

# CORRESPONDENCE



## New England Fishery Management Council

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Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

September 26, 2025

Dr. Christopher Moore  
Executive Director  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
Suite 201, 800 N. State Street  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Chris:

At its September 2025 meeting, the New England Fishery Management Council (NEMFC) identified actions in response to Executive Order 14276, *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness*. The NEFMC is preparing a letter outlining its recommended actions to NOAA Fisheries by the September 30, 2025 deadline.

Several of the actions will need coordination with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, and Northeast Fisheries Science Center. I anticipate that regional partners will begin discussions about workplans and timelines at the upcoming November meeting of the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC).

One specific action the NEFMC recommended may affect the MAFMC's species:

*To work with the MAFMC to consider developing an action to change the season for the Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area to be expanded from May 1 through October 31 to April 1 through November 31, and add to the allowable species possession list, bluefish and black seabass.*

Rationale: The timing and location of migrations of spiny dogfish and other species like bluefish and black seabass are changing. These modifications to the exemption area would increase access for the inshore fishing fleet.

The Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area<sup>1</sup> was established by Framework Adjustment 20 to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) (implemented on May 1, 1997, *Federal Register* Vol. 62, No. 62, 15381-15389). Therefore, modifications to the exemption area provisions ([50 CFR 648.80\(b\)\(7\)](#)) would be through a Northeast Multispecies FMP action, consistent with groundfish exemption regulations and conservation and management goals.

The NEFMC would evaluate the Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area to 1) expand the season and 2) add bluefish and black sea bass to the exempted species list for the

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<sup>1</sup> Details at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/resources-fishing/southern-new-england-dogfish-gillnet-exemption-area>

area. Following the evaluation, the NEFMC may decide to develop an action to modify the exemption area provisions.

Since the MAFMC is the lead for our joint Spiny Dogfish FMP and manages the Bluefish and Black Sea Bass FMPs, the NEFMC requests that the MAFMC consult on the evaluation of the Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area.

Please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cate O'Keefe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cate" and last name "O'Keefe" clearly distinguishable.

Cate O'Keefe  
Executive Director

CC: Michael Pentony, GARFO  
Bob Beal, ASMFC