

# **Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan**

## **FY 2026-2027 Specifications**

### **Action Plan, Version 2 (July 2025)**

**Council:** New England Fishery Management Council

**Fishery Management Plan:** Skates

**Title of Action:** Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan FY 2026-2027 Specifications

**Scope:** This action sets specifications for fishing years (FY) 2026 and 2027, including skate wing and bait possession limits.

**Objective(s):** 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 FY 2026 and 2027 will be informed by the 2025 skate data update.

**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.
2. **Skate Wing Possession Limits.** Overall skate wing possession limits would be adjusted based on the revised specifications and stock status update.
3. **Skate Bait Possession Limits.** Overall skate bait possession limits would be adjusted based on the revised specifications and stock status updates.

#### **Applicable Laws/Issues:**

1. **NEPA Analysis (EIS/EA/CE/SIR):** This action is expected to require a Supplemental Information Report (SIR). A formal determination will be made once the range of alternatives is identified and analyzed.
2. **Endangered Species Act/Marine Mammal Protection Act:** Typical issues and analyses expected at this time.
3. **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. Oversee document preparation and submission.
	NMFS GARFO SFD	Laura Deighan	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 alternatives; prepare document for rulemaking.
	NEFMC	Emily Bodell	Support development of measures, data requests and updating of the Affected Environment, lead for social impact analysis, assist in other impact analyses and document preparation.
	NMFS GARFO APSD	Dr. Sara Turner	Support data requests, identify potential monitoring issues during development and review.
	NMFS NEFSC	Katherine Sosebee (through April 2025)	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	Update affected physical environment and 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, protected species affected environment and impact analyses.
	NMFS GARFO Enforcement	Caleb Gilbert	Consult on enforcement issues.
	NMFS GARFO Habitat Conservation	Sabrina Pereira	Consult on habitat issues.
	NMFS GARFO General Counsel	Mitch MacDonald Scott Sakowski	Consult on potential legal issues and questions, regulatory/legal review.
	NMFS Population Dynamics Branch	Dr. Jason Boucher	Lead assessment scientist; consult on the development of measures
	NMFS NEFSC Fishery Sampling Branch (incl.	Amy Martins	Consult on developing measures, data analysis, and biological impact analyses regarding fisheries

	Observer Program)		monitoring issues; identify potential observer/at-sea monitoring or SBRM issues; support data requests.
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### NMFS Implementation Team Membership:

Organization	Name	Responsibility
NMFS GARFO SFD	Laura Deighan	Implementation Team Chair; primary GARFO contact for skates
NMFS GARFO SFD	Matt Rigdon	SFD support
NMFS GARFO HESD	Sabrina Pereira	Habitat advice/support
NMFS GARFO PRD	Danielle Palmer	Consultation on measures and impacts on protected resources
NMFS GARFO TDMD	Torey Adler; Talya tenBrink	Programming support for AMS
NMFS GARFO APSD	Dr. Sara Turner	Analysis and data support
NMFS GARFO NEPA	Ashleigh McCord	NEPA advice
NMFS Enforcement	Caleb Gilbert	Consultation on development of measures with enforcement considerations
NE General Counsel	Mitch MacDonald, Scott Sakowski, Katherine Pohl	Legal advice
NMFS GARFO VMS Coordinating Committee	Carl Lemire (Chair)	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	Andrea Gomez	Assistance with outreach and roll-out plan
U.S. Coast Guard	TBD	At-sea inspection/enforcement advice

## Worksheet 1: Skate PDT Resources and Work Schedule

*Note: These are the PDT resources anticipated from January 2025 forward and may 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
<b>Stock Status Results</b>	Develop survey indices, stock status results and ABC recommendations	Sosebee/Boucher with whole PDT	February 2025	August 2025	7 months
<b>Alternatives Development</b>	Develop specifications based on flow chart, possession limits	Feeney, Bodell with whole PDT	February 2025	September 2025	8 months
<b>Affected Environment</b>	Update data, tailor content	Feeney, Bodell Werner, other PDT	April 2025	September 2025	6 months
<b>Impacts Analysis</b>	Target species (skates)	Feeney	August 2025	September 2025	2 months
	Non-target species	Feeney			
	EFH	Bachman			
	Protected Resources	Feeney, Palmer			
	Human Communities	Bodell, Werner			
	Cumulative effects analysis	Feeney, Bodell, Deighan, Rigdon, McCord	October 2025	October 2025	1 month
<b>Draft SIR</b>	Oversight of document development & completion	Feeney, Bodell	April 2025	December 2025	9 months
<b>RIR/RFA Analysis</b>	For Final SIR	Werner	October 2025	October 2025	1 month
<b>Final SIR</b>	Document completion/submission	Feeney, Bodell	December 2025	December 2025	1 month

## Worksheet 2: Timeline for Development of Skate 2026-27 Specifications

2025	
Feb-Oct	NEFSC and PDT work on survey indices and developing alternatives (informed by September assessment peer review)
April	Council receives update on action
August	Skate data update provided SSC recommends ABC
September	PDT completes impact analysis
<b>September</b>	<b>Council takes final action</b>
October	Preliminary submission
December	Formal submission
2026	
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	9.25.2025	9.25.2025
2. Draft submission	9.25.2025	10.31.2025
3. Deeming regulations	9.25.2025	10.16.2025
4. NMFS internal review of draft (dependent on timing of submission) (GARFO, NEFSC)	10.31.2025	12.2.2025
5. Econ clearance	10.31.2025	11.21.2025
6. Proposed rule development and review (GARFO)	10.31.2025	11.28.2025
7. Proposed rule publication (NMFS HQ, DOC, OFR, etc.)	11.28.2025	12.30.2025
8. Public comment	12.30.2025	1.14.2026
9. Final rule development (dependent on comments received) (GARFO)	1.14.2026	2.4.2026
10. Final Council submission	12.2.2025	1.21.2026
11. Final rule finalization, clearance, review (dependent on timing of submission) (GARFO)	2.4.2026	2.25.2026
12. Final rule publication (NMFS HQ, DOC, OFR, etc.) and Action Effective	2.25.2026	3.30.2026
13. Implementation delay (*providing range in case APA waiver not cleared and full 30-day delay required)	3.30.2026	4.29.2026

#### Action Plan Versions:

Version	Date	Author	Change Description
1	March 2025	Rachel Feeney	Initial action plan
2	July 2025	Rachel Feeney	Changed: NEFSC data update rather than assessment, PDT membership, timing of final action