

Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan

Amendment 5 Supplemental Scoping Oral Comments



January/February 2021

Thursday January 21, 2021 3:30 - 5:30 pm	Webinar Hearing
Monday February 8, 2021 4 - 6 pm	Webinar Hearing



New England Fishery Management Council

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John F. Quinn, J.D., Ph. D., *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

Amendment 5 to the Northeast Skate Complex FMP Public Scoping Meeting Summary

Webinar

January 21, 2021

Hearing Officer: Matthew McKenzie, Skate Committee Chair

Council Staff: Rachel Feeney (Skate Plan Coordinator), Jenny Couture, Lou Goodreau

Attendance: 23 on the webinar

The meeting began at 3:30 pm. Dr. McKenzie, Skate Committee Chair, welcomed attendees and provided opening comments about Amendment 5 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan (FMP). He explained that this was the first of two public scoping meetings being held and is an opportunity for to identify management issues and develop alternatives for the wing and/or bait skate fishery for Amendment 5. Dr. Feeney of Council staff provided an overview of Amendment 5 including details on why the Council is scoping again, the Council-approved problem statement, goals, and types of measures for achieving goals, and questions to consider about limited access and other potential management measures. Following an opportunity for questions on the presentation, Dr. McKenzie opened the meeting for public comment.

Maggie Raymond - Associated Fisheries of Maine: Ms. Raymond requested some information and data: 1) history of possession limits and 2) landings by gear type from the beginning of the skate plan in 2003 through the most recent fishing year, like Table 26 in the Discussion Document. Staff referred her to Tables 21 and 22 of the Discussion Document for the history of possession limits and noted that the Skate PDT is developing more gear data for the document.

Ms. Raymond explained that her hunch is, at the beginning of the skate plan in 2003, skate trawl participation was higher because of the higher possession limits, that once the possession limits were lowered to 5,000 lb (or lower), participation by trawl vessels declined and shifted towards the gillnet fleet. She feels that the low skate possession limits are not economical for most trawl vessels to participate, which goes against the idea that there will be an influx of groundfish boats entering the skate fishery. Additional gear data by fishing year would be helpful.

Scott MacAllister - Chatham, MA; Skate Advisor; wing fishery: A lot of younger fishermen in RI are concerned about the control dates, any change in regulations, and being displaced from the fishery as some recently made the investment to purchase vessels. Some fishermen are entering, and others are leaving the fishery; any rule change that would increase the value of permits for the fishermen who are retiring would be unfair for those just entering the fishery. It would be unfair if recent entrants became shut out and then had to buy their way back in at a high price.

Dan Nordstrom - RI; Skate Advisor; bait fishery: Most people in the RI area want to keep the bait skate control date, because this was established years ago to prevent overfishing. We have been working closely with the lobster fishery, already have three seasons, and we have been doing this for a long time.

Patrick Duckworth - Point Judith, RI; wing gillnet fishery: I have never seen a graph of how many skate wings are landed on a monkfish day at sea (DAS) versus a groundfish DAS. Monkfish and skate

fishing go hand in hand, so the control dates for both need to be consistent, otherwise there will be a huge skate discarding problem if skate wings cannot be landed. How is a directed skate fishery defined, fishermen that are harvesting monkfish? Are folks that are catching skates on a monkfish DAS considered directed skate fishing? The skate fishery is already a limited access fishery because you cannot land more than the incidental limit unless you are fishing under a groundfish or monkfish DAS. I hate seeing people like the younger guys get pushed out of the fishery and I also do not want to see the guys who have been fishing for a while not be able to land skate wings if fishing with a monkfish permit. Whoever has a federal monkfish permit should automatically be able to get a skate limited access permit if limited access goes forward.

Greg Duckworth - Point Judith, RI; wing gillnet fishery: Anyone who is gillnet fishing for monkfish will come across skates and vice versa. If the price is too low then skates are discarded. People made different choices over the years and I would rather catch skate in state waters to avoid using a federal permit. If the control date includes years in which I do not have landings, then that is not right. Anyone with a valid monkfish permit that landed monkfish and qualified for that permit have caught skates and should not be pushed out of the fishery, otherwise there will be a huge discard problem. People make different choices based on circumstances; I used to fish lobster but then switched to something else when there was an oil spill, and those were the control dates chosen for the lobster fishery. Any legitimate federal monkfish permit holder should be grandfathered in for the skate wing fishery. There are no more doors to open. I am not at liberty to comment on the bait fishery.

Greg Mataronas - MA; Skate Advisor; gillnet fishery primarily targeting monkfish, wing fishery: I go back and forth whether we need limited access. Maybe the intermediate possession limit suggestion would avoid triggering the incidental limit in March or April. I agree with others that we cannot affect other fisheries; we very rarely hit the monkfish possession limit first, it is usually the skate limit. I do not think gear modifications should be pursued when targeting monkfish as most monkfish fishermen use at least 12" mesh (some use 14" mesh) to better target monkfish, thus they are not catching smaller skates. Separate TALs for the wing fishery segment could complicate enforcement and there is no real directed wing fishery so not sure what will happen if this goes forward. If limited access does happen, tiers are not the way to go; I do not want to affect other fisheries with a skate limit and limit what a vessel does when fishing for monkfish. Allowing future participation and blocking people out of the fishery are contradictory. I do not see an issue with accumulation limits as I can only fish one boat at a time. The skate fishery is not like the crab or scallop fisheries owning multiple boats and permits; the skate fishery is a high volume, low value fishery with lower possession limits. The issue of more people entering the fishery started when skate prices were higher, but people are slowing down fishing because both monkfish and skate prices are now lower.

Skate Amendment 5

Public Scoping

Webinar

Audience List

Date	January 21, 2021
Start time	3:30 PM
End time	4:20 PM
Number of participants	23

Skate Committee Chair: Matt McKenzie

Skate Council Staff (3): Rachel Feeney, Jenny Couture, Lou Goodreau

Participants

	Name		Affiliation (if known)
1	David	Borden	Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association
	Patricia	Clay	NMFS/NEFSC; Skate PDT member
	Greg	DiDomenico	Garden State Seafood Association
	Greg	Duckworth	Skate fisherman
	Patrick	Duckworth	Skate fisherman
	Libby	Etrie	NEFMC member, Skate Committee member
	Dan	Farnham	MAFMC member, Skate Committee member
	Cynthia	Ferrio	NMFS/GARFO, Skate PDT member
	Heidi	Henninger	Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association
	Andrea	Incollingo	Skate fishery shoreside support, Skate AP member
10	Jeff	Kneebone	New England Aquarium, Skate AP member
	George	Lapointe	George Lapointe Consulting LLC
	Scott	MacAllister	Skate fisherman, Skate AP member
	Greg	Mataronas	Skate fisherman, Skate AP member
	Tom	Nies	NEFMC staff
	Dan	Nordstrom	Skate fisherman, Skate AP member
	Scott	Olszewski	RI DEM, NEFMC designee, Skate Committee member
	Janice	Plante	NEFMC staff
	Maggie	Raymond	Associated Fisheries of Maine
	Dan	Salerno	NEFMC member, Skate Committee member
20	Eric	Schneider	RI DEM, Skate PDT member
	Stephanie	Sykes	Cape Cod Fishermen's Alliance
	Samantha	Werner	NMFS/NEFSC, Skate PDT member
	Kelly	Whitmore	MADMF, NEFMC designee, Skate Committee member



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Amendment 5 to the Northeast Skate Complex FMP Public Scoping Meeting Summary

Webinar

February 8th, 2021

Hearing Officer: Dr. Matthew McKenzie, Skate Committee Chair

Council Staff: Dr. Rachel Feeney (Skate Plan Coordinator), Jenny Couture, Lou Goodreau

Attendance: 20 on the webinar

The meeting began at 4:00 pm. Dr. McKenzie, Chair of the Skate Committee, welcomed attendees and provided opening comments about Amendment 5 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan (FMP). He explained that this was the second of two public scoping meetings being held and is an opportunity for the public to identify management issues and develop alternatives for the wing and/or bait skate fishery for Amendment 5. Dr. Feeney of Council staff provided an overview of Amendment 5 including details on why the Council is scoping again, the Council-approved problem statement, goals, and types of measures for achieving goals, and questions to consider about limited access and other potential management measures. Following an opportunity for questions on the presentation, Dr. McKenzie opened the meeting for public comment.

Kevin Wark—Barnegat Light, NJ; skate wing fisherman also representing Viking Village, Inc.: I am a full-time commercial fisherman with 40 seasons and a New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council member. Today, I am representing Viking Village, Inc. with 34 vessels, 8-10 of which participate in the skate wing fishery. We support limited access and plan to write a comment letter. Harvesting skate wings, as part of the monkfish fishery, is labor intensive and there are a lot of winter skates here. The biggest problem is that people are coming into and out of the fishery that are not full-time, because the fishery is open access. The fresh and Canadian markets are only so big and there is a high cost to truck skates to the processors in New England. We have trouble using skates properly. It leads to discards when the price isn't high enough. Winter skates come close to shore leading to sturgeon and other protected resource interactions; an open access fishery with high limits is not great. We catch more skates for less, but when the volume decreases, we do better economically.

Mr. Wark asked a clarifying question on the 12-inch gillnet mesh size measure and the rationale for considering it, stating that he worked with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center testing 13-inch mesh size in over 300 days of field tests to reduce sturgeon bycatch, and it did catch less winter skate while retaining monkfish. Staff clarified that the Council was considering increasing the current gillnet mesh size from 10" to 12" and is seeking comment on that idea through this scoping process. Mr. Wark noted that his latest treatment was a 13" mesh to reduce sturgeon bycatch, also raising the mesh and adjusting tie down to reduce vertical height, and we used a telemetry array of the Delaware coast. It reduced winter skate and retained monkfish. We have some science on that. We used 10-inch mesh size where the skates bounced off the net, but the monkfish catch was sub-par.

Bonnie Brady – Long Island Commercial Fishing Association: I plan on submitting written comments but remember the original scoping meetings in Montauk and Shinnecock. The main thought then was to continue allowing open access. With the fishery so labor intensive, those that choose to give it a shot

should have the ability to do so. There was concern that those who recently started in the fishery may be closed out under limited access.

David Leveille – Sector manager for Northeast Sector 2 and 6, representing over 40 vessels, mostly draggers with a few gillnet and hook vessels, mainly targeting groundfish in the Northeast: Sectors 2 and 6 are opposed to any tiered type or limited entry program to manage the fishery. We believe the Council's scoping documents have not identified any overfishing problem based on landings over the last several years. The fear that vessels will shift to skates because of increased restrictions on the groundfish fishery holds no merit. This would have already happened. The Northeast groundfish vessels do not survive targeting skates; it's purely a bycatch of their fishing activity, with the majority of skates used as a food source. Taking the bycatch away from the fishery serves no purpose in better management. The fishery should be managed as a whole, not by eliminating participants. Many of the potential approaches would seem to favor one harvesting sector over another. We favor preserving access to the fishery consistent with its historical participation.

Kevin Wark: The vessels from Viking Village understand people's plight in this business. We do not want to displace anyone fully. That is not our goal. Our thought was to make enough on skates where we don't have to discard them and so we can concentrate on monkfish. It would be nice for skates to have more value so people would be more willing to keep skates. We don't want to catch more for less. No one should be displaced from the fishery, but we would need a tiered system or some protection to continue landing skate wings in the monkfish fishery in the future.

Skate Amendment 5

Public Scoping

Webinar

Audience List

Date	February 8, 2021
Start time	4:00 PM
End time	4:35 PM
Number of participants	20

Scallop Committee Chair: Matt McKenzie

Council Staff (3): Rachel Feeney, Jenny Couture, Lou Goodreau

Participants

	Name		Affiliation (if known)
1	Bonnie	Brady	Long Island Commercial Fishing Association
	Patricia	Clay	NMFS/NEFSC, Skate PDT member
	Libby	Etrie	NEFMC member, Skate Committee member
	Dan	Farnham	MAFMC member, Skate Committee member
	Cynthia	Ferrio	NMFS/GARFO, Skate PDT member
	James	Fletcher	United National Fisherman's Association
	Melanie	Griffin	MADMF, NEFMC designee
	Jeff	Kneebone	New England Aquarium, Skate AP member
	David	Leveille	Northeast Multispecies Sectors 2 and 6
10	William	McCann	Skate fisherman, Skate AP member
	Drew	Minkiewicz	Fisheries Survival Fund
	Scott	Olszewski	RI DEM, NEFMC designee, Skate Committee member
	John	Pappalardo	NEFMC member, Skate Committee member
	Maggie	Raymond	Associated Fisheries of Maine
	Dan	Salerno	NEFMC member, Skate Committee member
	Stephanie	Sykes	Cape Cod Fishermen's Alliance
	Kevin	Wark	Skate fisherman, Viking Village
	Samantha	Werner	NMFS/NEFSC, Skate PDT member
	John	Whiteside	Skate AP member
20	Kelly	Whitmore	MA DMF, NEFMC designee, Skate Committee member