



Joint¹ Sturgeon FMAT²/PDT³ Meeting Summary

December 20, 2023 Webinar

The joint Sturgeon FMAT/PDT met on December 20, 2023 via webinar. The purposes of this meeting were to 1) develop sturgeon bycatch reduction alternative packages for NEFMC and MAFMC consideration and 2) develop plans to analyze the impacts of those packages. The meeting was not open to the public due to review of confidential observer data.

FMAT/PDT Attendees: Jason Didden (MAFMC), Jenny Couture (NEFMC), Robin Frede (NEFMC), Jason Boucher (NEFSC), Spencer Talmage (GARFO SFD), Bridget St Amand (NEFSC), Lynn Lankshear (GARFO Protected Resources Division), Sharon Benjamin (GARFO NEPA), and James Boyle (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission).

The FMAT/PDT met and developed four packages of alternatives that are designed to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch. The packages use time/area closures and/or gear modifications based on the range of alternatives approved by both Councils in the fall of 2023. The FMAT/PDT also considered recent input from NMFS, [which was discussed in this December 2023 memo from staff to the MAFMC](#).

The previous alternatives from the Councils could have resulted in tens of thousands of unique combinations, so four packages were constructed to create a reasonable range of alternatives that could be analyzed in time for April 2024 final action. The packages range from high to low impacts in terms of reduction in sturgeon bycatch and impacts to both fisheries. [A peer-reviewed model](#) developed for gillnet fishing effort redistribution related to potential whale take reduction measures will be used to estimate impacts of closed areas. The FMAT/PDT is considering how to analyze the impacts of gear restrictions.

The FMAT/PDT is working on a clear and concise description of the four packages of alternatives and will present the packages for review to the Councils in late January/early February 2024.

The Councils will hold separate meetings of their Spiny Dogfish and Monkfish Advisory Panels in late February/early March 2024 and will hold a Joint Spiny Dogfish and Monkfish Committee meeting in mid-March 2024 to develop recommendations for the Councils. Final action by both Councils is scheduled for April 2024.

If additional information is needed before the late January/early February 2024 Council meetings, please call Jason Didden of MAFMC staff (302-526-5254) or Jenny Couture of NEFMC staff (978-465-0492 x111). The briefing documents for the Council meetings will be available at their websites, <https://www.mafmc.org/>, and <https://www.nefmc.org/>.

¹ This is a joint action of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC)

² FMAT = Fishery Management Action Team

³ PDT = Plan Development Team