



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Skate Plan Development Team

Webinar

August 5, 2025

The Skate Plan Development Team (PDT) met on August 5, 2025, at 9:00 am to discuss: 1) Fishing year (FY) 2024 year-end skate catch accounting; 2) outcomes of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center skate data update; 3) FY 2026 – 2030 (defaults for 2028 - 2030) specifications for the Northeast Skate Complex; and 4) other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Dr. Rachel Feeney (Skate PDT Chair; Monkfish PDT); Emily Bodell (NEFMC staff); Laura Deighan, Ashleigh McCord, Matthew Rigdon, and Dr. Sara Turner (NMFS/GARFO); Dr. Jason Boucher and Samantha Werner (NMFS/NEFSC); and Eric Schneider (RI DEM). In addition, about eight other people attended.

KEY OUTCOMES

- FY 2024 skate landings were within total allowable landings (TAL) and catch was within annual catch limits (ACL).
- Skate biomass indices have been stable; some species had increased indices.
- The PDT developed an acceptable biological catch using the control rule to provide to the Scientific and Statistical Committee.
- The PDT developed deductions from the annual catch target for discards, state landings and recreational catch.

AGENDA ITEM #1: INTRODUCTIONS/ APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The meeting opened at 9:00 am. Attendees were introduced. There were no changes to the agenda.

AGENDA ITEM #2: FISHING YEAR (FY) 2024 YEAR-END SKATE CATCH ACCOUNTING

The PDT reviewed the 2024 year-end catch accounting. Landings were higher relative to TAL than in recent years. Catch was within the ACL. Final numbers will be included in the PDT memo to the SSC and in the specifications document.

AGENDA ITEM #3: NORTHEAST FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER SKATE DATA UPDATE

NEFSC staff presented the 2025 skate data update. Survey biomass indices are stable within recent ranges, with some increases. Winter skate is the most abundant in the survey and recently increased. Thorny skate remains below the biomass threshold. The figures of length data may show evidence of recruitment in winter skate, but there is insufficient data in the figures for the other species to identify potential recruitment events.

AGENDA ITEM #4: FY 2026 – 2030 (DEFAULTS FOR 2028 - 2030) SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE NORTHEAST SKATE COMPLEX

The PDT developed a revision to the proxy for maximum sustainable yield based on two calculation errors discovered since the 2023 assessment. The PDT developed an ABC based on the control rule, as well as default measures for FY 2028-2030. For the default, the PDT recommended status quo measures for 2028-2030 for consistency with the current rollover provisions in the skate regulations and with other Council-managed FMPs. However, the PDT also noted the SSC could consider a more precautionary approach with tiered reductions to deal with uncertainty. The PDT developed the deductions for discards, recreational catch, and state landings, checking that methods developed in 2023 are followed. The PDT also reviewed the risk policy matrix, noting recent changes in format and content. The PDT prepared a memo to the SSC and noted that with a likely increase in ABC, possession limit increases may be appropriate.

Follow-ups:

- Turner: Provide state landings for calendar years 2022-2024.
- Boucher: Provide seven-panel figure of survey biomass indices.
- Werner: provide FY 2022-2024 fishery revenue, active vessels and dealers for updating the risk matrix.

AGENDA ITEM #3: OTHER BUSINESS

Executive Order (EO) 14276: Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness

By August 15, the PDTs need to deliver recommendations on ideas for addressing this EO to the Council's Executive Director. Council and SFD staff will discuss the list developed by the PDT prior to this deadline.

Exempted fishing permit

SFD staff updated the PDT that the EFP regarding increased wing possession limits has been approved and will be implemented shortly. Some provisions were added to the EFP to help mitigate impacts on price and landings. The EFP would end at a threshold below the trigger for the trip limit reduction.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at noon.