

Skate 2024-2025 Specifications

Action Plan, Version 1 (March, 2023)

Council: New England Fishery Management Council

Fishery Management Plan: Skates

Title of Action: Skate 2024-2025 Specifications

Scope: This action sets specifications for fishing years (FY) 2024 and 2025, reviews/modifies skate wing and bait effort controls, and potentially expand possession of barndoor and smooth skates.

Problem Statement/Objective of Action: The Skate Fishery Management Plan requires the review and specification of annual skate harvest limits, and other management measures, as needed, for up to two fishing years at a time. Specification setting for FYs 2024 and 2025 will be informed by the 2023 management track assessment for skates.

Likely Range of Alternatives: The following alternatives to the current measures are being considered:

1. Updates to Annual Catch Limits

- Updated specifications based on new NEFSC trawl survey data and assessment.

2. Skate Wing Possession Limits

- Skate wing possession limits would be adjusted based on the revised specifications and stock status update.

3. Skate Bait Possession Limits

- Skate bait possession limits would be adjusted based on the revised specifications and stock status updates.

4. Barndoor and Skate Possession

- Barndoor skate possession could be expanded and smooth skate possession could be allowed.

Type of NEPA Analysis Expected (CE/EA/EIS): This action is expected to require an Environmental Assessment (EA) or a Supplemental Information Report (SIR). A formal determination will be made once the range of alternatives is identified and analyzed.

Endangered Species Act/Marine Mammal Protection Act: Typical issues and analyses expected at this time.

Other Applicable Laws and Regulatory Requirements: Typical issues and analyses expected at this time.

Skate Plan Development Team Membership and Other Individuals:

	Organization	Name	Responsibility
Plan Development Team	NEFMC	Dr. Rachel Feeney	NEFMC Project Manager, Skate PDT Chair and FMP Coordinator. Primary point of contact in NEFMC for action. Lead on social impact assessment. Oversee document preparation and submission.
	NMFS GARFO SFD	Cynthia Ferrio	GARFO Project Manager, Implementation Team Coordinator. Primary point of contact in NMFS for action; identify potential policy, regulatory, and administrative issues during development and review; collaborate on the development of the alternatives; prepare document for rulemaking.
	NEFMC	Connor Buckley	Consult on development of measures, support data requests and updating of the Affected Environment, assist in impact analyses and document preparation.
	NMFS GARFO APSD	Kris Winiarski	Support data requests, identify potential monitoring issues during development and review.
	NMFS NEFSC	Dr. Katherine Sosebee	Lead skate assessment scientist; consult on development of measures, data analysis, and biological impact analyses.
	NMFS NEFSC SSB	Samantha Werner	Consult on the development of measures, assist in updating Affected Environment, lead on economic impact assessment.
	RI DEM	Eric Schneider	Consult on development of measures, data analysis, and biological impact analyses.
Other Individuals	NEFMC	Michelle Bachman	Complete Essential Fish Habitat impact analyses.
	NMFS GARFO NEPA	Ashleigh McCord	Review document for completeness regarding NEPA requirements during development and review.
	NMFS GARFO HMS	Dr. Tobey Curtis	Consult on development of measures, data analysis, and biological impact analyses.
	NMFS GARFO PR	Danielle Palmer	Consult on development of measures and protected species impact analyses.
	NMFS GARFO Enforcement	Shaun Eusebio	Consult on enforcement issues.
	NMFS GARFO Habitat Conservation	Jessie Murray	Consult on habitat issues.

	NMFS GARFO General Counsel	Mitch MacDonald	Consult on potential legal issues and questions, regulatory/legal review.
	NMFS NEFSC Fishery Sampling Branch (incl. Observer Program)	Amy Martins	Consult on development of measures, data analysis, and biological impact analyses with respect to fisheries monitoring issues; identify potential observer/at-sea monitoring or SBRM issues during development and review; support data requests.

NMFS Implementation Team Membership:

Organization	Name	Responsibility
NMFS GARFO SFD	Cynthia Ferrio	Implementation Team Chair; primary GARFO contact for skates
NMFS GARFO HCD	Jessie Murray	Habitat advice/support
NMFS GARFO PRD	Danielle Palmer	Consultation on measures and impacts on protected resources
NMFS GARFO IRM	Ken Ortiz	Programming support for AMS
NMFS GARFO APSD	Jim St. Cyr	Programming support for AMS
	John Sullivan	Analysis and data support
NMFS GARFO NEPA	Ashleigh McCord	NEPA advice
NMFS Enforcement	Shaun Eusebio	Consultation on development of measures with enforcement considerations
NE General Counsel	Mitch MacDonald, Katherine Pohl	Legal advice
NMFS GARFO/NEFSC Fishery Dependent Data Committee	TBD	Advice/support on changes to data collection, storage, usage/analysis, and database structure
NMFS GARFO VMS Coordinating Committee	William Semrau (Chair), Carol Bleszinski	Advice/support on VMS changes
NMFS NEFSC Observer Program	Amy Martins	Evaluate impacts to the standard bycatch reporting methodology and observer/at-sea monitor deployment
NMFS GARFO Communications Team	Allison Ferreira Kate Swails	Assistance with outreach and roll-out plan
U.S. Coast Guard	Capt. Brian Fiedler	At-sea inspection/enforcement advice

Worksheet 1: Skate PDT Resources and Work Schedule

Note: These are the PDT resources anticipated from January 2023 forward and will be updated when the Council is further along with developing the action.

PDT Work Task/ Issue to Address	Specific Needs	Primary PDT Participation	Start	End	Duration
Stock Status Results	Develop survey indices, stock status results and ABC recommendations	Sosebee with whole PDT	February 2023	August 2023	9 months
Alternatives Development	Develop specifications based on flow chart, possession limits, other measures	Feeney, Buckley with whole PDT	February 2023	October 2023	9 months
Affected Environment	Update data, tailor content	Feeney, Buckley Werner, other PDT	April 2023	September 2023	6 months
Impacts Analysis	Target species (skates)	Feeney, Sosebee	August 2023	November 2023	2 months
	Non-target species	Feeney			
	EFH	Bachman			
	Protected Resources	Buckley, Palmer			
	Human Communities	Feeney, Buckley, Werner	December 2023	January 2024	2 months
Cumulative effects analysis	Feeney, Ferrio, McCord				
Draft SIR/EA	Oversight of document development & completion	Feeney	April 2023	January 2024	10 months
RIR/RFA Analysis	For Final SIR/EA	Werner	December 2023	January 2024	2 months
Final SIR/EA	Document completion/submission	Feeney, Buckley	February 2024	February 2024	1 month

Worksheet 2: Timeline for Development of Skate 2024-25 Specifications

2023	
Feb-Oct	NEFSC and PDT work on survey indices and developing alternatives (informed by September assessment)
October	SSC recommends ABC
November	PDT completes impact analysis
December	Council takes final action
2024	
January	Preliminary submission
February	Formal submission
May	Implementation

Worksheet 3: Detailed Implementation Timeline

To be completed by Implementation Team Chair – this timeline should start with the Council’s final decisions and include details regarding review/implementation. For major actions (amendments), this timeline may not be completed until later in the process.

PROJECT PHASE	STARTING	ENDING
1. Council Meeting to select final measures	12.7.2023	12.7.2023
2.		
3.		
4.		
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7.		
8.		
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10.		
11.		
12.		

Action Plan Versions:

Version	Date	Author	Change Description
1	March 2023	Rachel Feeney	Initial action plan