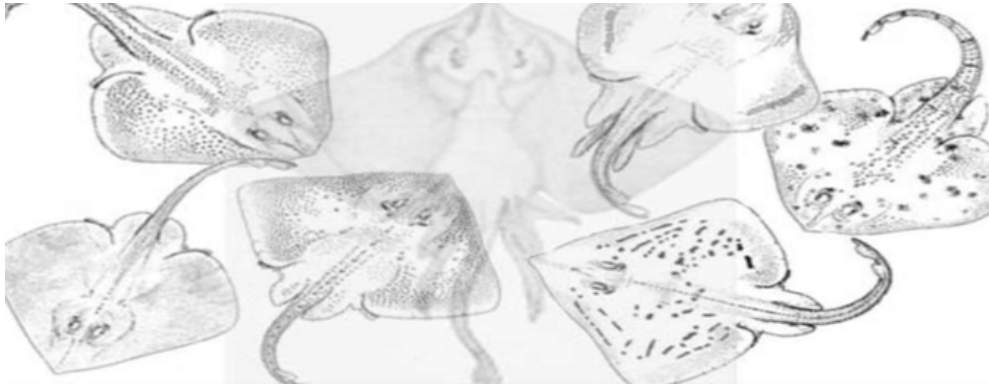


DECISION DOCUMENT

Skate Specifications FY 2026-2030



This document was developed to help the Council select a final proposed action for skate specifications and effort controls for fishing years (FY) 2026-2030.

September 2025 Council Meeting

Anticipated Council Action:

Prior to selecting a proposed action, the Council will receive a presentation by staff on the NEFSC data update and a presentation on measures under consideration and their analyzed impacts on target species, non-target species, protected resources, the physical environment (EFH), and human communities (economic and social impacts) in the Skate Specifications action. This action was developed by the Skate Plan Development Team (PDT) based on the Scientific and Statistical Committee's 2025 recommendations. Council staff will also answer questions, as needed, about the draft Supplemental Information Report (SIR).

The following are anticipated Council actions:

1. Motion to recommend a *proposed action* for FY 2026-2030 specifications. This includes overfishing limits, acceptable biological catches, and related specifications for the Northeast skate complex.
2. Motion to recommend a *proposed action* for skate possession limits.
3. Motion to submit the Skate Specifications for FY 2026-2030 to NOAA Fisheries, as amended today.

Proposed Action (part 1) – FY 2026-2030 Specifications

The Committee opted to not recommend a proposed action to the Council

Section 3.0 (SIR document) – Proposed Action		Preferred by	
		AP	Committee
Original Action	- Overfishing Limit = unknown - Acceptable Biological Catch = 32,155 mt		
Proposed Action (Sec. 3.0)	SSC Recommendation - Overfishing Limit = unknown - Acceptable Biological Catch FY 2026-2027 = 41,282 mt FY 2028-2030 = 37,154 mt	X	No motion
Decisions/Questions/Information to Consider - See SSC report (8/19/25) meeting: https://www.nefmc.org/library/aug-19-2025-ssc-report-re-skates - The SSC's recommendation uses updated skate survey data (through spring 2025), landings, and discard information. This is the first year where NEFSC provided a data update in lieu of an assessment. - The Plan Development Team updated reference points and used the ABC control rule. The SSC recommended the ABC using the control rule for FY 2026-2027, with a 10% reduction in FY2028-2030 for precaution (Table 1 in SIR, p. 8). - The Skate AP recommends the SSC recommendation. The AP also recommended revisiting specifications in two years with updated data. - The Skate Committee did not make a recommendation for the Council. A Committee motion failed that would have recommended the SSC's recommendation for just FY 2026-2027.			
Other important Considerations/Draft SIR References - Overfishing is not occurring on any skate species in the complex. Thorny skate is overfished (SIR Section 5.1). - Impacts of the SSC recommendation are within the range of what was considered in the last Environmental Assessment (FY 2024-2025, Framework 12; SIR Section 6.0).			

Proposed Action (part 2) – Possession Limits

Section 3.0 (SIR document) – Proposed Action		Preferred by	
		AP	Committee
Original Action	- Bait = 25,000 lb - Wing - Wing DAS Season 1 = 4,000 lb - Wing DAS Season 2 = 6,000 lb - Wing B-DAS = 275 lb - Wing non-DAS = 625 lb		
Proposed Action (Sec 3.0)	- Bait = 30,000 lb - Wing - Wing DAS Season 1 = 4,500 lb - Wing DAS Season 2 = 6,500 lb - Wing B-DAS = 275 lb - Wing non-DAS = 625 lb	X	X
<i>Note:</i> bait limits are in whole weight, skate limits are in wing weight. Decisions/Questions/Information to Consider - The AP and Committee recommended small increases to possession limits. While past underutilization of TALs was noted, there was concern for softening of markets that may come with larger increases in limits. - The AP and Committee recommended revisiting possession limits in two years to determine if adjustments are warranted based on fishery performance.			
Other Important Considerations/Draft SIR References - The proposed action for possession limits is not yet in the SIR document, as it was developed during the September 16 and 17 AP and Committee meetings. - The SIR estimates potential increases in landings from a range of Wing DAS possession limit increases. The increases recommended by the AP and Committee are lower than those estimated in the SIR. No estimates were made relative to Bait limits, as the AP did not suggest any changes during its prior meeting in March 2025.			