



New England Fishery Management Council

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

MEETING SUMMARY

Monkfish Plan Development Team

webinar

June 21, 2022

The Monkfish Plan Development Team (PDT) met on June 21, 2022, via webinar at 12:30 PM to continue work on the monkfish fishery performance report and on Framework Adjustment 13 to the Monkfish Fishery Management plan. The Monkfish Research-Set-Aside program was discussed under Other Business.

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); Renee St. Amand (CT DEEP), and Dr. Tara Dolan (MADMF). Monkfish Committee Chair Libby Etrie, Committee member Kelly Whitmore, Ryan Silva (GARFO), and two members of the public attended.

TIMELINE AND UPDATES

A PDT meeting will be scheduled for mid-July ahead of the August 4 review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) of the discard deduction methods.

FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 13

The PDT reviewed outcomes of the May Committee meeting and discussed Committee tasking.

Discard deduction methods

The PDT sub-group reported progress on completing an analysis of four alternate discard deduction methods. The PDT noted the Committee's goal to provide stability to the monkfish fishery. The sub-group presented the calendar year discard data and a comparison of each discard deduction method to realized discards. Some PDT members noted that a goal of stability in the TAL would not necessarily match what discards have been, and it may be preferable from a scientific perspective to use a method that best matches recent discards. This is a policy trade-off the Council will need to make. The PDT noted that tables would help in reading the numbers. Identifying the what the deduction for FY 2020-2022 would have been under each method would be helpful, as well as which is the closest predictor over multiple specification cycles. The PDT clarified that every three years, the PDT has been using the latest three years of data to set the discard deduction for the following three years. The Committee Chair encouraged the PDT to note any concerns regarding tradeoffs in optimizing yield in the memo to the SSC.

The PDT noted continued interest in examining whether recruitment data could predict discards, though that would be a longer-term task. The near-term task is not including those data.

The sub-group will continue working on the analysis, updating the figures presented and providing some data in table form. Providing the variance around the mean or median may help identifying which approach results the closest prediction of discards and in fishery stability and the tradeoffs associated with that. The sub-group will develop pros and cons of the approaches.

Next steps:

- Deroba – Supply recruitment data to the sub-group.
- Dolan – Continue developing analyses.
- Couture – Continue coordinating sub-group and memo writing.

Effort Controls - DAS Allocation and Possession Limits

The PDT discussed the Committee's goal with adjusting effort controls and tasking to develop alternatives that would increase Day-At-Sea allocations and possession limits in the southern area. The PDT reviewed alternatives as drafted and supported creating a few bundled of alternatives, to reduce the number of potential combinations of alternatives that would need to be analyzed. The Committee Chair confirmed that the Committee was envisioning these alternatives fitting together in a stepwise way. The PDT can develop bundles to present. The PDT discussed recommending that the Committee consider applying the alternative to use up to three DAS to the northern area as well, to help make the regulations consistent between areas.

The PDT then discussed analytical approaches, noting challenges with assuming how effort would change. Using FY 2018 data may still be best for trip-level analysis, as there is trip-level data available and the fishery was not impacted by the pandemic, though looking at a recent year may be more realistic. It was noted that the price of fuel has almost doubled, and a break-even analysis may be helpful. If the regs are eased, but then the fishery still can't make money, it does not do much good. Observer data has trip level data that would help understand discards, to know the vessels that could have landed more monkfish (updated through Oct 2021). The PDT could develop an upper threshold of how these increases would be used, but given economics, it may be fewer vessels that could take advantage. Currently, vessels can use 1 additional DAS to land additional monkfish. The PDT could look at how frequently that provision is used and if there is additional catch that is discarded. Though there are economic constraints, it is safe to assume some vessels will take advantage of these alternatives, because the AP was asking for them. The PDT agreed to convene a sub-group to discuss analytical approaches further (Talmage, Walden, Winiarski, Couture, Feeney).

Next steps:

- Feeney and Couture – revise effort control alternatives into bundles.
- Benjamin – review structure of alternatives.
- Spencer – review the language on allowing up to three DAS to be used on a trip.
- Walden – examine price data and consider approaches to identifying the potential for effort increases given fishery economics; also examine observer data to identify the degree that discards could be turned into landings.
- Couture – facilitate analytical sub-group.

Gillnet mesh

The PDT discussed the section on requiring 11 and 12-inch gillnet mesh. The PDT will review these alternatives offline. The focus of the PDT work should be on the discard deduction methods and DAS and PL alternatives in the near term.

Next steps:

- Talmage – review alternatives.

PDT-ADVISORY PANEL FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The PDT discussed the reviews of the draft report by the Monkfish Committee, SSC, and Council staff. The report will be finalized by the August-September AP and Committee meetings.

Next steps:

- Winiarski – provide FY2021 year-end catch accounting data, clarify discard calculation method; update Table 8 (TAL use)
- Walden – identify if there are seasonal price and export data that could be included.
- Feeney and Couture – update report for PDT review.
- All – review next iteration of report.

OTHER BUSINESS

Monkfish Research-Set-Aside Program

The PDT briefly considered the rationale for not issuing a Request for Proposals last year but had no further comment. The Council will be asked to consider if it wants to comment on whether there should be an RFP this year.

After briefly reviewing follow-up tasking, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm with no other business discussed.