

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

SUMMARY

Monkfish Amendment 6 Scoping Hearing

Hilton Oceanfront, Virginia Beach, VA

December 15, 2010

Hearing Chair: Terry Stockwell

Staff: Jim Armstrong

Attendance: approx. 24

After the staff presentation, the floor was opened up for questions. None of the H permit fishermen, the only monkfish fishermen in attendance, initially volunteered to speak.

A commenter asked how Amendment 6 fits in with the MAFMC's visioning project and was told that they are on separate tracks/timeframes.

The chair was asked if the referendum requirement could be interpreted to allow separate referenda in the different management areas. He replied that counsel is working on that question.

A commenter remarked that the catch history will be complicated by restraints on effort from various federal actions as well as trip limits and will, as a result, make allocation problematic.

A monkfish fisherman described some of the attributes and constraints of fishing under the H category permit. He stated if catch shares would allow him to keep his entire catch, that would be helpful. He said that the net limits are a constraint on catch anyway and that tides and weather and restrictions for marine mammals and turtles reduce the amount of gear the H category fishermen have in the water. He said he was hoping that allocation would take into account the unique aspects of the H category and not just the poundage landed by them. The season is a couple months long at the most. He emphasized that his support for catch shares is limited to the degree to which industry is involved in developing them. He suggested that the potential catch (DAS x trip limit) be used rather than actual landings for allocation purposes due to all the other constraints on their landings.

A second monkfish fisherman described the restrictions due to harbor porpoise and turtle regulations that limit their ability to fish.

A third monkfish fisherman who has both an H permit and a D permit expressed concern that catch shares were just another way of imposing sectors. He said that sectors have been unsuccessful in that he has to pay a lot of money for monitoring – usually \$1,500 per observed trip.

A fourth monkfish fisherman added that he was concerned that historic landings might include the 1991-1995 period when they didn't have any landings and that landings in recent years after the category H permit was created are constrained by the short season and regulations that keep them from fishing as much as they could.

The fishermen were asked if they would be interested in participating in a workshop to work out their concerns in greater detail. One fisherman spoke up and said he would like to do that. Others responded by nodding their heads.

There was a discussion about the availability of landings data prior to the issuance of the H permit. Several fishermen said that the data are available. Additionally there was discussion about the spatial restrictions on harvest associated with the H permit and concern about whether catch shares would be a way to relieve that.

The hearing started at 5:30 p.m. and adjourned at about 6:30 p.m.