

1.1 Social Impacts

1.1.1 Updates to Annual Catch Limits

ACL alternatives are described in Section **Error! Reference source not found.** and include decreases in the ACL, in the aggregate skate ACL, and in the skate bait and skate wing fishery TALs.

1.1.1.1 No Action (ACL= ABC of 35,479 mt, ACT of 27,275 mt, TAL of 18,001 mt, Wing TAL =11,169 mt, Bait TAL 5,626 mt)

Under the No Action Alternative, the skate catch limits would be those proposed in FW2. No additional impacts on human communities beyond those already analyzed in FW2 EA are expected. The FW2 EA determined that the action would have neutral to low negative economic and social benefits, mainly from the potential increase in probability of triggering the AM. Maintaining the status quo possession limits might increase the probability of triggering that AM. The FW2 specifications were below FY2011 total catch but above FY2012 catch. This indicated that the current possession limits may not result in an overage of the wing TAL. The two seasonal skate wing possession limits implemented in FW1 (2,600 lbs for May 1 through August 31, and 4,100 lbs for September 1 through April 30) were also expected to increase efficiency and revenue in the skate wing fishery by allowing more landings when prices are typically higher, and when winter skates can generally be captured closer to shore. In FY2014, 97.3% of the wing TAL was achieved under the status quo specifications and possession limits. Option 1 would have more positive impacts than Option 2 by allowing for higher TALs but may have some low negative long-term impacts if the stock further declined in biomass.

1.1.1.2 Option 2: Revised Annual Catch Limit Specifications (ACL= ABC of 31,081 mt, ACT of 23,311 mt, TAL of 12,872 mt, Wing TAL =8,560 mt, Bait TAL 4,312 mt)

Under Option 2, the specifications are calculated using the best available science that includes revised discard mortality rate estimates for four of the seven skate species. The reduced ACL and TAL have the potential to impact fishing behavior and profits; the reduction also would increase the potential of the AM being triggered before the end of the fishing year. Based on FY2014 landings, the revised specifications may result in an overage of the wing TAL. Compared to Option 1, Option 2 would have a higher likelihood of triggering the incidental possession limit of 500 lbs and potentially the AM for the wing fishery. The incidental possession limit may have low negative impacts because it reduces additional revenue from skate resources and may impede harvesting of other targeted species if large amounts of skate are encountered that cannot be landed.

1.1.2 Skate Wing Possession Limit Alternatives

1.1.2.1 Option 1: No Action – 2,600 lbs from May 1 to Aug 31; 4,100 lbs from Sept 1 to Apr 30

This option would maintain the current skate wing possession limits established in FW1. Option 1 might have more negative impacts compared to Option 2 if in-season incidental limit is triggered before the end of the fishing year, assuming there is a reduction in the TAL. Based on the economic impacts, a comparison of FY2013 and 2014 landings to the proposed TAL in the wing fishery would allow for a high percentage of the TAL to be achieved but would also result in the incidental possession limit being implemented before the end of the fishing year. This could result in low negative impacts if it affects other fishing activities.

1.1.2.2 Option 2: Revised Skate Wing Possession Limits – 1,500 lbs from May 1 to Aug 31; 2,400 lbs from Sept 1 to Apr 30

This Option would reduce the trip limit in both seasons to 1,500 lbs from May to Aug 31 and 2,400 lbs from Sep 1 to Apr 30. This option would likely reduce the likelihood of an AM being triggered before the end of the fishing year but may negatively impact landings if fishermen are encountering more skates than they can land. Based on the economic impacts, under FY2014 conditions, the in-season possession limit would be expected to be implemented before the end of the fishing year. Option 2 may also reduce the ability of fishermen to land their TAL – based on the economic impacts, the fishery would achieve between approximately 80-90% of the wing TAL. Compared to Option 1, Option 2 would have neutral to low negative impacts on fishermen as the likelihood of an AM being triggered is reduced but it makes it more difficult for fishermen to achieve the total TAL.

1.1.2.3 Option 3: Revised Skate Wing Possession Limits – 5,000 lbs year round

This Option would raise the skate wing trip limit to 5,000 lbs and remove the seasonal component. This option would allow the fishery to achieve its TAL, however, the likelihood of an AM being triggered greatly increases. Based on the simulated impacts of the revised trip limits described in the economic impacts it is highly likely that the TAL would be exceeded under this option. Option 3 has more negative impacts compared to Options 1 and 2.

1.1.3 Skate Bait Possession Limit Alternatives

1.1.3.1 Option 1: No Action – 25,000 lbs year round

This Option would maintain the current skate bait possession limit at 25,000 lbs, with a Letter of Authorization. The trip limit is unlikely to result in an overage of the TAL and would have neutral impacts on the fishery. It is included in this document to meet MSA requirements. Compared to Option 2, Option 1 would have more positive impacts on the fishery.

1.1.3.2 Option 2: Revised Skate Bait Possession Limit – 20,000 lbs year round

Option 2 would reduce the skate possession limit to 20,000 lbs, with a letter of Authorization. This would have negative impacts on the fishery as it would reduce the possession limit on a fishery that has not exceeded the TAL and is not likely to. It would make it more difficult for the fishery to achieve the TAL. Option 2 would have more negative impacts compared to Option 1.

1.1.4 Wing Fishery Seasonal Management Alternatives

1.1.5 Option 1: No Action

The No Action alternative would maintain the seasonal structure established in Framework Adjustment 1 for skate wing possession limits. The fishing year would remain divided into two seasons: season 1 (May 1 to Aug 31) and season 2 (Sep 1 to Apr 30). This would maintain the current levels of fishing opportunities for vessels. However, based on the economic impacts analysis, Option 1 would have similar impacts to Option 1 for the wing possession limits.

1.1.6 Option 2: Modification of Wing fishery Seasonal Management

This alternative would create seasonal TALs for the wing fishery consistent with the existing seasonal skate wing possession limits. The first season would be allocated XX % of the annual TAL (representing XX,XXX in 2016 and 2017) for May 1 to August 31. The second season would be allocated XX% of the annual TAL (representing XX,XXX in 2016 and 2017) for September 1 to April 30. Once 85% of the allocated TAL is reached between September 1 and April 30, the Regional Administrator would have the discretion to implement the incidental possession limit if the fishery is projected to exceed the TAL. The economic impacts analysis apportioned 40% of the annual TAL to season 1. The fishery was projected to trigger the incidental limit in the first season. Although, the fishery was projected to achieve over 90% of the proposed wing TAL (based on FY2013 and 2014 conditions), neutral to low negative impacts would be expected if the incidental possession limits were triggered early in each season affecting the targeting of other species and the directed skate fishery.

1.1.7 Option 3: Revised Skate Wing Seasonal Structure

This alternative would create seasonal TALs for the wing fishery consistent with the existing seasonal skate wing possession limits. The first season would be allocated XX % of the annual TAL (representing XX,XXX in 2016 and 2017) for May 1 to August 31. Between August 1 and September 15, the incidental possession limit of 500 lbs would be implemented, regardless of whether the in-season trigger point had been reached. The second season would be allocated XX% of the annual TAL (representing XX,XXX in 2016 and 2017) for September 1 to April 30. Once 85% of the allocated TAL is reached between September 1 and April 30, the Regional Administrator would have the discretion to implement the incidental possession limit if the fishery is projected to exceed the TAL. Similar social impacts to Option 2 would be expected as the incidental possession limit was projected to be triggered anyway, with 40% of the annual TAL apportioned to the first season, under these possession limits.

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