



New England Fishery Management Council

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

MEETING SUMMARY **Skate Plan Development Team**

webinar
November 21, 2019

The Skate Plan Development Team met on November 21, 2019 via webinar for two hours primarily to develop Amendment 5 to the Skate Fishery Management Plan (limited access): to review tasking from the October 22 Skate Committee meeting, discuss work to date to accomplish Committee tasking, and plan future work.

MEETING ATTENDANCE AND DOCUMENTS

Dr. Rachel Feeney (Chairman), Jenny Couture and Lou Goodreau (NEFMC staff); Cynthia Ferrio, Ashleigh McCord and John Sullivan (GARFO); Dr. Kathy Sosebee (NEFSC); and Eric Schneider (RIDEM). In addition, one member of the public attended. The meeting documents are at: <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/nov-21-2019-skate-pdt-webinar>.

INTRODUCTIONS/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

No agenda changes.

STATUS UPDATE ON FRAMEWORK 8

The NEFMC sent the preliminary submission to NMFS on November 5, 2019. The review process is ongoing. The NEFMC will likely receive comments on preliminary submission in early January.

AMENDMENT 5 TO THE SKATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN (LIMITED ACCESS)

Review and update the Action Plan

Draft version 3 of the Action Plan for Amendment 5 was reviewed. The list of PDT members and the timeline have been updated. A contact from the NEFSC fishery sampling branch should be identified. PDT members should let the Chairman know of any edits by early Dec.

Review tasking from the October 22 Skate Committee meeting; Discuss work to date to accomplish Committee tasking; Plan future work/meetings

The PDT reviewed the Skate Committee tasking from May (to provide fishery data by declaration codes) and October 2019 (to clarify and address data issues) to help the Committee understand the fisheries and fishermen using the skate resource. NEFMC staff presented a strawman approach and preliminary work on the October tasking. The PDT was generally

comfortable with proceeding as proposed, including the staff-developed method to ensure duplicate records are excluded.

The PDT wondered if the landings identified as little skate wings might be winter skate, as little skates (and rosette skates) are often too little to wing. It was suggested that the Advisory Panel may help clarify how these species are used by the fishery. Although there may be some confusion over the species and codes, the PDT felt it would be valuable to maintain the codes vs. eliminate them as fishermen can land little skates in the wing fishery. A member of the public indicated that trips landing smaller skates are likely to have a mix of winter and little skates. The PDT agreed that for the current tasking, characterizing the wing and bait fisheries is more important than down to the species level, but noted that potentially there could be future work on improving the species-level data.

For clarifying the undeclared skate trips, staff have worked on removing trips under the incidental limit and any state landings, however, total state landings are not equating to what APSD reports annually. The PDT discussed the methods to identify state landings. It was recommended to use the federal permit data and the date of sale from the dealer data to determine the fishing year. The APSD-reported state landings only include landings by state-only permitted vessels (not including federally permitted vessels fishing in state waters, it was suggested that future reporting include that clarification).

For explaining why wing landings may exceed possession limits, skate may be landed whole for later processing into wings, so the landings may be the whole weight. The PDT cautioned against recoding these landings as bait. It was suggested that the Advisory Panel may help clarify how skate are processed for human consumption. It was also suggested that FY2017 may have been an anomalous year.

Trips using the extra-large gillnet exemption are likely declaring a groundfish sector trip. The PDT will work on clarifying this exemption and could provide data for trips using the exemption.

OTHER BUSINESS

The skate quota monitoring archives webpage on GARFO's website should be on-line very soon. At its next meeting, the PDT will make recommendations for updates to the Council's research priorities related to skates. The next AP/Committee meeting will likely be in February or March. The next PDT webinar will be after more progress is made on the tasking, likely late December or early January.