



## New England Fishery Management Council

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# DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

## Monkfish Advisory Panel

Hilton Garden Inn, Warwick, RI

October 12, 2016

The Advisory Panel met on October 12, 2016 in Warwick, RI to: discuss the alternatives under consideration in Framework 10.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** Mr. Tim Froelich, Mr. Eric Hansen, Mr. Rich LaRocca, Mr. Randall Morgan, and Mr. Ted Platz; Dr. Fiona Hogan (NEFMC staff); Dr. Willie Whitmore (GARFO); and Dr. Tammy Murphy (NEFSC SSB). In addition, approximately 4 members of the public attended.

There was no quorum at the meeting but consensus was reached for individuals present.

### **KEY OUTCOMES:**

- The Advisors present agreed to a 3% management uncertainty buffer for both management areas.
- The Advisors present recommended a 15% increase in DAS allocations and trip limits for the SFMA.

### **PRESENTATION: FRAMEWORK 10**

Council Staff outlined the alternatives under consideration for Framework 10. These included specifications for FYs 2017 - 2019. The four options included no action, updating the discard rates for each management area, and options to adjust the management uncertainty buffers in each management area. Other alternatives were would increase DAS allocation and/or trip limits for both management areas.

Dr. Hermesen updated the DAS allocation and trip limit analysis to help the AP make an informed decision on appropriate adjustments. The analysis works by taking accounting for the incidental limits and then allocating the remaining quota to the directed fishery based on the pattern of fishing in the most recent complete fishing year. Key assumptions of the analysis included that landings from permit category E and state-only permitted vessels, limited access vessel landings and effort, and fishing and landing patterns would all be the same as in FY2015. These assumptions have not been violated throughout the history of using this model configuration so the PDT considered the assumptions to be valid. One caveat of the analysis was that it doesn't include other factors, such as price, when it estimates the number of DAS or potential daily landing limits that would achieve the TAL. It was important to acknowledge that additional factors may need to be considered when selecting an appropriate DAS allocation and/or daily landing limit for both management areas. Five model runs were conducted for each management area (Table 7, Hermesen, 2016). The runs solved for maximum value for either the DAS allocation or the daily landing limit that would be needed to achieve the TAL. The runs indicated that increases could be made to the DAS allocations and daily landing limits for both management areas. For the NFMA, the maximum DAS allocation was 74 DAS (status quo) or 84 (3% management uncertainty

buffer); trips limits could be set higher than 1,250 tail weight per DAS. For the SFMA, the maximum DAS allocation was 56 (status quo) or 58 (3% management uncertainty buffer); trips limits could be set at 1,160 (status quo) or 1,200 (3% management uncertainty buffer) for A and C permits and 1,000 (status quo) or 1,030 (3% management uncertainty buffer) for B and D permits.

An AP member suggested using multiple years to establish the pattern in fishing and landings, however, the monkfish fishery has been very stable and FY2015 was considered to be representative of recent fishing.

### ***AGENDA ITEM #1: FRAMEWORK 10***

There was general concern that increasing DAS allocations and trip limits could create more problems than expected. There was some support for decreasing the management uncertainty buffer. Although concerns were raised that it was a shot in the dark because there has been no change in the uncertainty surrounding the fishery and assessment. Prior to 2009, the TAL had been exceeded, which was considered to be a recent overage. The advisors present were more comfortable with a 6% management uncertainty buffer in both management areas because they did not think the stock was as healthy as the assessment indicated but were not strongly opposed to a reduction. GARFO staff clarified that the management uncertainty buffer was in place to help prevent the ACL from being exceeded. Adjusting the management uncertainty buffer would not help the fishery achieve the TAL.

An AP member was concerned about trying to fully achieve the TAL because that assumed the science was correct. The advisor didn't want to replicate what has happened in the NE multispecies fishery where quotas have been reduced to the point that a disaster had to be declared. The NEFSC trawl survey formerly provided low numbers of monkfish when the Albatross was used but those numbers increased with the Bigelow. Short-term benefits would be paltry compared to the cost of rebuilding. An AP member suggested moving winter and barndoor skate to the monkfish FMP. Concern was raised that skates could restrict the ability to fish for monkfish. The skate wing TAL was recently reduced but trip limits were not.

AP members had differing opinions on if or how DAS allocations or trip limits should be increased. One AP member was in favor of status quo DAS allocation and trip limits to ensure stability in the fishery and to not trigger the need to rebuild monkfish. However, if an increase was preferred, the AP member would prefer a low increase (e.g. 10%) and just for trip limits, not DAS allocations. Another AP member disagreed and considered a 25% in both DAS allocations and trip limits to be preferable. An AP member was more in favor of increasing DAS allocations as opposed to trip limits. No AP members were in favor of increasing the DAS allocation or trip limit to the extent the analysis suggested could be taken.

### **Public comment:**

- Claire Fitz-Gerald – For skates, we went through a whole process and broke the wing TAL into two seasons to make sure no one was affected by anyone's fishing. Anything that's left over after season 1 rolls over to the second season. I believe that the first season only caught 86% of its TAL. Hopefully for this year the skate won't impact your fishery. I'll also say as far as monkfish goes we're fishing in the SFMA in winter and we're looking for a higher trip limit. I appreciate the willingness to compromise. I support what everyone has said about being cautious and want to see the 10% and 20% increases. One last thing is occasionally we talk about creating more flexibility in terms of leasing or stacking permits. Is that something that is still a good idea?

GARFO staff informed the AP that as of the latest quota monitoring update (October 1, 2016) for skate wing season 2 we are at 58% of the quota and the projections show they're trending closely to FY2015. In

FY2014, 97.3% of the wing TAL was caught. The 85% trigger was reached but the fishery was not projected to exceed the TAL so the incidental possession limit (500 lb) was not implemented. An AP member thought that if the skate wing fishery triggered the incidental possession limit prior to the end of the fishing year, there could be profound economic impacts. An AP member requested projections for what skate landings would be if monkfish DAS and trip limits were increased. GARFO staff informed the AP that it was unlikely that the DAS allocation and trip limit analysis could be updated prior to the November 2016 Council meeting because of other work commitments. Council staff noted that we don't currently have a model that projects skate landings in relation to monkfish effort. Another AP member noted that if the incidental skate wing possession limit was implemented fishing for monkfish could still occur but more skate would be discarded. Skate price was reported to increase in March and April to almost \$1/pound because of demand from France, although, during this time period it may be possible to fish for monkfish cleanly in the canyons and therefore reduce interactions with skate. Another AP member noted that they could better avoid skate if they could fish in areas that scallopers might be in. The increased skate price during that time period was not sufficient to convince some AP members to not recommend an increase in DAS allocations.

However, the AP members present agreed to a 15% increase in DAS allocation and trip limit for the SFMA. One AP member present fished in both management areas but no representatives were present who only fished in the NFMA. Therefore no recommendations were made for the NFMA. One AP member had serious reservations about any increase in DAS allocation and trip limits.

SSB staff asked the AP if there were any concerns about increasing landings, e.g. would they be able to sell it or would there be market impacts. There were no major concerns about price or market impacts. They were comfortable because it was a small increase; larger changes can drop the price. An AP member thought more DAS would allow them to supply product for longer in the fishing year. The ability to continue having a stable market was desirable; the dogfish fishery was used as an example, the market disappeared while the fishery was rebuilding.

The AP did not recommend changes to incidental limits. One AP member was not happy with the current incidental limits but another thought they were too high for trawl gear in the SFMA. Higher incidental limits were thought to allow for a directed side fishery. Another AP member didn't think they were too high; scallopers were not likely to leave a tow to target monkfish because scallops are worth more.

An AP member was interested in moving forward with DAS leasing and addressing latent effort, as recommended at the August 17, 2016 AP meeting. Staff explained that they were part of A6 but work on that amendment was discontinued. The AP recommendation was discussed at the September 1, 2016 Committee meeting and will be discussed at the November 2016 Council meeting under the priorities agenda item.