



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Skate Plan Development Team

The PDT held a conference call on February 15, 2018. The PDT discussed potential analyses of upcoming alternatives for Framework 6.

Framework Adjustment 6

1. The PDT discussed the two potential approaches, suggested in public comments at Council meetings, to prolong the skate wing fishing year: adjusting possession limits and adjusting the management uncertainty buffer.

Management Uncertainty Buffer

1. Amendment 3 to the Skate FMP established the management uncertainty buffer as part of the specifications setup. The final preferred alternative stated: “Accounting for management uncertainty in monitoring skate catch, the Annual Catch Target (ACT) will be initially set at 75% of the ACL.” Scientific uncertainty was thought to be accounted for as part of the method chosen for setting the ACL. The catch/biomass median approach was considered a precautionary approach to setting specifications.
2. On its January 18th, 2018 call, the PDT noted that the Annual Catch Target had been exceeded by small amounts when the ACL was lower than other years (Table 1).

Possession Limit Analysis

1. On the January 18th, 2018 PDT call, the PDT discussed the trend in number of trips occurring in each month. The average price per landed pound of skate wings was looked at for trends on this call (Figure 1). There was a wide range of average price per month across fishing years but in some years, higher prices per pound were earned in Season 2 of the fishery.
2. The original rationale for establishing the existing possession limits, in Framework 1, was to reduce the incentive to land skate early in the fishing year when wing prices were comparatively low. It was also done to prolong the fishing year to “increase the chance of enabling the mixed skate and monkfish gillnet fishery in the spring.”
3. The PDT reviewed a tasking motion from April 2017 that considered establishing separate trip limits for day versus trip boats. On the call, it was thought that it could possibly be done via a framework action, but it depends on the details. The concern is whether the new measures would fundamentally altered the fishery or create new fishing

privileges. There are no current regulatory definitions for a day versus a trip boat within the skate FMP – the PDT defined a day trip as consisting of 1 day, and multi-day trips having more than 1 day.

4. The PDT reviewed statistics from ‘day’ trips and ‘multi-day’ trips, for skate wings, for the calendar years 2015-2016. Defining a day versus a multi-day trip was discussed, as some trips lack effort data and some are ‘split’ in the CFDBS (Dealer) database. A trip is split in the database for various reasons including fishing occurred in two different areas, or landings occurred at two different ports, or landings occurred at two different dealers. It’s difficult to identify if these ‘split’ trips are ‘day’ or ‘multi-day’ trips. Also, a trip with 1.1 days-at-sea (~24 hours, 1 minute) is classified as a ‘multi-day’ trip. Sixty-eight percent of all the skate trips in the dealer database, during calendar years 2015-2016, were classified as day or multi-day trips. Further work may classify more trips this way.
5. The PDT reviewed the distribution of and landings from skate day and multi-day trips (see Figures 2-5). In the day boat wing fishery, 9297 trips were taken during 2015-2016. Figure 2 shows the distribution of these trips by the pounds landed per trip. On the horizontal axis the first bar shows 5057 trips on which 1 to 500 pounds of skate wings were landed. Notice the sixth bar, with 810 trips landing between 2501 and 3000 pounds; the season 1 possession limit. Figure 3 shows the total skate wing landings by ‘landings-per-trip’ groups, during the two years 2015-2016. The last bar indicates 1,757,204 pounds of skate wings were landed, on trips which landed over 4000 pounds of skate wings. The bar representing 2501 to 3000 pound day trips, resulted in 2,062,389 pounds of skate wings.
6. Figures 4 and 5, showing the 6,479 multi-day trips analyzed, may be interpreted likewise. In Figure 4 most multi-day trips (3,082 trips) landed less than 500 pounds of skate wings. During calendar years 2015-2016, Figure 5 shows that 2,160,585 pounds (out of a total of 5,790,754 pounds of skate wings) were from multi-day trips landing more than 4000 pounds.

Table 1:

Fishing Year	ACL	Percent of ACL
2011	50,435	64%
2012	50,435	56%
2013	50,435	55.8
2014	35,479	81.2
2015	35,479	79.2
2016	31,081	79

FIGURE 1:

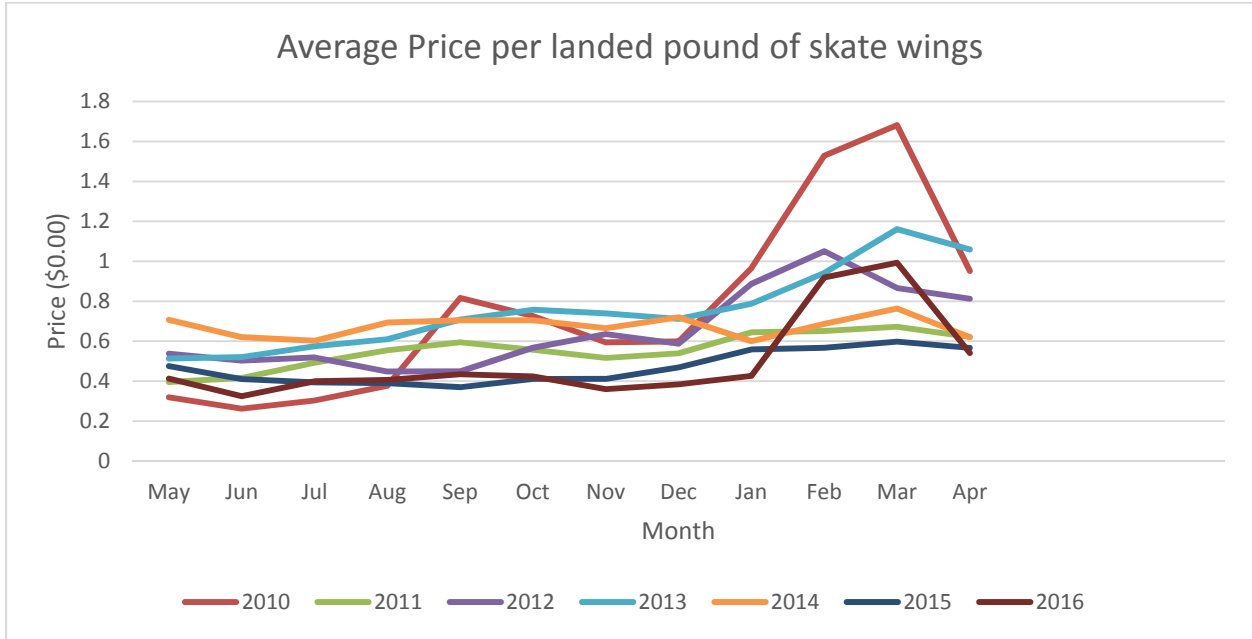


Figure 1 - Average price per landed pound of skate wing by fishing year (FYs 2010-2016 shown)

FIGURE 2: Skate wing ‘day trips’ – distribution of trips by the pounds landed. The number on top of each bar shows the number of trips. X-axis indicates the pounds landed by trip. The first bar shows that 5057 trips landed between 1-500 lbs; the second bar shows that 1781 trips landed between 501 – 1000 lbs, etc.

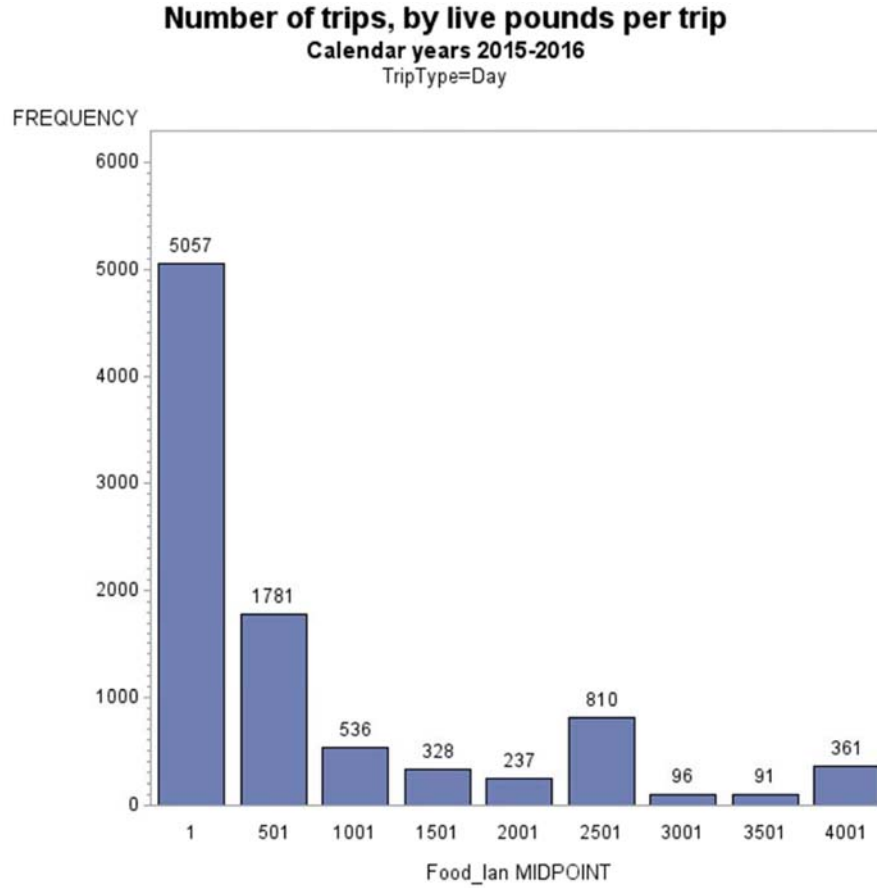


FIGURE 3: Skate wing ‘day trips’ – Total amount of landings by ‘landings-per-trip’ group. Note: The first bar indicates that a total of 343,499 live pounds were landed on trips that landed between 1 – 500 lbs.

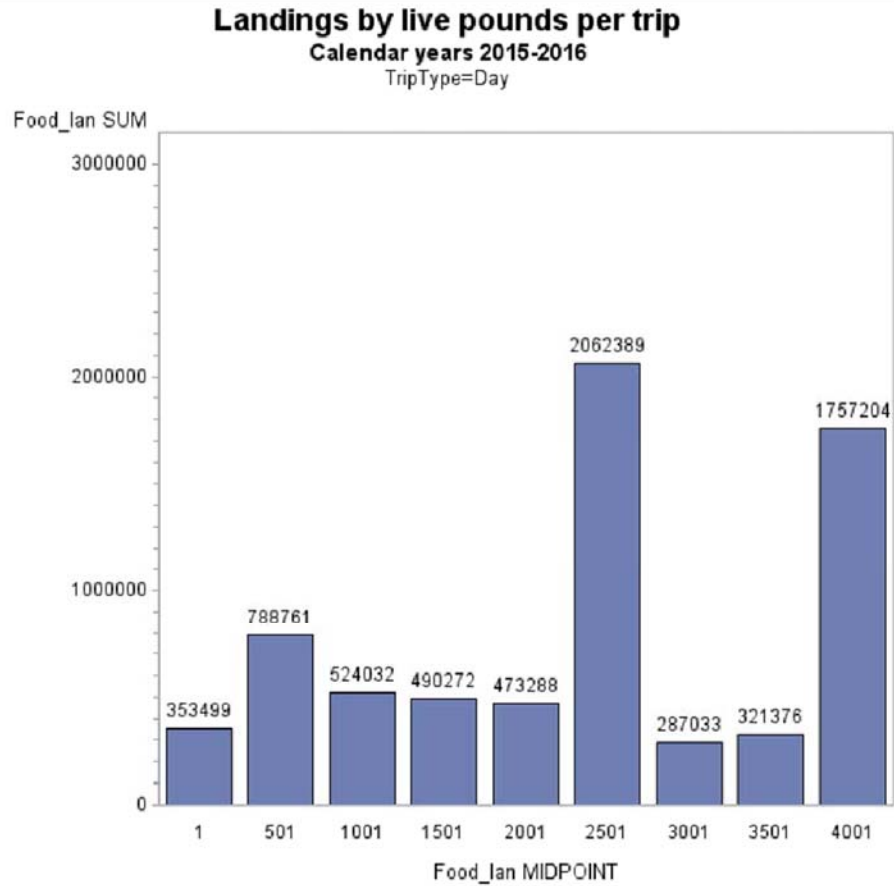


FIGURE 4: Skate wing ‘multi-day’ trip - distribution of trips by the pounds landed. The number on top of each bar shows the number of trips. X-axis indicates the pounds landed by trip. The first bar shows that 3082 trips landed between 1-500 lbs.

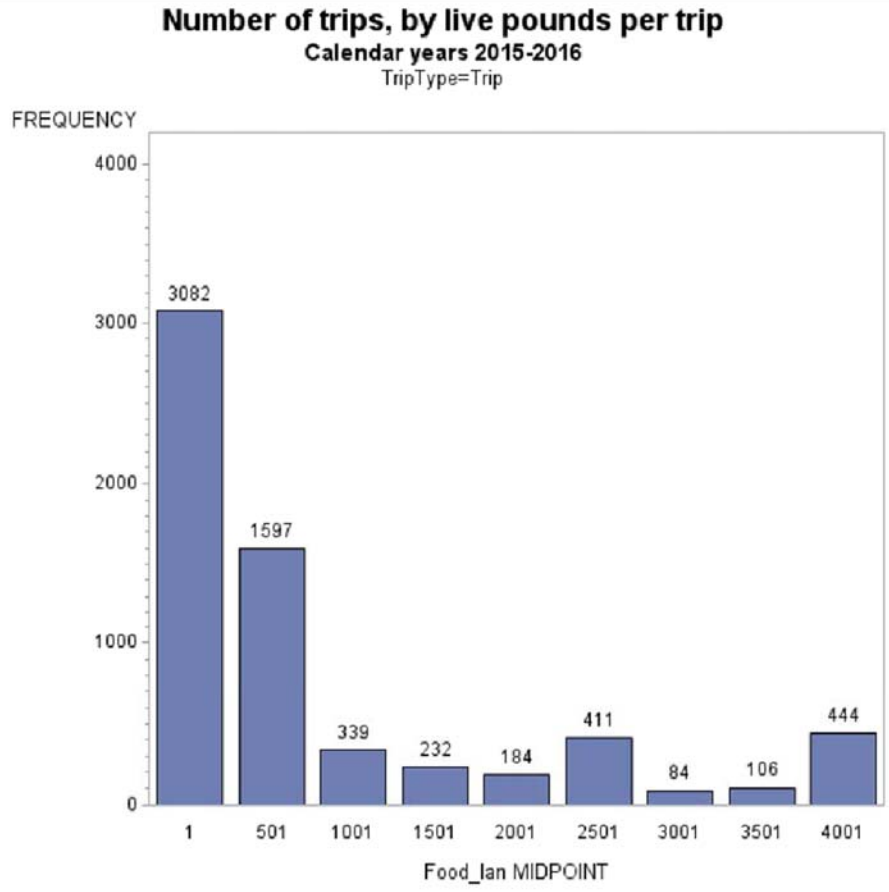


FIGURE 5: Skate wing ‘multi-day’ trips – Total amount of landings by ‘landings-per-trip’ group. Note: The first bar indicates that a total of 204,507 live pounds were landed on trips that landed between 1 – 500 lbs.

