



New England Fishery Management Council

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Skates: Council Signs Off on Framework 12 with Fishing Year 2024 and 2025 Specifications, Possession Limit Adjustments

The New England Fishery Management Council has taken final action on Framework Adjustment 12 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The framework includes:

- Specifications for fishing year 2024 and fishing year 2025, including total allowable landings (TALs) for the skate wing and skate bait fisheries;
- Adjustments to the skate wing possession limits; and
- Removal of the species-specific possession restrictions for barndoor skates and smooth skates.

The Council voted on Framework 12 during its [December 5-7, 2023](#) meeting in Newport, Rhode Island. Since that meeting, the Council has sent the framework document to the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) of NOAA Fisheries for preliminary review. Following the preliminary and subsequent final review, NOAA Fisheries is expected to implement the approved measures by May 1, 2024, the start of the new skate fishing year.

Based on the formula shown in the graphic below, proposed fishing year 2024 and 2025 TALs are as follows:

SKATE WING FISHERY: (a) 10,453 metric tons (mt) in whole weight, equivalent to about 23 million pounds of total allowable landings; 4,605 mt in wing-only weight, equivalent to about 10 million pounds; and

SKATE BAIT FISHERY: 5,266 mt whole weight, equivalent to roughly 11.61 million pounds.

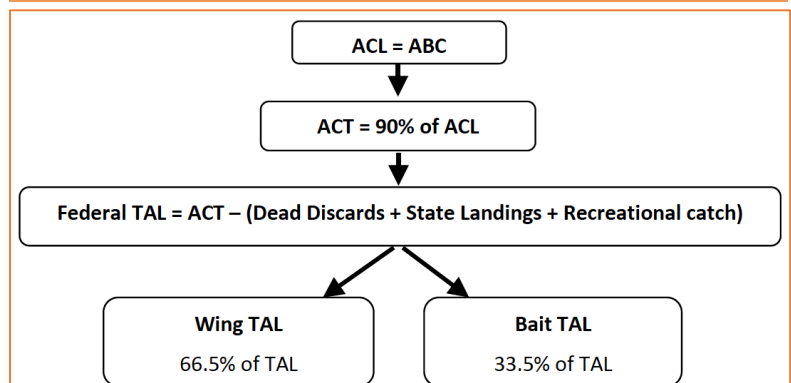
Detailed specifications are shown in the table on the next page.

Skate Wing Possession Limits

The Council recommended increasing possession limits in the skate wing fishery on both days-at-sea trips and on trips catching skates incidentally.

NOTE: The Council, based on recommendations from its Skate Committee and Skate Advisory Panel, made no changes

Formula for Setting Skate Specifications



KEY: ACL = Annual Catch Limit | ABC = Acceptable Biological Catch | ACT = Annual Catch Target | TAL = Total Allowable Landings



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to the possession limits for the bait fishery. Here are the skate wing possession limit adjustments in Framework 12.

Fishing on a Day-At-Sea:

- 4,000 pounds for Season 1, which runs May 1-August 31. This is an increase from the current 3,000-pound limit.
- 6,000 pounds for Season 2, which runs September 1-April 30. This is an increase from the current 5,000-pound limit.

Fishing Not on a Day-At-Sea:

- 625 pounds, which is an increase from the current 500-pound limit.

Fishing on a Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) B-Day-At-Sea:

- 275 pounds, which is an increase from the current 220-pound limit.

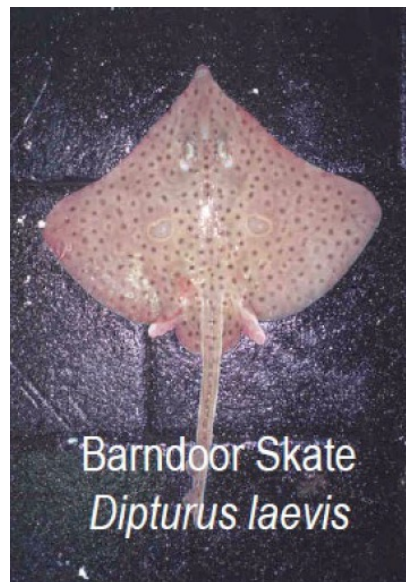
The possession limit increase in the directed fishery is expected to help turn discards into landings and help meet market demand for skate wings. Likewise, the 25% possession limit increase in non-directed fisheries is expected to help reduce skate discards in fisheries where skates are caught incidentally by turning discards into landings.

Barndoor and Smooth Skates

The Council also agreed to remove the possession limit restrictions on barndoor and smooth skates.

BARNDOOR SKATES: Currently, barndoor skate wings cannot exceed 25% of the total skate wing possession limit for fishermen working on a day-at-sea in the skate wing fishery. Barndoor skate possession is prohibited in the bait fishery, as well as the

2024-2025 Skate Specifications	Metric Tons Whole Weight * Except Where Noted	Pounds Whole Weight * Except Where Noted
ABC = ACL	32,155	70,889,640
ACT (90% of ACL)	28,940	63,801,779
Expected Dead Discards	12,149	26,783,960
Expected State Landings	756	1,666,695
Recreational Catch	316	696,661
Federal TAL	15,718	34,652,258
Wing TAL (whole weight)	10,453	23,044,920
Wing TAL (*wing weight)	*4,605	*10,152,287
Bait TAL	5,266	11,609,543



Barndoor skates have a very pointed snout, a reddish-brown body surface, small dark spots covering the body, no spines on the wings, and a gray underside on the wings. Smooth skates also have a pointed snout, no hard spines on the wings, a pale brown coloration, and two rows of small spines along the tail. For additional details, view the [NOAA Fisheries Northeast Skate ID Guide](#).





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incidental wing fishery, which includes non-days-at-sea and groundfish B-days. Framework 12, if approved by NOAA Fisheries, would remove this species-specific restriction on barndoor skates for all components of the skate fishery. Barndoor skates are fully rebuilt and overfishing is not occurring.

SMOOTH SKATES: Possession of smooth skates is currently prohibited in the Gulf of Maine Regulated Mesh Area, which is where smooth skates are found. Possession is not allowed in either the skate wing or bait fisheries.

Framework 12 proposes to remove the prohibition on smooth skate possession since this species, like barndoor, is fully rebuilt and overfishing is not occurring. This move would be consistent with the Council's overall approach to skate management, which is not species-specific for rebuilt species.

Stock Assessment and SSC Report



Before the Council took final action on Framework 12, it heard two other reports. First, it received a [presentation](#) from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center on the 2023 Management Track Stock Assessment for the seven-species skate complex. Here is the [peer-reviewed assessment report](#). Based on the 2023 assessment, barndoor, clearnose, little, rosette, smooth, and winter skates are not overfished. Thorny skates remain overfished, but overfishing is not occurring. Overfishing is occurring on winter and little skates.

The Council also received a [presentation](#) from the chair of its Scientific and Statistical Committee, which included overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendations for the skate complex. The SSC's fishing year 2024 and 2025 ABC recommendation of 32,155 metric tons for the skate complex set the stage for the specifications in Framework 12. The overfishing limit for the skate complex is unknown. Here is the [SSC's memo](#).

QUESTIONS? Contact Dr. Rachel Feeney, the Council's skate plan coordinator, at rfeeney@nefmc.org. Also, visit the Council's [skate webpage](#). Skate-related December 2023 meeting materials are [posted here](#).

Average Revenues by Skate Disposition, Fishery, and State for Calendar Years 2018 Through 2022

State	Wing	Bait	Total Skates	All fisheries	% Skates
ME	\$3,360	\$0	\$3,360	\$475,396,032	0.00%
NH	\$5,100	\$17,934	\$23,034	\$43,016,716	0.05%
MA	\$3,082,215	\$181,895	\$3,264,110	\$719,512,320	0.45%
RI	\$1,153,946	\$1,027,313	\$2,181,260	\$103,053,680	2.12%
CT	\$83,692	\$294,391	\$378,084	\$14,720,796	2.57%
NY	\$393,608	\$21,248	\$414,856	\$28,368,504	1.46%
NJ	\$443,078	\$103,522	\$546,601	\$175,336,096	0.31%
MD	\$6,972	\$452	\$7,334	\$6,866,677	0.11%
VA	\$29,653	\$357	\$29,724	\$61,859,064	0.05%
NC	\$9,740	\$0	\$9,740	\$18,711,378	0.05%

During calendar years 2018 through 2022, skates were landed in 10 states. Most of the landings were in Massachusetts, where the skate wing fishery is primarily located, and in Rhode Island, where the skate bait fishery is primarily located. The skate fishery contributed up to 2.6% to overall fishing revenue in the states listed above during this 2018-2022 timespan. Source: Framework Adjustment 12 to the Northeast Skate Complex FMP