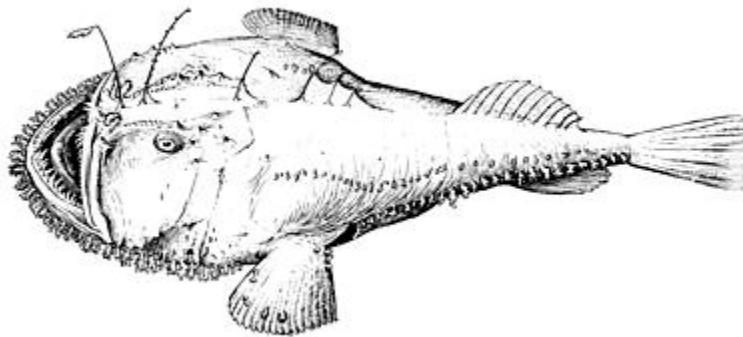


DRAFT

Monkfish Fishery Management Plan Framework Adjustment 9

Alternatives under Consideration



Monkfish Committee Meeting

April 7, 2015

1.0 Alternatives under Consideration

1.1 Modifications to current DAS/Trip Limit system

1.1.1 Use of Northeast Multispecies DAS to Land Monkfish

In order to land more than incidental amounts of monkfish, vessels must be fishing under a monkfish DAS, a NE multispecies DAS, an Atlantic sea scallop DAS, or a combination of both monkfish and NE multispecies DAS or scallop DAS. Permit Category C, D, or H vessels (those also issued a limited access NE multispecies DAS permit) are allocated monkfish-only DAS equal to the difference between the vessel's monkfish DAS allocation and its NE multispecies DAS allocation. Such DAS can be used at any time during the fishing year, but must be used in certain designated areas and times and with certain gear types that minimize the bycatch of NE multispecies. The remainder of their monkfish DAS must be used in conjunction with a NE multispecies DAS.

The following options consider revising when and where a NE multispecies DAS can be declared to maximize the ability of vessels to reduce monkfish discards and increase operational flexibility.

1.1.1.1 Option 1: No Action

Permit Category C and D vessels with Multispecies permits must use a groundfish DAS when declaring a monkfish DAS, including vessels in groundfish sectors. While vessels may declare a monkfish DAS at sea if the monkfish incidental limit is exceeded, there is no such provision in the multispecies plan. Therefore, vessels must start the trip on a groundfish DAS to allow the use of the at-sea monkfish DAS declaration provision.

1.1.1.2 Option 2: Allow all limited access Monkfish Category C, D, and H vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in both the NFMA and SFMA

The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C, D, or H vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non-DAS trip or under a monkfish-only DAS may declare his/her intent to also use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change the trip's DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels' VMS unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.

Rationale: Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at-sea (i.e., the monkfish "option"), this would allow groundfish DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a groundfish DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if groundfish DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish-only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a groundfish DAS at sea.

1.1.1.3 Option 3: Allow only groundfish sector vessels holding limited access Monkfish Category C, D, and H permits to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in both the NFMA and SFMA

The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C, D, or H sector vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non-DAS trip or under a monkfish-only DAS may declare his/her intent to also use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change its DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels' VMS unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.

Rationale: Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at-sea (i.e., the monkfish "option"), this would allow groundfish DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a groundfish DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if groundfish DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish-only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a groundfish DAS at sea.

1.1.1.4 Option 4: Allow all limited access Monkfish Category C, D, and H vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in the NFMA only

The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C, D, or H vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non-DAS trip or under a monkfish-only DAS in the Northern Fishery Management Area (NFMA) may declare his/her intent to also use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change its DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels' VMS unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.

Rationale: Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at-sea (i.e., the monkfish "option"), this would allow groundfish DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a groundfish DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if groundfish DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish-only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a groundfish DAS at sea. This option focuses on the NFMA only because incidental limits have been shown to be more likely to be exceeded there (FW 4).

1.1.1.5 Option 5: Allow only groundfish sector vessels holding limited access Monkfish Category C, D, and H permits to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in the NFMA only

The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C, D, or H sector vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non-DAS trip or under a monkfish-only DAS in the Northern Management Area may declare his/her intent to also use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change its DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels' VMS unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.

Rationale: Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at-sea (i.e., the monkfish “option”), this would allow groundfish DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a groundfish DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if groundfish DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish-only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a groundfish DAS at sea. This option focuses on the NFMA only because incidental limits have been shown to be more likely to be exceeded there (FW 4).

1.1.2 Southern Management Area at-sea Monkfish DAS declaration

1.1.2.1 No Action

The provision that allows a vessel on a groundfish, but not a monkfish DAS, to declare a monkfish DAS at sea prior to returning to port in the event the vessel exceeds the monkfish incidental limit currently only applies in the Northern Management Area. Vessels in the Southern Management Area must start the trip on a monkfish DAS to be able to land more than the incidental limit.

1.1.2.2 Allow at-sea Monkfish DAS declaration in the SMA

This alternative would allow vessels on a groundfish DAS in the Southern Fishery Management Area to declare a monkfish DAS at sea prior to returning to port in the event the vessel exceeds the monkfish incidental limit.

Rationale: Vessels fishing for monkfish in the SFMA must be on a groundfish DAS to land more than the incidental limit of monkfish. In some cases, while fishing for monkfish, vessels catch more than the applicable monkfish incidental limit and must discard the overage. This provision would enable those vessel to land monkfish up to the applicable monkfish DAS trip limit by allowing those vessels to declare a monkfish DAS prior to returning to port. Adopting this provision will make the SFMA fishery more consistent with the NFMA fishery which already has the at-sea declaration provision.

1.1.3 Increase monkfish-only DAS based on higher groundfish common pool DAS counting

1.1.3.1 Option 1: No Action

1.1.3.2 Option 2: Increase monkfish-only DAS based on higher groundfish common pool DAS counting

This alternative would increase the allocation of monkfish DAS to offset the impact of groundfish DAS differential counting for common pool vessels. A vessel's monkfish allocation would be increased proportionate to the difference between groundfish DAS charged and monkfish DAS charged so that each vessel would be able to fully utilize its annual allocation of monkfish DAS to the extent possible. Any monkfish DAS allocated that exceed the groundfish DAS allocation would have to be fished as monkfish-only DAS, or the vessel would have to lease in additional groundfish DAS to continue fishing its monkfish DAS in combination with groundfish DAS.

Rationale: A common pool vessel is charged groundfish DAS in 24-hour increments, but is charged monkfish DAS based on actual time fishing, or a minimum of 15-hours if fishing with gillnets. This means that such vessels use groundfish DAS faster than monkfish DAS. Current monkfish regulations allow a Category C, D, F, G, or H vessel to fish monkfish-only DAS (i.e., operate as a Category A or B monkfish permit) if its monkfish DAS allocation is greater than its groundfish DAS allocation and after having used all its groundfish DAS allocation. However, the regulations do not make any accommodation for differential counting of groundfish DAS, and as such, the combined regulations may prevent vessels from fully utilizing their allocated monkfish during a fishing year, or force them to lease additional groundfish DAS. This alternative would ensure that monkfish vessels can fish their full monkfish DAS allocations based on the area fished by increasing the number of monkfish-only DAS by the difference between the groundfish and monkfish DAS charged on a particular trip. Such vessels would still be required to use their monkfish-only DAS in exempted fishing areas.

1.1.4 Modify DAS/trip limit allocation for Category F (offshore) vessels

1.1.4.1 No Action

Category F vessels may possess 1,600 pounds (tail weight) and their DAS usage is prorated, depending on what standard monkfish permit the vessel has been issued.

1.1.4.2 Increase the trip limit and adjust monkfish DAS allocations accordingly

Under this alternative, the trip limit applicable to Category F vessels would be increased [to a level to be determined]. The number of DAS that would accrue for the trip would be based on the Category F trip limit divided by the SMA trip limit applicable to the vessel's primary permit category. For example, if the trip limit were 2,200 lbs. tail weight per DAS, and the vessel primary permit is Category A or C, the vessel would be charged 4 DAS (4x550). Vessels would have to have sufficient DAS to cover the trip landings.

Rationale: This provision would help to improve the profitability of Offshore Area trips.

1.2 Modifications to Monkfish Possession Limits

1.2.1 Northern Area Monkfish Trip Limit on a Groundfish DAS

1.2.1.1 No Action

Under current regulations, vessels on a monkfish DAS are subject to a trip limit, and when on a groundfish, but not a monkfish DAS they in the Northern Management Area have an incidental limit of 600 lbs. tail wt. per DAS.

1.2.1.2 Eliminate the Trip Limit on a Groundfish DAS

This alternative would eliminate the monkfish trip limit when a vessel is on a groundfish DAS in the NMA, effectively eliminating the need to use a monkfish DAS.

Rationale: Eliminating the monkfish trip limit in the NMA is intended to increase monkfish landings to more fully utilize the ACT in the NMA. This could provide additional fishing revenue for groundfish vessels to help offset expected fishing revenue reductions associated with reduced groundfish quotas in NMA in the near future, and minimize the potential for effort to shift from the groundfish fishery in the NMA to the monkfish fishery in the SMA.