



# New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 7, 2021

PRESS CONTACT: Janice Plante  
(607) 592-4817, [jplante@nefmc.org](mailto:jplante@nefmc.org)

## Council Recommends NOAA Fisheries Rescind Control Dates for Skate Wing and Skate Bait Fisheries

After thoroughly debating the issue during its [June 22-24, 2021](#) webinar meeting, the New England Fishery Management Council voted to recommend that NOAA Fisheries rescind the existing control dates for both the skate wing and skate bait fisheries. The current control dates are:

- **Skate Bait Fishery** – July 30, 2009; and
- **Skate Wing Fishery** – March 31, 2014.

All documents discussed during the Council's June 2021 Skate Report are posted [HERE](#).

The Council originally recommended control dates because it was concerned about potential increases in effort and speculative entry into the fishery while it explored limited access options for skates.

In 2017, the Council began working on [Amendment 5](#) to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan, which initially was focused on limited access. The amendment evolved and broadened in scope over time. Then, during its April 2021 meeting, the Council voted to [drop further consideration](#) of limited access measures from the amendment and instead use other tools to improve skate management.

Given this development, the Council in June debated what to do with the existing control dates, which were considered old and not reflective of the current composition of participants in either the bait or wing fisheries. The Council weighed whether to ask NOAA Fisheries to: (1) publish new control dates; or (2) do away with the existing ones.

Since the Council voted in April to stop working on limited access, several Council members were concerned that publishing new control dates would send the wrong message to fishermen. Therefore, the Council opted to recommend that NOAA Fisheries rescind the control dates, recognizing that if the Council decides to pursue limited access at some point in the future, it can engage in a new discussion about this issue.

The Council also received progress reports on [Amendment 5](#) measures and the development of [2022-2023 specifications](#) for the fishery. Final action on specifications is scheduled for the Council's [September 2021](#) meeting.



*Little skate, the primary component of the bait fishery. – NOAA Fisheries photo*

**QUESTIONS?** Contact Skate Plan Coordinator Dr. Rachel Feeney at (978) 465-0492 ext. 110, [rfeeney@nefmc.org](mailto:rfeeney@nefmc.org).