



New England Fishery Management Council
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MEETING SUMMARY

Joint Monkfish and Skate Plan Development Teams

Webinar
February 2, 2026

The Monkfish and Skate Plan Development Teams (PDT) met jointly on February 2, 2026, via webinar at 1:00 pm to discuss and review: 1) the draft summary of input on coordinated monkfish and skate work in 2025; 2) the draft scoping document for a potential Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program for the monkfish and/or skate wing fisheries; and 3) other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Jenny Couture (Monkfish PDT Chair) and Dr. Rachel Feeney (Skate PDT Chair; Monkfish PDT); Emily Bodell (NEFMC staff); Sharon Benjamin, Laura Deighan, Ashleigh McCord, Caroline Potter, Spencer Talmage, and Dr. Sara Turner (NMFS/GARFO); Dr. Chris Legault, and Samantha Werner (NMFS/NEFSC); Jason Didden (MAFMC); Dr. Tara Dolan (MADMF); Ben LaFreniere (ME DMR); Eric Schneider (RI DEM); Renee St. Amand (CT DEEP); and Scott Olszewski (Skate Committee Chair). In addition, about eight other people attended.

KEY OUTCOMES

- Drafted a summary of feedback on 2025 coordination and an IFQ scoping document for the Advisory Panels and Committees to consider when they meet on March 19.

AGENDA ITEM #1: INTRODUCTIONS/ APPROVAL OF AGENDA/TIMELINE AND OTHER UPDATES

The meeting began with a moment of silence to remember the loss of the *F/V Lily Jean*. Council staff reviewed the meeting agenda and a timeline for the 2026 monkfish and skate Council priorities. Staff will continue working with the Monkfish and Skate Committee Chairs to develop a timeline for anticipated scoping meetings this spring to help with meeting planning; the revised timeline will be shared with the PDTs. The Scientific and Statistical Committee will meet on March 13 to review two monkfish catch per unit effort (CPUE) projects for management use. Council staff are also participating in a joint governance workshop at the end of February as part of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) work.

AGENDA ITEM #2: SUMMARY OF INPUT ON 2025 COORDINATED MONKFISH AND SKATE WORK

Council staff reviewed the draft summary of input received on the coordinated monkfish and skate work in 2025. Staff also asked the PDTs if there was any additional information or feedback that should be incorporated into the draft summary, which will be provided for the March 19th Joint Monkfish and Skate Advisory Panel and Committee meeting and finalized thereafter. A PDT member noted that there will be joint meetings this year to discuss IFQ work, and there may be some suggestions in the draft summary that can be incorporated into this process.

Next Steps

- Council Staff – update draft summary; provide a copy for the IRA joint governance workshop.

AGENDA ITEM #3: SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR A POTENTIAL IFQ PROGRAM FOR THE MONKFISH AND/OR SKATE WING FISHERIES

Council staff reviewed the draft scoping document for a potential IFQ program for the monkfish and/or skate wing fisheries. This includes an overview of the schedule for scoping meetings this spring, why the Council is conducting scoping, what the Council is considering, what the scoping comments should address, an overview of the steps in potentially developing an IFQ program, and background information. The PDTs made several revisions to the document per the following discussion.

A PDT member suggested finding a recent meta-analysis of IFQ performance (if available) and including a link in the scoping document. Council staff were not aware of a recent meta-analysis but noted that there is literature available on various program reviews; a literature review would be a joint PDT task if the Council pursues an action to develop an IFQ program. A PDT member suggested linking to the 2007 NOAA publication: [*The Design and Use of Limited Access Privilege Programs*](#) for additional background information. A PDT member asked if the Council was considering fishing history to allocate permits.

The PDT discussed transferability in an IFQ program, with members offering clarification that an individual transferable quota (ITQ) is considered a subset of an IFQ program. A PDT member suggested considering regional differences, noting the differences between the northern and southern monkfish fishery management areas as an example. A PDT member asked about recent genetic work regarding the northern and southern monkfish stocks, noting that the research showing only one stock in the Northeast region could create some uncertainty for an ITQ program if management units are changed accordingly. Council staff stated that the research was going to be considered in the 2027 research track assessment, which is postponed indefinitely, and it is unclear what the next steps will be to review and incorporate that genetics research into management. A PDT member stated that the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires programs to have measures to prevent excessive share accumulation.

Mid-Atlantic Council staff on the PDT explained that the monkfish and skate IFQ scoping process is not on the MAFMC's list of priorities in 2026 but would likely consider an action for the 2027 priorities if the New England Council decides to develop an action related to monkfish. NEFMC staff noted that the Council has a process for changing priorities during the year and clarified that the Council only approved scoping as a 2026 priority, so starting to develop an action in 2026 would require a change in priorities.

The PDT discussed what to include in the fishery performance section of the document, opting to include links and references to recent documents instead of inserting figures and tables. A PDT member asked whether the document needed to include or reference a cost recovery assessment. After the PDT meeting, GARFO staff suggested the scoping document note that limited access privilege programs are required to include a cost recovery program and include an example for further information.

Next Steps

- Council Staff – incorporate PDT edits into the draft scoping document for further PDT review.

AGENDA ITEM #4: MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES /OTHER BUSINESS

The Monkfish CPUE projects will be peer-reviewed by a subpanel of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee on March 13th; the PDTs and other stakeholders are welcome to attend. The Monkfish and Skate Advisory Panels and Committees will meet jointly on March 19th via webinar to discuss the draft summary of input on coordinated monkfish and skate work in 2025 and the draft scoping document for a potential IFQ program. The Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils will receive final versions of the summary of 2025 input and the IFQ scoping document for approval during the April 7-9 meeting in NYC and April 14-16 meeting in Portland, ME, respectively. The work is being brought to the MAFMC given monkfish is jointly managed. Council staff noted that Monkfish Framework 17 is finalized, and the FY 2026-2028 skate specifications action is under review. The meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.