to RSA researchers if researchers aren't interested (coordination with researchers would be necessary)

e Could enhance ability to target emerging issues with RSA program; assessment scientists better understand industry-driven research priorities; increase uptake of research results because of shared ownership of results between researchers collecting the data and the assessment scientists using the science enhancing credibility and applicability of results

Administrative burden, would need to address equity/fairness, NMFS can only be project partner once award selections are made, would be dependent upon available/relevant technical expertise; most of the challenges for this idea could be addressed during the RFP research priority setting; NEFSC should provide recommendations to include in the priorities

f Could be wrapped into other GARFO communication ideas

NMFS is actively working on improvements to the RFP process so might not be needed

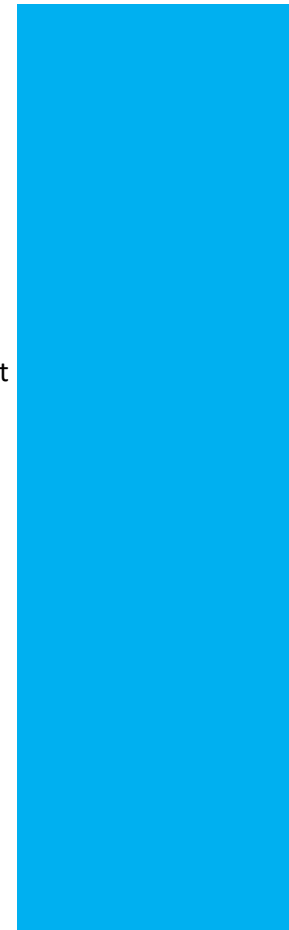
g Networking opportunity, improved science, greater awareness of program and work being done, improved project performance; could increase program awareness and potential participation (researchers and fishing industry)

Additional work, time, cost; funding limitations is the main driver of RSA performance; most collaboration happens once project/research are done so unclear if the timing of this collaborative opportunity would better integrate results if research is already complete

h Easy, simple, way to engage the Mid-Atlantic fishing industry and researchers Duplicative with RSA Share Day idea where AP and Cte members are invited

i Easy, simple, way to engage the Mid-Atlantic fishing industry and researchers; could be done to complement RSA Share Day and/or AP/Cte mtgs
GARFO is in process of re-establishing a webpage containing all prior RSA reports; easy to incorporate an automated system for stakeholders to sign up to be alerted when new RSA reports are posted to the website
j

- Would simplify the program and tracking; could enable additional flexibility for other segments of the fishery to participate in the RSA program (Category E incidental permit) and ability to flip to an RSA DAS while at sea; would prevent an overage in monkfish landings and an underage in DAS usage
- a
- Need to identify the appropriate RSA landings quota; need to look at average landings from RSA DAS and see if this is really a problem
- Ideally fishermen catch their poundage quota before using their full DAS quota (incentive of the Monkfish RSA program to be efficient in harvesting to exceed trip limits)
- b
- Unclear the impacts from only having one effort control (e.g., eliminating DAS allocation) given this could have unintentional consequences on other fisheries the monkfish fishery targets (skates); unclear how difficult it is to implement; requires Council action; inconsistent with DAS effort controls under the Monkfish FMP
- Could improve public understanding of the process; improved understanding of successful applicants, which could help prospective applicants; may only need to be done once to understand cutoff dates for the NOFO, review, award, paperwork requirements, start of FY
- c
- Could be a lot of work with little benefit if timetable is too detailed or needs to be adjusted often



Would create higher demand and allow fishermen to purchase RSA DAS as needed; turn discards into landings; overall increase in flexibility; consistently identified as primary change that would increase industry interest in RSA fishing opportunities; could incentivize using RSA DAS to get around possession limits; could charge higher RSA price for this situation

Enforcement considerations; could require VMS units if other options such as Starlink aren't considered - VMS is not required as part of the Monkfish FMP, which would disincentivize participation in the Monkfish RSA program; switching to the combination Monkfish and Northeast Multispecies DAS is only permitted in the Northern Fishery Management Area, not southern area; vessels may have to purchase RSA DAS in advance and have them available to make this switch at sea

Simplified paperwork could give RSA researchers more time to devote to the science; could allow for bigger projects; greater ability to address long-term data needs; added flexibility; greater ability to sell more RSA DAS; would eliminate DAS expiration issue for researchers; if multiple EFPs for a given project are eliminated then may not need longer awards

Unclear if this is legally possible; seems very involved and complex; need to determine how to eliminate multiple EFPs and how to structure one EFP with only one RSA allocation for each project; less able to address pressing needs given the projects could be longer than what is currently allowed (up to 2 years); could be harder to maintain project momentum and follow progress over longer timeframe; increase length of project deliverables (project results wouldn't be available until grant is closed, meaning 5 years for a 4 year project)



Researchers could have additional time to complete paperwork with fishing industry participants, iterate with GARFO as needed so EFPs will be issued at the start of the fishing year so fishermen could buy RSA DAS without delays; could think about this when developing the timeline of RSA program

f

Lengthens the process; likely wouldn't be able to sell RSA DAS proactively to fishermen given a lot of fishermen buy RSA DAS on a more ad hoc basis given fluctuations in the market

Could help improve the completion/success for RSA projects; would reduce competition between recipients; would reduce potential for insufficient demand for RSA DAS; small changes/reductions in RSA quota would help prevent periods of latency (no RSA DAS available to buy) than if projects were only solicited once all RSA DAS for current projects were sold; would create more stability allowing current projects to continue selling RSA DAS while new projects would receive reduced DAS allocations to avoid saturating the market with too many RSA DAS

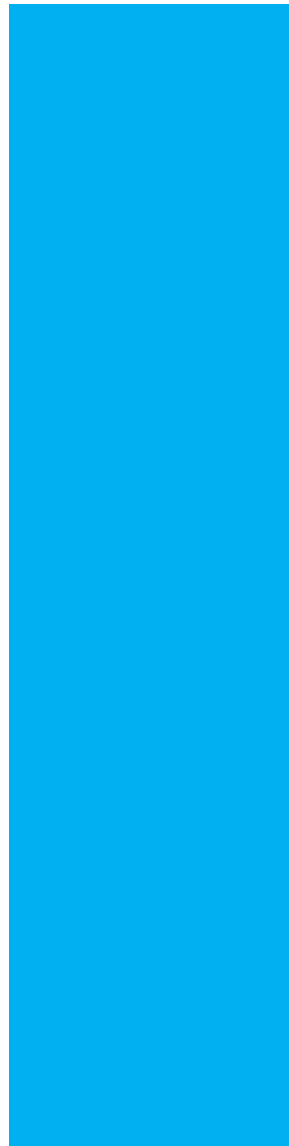
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Could take time to determine the appropriate number of RSA DAS (or pounds) to allocate based on what the fishing industry can support; would likely be an iterative process which could take time and resources; could be inequitable across projects and a deterrent to new researchers applying for RSA

Could turn discards into landings; more RSA DAS could be sold; useful if there are E permit holders interested in buying RSA DAS

h

Would likely be doable if RSA allocations were in pounds, not DAS; could seem unfair to the limited access monkfish fishery - might have to create an overall cap for Permit E vessels to limit their landings relative to limited access fleet, which could be hard to determine the right cap; concern over latent effort from the incidental monkfish fishery



- Regulations do not prohibit Category F vessels from participating in the Monkfish RSA program; could
- i increase RSA DAS use

There is a lot of variability with DAS limits and monkfish management so the desire to switch into Permit F fishing would depend upon DAS allocation and landing limits and how people perceive the state of the fishery; need to better understand the issue with F permit

Unclear if this is needed given vessels can use both a Monkfish and Northeast Multispecies DAS to have unlimited possession limits.

Update since July 24 WG mtg: Sectors may receive an exemption from the 50 net limit regulation that provides for an additional 50 monkfish nets (10", etc.). If this sector trip is combined with a MNK DAS trip (combo trip) then exemption would remain in effect, meaning the exemption would be permitted on Monk RSA DAS trips. Need to further specify if the idea is to receive further exemptions from the net limit restrictions in the GOM.

CFR 648.80(a)(3)(iv)(B)(2):

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/part-648/section-648.80#p-648.80\(a\)\(3\)\(iv\)\(B\)\(2\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/part-648/section-648.80#p-648.80(a)(3)(iv)(B)(2))

- j Could increase participation

Could improve collaboration and generate increased engagement from RSA researchers and the fishing industry; could increase awareness of the Monkfish RSA program and research activities; Monkfish PDT, AP, Cte could consider developing a process document to guide the program that may be a supplement for GARFO managing the grants

Requires a lot of effort and resources with perhaps limited benefit; unclear who would coordinate; would need to be independent of grant awards (NOAA manages the RSA program to ensure certain grant requirements are met and that's all); need to clarify the role of the management body including the tasks, degree of active management, etc.







