



New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

October 2, 2023

Mr. Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Mike:

The Monkfish Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program Working Group completed a final report in September describing recommendations for potential improvement to the Monkfish RSA program. On September 28, 2023, the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) agreed to send a letter to GARFO to encourage uptake of the communication improvements recommended by the Working Group that are under the purview of NOAA Fisheries. Specifically, these communication improvements include:

- Making the RSA Request for Proposals (Notice of Federal Funding) more explicit regarding expectations of how to feed the results into assessment/management, including timing of the next research track assessment, how to fund the research through compensation fishing, recent performance of the Monkfish RSA program, etc.
- Supporting a Monkfish RSA Share Day, forum, or port workshop for completed and ongoing Monkfish RSA projects including the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), New England and Mid Atlantic Council members, staff, Advisory Panel members, and other interested parties from the greater Atlantic region.
- Publish the Request for Proposals (Notice of Federal Funding) earlier, specifically during the summer so that awards can be made prior to the start of the monkfish fishing year.
- Expand efforts to highlight RSA grant opportunities to prospective RSA applicants with explanations on how the program works along with risks (using the Sea Grant Network, etc.); include targeted outreach to both Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.
- Expand efforts to highlight when and where the fishing industry can purchase RSA days-at-sea (DAS) using NOAA Navigator, Commercial Fisheries News, NOAA Bulletins, etc., and include targeted outreach to both Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.
- Add a requirement to have periodic check-ins between RSA researchers and the RSA program office beyond the progress report requirements, with the intention to have more informal conversations about progress, challenges, etc.

- Assist the Council in sending out periodic emails with updates and final results of Monkfish RSA projects to the monkfish fishing industry, NEFSC, research industry, and other interested parties.
- Create an automated system to alert stakeholders when final RSA reports are available (applicable across all RSA fisheries).

Additional details and rationale can be found within the Working Group's [Final Report](#). Thank you for considering the Council's request. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cate O'Keefe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Cate O'Keefe, PhD
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Chris Moore, MAFMC; Dr. Jon Hare, NEFSC