

New England Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing

Holiday Inn, Hyannis, MA

January 10, 2011

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Phil Haring

Attendance: approx. 14

Howard King, Monkfish Committee Vice Chair and Mid-Atlantic Council member also attended.

One fisherman expressed concerns about the costs of catch shares and asked what the cost sharing program would entail. He also asked how the skate fishery, which is linked to days-at-sea (DAS) would be handled if monkfish was managed under a catch share program, since the two species are caught together.

The second fisherman to comment stated support for catch shares, especially an IFQ program. He says that now he hauls his nets until he gets the trip limit, and when he returns to haul the remaining gear, the product is not marketable and must be discarded. He feels that his costs would be reduced by a catch shares system. He supports catch history from 1999-2009, with each permit holder being able to select the best five years. With regard to accumulation and transferability of quota, the industry should decide the limits. He also said that there should be a weighmaster system with dockside monitoring.

The next three fishermen supported catch shares, particularly individual allocations. One supported using catch history from 2000-2009 for the initial allocation. He also stated that trip limits and DAS causes significant discards.

The next commenter suggested that monkfish discards in the scallop fishery is like their yellowtail flounder discards, and to give them credit for their discards when allocating catch shares would be unfair to those in the directed monkfish fishery. He noted that the sector program in the groundfish fishery is going through growing pains but that the Councils should look into how they can incorporate monkfish into the existing plan.

With regards to the scallop fishery, a previous commenter noted that the areas where the scallopers fish varies from year to year, and that their needs for monkfish allocation from either the northern or southern management areas will vary. Another commenter suggested that the allocation of monkfish to the scallop fishery does not have to be on an individual basis, but could be done on a fleet-wide basis.

Another commenter with experience in the scallop fishery noted that most of the monkfish bycatch in the fishery is from the northern area, and that very little is caught in the southern area. While the scallopers historically caught a substantial part of the total monkfish landings, that was at a time when they were fishing as much as 280 days a year, compared to 70-80 days now. At that time, they also targeted monkfish because it was unregulated and there was a market

emerging. His biggest concern with regard to monkfish in the scallop fishery is that there be a realistic allocation, so the fishery does not get shut off from scalloping. He said there should not be a situation such as what is occurring with the yellowtail flounder bycatch that potentially prevents catch the available scallops. He also strongly opposes catch shares unless the program is designed to benefit fishermen and not the outside investor. He said catch shares have been an unjust imposition on the groundfish fishery. He asked about the costs imposed on a vessel that is in two sectors, monkfish and groundfish, and whether that vessel would have to pay two sets of costs. He stated that the sector program has only increased NMFS size and budget, but has not benefitted most fishermen. He also said that the sector program should have been subject to a referendum.

The hearing started at 3:10 p.m. and adjourned at about 4:10.