



New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chair* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEETING SUMMARY

Monkfish Plan Development Team

webinar

May 12, 2022

The Monkfish Plan Development Team (PDT) met on [May 12, 2022](#), via webinar at 1:00 PM to recommend Research-Set-Aside program priorities, continue work on the monkfish fishery performance report and on Framework Adjustment 13 to the Monkfish Fishery Management plan.

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Dr. Rachel Feeney (PDT Chair), Jenny Couture (NEFMC); Sharon Benjamin, Spencer Talmage, Kris Winiarski (NMFS/GARFO); Dr. Jon Deroba and John Walden (NMFS/NEFSC); Jason Didden (MAFMC); Eric Schneider (RI DEM DMF); Renee St. Amand (CT DEEP), and Dr. Tara Dolan (MADMF). Monkfish Committee Chair Libby Etrie and Committee member Kelly Whitmore attended.

TIMELINE AND UPDATES

The PDT welcomed Dr. Tara Dolan to her first PDT meeting. The only update to the timeline for the 2022 management priorities of note is that the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will review the performance report on June 7. The next deadline for the PDT is May 19, for getting documents prepared for the May 26 Committee meeting.

MONKFISH RESEARCH-SET-ASIDE PRIORITIES

The PDT reviewed the Advisory Panel (AP) recommendations for 2023/2024 Research-Set-Aside program priorities and reviewed a draft PDT memo to the Committee, making its own recommendations. Given the RSA program funding comes from industry, the PDT generally supported the AP recommendations. On the AP recommendation of funding stock structure/stock identification, the PDT felt that research on life history was a greater need and a necessary precursor. However, the PDT felt these topics may not be well suited for the RSA program.

Next steps - specifications:

- Feeney – revise PDT memo, circulate, and finalize.

PDT-AP FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The PDT discussed the Advisory Panel input on the status of the fishery and felt the fishery data generally support the observations and concerns of the AP. The PDT noted the Council opted not to address latent effort as a management priority in 2022. Diesel fuel prices have increased 76% over this time last year. Monkfish prices have increased as well but only at a rate of 20%, likely not compensating for the rising cost of fuel. The PDT then reviewed the key summary points and noted necessary revisions to the fishery data, including the recreational data in the year-end catch accounting. The report will be clarified to

elucidate the status of monkfish which, as determined by the 2013 assessment is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Next steps:

- Winiarski – finalize year-end catch accounting data (recreational).
- Talmage – confirm that language for footnote #2 is accurate (change to trip declaration requirement).
- Feeney – update report and finalize draft for Committee and SSC review.

FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 13

The PDT reviewed outcomes of the April Council and May 4 AP meetings and discussed Committee tasking.

DAS Allocation and Possession Limits

The PDT discussed the Committee tasking to analyze a few adjustments in possession limits and DAS allocations to see if landings can be better optimized. The PDT is working through challenges with pulling data to identify vessels using close to their full DAS allocation, trips using full PLs, and incidental limit use. For DAS allocation, the PDT agreed to focus on vessels using at least 90% of their DAS. PDT members were concerned that current effort controls may be hindering profitability and that a more flexible approach may be needed. It was noted that many southern area trips are at the possession limit, so there might be increased landings if southern area possession limits are raised. Latent effort was noted to be a concern within the fishery by the Committee Chair. However, there have not been predicted effort shifts. The scoping comments from Amendment 6 could be examined for motivators and constraints for shifting effort onto monkfish.

Regarding adjustments, the PDT recommended the focus to be upon increasing the possession limits as well as considering an allowance of up to three DAS of limits on a trip. Since catch has been very close to or exceeded the acceptable biological catch in the northern area, the PDT recommended adjustments there are not needed. DAS allocation in the south has been lower than the north since at least Framework 4 (2007). This may potentially be due to stock concerns, but the Committee could consider increasing it to match the allocation in the north. Small, incremental adjustments would be better than large changes.

Next steps:

- Winiarski and Couture – continue work on data queries.
- Feeney – put PDT recommendations into discussion document.

Other management measures

The PDT discussed the section on requiring 12-inch gillnet mesh and felt that no additional work is needed at this time.

The PDT discussed the section on requiring use of the Vessel Monitoring System. The PDT is working on understanding the process on what happens when a groundfish permit is relinquished and a monkfish category D permit is no longer relevant. The PDT agreed that some data in draft table 11 are confidential.

The PDT discussed the section on southern area discards. Council staff are working with scallop staff to describe: where the scallop fishery is relative to the monkfish management area boundary, discard trends, and future trends in scallop effort.

Next steps:

- Talmage – follow up on the groundfish permit relinquishment question.
- Couture – mask data in Table 11 due to confidentiality.
- Feeney and Couture – follow up with scallop staff.

Discard deduction methods

NEFSC data systems are being repaired, so there is a delay in accessing the “StockF” system, and likely a delay in updating monkfish discard data for calendar years 2020 and 2021. It was agreed the new Catch Accounting and Monitoring System (CAMS) should be used for updating discard data for use in the analysis of discard deduction methods. The PDT formed a sub-group to complete this analysis (Dolan, Feeney, Talmage, Winiarski). The work should be completed by late June for PDT review in early July.

Next steps:

- Winiarski – Update the CY discard data with CAMS.
- Feeney – Coordinate sub-group.
- Walden – help update fishery data regarding economics
- Feeney – update draft report.

OTHER BUSINESS

After briefly reviewing follow-up tasking, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm with no other business discussed. The PDT sub-group and full PDT will meet in June.