



New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Acting Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Monkfish Plan Development Team**  
August 23, 2021

The Monkfish Plan Development Team (PDT) met by webinar on August 23, 2021 to 1) review analyses related to the Council's 2021 Monkfish Priority to "Complete work recommended by the Council in June 2020 for including the 2019 discard information in the analysis of discard estimation methods undertaken in 2020"; and 2) consider Monkfish Priorities for 2022.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:**

Monkfish PDT	
Renee St. Amand, CT DEEP	Eric Schneider, RI DEM
Sharon Benjamin, GARFO	Alicia Schuler, GARFO
Jason Didden, MAFMC	Spencer Talmage, GARFO
Dan Linden, GARFO	
Other Monkfish Contributors	
Cate O'Keefe, Fishery Applications Consulting	Chris Kellogg, NEFMC
Pete Christopher, GARFO	Libby Etrie, NEFMC Monkfish Chair

**INTRODUCTIONS:**

The meeting began at 2:00pm with introductory comments by contractor Cate O'Keefe. Dr. O'Keefe provided an overview of the agenda, including meeting objectives and deliverables. The major goals of the meeting were to review updated analyses related to estimating discards to calculate monkfish TALs and consider monkfish priorities for 2022.

**MONKFISH TOTAL ALLOWABLE LANDINGS: DISCARD ESTIMATION 2021**

Dr. O'Keefe presented information about the method to set monkfish specifications, including Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Annual Catch Target (ACT), and Total Allowable Landings (TAL). Information and prior analyses related to high discard rates following a 2015 strong recruitment event was reviewed with specific focus on the potential to apply a long-term discard estimation approach. Based on the results from the 2020 analyses of discard estimation methods, the Council included the following in the list of 2021 Priorities:

*Complete work recommended by the Council in June 2020 for including the 2019 discard information in the analysis of discard estimation methods undertaken in 2020. The work should be done in 2021 to be considered in the 2022 specification process.*

Several iterations of long-term discard trends were examined, including multiple time periods with start years of 2000, 2008, and 2011, as well as the long-term mean and long-term median

discard percent of catch. The range of start years were included to examine trends over a longer time period (start year 2000), a period of stability in monkfish management and monitoring measures (start year 2008), and a more recent period of stability and consistency in monkfish and groundfish management and monitoring measures (start year 2011). The mean and median discard percent of catch were calculated to compare performance of the metrics based on the skewed distribution of data.

All approaches were reviewed by the Monkfish PDT, and the preferred approach applied start year 2011 with median discard percent of catch, as this approach represented recent historical trends under consistent management measures with lower uncertainty in the estimate. The PDT noted that the range of estimates of discards as a percent of catch among all approaches was similar (Table 1).

**Table 1. Framework 12 (FW12 FMP) discard estimate compared to alternative discard estimation approaches, including the discard percent of catch, resulting FY22 TAL, and % difference from the FW12 projected discards. Highlighted values indicate PDT preferred approach.**

	South			North		
	Discard %	FY22 TAL	TAL % Diff	Discard %	FY22 TAL	TAL % Diff
FW12 FMP	50.8%	5,882	--	18.2%	6,624	--
00-19 Mean	31.2%	8,220	28%	10.7%	7,234	8%
00-19 Median	32.8%	8,028	27%	11.6%	7,161	7%
08-19 Mean	34.3%	7,849	25%	15.2%	6,870	4%
08-19 Median	28.0%	8,602	32%	13.4%	7,015	6%
11-19 Mean	37.7%	7,443	21%	16.3%	6,781	2%
11-19 Median	33.1%	7,993	26%	13.0%	7,048	6%

For both management areas, the long-term discard options did not fully capture the magnitude of discards following the 2015 recruitment but may reduce uncertainty of projected discards compared to the 3-year moving average. The long-term discard options are more reflective of historic discard trends and would likely perform well under stable monkfish resource conditions in the future. The PDT noted that the moving-average discard rate would perform better if it was updated in real-time and applied in more frequent management updates.

### **2022 MONKFISH PRIORITIES AND RESEARCH**

The PDT recommended maintaining the FY2022 TALs for the southern and northern management areas with no change in discard methods.

- Southern area TAL = 5,882 mt
- Northern area TAL = 6,624 mt

Additionally, the PDT recommended a 2022 Council priority to initiate a monkfish management action to set fishery specifications for FY2023-2025 based on the 2022 monkfish management track stock assessment. They suggested that a long-term discard approach could be considered in a future monkfish management action and analyzed in the suite of options for fishery specifications. The PDT also suggested exploration of the monkfish recruitment index as a potential indicator of future discards.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00pm.