



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Northeast Skate Complex Plan Development Team

webinar

March 4, 2021

The Northeast Skate Complex Plan Development Team (Skate PDT) met on March 4, 2021 via webinar at 9:00 AM to discuss Amendment 5 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan, the 2022-2023 fishery specifications, and other business.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Dr. Rachel Feeney (PDT Chair); Cynthia Ferrio, Ashleigh McCord, and John Sullivan (GARFO); Jenny Couture and Lou Goodreau (Council staff); Dr. Trish Clay, Dr. Kathy Sosebee, and Samantha Werner (NEFSC); and Eric Schneider (RI DEM). Skate Committee Chair Dr. Matthew McKenzie and about eight others attended.

AMENDMENT 5

The PDT reviewed a draft summary of scoping comments prepared by staff. The summary is consistent with the thematic analysis approach used in recent years for the comment periods of other fishery management plans. Here, comments from the initial scoping comment period (in 2017) are being included in the summary.

The PDT continued its work on drafting a memo on topics related to the expanded range of potential measures in this action (i.e., other than limited access). See final PDT memo to the Skate Committee for details (to be completed mid-March).

It was noted that some updates to the skate dependence data are being made in the discussion document.

Follow-ups

- Feeney - Finish summary of all comments. Whole PDT to review.
- Couture and Feeney – Finish memo based on PDT input. Whole PDT to review.
- Goodreau and Couture – Finish discussion document updates.

FISHERY DATA

The PDT received the input of its informal sub-group on fishery data on which NMFS databases to use for which purposes. It was agreed to generally use CFDEERS unless there is a need for statistical area data. In future, the sub-group may continue investigations to better understand any differences between CFDEERS located at the NEFSC and the version located at GARFO.

In 2020, the PDT alerted NMFS of two types of errors in the landings data: 1) cases where live pounds equals landed pounds, but the disposition code indicates that it is wing landings, and 2) cases where landed weight is greater than live weight. In total, cases represent under 5% of total skate landings. Subsequently, a few corrections were made by NMFS. For the other cases, the PDT decided to:

1. Have its data sub-group recommend a skate price to use as a threshold for deciding if the landing is likely to be bait rather than wing.
2. In cases where landed weight is 2.27 times the live weight, switch the landed and live pounds.

Follow-ups

- Goodreau – reconvene the sub-PDT to make a price threshold recommendation.

SPECIFICATIONS

The PDT continued preliminary discussion of the 2022-2023 skate fishery specifications. The NEFSC has determined that no NEFSC trawl survey data past fall 2019 will be used to calculate survey indices due to disruptions to the survey in 2021, until there is more deliberation on how to handle these gaps in survey coverage. Given this, the PDT had a preliminary discussion about developing a recommendation for the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC). The PDT reviewed the ABC control rule and discussed the challenges of following the control rule exactly given recent gaps in the survey time series. Also, the missed stations in the fall 2018 survey would still be impacting the calculations. Historically, the PDT has decided how to address survey gaps when developing ABC recommendations. As the data gaps are unusually large this time, the PDT decided to seek additional scientific advice and input of the NEFSC before proceeding to potential ABC recommendations later this spring.

Follow-ups

- Sosebee – Seek further input from the NEFSC.
- Feeney – Finish discussion document updates. Whole PDT to review.

OTHER BUSINESS

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM. The next Skate PDT meeting will likely occur in late March-early April 2021.