



New England Fishery Management Council

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

MEETING SUMMARY

Skate Committee

Webinar

November 7, 2022

The Skate Committee met on November 7, 2022, at 10:00 AM via webinar to discuss: 1) Council priorities for 2023 regarding skates, 2) other business, and 3) in a closed session, Advisory Panel (AP) applicants for the 2023-2025 (AP) term.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Committee: Mr. Scott Olszewski (Committee Chair), Mr. Mark Alexander, Ms. Elizabeth Etrie, Mr. Dan Farnham, Mr. John Pappalardo, Mr. Dan Salerno, and Ms. Kelly Whitmore; Council staff: Dr. Rachel Feeney (Plan Development Team (PDT) Chair), Ms. Jenny Couture. GARFO staff: Ms. Cynthia Ferrio. Two members of the public attended.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- The Committee recommends the Council write a letter to the Northeast Region Coordinating Council that the skate assessment not be delayed from summer 2023 as scheduled.
- The Committee reprioritized their recommendations for 2023 Council priorities, listing support of the management assessment in 2023 as most important.

AGENDA ITEM #1: INTRODUCTIONS, APPROVAL OF AGENDA, AND TIMELINE

The Committee Chair introduced the Committee, welcomed attendees, and sought approval of the agenda. There were no agenda changes. Staff reviewed the timeline for skate work in 2022 and Fishing Year (FY) 2022 fishery performance based on weekly quota monitoring reports.

AGENDA ITEM #2: 2023 COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The Committee reviewed the preliminary recommendations that the Committee developed during the August 2022 joint meeting with the Advisory Panel. The Committee had recommended:

- Develop FY 2024-2025 skate specifications (required). With smooth skate and barndoor skate rebuilt, consider measures that would allow for expanded possession by the fishery.
- PDT work:
 - Support the 2023 management track stock assessment for skates.
 - Develop a white paper on potential approaches to support thorny skate rebuilding.
 - Support improvements to fishery data quality controls.

Committee members shared concerns about how long it has been since the last formal skate assessment. Staff reminded the Committee that the last assessment was in 2007 and that there was going to be one in

2021 to inform development of 2022-23 specifications that year. In the fall of 2020, the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC) decided to postpone it to 2023. Staff noted that during the fall 2022 NRCC meeting, when trying to juggle how to accommodate the new cod stocks, an idea was raised that the skate assessment be postponed again. Committee members were concerned that skates will again be pushed down the road.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT: To recommend that the Council write a letter to the Northeast Region Coordinating Council to keep the management track assessment for skates on its scheduled timeline of summer 2023.

There was no further discussion of this statement. Committee members also noted the ongoing need to track protected resources issues.

1. MOTION: ALEXANDER/SALERNO

To rank the 2023 Council priorities regarding skates in the following order:

1. Support the 2023 management track stock assessment for skates.
2. Develop FY 2024-2025 skate specifications. With smooth skate and barndoor skate rebuilt, consider measures that would allow for expanded possession by the fishery.
3. Develop a white paper on potential approaches to support thorny skate rebuilding.
4. Support improvements to fishery data quality controls.

Rationale: Ranking the assessment as #1 stresses the Committee's view that the assessment is very important. An assessment has not been done since 2008. Though smooth and barndoor skate were declared rebuilt a few years ago, being informed by an assessment would give the Council confidence to consider expanding possession of these species.

Discussion of the motion: Committee members felt that having a robust assessment was most important and would help in determining if increased possession of smooth skate and barndoor skate is appropriate.

The motion carried without objection.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT: The Skate Committee feels that working on measures related to the NOAA Fisheries Sturgeon Action Plan would be best addressed at the Council level (e.g., through an omnibus action) rather than just with the Skate Committee. The Committee acknowledges that addressing this Action Plan will take time of the staff supporting the Committee.

Committee members discussed that sturgeon and other protected resources issues will affect several other fishery management plans (FMPs), so it is better to work on these issues at the Council level. Especially for the Skate FMP, many of the gear regulations mirror or are controlled by measures in other FMPs. Even if there is an omnibus action or a joint action with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, there will be time spent by many staff members, which should be noted.

AGENDA ITEM #3: OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

The public portion of the Skate Committee meeting adjourned at about 10:45 a.m. The Committee then met in closed session to review applications for the 2023-2025 Skate Advisory Panel and made recommendations to the Executive Committee.