

Liaison Report from the June 27th thru 29th, 2023 NEFMC Meeting in Freeport, ME – Hybrid

Skate Committee Report:

The New England Fishery Management Council covered three items related to the Northeast skate complex:

- 1) The Council received a brief recap of the May 22, 2023 assessment oversight panel meeting for the Skate Complex Management Track Stock Assessment
- 2) The Council Accepted the final thorny skate whitepaper on potential approaches to support thorny skate rebuilding.
- 3) The Council Initiated Framework Adjustment 12 to set 2024-2025 specifications for the skate complex and consider removing the partial possession prohibition on Barndoor skates and allowing possession of Smooth skates

For additional information click here: <https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/NEFMC-Receive-Final-Thorny-Skate-Whitepaper-Initiates-Framework-12-to-Develop-2024-2025-Specs-Other-Measures.pdf>

Herring Committee Report:

The council adopted an Atlantic Herring Action Problem Statement; the purpose of the action is to develop and implement management actions designed to attain:

- Optimum yield
- Account for its critically important role as a forage species
- And minimizing user conflicts created by competing interests between the directed herring fishery including commercial and recreational fisheries, whale watching, and tourism.

The NEFMC will also explore a range of management alternatives to minimize user conflicts including spatially and temporally explicit gear restrictions area closures, and possession limits.

The geographic scope of potential management measures will consider, but not be limited to, the spatial extent of the Midwater Trawl Restricted Area approved by the Council in Amendment 8, with a particular focus on areas not already subject to seasonal closures to midwater trawling. Analyses conducted to support this action will also evaluate the changes in the incidental catch of shad and river herring that will likely result from the measures adopted to reduce spatial and temporal user conflicts.

Groundfish Committee Report:

- The Council moved to revise FY2024 and FY2025 specifications for Gulf of Maine haddock and extend the removal of the sector management uncertainty buffer for white hake and Gulf of Maine haddock until the next specifications cycle for these stocks, as contained under Framework 65
- The NEFMC initiated FW 66 which includes multiyear specification setting and management measures
- The Council also initiated a Framework to consider adjustments to the existing Groundfish ABC control rule.

Atlantic Sturgeon:

The NEFMC approved the full range of monkfish alternatives with the understanding that alternatives will be further refined by the joint monkfish and dogfish committee with input from Office of Law Enforcement and the Coast Guard.

Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM):

The NEFMC moved to postpone the deep-dive EBFM workshops until early 2024 in order to properly prepare presenters and presentation materials and to complete the Prototype Management Strategy Evaluation (pMSE) work. In addition, the committee believes that scheduling the workshops in early 2024 will improve stakeholder engagement.

Scallop Committee Report:

The Council request National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to modify the Scallop Research Set-Aside Program to allow regional scallop surveys used for stock assessments and specification setting to be funded for up to four-years, with an option for a one-year extension for completing grant reports and data analysis.

The Council also developed the 2024/2025 Research Set-Aside priorities as listed below in the link.

The NEFMC initiated Framework Adjustment 38, an action that will set fishery specifications for fishing year 2024 and default measures for 2025.

Additional information can be found here: <https://d23h0vhs26o6d.cloudfront.net/NEFMC-Supports-Changes-to-Scallop-RSA-Program-and-Sets-2024-2025-RSA-Priorities-Initiates-Framework-Adjustment-38.pdf>