



## New England Fishery Management Council

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## MEETING SUMMARY

### Skate Plan Development Team

The PDT held a conference call on February 19, 2019 and an in-person meeting on April 2, 2019. The PDT discussed the upcoming specifications actions and limited access.

#### Specifications for Fishing Years 2020 and 2021

1. Skate specifications are based on the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) trawl survey. The fall survey is used to calculate survey indices for all skate species except for little skate (which uses the spring survey).
2. The fall 2017 trawl survey did not sample strata in southern New England (SNE) or Mid-Atlantic (MDA), resulting in no survey indices for rosette or clearnose skate for that year. The incomplete sampling also affected indices for barndoor, thorny, smooth, and winter skate, because fewer strata were available to calculate the 2017 indices from.
3. The fall 2018 survey missed 3 strata completely (34, 35, 30) and completed only 1 tow in strata 36, which affected survey indices for barndoor, thorny, smooth, and winter skate.
4. The PDT tried to determine how much these issues would affect our ability to set specifications based on the survey. For the missing survey indices, 3 options were considered using: a 2-year average (instead of the methodology using the 3-year average established in Amendment 3 for all skate species), a Loess smoother, or the Kalman filter. A comparison of survey indices resulting from these options showed similar results for both clearnose and rosette skates (Table 1). Thus, rather than adopt an entirely different approach, the PDT decided to use the 2-year average to develop specifications for clearnose and rosette skates.
5. To address the limited sampling in fall 2017 issue for barndoor, smooth, and thorny skate, the PDT looked at adjusting the survey index by the average ratio of the sum of 1963-2016 without SNE to with SNE or by an average ratio using a recent time period. Since the sampling of strata for these species was incomplete as opposed to missing, a different approach was used. The PDT proposed using the species-specific time series average, which would be consistent with what was done for little skate in 2014.
6. More work is needed to address the fall 2018 survey issue.
7. The PDT will present the recommended adjustments and other options for setting specs to the SSC.

## Limited Access

1. The number of active skate permits has fluctuated over time; the last 5 years include the lowest in the time series (FY2018 data are preliminary) (Table 2). The number of active permits does not appear to restrict the ability to land the TAL. The majority of permits are used to land skate wings. Vessels could be categorized into various levels of dependence based on the number of trips landing skate (Table 3 - Table 5) or economic dependence (Appendix I). The number of vessels entering or leaving the fishery vary by year, but overall a net decline in active permits is occurring (Table 6 and Table 7).
2. Given the smaller size of the bait fishery (in terms of number of permits and trips), preliminary work focused on this fishery. The control date for the bait fishery is July 30, 2009. The PDT examined 3 time periods: FYs 2004-2008, FYs 2009 – 2013, and FYs 2014 – 2016. How the Council uses the control date will affect the number of qualifying vessels. A new control date can't be selected for a certain date in the past. If a new control date is required, it would be the date the FR notice publishes, i.e. in 2019. For the bait fishery, the highest number of qualifying vessels would likely be from using only the time period before the control date, i.e. if you had a skate permit and landed at least 1 lb of skate bait your vessel would qualify (see Table 1 in document 3b). The number of qualifying vessels would generally decrease if a later time-period is used, however, FY2014 – 2016 is a shorter block of time and number of qualifying vessels might increase slightly if expanded to FY2018. The most restrictive qualification criteria, resulting in fewest qualifying vessels, is using the time period before the control date and requiring vessels to currently be active. The PDT noted the potential for latent effort in the bait fishery if all vessels holding a permit between FY 2004 – 2008 qualified but not many are currently fishing.
3. The PDT agreed to use the CFDEERS database for determining qualification. Identifying issues with databases was important to the PDT as different codes can result in different numbers of vessels qualifying. These initial analyses were run by Council staff and the numbers should be considered preliminary until NMFS officially pulls the data.
4. The PDT considered the Letter of Authorization (LOA) as a qualification criterion for the bait fishery. The data on which vessels used a LOA may be questionable for the first couple of years of skate management as it was a relatively informal process then.
5. The PDT has not examined DAS as a qualification criterion, but concluded that landings would be a more appropriate criterion given that DAS are tied to other FMPs and their usage could depend on other targeted species, e.g. monkfish, any groundfish species.
6. The PDT discussed the need for an incidental open access permit for skates if a limited access permit program is implemented. Skates are caught in several gear types and the PDT did not want to create a program that resulted in increased discards. The PDT looked at landing frequencies from FY2016 for the bait (Figure 1) and wing (Figure 2) fisheries. No clear trend was apparent for the bait fishery that would have suggested an appropriate incidental limit. Trends were apparent in wing fishery landings that could be used to identify an appropriate incidental permit possession limit. Additional PDT analysis (expanded to include more fishing years) and guidance from the AP and Committee would be needed to recommend an appropriate incidental limit for this permit category.
7. The PDT discussed the draft purpose and need statement and objective for the amendment. The AP and Committee need to further refine their objectives for the

amendment to help the PDT finalize the purpose and need. The PDT is working on making the purpose and need NEPA compliant. The PDT has not drafted alternatives to date, looking first for guidance on qualification criteria and the structure of the permit program. To help with that, the PDT compiled a list of potential approaches for structuring permits and the qualification criteria.

**Questions for the AP and Committee**

LA permit program

- a. Create a single LA skate permit (have 1 permit type)
- b. Create separate Bait and Wing LA permits (have 2 permit types)
- c. Create separate Bait, Wing, and Bait/Wing combo permits (3 permit types)
- d. Any of the above plus an open access incidental permit

Qualification Criteria

- e. Held a permit prior to the control date (July 30, 2009)
  - i. Plus actively fishing now (need to qualifying fishing years)
  - ii. Landings of X amount prior to control date
- f. Actively fishing now
  - i. Landings of X amount
- g. Held LOA during X time period (bait only)
- h. Does control date need to change for either fishery?

Table 1 – Preliminary estimates of survey indices from PDT analyses to replace missing fall 2017 clearnose and rosette skate indices

Option	Clearnose	Rosette
2-year average	0.610	0.0473
Kalman filter	0.469	0.0486
Loess 10%	0.836	0.0497
Loess 20%	0.690	0.0510
Loess 30%	0.620	0.0480

Table 2 – Number of permits landing skate species, and value of those landings (no bait landings available in databases in 2003)

FISH. YEAR	TOTAL PERMIT	TOTAL _LBS	TOTAL VALUE	WING PERMIT	WING _LBS	WING VALUE	BAIT PERMIT	BAIT LBS	BAIT VALUE
2003	421	16,279,061	\$2,005,322	421	16,279,061	\$2,005,322			
2004	506	29,139,849	\$4,576,634	502	23,786,712	\$4,173,148	22	5,353,137	\$403,486
2005	511	28,212,377	\$5,087,087	499	23,025,782	\$4,698,225	24	5,186,595	\$388,862
2006	520	29,667,534	\$6,512,338	518	24,715,918	\$6,107,426	25	4,951,616	\$404,912
2007	522	39,395,973	\$7,644,577	516	31,857,982	\$7,000,062	25	7,537,991	\$644,515
2008	499	36,110,966	\$6,231,808	490	28,267,845	\$5,512,798	40	7,842,894	\$719,010
2009	504	36,321,700	\$6,602,301	502	29,530,574	\$5,932,049	24	6,780,811	\$670,252
2010	490	27,816,447	\$5,172,654	475	19,364,051	\$4,191,337	54	8,452,396	\$981,317
2011	494	34,721,970	\$7,891,917	486	25,523,899	\$6,333,371	36	9,197,957	\$1,558,546
2012	464	29,242,265	\$6,163,103	455	18,776,874	\$4,799,915	30	10,465,346	\$1,363,188
2013	401	27,164,154	\$6,461,369	390	16,783,291	\$5,319,301	41	10,332,188	\$1,121,969
2014	401	31,001,944	\$8,242,850	385	22,467,773	\$7,166,253	38	8,501,192	\$1,074,170
2015	384	28,780,962	\$5,175,509	372	19,249,880	\$4,182,850	33	9,524,140	\$992,348
2016	372	26,651,231	\$4,756,200	358	18,161,598	\$3,805,030	38	8,485,768	\$951,083
2017	374	26,206,306	\$5,296,697	365	18,222,225	\$4,261,973	56	7,980,131	\$1,034,388
2018	264	12,309,469	\$2,873,347	254	9,242,931	\$2,489,316	28	3,056,238	\$369,919

Note: 2018 data are preliminary.

Table 3 – Number of active skate vessels by number of trips landing skates

FISHING_YEAR	TOTAL_VESSELS	5 or fewer trips	6-10 trips	11-25 trips	26-50 trips	51-100 trips
2003	421	209	101	80	27	4
2004	506	187	72	159	80	23
2005	511	144	84	172	80	40
2006	520	151	90	173	81	39
2007	522	137	85	160	88	63
2008	499	147	74	171	86	45
2009	504	138	99	141	94	49
2010	490	138	60	156	96	69
2011	494	112	50	147	112	91
2012	464	110	43	140	117	72
2013	401	106	45	113	96	67
2014	401	95	59	113	93	63
2015	384	92	52	112	75	67
2016	372	88	60	106	88	52
2017	374	96	60	103	89	61
2018	264	100	54	66	48	15

Table 4 – Number of vessels by number of trips landing wings

FISHING_YEAR	TOTAL_VESSELS	5 or fewer trips	6-10 trips	11-25 trips	26-50 trips	>50 trips
2003	421	209	101	80	27	4
2004	502	175	71	157	80	19
2005	499	137	80	166	79	37
2006	518	141	88	172	79	38
2007	516	130	82	156	87	61
2008	490	135	71	163	81	40
2009	502	131	95	139	93	44
2010	475	118	56	145	91	65
2011	486	101	46	144	109	86
2012	455	102	41	136	112	64
2013	390	90	44	104	93	59
2014	385	78	54	107	89	57
2015	372	85	50	107	68	62
2016	358	79	58	93	82	46
2017	365	77	52	96	84	56
2018	254	92	48	62	39	13

Table 5 – Number of vessels by number of trips landing bait (“--” represents confidential data; blank cells are zeroes/no data)

FISHING_YEAR	TOTAL_VESSELS	5 or fewer trips	6-10 trips	11-25 trips	26-50 trips	>50 trips
2003						
2004	22	14	--	--		5
2005	24	8	--	6	--	5
2006	25	14	--	4	--	3
2007	25	9	--	6	--	5
2008	40	14	4	9	5	8
2009	24	10	4	--	--	6
2010	54	24	4	12	6	8
2011	36	10	4	6	6	10
2012	30	6	--	--	7	10
2013	41	16	--	9	--	11
2014	38	12	5	7	5	9
2015	33	6	4	7	8	8
2016	38	--	--	13	8	8
2017	56	20	8	12	8	8
2018	28	6	--	4	10	--

Table 6 – Number of vessels entering the skate fishery, and wing and bait fisheries, by year defined as vessels landing skate wings/bait for the first time in year X (Vessels are only counted once, even if they drop out and re-enter).

FISHING YEAR	All Vessels	Wing Vessels	Bait Vessels
2004	155	153	22
2005	90	84	11
2006	70	71	14
2007	58	56	15
2008	36	37	18
2009	37	38	10
2010	49	48	21
2011	34	35	4
2012	33	32	5
2013	11	10	13
2014	25	24	7
2015	25	25	5
2016	17	17	7
2017	26	25	18
2018	6	6	5

Table 7 – Number of vessels which landed skates in the previous fishing year and did not land skates in the current year, including wing and bait vessels

FISHING_YEAR	Total Vessels Dropped Out	"Wing" Vessels Dropped Out	"Bait" Vessels Dropped Out
2004	70	72	0
2005	103	107	9
2006	106	103	13
2007	94	94	16
2008	98	98	7
2009	72	72	29
2010	100	111	8
2011	71	70	26
2012	84	85	11
2013	96	98	5
2014	66	69	12
2015	71	69	13
2016	67	70	7
2017	63	61	10
2018	129	130	33

Figure 1 – Trip frequency for bait fishery for FY2016.

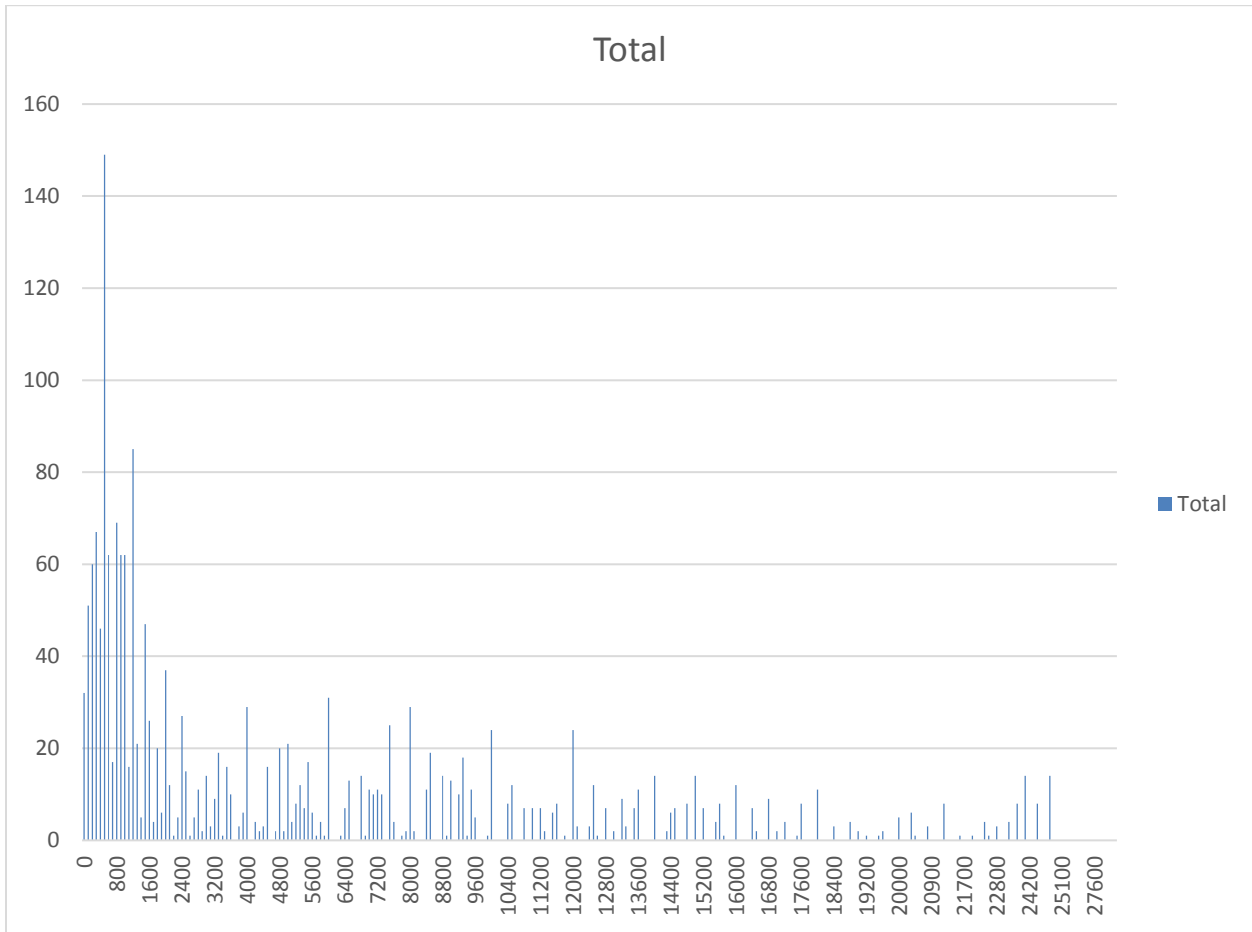


Figure 2 – Trip frequency for wing fishery for FY2016.

