

6.4 Economic Impacts

The following section examines the expected economic impacts of the proposed action and of the alternatives considered in the DSEIS but not adopted by the Councils.

6.4.1 Economic Impacts of the proposed action

Appendix I contains a summary table of the alternatives that were under consideration by the Councils, including a synopsis of the main elements of each alternative and the issues and impacts associated with each decision. The table also identifies the goals and objectives from Section 3.0 that each preferred alternative addresses. Appendix I also contains a second table, showing which alternatives were recommended by the Monkfish Committee, the Industry Advisory Panel, and proposed by the Councils in this submission. The following section contains a discussion and analysis of the economic impacts of the proposed action.

The proposed management changes contain a variety of measures that would have an impact on vessels that participate in monkfish fisheries. These measures include gear changes, minimum fish size, closed seasons, and provisions for a special access program in the SFMA, as well as qualification for fisheries south of 38° N. In addition, the Amendment contains provisions to address bycatch, Essential Fish Habitat, cooperative research, and exemptions for vessels fishing outside the U.S. EEZ. For the most part, the economic impact of these potential changes will include some monetary component, but this monetary impact is very difficult to quantify. For this reason, much of the following contains a qualitative assessment of how vessels will be affected relative to taking no action. Even though a quantitative assessment is not possible, in many cases the type of vessel that one may reasonably expect to be affected can be identified. Thus, wherever possible the number of vessels that may be affected is estimated.

6.4.1.1 Trip/possession limits for incidental catch

The Councils propose three changes to the allowable retention of monkfish incidental catch by vessels in various fisheries (see Section 4.1.1).

6.4.1.1.1 Incidental catch – 50 lbs. (tails) per day/150 lbs. maximum

Under the proposed action, vessels fishing with small mesh or handgear would be allowed to retain up to 50 lbs. (tail weight) for each 24-hour day, or partial day, up to a maximum of 150 lbs. This trip limit would also apply on vessels holding a limited access multispecies permit that are 30 feet less in length. Vessels fishing under this trip limit are by definition not fishing on a DAS, so the day is counted from time of departure as entered in the vessel logbook or VMS.

There are currently only 8 vessels permitted in limited access multispecies small vessel category, and these vessels likely fish single day trips due to their small size. Thus, the economic impact of this measure is not likely to be different than the no action alternative for those vessels. Secondly, because of the very small amount of reported monkfish

landings by vessels using handgear, the economic impact of this measure on such vessels should also be no different than the no action alternative.

Changes in incidental catch limits would provide small entities an opportunity to retain larger quantities of monkfish than under the no action alternative. Since the proposed change represents an increase over current trip limits, recent data cannot be used to quantify the potential economic impact of a higher trip limit. However, observed data may provide some insights into the number of trips and vessels that may benefit. Data from fishing year 2001 VTR records were used to identify the number of trips that may be affected. For these identified trips, distributions of trip duration, monkfish discards, and monkfish landings were constructed. These distributions provide an indication of the proportion of trips that may benefit from a higher trip limit. During FY2001, 12,000 trips were taken by monkfish permit holders that were identified as potentially subject to the 50 lb. incidental trip limit. Of these, 2,500 trips by 202 vessels reported landing monkfish. The proposed change would convert the 50 lb. trip limit to a daily 50 lb. limit up to a maximum of 150 lbs. This means that the trip limit change would only affect trips that are more than 24 hours in duration and that landed more than 50 lbs.

Approximately two-thirds of the trips landing monkfish landed less than 50 lbs., leaving 835 trips that may have been constrained by the 50 lb. incidental trip limit in FY2001. These trips either caught and landed no more than 50 lbs. of monkfish or caught more than 50 lbs. and discarded any overages. If these discards were reported, an estimate of the additional benefit of being able to retain more monkfish could be estimated. Unfortunately, over 90% of affected trips report no discards at all. Given the fact that fully one-third of affected trips are at exactly the trip limit it seems unlikely that available data would provide a reliable estimate of the economic benefit of increasing the incidental trip limit. Nevertheless, an upper bound estimate can be calculated by assuming that all trips would retain the maximum allowable limit.

As calculated from the logbooks, a total of 3,385 days absent were associated with the 835 trips that may benefit from the proposed action. Given the maximum limit of 150 lbs., trips that were more than 3 days (72 hours) would not be able to retain any more monkfish. This means that a maximum of 75,900 lbs. of monkfish could be retained under this option. The average monkfish price for 2001 was approximately \$2.53 per lb. so the maximum revenue gain would be \$192,000. Since 112 vessels had at least one trip that would benefit from Option 1, the average benefit would be \$1,700 in gross fishing revenue.

6.4.1.1.2 Incidental catch -General Category scallop dredge and clam dredge

The Councils propose applying the monkfish incidental catch limit applicable to small mesh vessels (50 lbs. tail weight/day, 150 lbs. maximum, see previous section) on General Category scallop dredge vessels and clam dredge vessels. Under current monkfish regulations, neither vessels fishing under a general category permit using scallop dredge gear nor vessels using clam dredges may retain any monkfish. The proposed action would change current restrictions to be equivalent to that of the incidental trip limit of 50 lbs. per day up to 150 lbs. maximum.

Based on FY2001 VTR data, 1,620 trips taken by 52 different vessels were determined to be consistent with either a clam or a general category scallop trip. None of these trips reported any monkfish discards so these data provide no information regarding potential catch rates on general category scallop or clam trips. Of these trips, over 90% were 24 hours or less and 99% of the trips were less than 48 hours. Given these trip durations, the maximum benefit from a 50 lb. trip limit would be 81,000 lbs. or \$204,000. This assumes that the catch on every trip is at least 50 lbs., which is unlikely since median landings on incidental trips were only 25 lbs. At this median level, revenue benefits on clam or general category scallop trips would be approximately \$102,000 or an average benefit of just under \$2,000 per vessel. The proposed incidental trip limit would provide only modest increases above this level since only 10% (162) of general category scallop or clam dredge trips are more than 24 hours in duration and the vast majority of these are no more than 48 hours. Assuming median landings, this leaves a maximum benefit of only \$10,250 over and above the 50 lb. incidental trip limit.

6.4.1.1.3 Incidental catch - summer flounder vessels west of 72°30'W

The Councils propose to restore the monkfish incidental catch limit on vessels fishing for summer flounder (fluke) west of 72°30'W to five percent of the total weight of fish on board, but not to exceed a possession limit of 450 lbs. (tail wt.). Under this proposal, the boundary line between the two areas would be returned to its location prior to the groundfish interim rule, or 72°30'W, and around the eastern end of Long Island.

The proposed alternative would restore fishing opportunities for vessels involved in a summer flounder fishery in the affected areas. The economic impact of this change was estimated by using FY2001 VTR data for trips taken by vessels with a fluke permit using between 5.5" and 6" mesh and retaining fluke within statistical areas 612, 613, 615, 616, 622, 623, 627, 628, 633, 634, 636, and 637. Although these statistical areas do not correspond precisely to the regulated mesh area boundaries, they provide a rough approximation. Note also that the VTR reports only a single coordinate to represent an entire trip that may have taken place anywhere within a statistical area, so the statistical area may be a better proxy for trips that may be affected by the regulatory change than strict adherence to location data.

By adjusting these observed monkfish landings by the No Action incidental catch limit of 50 lbs. per trip, an estimate of the potential revenues that would be restored under the proposed alternative is obtained. Specifically, across the 114 vessels in the data set that landed monkfish the average annual restored landings would be 326 lbs. of monkfish. At an average price of \$2.53 per lb., this translates into \$825 per vessel. However, the impact varies considerably across vessels, ranging from no impact (i.e., no observed trip exceeded 50 lbs.) to almost \$10,000.

6.4.1.2 Minimum fish size

The Councils propose setting the minimum size to 11 inches (tail), 17 inches (whole) in both areas (status quo for the NFMA, reduction from 14 inches (tail) in the SFMA, Section 4.1.2).

The proposed action would implement a uniform minimum fish size in both management areas. The NFMA size limit would be unchanged but the SFMA size limit would be reduced to that of the NFMA (11-inch tail or 17- inches whole). This change would not have any economic impact on trips taken in the Northern area but would increase economic opportunities for vessels fishing for monkfish in the SFMA. A reduction in the size limit may also make fishing in the SFMA area more attractive since some vessels may have chosen to fish in the NFMA to take advantage of the smaller size limit. Without detailed information on the size distribution of the commercial catch in both areas, an accurate assessment of how much economic benefit will accrue to individual vessels is not possible. In addition to this economic benefit, there would be a concurrent reduction in the enforcement burden due to this change.

6.4.1.3 Closed season or time out of the fishery

The Councils propose to eliminate the requirement for limited access monkfish vessels to take a 20-day block out of the fishery. It would not affect any similar requirement on vessels with permits in other fisheries where those requirements exist, such as the multispecies fishery (see Section 4.1.3).

Current regulations require vessels (except Category C or D scallopers) to take a 20-day block out of the monkfish fishery during the spring. This requirement corresponds with the spawning season for monkfish. The proposed action would eliminate this requirement, thereby removing any associated regulatory burden. The extent of the regulatory relief provided by the removal of the 20-day block requirement is unknown. The 20-day block out of the fishery only means that vessels cannot call in a monkfish DAS. It does not mean that vessels cannot fish, nor does it mean that limited access permit holders cannot retain monkfish. Since the 20-day block may be taken at any time during the prescribed period, vessels may choose the specific block they expect to be most advantageous. Nevertheless, removing the requirement would provide vessels with greater flexibility in choosing when to fish for monkfish and when to fish for other species.

6.4.1.4 Offshore SFMA Fishery

The Councils are proposing establishment of an annual enrollment program for vessels wanting to fish offshore in southern New England. Vessels electing to enroll would be subject to season, area, VMS, and gear restrictions, and a 1,600 lbs. trip limits with pro-rated DAS allocations (see Section 4.1.4).

The proposed offshore SFMA would permit enrolled vessels to increase in effect the amount of monkfish that could be retained per DAS. Over a fishing season the program would allow vessels to achieve higher profitability, because more monkfish could be retained using fewer overall inputs. Note that enrolled vessels would use up their DAS at a higher rate so no more fishing time would be used, but vessels would be able to use their available time more efficiently.

Participating vessels would be subject to VMS requirements, meaning vessels currently without VMS would have to bear the cost of installation. However, since participation would be voluntary, each individual would be able to weigh the benefits and costs of obtaining VMS before choosing to enroll. Given the proposed distance from shore, participation in the fishery would likely be limited to larger vessels.

6.4.1.5 Modification of permit qualification for south of 38°00’N

The Councils propose to qualify vessels for a special limited access permit if they meet the qualification criteria described in Section 4.1.5. Vessels that qualify for a permit under this proposal would operate under the same regulations applicable to other limited access vessels, except that they would be limited to fishing for monkfish (on a monkfish DAS) south of 38°20’N.

The vessel level economic impact on affected vessels is likely to be positive, due to the increased opportunity to fish for monkfish in the EEZ, but the magnitude of this impact cannot be determined. These vessels already prosecute a monkfish fishery in state waters during the same limited season when they would be able to fish in the EEZ if they qualified for a federal permit. Secondly, it is unclear if the limitations on this fishery resulting from sea turtle closures would offset any immediate benefit these vessels might realize from obtaining a federal monkfish permit.

Preliminary estimates indicate that under the proposed action 5 vessels would qualify for a limited access permit (all in Categories B and D). Depending on these vessels’ level of effort (DAS used) and catch rates, the proposed action could therefore have an impact on the trip limits for other vessels fishing in the SFMA, since the TAC would now be distributed over an increased number of vessels.

In the five years prior to implementation of the FMP in 1999, the five vessels that are expected to qualify for a permit under the proposed action, depended on monkfish for about 25 percent of their total revenues (Table 115), averaging \$77,652 in monkfish revenues per vessel out of total average vessel revenues of \$480,023. (Note, these revenue figures are for the entire period, not annualized. Some of these vessels may have continued to rely on monkfish since FMP implementation by fishing in state waters and participating in experimental fisheries in 2000 and 2001.

	Revenues Jan 1, 1995 - Nov 7, 1999			
	Monkfish	Other spp	Total	Pct Monkfish
Sum	\$465,910	\$2,414,226	\$2,880,136	
Average	\$77,652	\$402,371	\$480,023	25.2%

Table 115 Pre-FMP vessel dependence on monkfish for five qualifying vessels under the proposed action.

An analysis done by the PDT that assumed the same average DAS usage rate and average catch per DAS as the rest of the fleet, concluded that Category A and C vessels’ trip limits would need to be reduced 13.6 lbs./DAS per vessel, while B and D trip limits

would have to be reduced 10.1 lbs./DAS per vessel. If 5 new permits were issued, the trip limits would be reduced by approximately 100 lbs./DAS (tail wt.) if the trip limits were originally at 1,200 lbs./DAS (roughly the FY2003 limits), and would be reduced by proportionally smaller amounts at lower trip limits. Comments by the public and the Monkfish Committee, however, suggest that these effects are unrealistically high due to the DAS usage and catch rate assumptions. For that reason, it is not possible to estimate with any degree of confidence what the economic impact would be on the rest of the fleet from the addition of 5 new permits. It should also be noted that if more than 5 permits were added, the impact on trip limits would be proportionally higher. Likewise, fewer additional permits would result in a smaller impact on trip limits.

6.4.1.6 Modifications to the framework adjustment procedure

The Councils propose the following additions to the list of actions that can be taken under the framework abbreviated rulemaking procedure (see Section 4.1.6).

Including these items in the list of frameworkable measures under the FMP is administrative in nature, and, therefore, will not result in any economic impacts at this time. The economic impacts associated with any DAS transfer, protected species, or bycatch reduction measures considered by the Councils in the future will be fully analyzed in the associated framework action.

6.4.1.6.1 Implement transferable MF-only DAS

Under this proposal, the Councils could consider adopting either DAS leasing or DAS sale provisions in a future framework action.

6.4.1.6.2 Implement measures to minimize fishery impact on protected species

The Councils propose to include measures to protect sea turtles and other species protected under the Endangered Species Act and/or Marine Mammal Protection Act, as the need arises, in the FMP list of actions that can be taken under the framework adjustment process. The list of measures would include gear-specific seasonal/area closures or gear modification.

6.4.1.6.3 Implement requirements to use bycatch reduction devices

The Councils propose to add “bycatch reduction devices” to the list of measures that can be implemented under the framework adjustment process in the FMP.

6.4.1.7 NAFO Regulated Area exemption program

Under this proposal, a vessel issued a valid High Seas Fishing Compliance permit under 50 CFR part 300 would be exempt from monkfish permit, mesh size, effort-control, and possession limit restrictions in some situations. They would be permitted to transit the EEZ with monkfish onboard the vessel or land in U.S. ports monkfish caught while fishing in the NAFO Regulatory Area, provided the vessel complied with certain administrative and gear stowage requirements (see Section 4.1.7).

The proposed action would exempt anyone fishing in the NAFO regulatory area from EEZ regulations. Vessels would be presumed to be compliant with appropriate NAFO

regulations and would be issued a High Seas Fishing Compliance permit. This alternative would relieve participating vessels from dual compliance with both EEZ and NAFO regulations and would provide vessels with greater flexibility compared to current regulations. The economic impact of such a change cannot be estimated with precision since it is not known to what extent current regulations inhibit domestic vessels from participating in the NAFO Regulatory Area. Nevertheless, the economic impact is at least likely to be positive since vessels fishing in international waters would be relieved of the more restrictive EEZ measures.

6.4.1.8 Measures to minimize fishery impact on EFH

The Councils propose two actions specifically intended to minimize the impact of the monkfish fishery on EFH (see Section 4.1.8).

6.4.1.8.1 Southern Area trawl disc restriction

The Councils propose restricting the diameter of trawl roller gear to six inches maximum on vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS (monkfish-only or combined) in the SFMA.

This action may have some short-term negative economic effects on some of the vessels using trawl gear on a monkfish-only DAS in the SFMA. Vessels using non-conforming gear will be required to bear the cost of making the necessary change. However, this roller gear diameter is already used by most vessels in the SFMA, mitigating the potential impact. In addition, this requirement would effectively limit vessels to the locations they have already fished, and could therefore prevent exploratory fishing to find new productive areas.

6.4.1.8.2 Closure of Oceanographer and Lydonia Canyons to monkfish vessels

The Councils propose closing Oceanographer and Lydonia Canyons to vessels on a monkfish DAS to minimize the impacts of the directed monkfish fishery on deepwater corals.

The economic effect of the proposed closure was estimated by identifying all fishing activity taking place within the area using position coordinates provided in VTRs for calendar years 1999 and 2001. Since call-in records cannot be directly matched with logbooks, any trip where monkfish comprised at least 50% of the total weight of fish on board was assumed to be on a monkfish DAS. No trips were identified as having taken place within the Oceanographer and Lydonia Canyon Closure area. Therefore, based on the criteria used for the purpose of analysis, the economic effect of the proposed action would be zero.

6.4.1.9 Cooperative research programs funding

The Councils propose two alternatives for facilitating and streamlining cooperative research programs under the FMP, one based on a DAS set-aside and the other on providing a limited exemption from DAS for vessels engaged in research. Up to 500 DAS could be distributed to vessels to engage in cooperative research projects under one of the two programs outlined below (see Section 4.1.9).

Cooperative research has proven to be an important component of monitoring and assessment of the monkfish resource. By creating a DAS set-aside and DAS exemption program, the potential monkfish mortality effects of cooperative research can be accounted for upfront, streamlining the process for initiating and approving cooperative research.

6.4.1.9.1 Research DAS set-aside

A pool of 500 DAS would be set aside from the total monkfish DAS allocated to limited access vessels, excluding any carryover DAS. DAS allocations to limited access vessels would be reduced by the amount of DAS set aside (500 DAS) divided by the number of permits. NMFS will distribute DAS from the pool to vessels responding to an annual cooperative research Request for Proposals (RFP).

This program would spread the set-aside equally across all monkfish vessels but would affect vessels unequally. Vessels that use their full allocation would lose monkfish fishing opportunities. However, if these vessels were also the ones engaged in a cooperative research program, lost DAS would be recouped and total fishing time on monkfish could actually increase. Vessels that do not use their full allocation of DAS would be unaffected by this change.

6.4.1.9.2 DAS Exemption

Under this proposal, DAS set aside under the previous program, and not distributed to vessels in response to the RFP would be used to issue DAS exemptions to vessels to conduct monkfish research or surveys. The total DAS available under this program would be the remainder of the DAS pool not distributed under the annual RFP process.

This program would exempt DAS used in a cooperative research project from counting against a vessel's allocation. Since the DAS exemption program draws from the 500 DAS set-aside, vessels would not see a further reduction in their DAS allocations, but those vessels using their full allocation and not participating in either program would lose monkfish fishing opportunities. However, like the set-aside, an exemption program would make it possible for some vessels to realize an increase in monkfish fishing opportunity through participation in cooperative research projects.

6.4.1.10 Clarification of vessel baseline history

The Councils propose to eliminate the dual vessel-upgrading baseline (length, tonnage and horsepower) that applies on any vessel that was modified or replaced between the time it received its multispecies or scallop limited entry permit and its monkfish limited entry permit (see Section 4.1.10). Under this proposal, the vessel's baseline would be that which applied when the vessel received its original federal permit (in any FMP where upgrading restrictions were implemented).

Clarification of vessel baseline would have no immediate economic impact on a vessel's ability to earn fishing income in the monkfish fishery as no proposed measures are specifically tied to any physical dimension of the vessel. A change in baseline could affect the value of a vessel depending on whether the baseline is higher or lower than the

current monkfish baseline. A change in baseline may also have some implications in the event a DAS leasing program is developed. The DAS leasing program for Amendment 13 of the Multispecies plan is based on a vessel's baseline. This leasing program makes it possible for smaller vessels to obtain DAS from larger vessels but leases from smaller to larger vessels would not be allowed. Within this setting, the smaller the baseline, the larger the pool of potential trading partners. However, since the adjustment under the proposed action can only be made at the request of the vessel owner, presumably only those who would benefit would make such a request.

6.4.1.11 Economic impact of no action alternatives

The Councils propose taking no action on four measures proposed in the DSEIS. These are: the proposal to de-couple DAS usage requirements (see Section 4.2.2.1); alternatives to modify the trawl minimum mesh size (see Section 4.2.2.3); establishment of a trawl experimental fishery in the Gulf of Maine (see Section 4.2.2.12); and, alternatives to change the fishing year (see Section 4.2.2.13).

6.4.1.11.1 Impact of DAS usage no action alternative

This alternative would continue the existing effort control program in the monkfish fishery. Category C and D permits also hold either a multispecies or scallop limited access permit, and when on a monkfish DAS must also use a multispecies or scallop DAS. Each vessel must weigh the opportunity cost of using a monkfish DAS to target monkfish against the value of using a scallop or multispecies DAS to target one of those fisheries. According to the data in Table 38, Category C and D vessels used less than 50 percent of the allocated monkfish DAS, and no scallop/monkfish DAS were used. The economic impact of the no action alternative are unchanged from that of the original FMP, except that the proposed offshore fishery program may provide some economic relief for vessels that were negatively impacted by the FMP.

6.4.1.11.2 Impact of trawl minimum mesh size no action alternative

The current minimum trawl mesh size for vessels fishing on a monkfish-only or monkfish/scallop DAS is 10-inch square or 12-inch diamond codend mesh. Compared to the non-preferred alternatives, the cost to vessels would be minimized, since no new nets would have to be purchased. The smaller mesh size of the no action alternative also reduces the escapement of legal sized fish, therefore reduces the inefficiency that results from larger mesh requirements.

6.4.1.11.3 Impact of the experimental fishery no action alternative

Under current regulations, vessels may conduct monkfish research under an Experimental Fishery Permit, as long as the vessels comply with the research and exempted fishing provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The no action alternative would not modify this ability, and, therefore, does not have an economic impact.

6.4.1.11.4 Impact of fishing year no action alternative

The alternatives under consideration to change the fishing year, including the no action alternative, are administrative and do not result in any economic impact, except that by

maintaining alignment with the multispecies fishing year, the permit application burden on vessels and the government is minimized.

6.4.2 Economic Impact of non-preferred alternatives

This section describes the impacts of alternatives considered by the Councils and presented to the public in the DSEIS, but not adopted as proposed action. Since the impact of proposed measures is discussed in comparison to taking no action in the previous section, only those alternatives that contained measures other than the no action alternative are discussed in this section.

6.4.2.1 Monkfish DAS usage by limited access permit holders in scallops and multispecies fisheries

The Councils considered an alternative for modifying the requirement that Category C and D vessels (vessels with a multispecies or scallop limited access permit that qualified for a monkfish limited access permit) must use either a scallop or multispecies DAS when fishing on a monkfish DAS. Under the alternative, Category C and D vessels would have had the option to use Monkfish-only DAS or combined Monkfish/Multispecies or Scallop DAS. All monkfish limited access permit holders would initially be allocated 40 monkfish DAS but DAS could be reduced to meet rebuilding objectives.

The Councils considered two approaches (Decision 1a, Appendix I): separation of DAS by area, SFMA only (Alternative 1a), and separation of DAS by annual declaration, either area (Alternative 1b). The Councils also considered two monkfish DAS options under the proposal to separate monkfish DAS, one based on uniform (“fleet”) allocations of DAS and one based on individual vessel monkfish DAS allocations using historical vessel performance in the directed fishery (Decision 1b in Appendix I). If the Councils had decided to adopt the de-coupled DAS program, they were also considering implementing transferable DAS either as a part of the Amendment 2 rule, or deferred to a future action under the framework adjustment process (Decision 1c, Appendix I). They were considering DAS transfer programs modeled after those in Multispecies Amendment 13, by lease or sale (Decision 1d, Appendix I).

Since this measure would have only affected vessels having either groundfish or scallop DAS allocations, separation of DAS would have had no direct impact on the 55 Category A & B limited access or the 2,138 Category E open access vessels that held a monkfish permit in the 2002 fishing year, given that Fleet DAS would have remained at current levels. Since proposed individual DAS allocations are based on past performance, the impact would have been minimal even though some vessels would have seen an increase and others a decrease in allocation. Under individual DAS, the overall level of effort (cumulative of all vessels) would not have been reduced.

The economic impact of separating DAS on the 328 Category C and 334 Category D permit holders would have depended on whether the individuals held a groundfish or a scallop permit and whether they fished, or plan to fished, exclusively in one management area or both. Thus, for purpose of discussion the 662 C&D permit holders are sub-divided into four different groups; vessels that have a scallop permit; vessels that have a

groundfish permit that fish exclusively in the NFMA; vessels with a groundfish permit that fish exclusively in the SFMA; and vessels that have a groundfish permit that fish in both management areas. Note that multispecies combination permit holders (Category E) will be treated as a special case of a scallop vessel.

There were 176 scallop permit holders among the 662 C&D vessels, of which, 155 were Category C vessels. A total of 40 scallop permit holders also held a combination (Category E) multispecies permit. Under No Action a scallop vessel may choose to use a monkfish DAS but must forego the opportunity to use a scallop DAS to do so, since scallop vessels cannot direct on monkfish and scallops with a dredge or scallop net. With separation of DAS, scallop vessels could have chosen to fish a monkfish-only DAS without having to give up a scallop DAS. Given current allocations, full-time permit holders would have been able to use scallop gear for 120 DAS and then target monkfish using either large mesh trawl or gillnet gear for an additional 40 DAS. Given current resource conditions in the scallop fishery there is little economic incentive to use a monkfish-only DAS because the opportunity cost of losing a scallop DAS is too high. With separation of DAS, scallop vessels would have been able to diversify their business into a directed monkfish fishery without compromising scallop sales. Note that this does not necessarily mean that all scallop vessels would have taken advantage of the opportunity since it would have required installation of a net reel as well as the purchase of nets. In addition, vessels with little experience in a directed trawl or gillnet monkfish fishery may have been less inclined to take advantage of the separation of DAS. Note, however, scallop vessels that did decide to add directed monkfish activity to their overall business would have been competing with other limited access permit holders for a limited resource that could have resulted in a change in the distribution of monkfish revenues among vessels. If scallop vessels chose to fish with gillnets it may also have contributed to increased gear conflicts with other vessels as competition over limited bottom would have increased.

Even though separation of DAS would have offered scallop vessel owners an opportunity to expand their business, this opportunity would have been enhanced under Alternative 1B compared to Alternative 1A. Neither alternative would have had any affect on scallop activity but Alternative 1B would have made it possible for a scallop vessel to use monkfish-only DAS in either the NFMA or the SFMA, whereas, Alternative 1A would have meant that, if enrolled, the vessel could have only used a monkfish-only DAS in the SFMA.

While the general impact on scallop vessels is unambiguous, the impact of separation of DAS for limited access multispecies vessels is less clear largely because the regulations under which a vessel may participate in the monkfish fishery depend on the area fished, and absent an exempted trawl fishery in the NFMA, gear used. For this reason, multispecies vessels have been subdivided into three categories based on area fished.

Alternative 1A would have required an annual declaration to decouple DAS in the SFMA only. Such a declaration would have meant that the vessel could still declare on a trip-by-trip basis whether a monkfish-only or a combined DAS was being used, but could only

fish for monkfish in the SFMA. Vessels that did not declare for decoupled DAS would have fished for monkfish and multispecies under No Action regulations.

For vessels that fish for monkfish exclusively in the NFMA the economic effect of Alternative 1A would have been unchanged relative to the no action alternative since the trip-by-trip choices available to these vessels would have been unaltered. That is, assuming a 40 DAS monkfish allocation, a vessel with 50 groundfish DAS would still have been limited to fishing a maximum of 50 DAS for either monkfish or groundfish and would still have been able to fish up to 10 groundfish-only DAS without a monkfish trip limit. By contrast, if a vessel did declare into the SFMA it would have been possible to fish up to 50 groundfish-only and 40 monkfish-only DAS but would not have been able to use a monkfish-only or a combined DAS in the NFMA. Thus, while vessels that fish for monkfish only in the NFMA may have elected to have separation of monkfish DAS, doing so would have required a complete change in fishing location that could have required a change in homeport as well. Such a decision seems unlikely to make economic sense particularly when the majority of vessels that fish for monkfish only in the NFMA also fish for all other species exclusively in the NFMA.

Alternative 1B would have required an annual declaration to decouple DAS but would not have required an area designation. Vessels that elected to have separated DAS would still declare on a trip-by-trip basis whether they were fishing a groundfish-only, a monkfish-only or a combined DAS, but would have had to fish as Category E vessel in both management areas on a groundfish-only DAS. For vessels that fish exclusively in the NFMA this condition would have meant that the vessel would not be able to fish without a monkfish trip limit on a groundfish-only DAS. Vessels would have retained the option to fish without separated DAS, under No Action rules. Compared to the no action alternative, Alternative 1B would have provided greater flexibility to vessel owners and would have allowed them to choose whichever option would be most likely to improve economic performance.

At least until an exempted fishery has been established for a monkfish trawl fishery in the NFMA, trawl vessels that fish only in the Northern area may not be likely to declare for separated DAS since there would be nowhere to fish on a monkfish-only DAS in the North. This would have meant that potential gross revenue could have actually declined relative to No Action because the vessel would have been limited to fishing 40 combined DAS and 10 groundfish-only DAS with a 400 lb. per DAS trip limit. If the same vessel elected to fish under No Action it would be able to fish up to 50 groundfish DAS with no monkfish trip limit.

Depending on fishing patterns, gillnet vessels may have been better off with separation of DAS since an exempted fishery already exists in the NFMA. This means that gillnet vessels would have had an opportunity to increase total fishing days for monkfish and groundfish, although they may still not have elected to separate DAS if they still wanted to preserve the option to fish a groundfish-only DAS without a monkfish trip limit.

For vessels that fish exclusively in the SFMA Alternative 1A would have provided an opportunity to increase the total number of DAS that could be used in groundfish and monkfish fisheries combined. Unlike their northern counterparts, declaration into separated monkfish DAS would have been advantageous since they already fish monkfish only in the SFMA. Additionally, SFMA vessels would not have been giving up anything if they chose to fish a groundfish-only DAS since the monkfish trip limits would have been the same as No Action. The actual mix of groundfish-only, monkfish-only, or combined DAS that a vessel may have chosen cannot be predicted but Alternative 1A would have given vessel owners greater flexibility than they have now, enhancing their ability to operate a profitable business. Note that vessels that did not elect to have separated DAS would fish under No Action regulations, which would have left vessel owners no worse off than their current position.

Alternative 1B would have had the same economic impact on vessels that fish for monkfish exclusively in the SFMA. Vessels would still have been able to elect whether to have separated DAS, and would still have been able to declare into a monkfish-only, groundfish-only, or combined DAS on a trip-by-trip basis. Alternative 1B would have provided vessels with greater flexibility, however, because vessels would have been able to fish a monkfish or a combined DAS in the NFMA. Having this choice does not necessarily mean that vessels that fish only in the SFMA would actually have chosen to shift some effort to the Northern area since most of these vessels fish for all species only in the Southern area and many are based out of ports in Southern New England or the Mid-Atlantic states. Nevertheless, Alternative 1B would have provided vessels with greater flexibility and an opportunity to improve profitability compared to either No Action or Alternative 1A.

For vessels fishing in both management areas and not electing to have separated DAS, Alternative 1A would have had no economic impact relative to Alternative 2 since these vessels would have fished under No Action rules. Presumably, vessel owners that did declare into a separated DAS for the SFMA would have done so because they believed they could be more profitable. These vessel owners would have been able to continue to fish for monkfish in the SFMA but would have had to give up any directed monkfish trips that may have been taken in the NFMA and they would no longer have been able to take a groundfish-only trip in the NFMA and fish without a monkfish trip limit.

Alternative 1B would generally have had the same impact as Alternative 1A on these vessels, but would have provided vessel owners with more flexibility. Specifically, vessels owners would have been able to fish for monkfish on either a monkfish-only or a combined DAS instead of being limited to the SFMA-only for directed monkfish fishing.

Overall, separation of DAS would not have made any vessel worse off than they would be under No Action since all vessels would have had the choice to separate DAS or to fish under current regulations. In either case, vessels would have retained the ability to fish a groundfish or scallop-only DAS, a monkfish-only DAS, or a combined DAS. Therefore, the economic impact of either Alternative 1A or Alternative 1B was likely to have been positive, or at worst neutral, relative to No Action (Alternative 2).

It should be noted, however, that this analysis is based upon the assumption that overall effort level within the monkfish fishery would not have increased due to the DAS separation. If vessels that were previously not active in the monkfish fishery became so due to separated DAS, the trip limits and DAS allocated to currently active vessels would have had to be reduced proportionally to maintain the same overall level of effort that can be allowed for a given TAC. In this case, the economic opportunities of current participants in the fishery could have been reduced.

6.4.2.2 Alternatives to the 50 lbs./trip incidental catch limit

The Councils considered three alternatives for the 50 lbs./trip incidental catch limit, including the no action alternative, and adopted Alternative 2, 50 lbs./day up to 150 lbs. maximum possession. Under non-preferred Alternative 3, vessels would be allowed to retain 50 lbs./day up to 500 lbs. maximum possession up to 50 lbs.

The No Action Alternative would have maintained the current incidental catch limit of 50 lbs./trip, regardless of trip length. While all vessels would continue to face their present economic opportunities, the 112 vessels in FY2001 with at least one trip potentially constrained by the current trip limit would have been required to continue discarding any overages, thus forgoing any economic benefit afforded by the proposed action.

The non-preferred alternative did not affect the total number of potential vessels that may benefit from a trip limit change, but did increase the maximum amount of monkfish that could be retained by extending the maximum trip duration to 10 days (240 hours) over which benefits may accrue. This means that the maximum benefit for the 112 affected vessels would increase to 127,000 lbs. or \$322,000, an average benefit of \$2,900 per vessel.

6.4.2.3 Minimum trawl mesh size on directed MF DAS

The Councils presented three alternatives for minimum trawl mesh size while a vessel is on a monkfish DAS, and adopted Alternative 1, the no action alternative. Under the action alternatives, Category A and B trawl vessels on a monkfish DAS would have to use the larger mesh, as would limited access scallop vessels while on a monkfish DAS (since they are prohibited from using a dredge on a monkfish DAS). That would be 12-inch square mesh in the codend, and 12-inch diamond mesh in the belly and wings of the net under Alternative 2, and 12-inch square mesh in the codend under Alternative 3. If monkfish DAS were separated from multispecies DAS, then the selected alternative would also have applied on multispecies vessels fishing on a monkfish only DAS. When on a combined monkfish/multispecies DAS, if DAS were separated, the Councils considered requiring either multispecies regulated mesh (no action alternative), or one of the other alternatives described in this section.

For mesh sizes larger than 10 inches, the Councils proposed using the nearest metric equivalent for specification in the regulations. Large mesh sizes are manufactured in Europe under a metric system and measured between the knots, while U.S. mesh-size regulations are expressed in inches between the knots.

If any of the mesh alternatives had been adopted, at a minimum individual vessels would have been required to replace any nonconforming gear to the appropriate configuration. Since any of these alternatives would have applied only to trawl gear, the economic impact would be felt only by vessels using large mesh otter trawls. Unless, or until, a large mesh trawl exempted fishery is developed and approved in the NFMA, vessels that fish only in the NFMA would not be affected by the proposed mesh alternatives. However, vessels that fish in the SFMA with large mesh trawl gear may have been affected. Based on FY2001 VTR data the number of vessels using large mesh trawl was very low (12), and only 1 of these used large mesh of 10-inches or greater but less than 12-inches exclusively. VTR data do not provide sufficient information to evaluate net configurations (whether the mesh is diamond or square or what size mesh is in parts of the net), so there is no way to know whether other vessels using 12- inch or larger mesh are using square or diamond mesh.

6.4.2.4 Minimum fish size

The Councils considered four alternatives for minimum fish size, including the no action alternative (Alternative 1), uniform 10-inch minimum tail size (Alternative 2, Option 2), and eliminating the minimum size (Alternative 3). Alternative 4, contingent upon the adoption of a monkfish-only DAS program, would have applied a different minimum size when a vessel was on a monkfish-only DAS. None of the alternatives would change the catch targets or DAS/trip limit allocations, but would have the effect of converting some monkfish discards to landings, thereby minimizing bycatch.

The No Action Alternative 1 would have maintained the current size limits of 11-inches (tail) or 17-inches (whole) in the NFMA, and 14-inches (tail) or 21-inches (whole) in the SFMA. While all vessels would continue to have the economic opportunities presently available to them, vessels fishing in the SFMA would have continued to face reduced economic opportunities relative to those fishing in the NFMA, since they would have been required to discard fish that would have been of legal size in the NFMA.

Option 2 of Alternative 2 would have implemented a uniform size limit in both management areas but would have reduced the minimum size to 10-inches (tail) or 15-inches (whole). This change would have increased economic opportunities for all vessels fishing for monkfish but would have probably had greater beneficial impact on vessels fishing in the SFMA.

Alternative 3 would have eliminated the minimum size limit and would have provided the greatest economic opportunity for vessels participating in the monkfish fishery. Alternative 3 would not necessarily have meant that all monkfish caught would be retained since there may be a limited market for monkfish below certain sizes. Nevertheless, elimination of the size limit would have provided some incentive to develop markets for smaller monkfish.

Alternative 4 would have adopted a minimum size limit that would be 14- inches (tail) or 21- inches (whole) while vessels are fishing on a monkfish-only DAS. Vessels that

typically fish in the SFMA would not have been affected by Alternative 4 since the size limit would be the same as the current regulation allows. Vessels fishing in the NFMA on a monkfish-only DAS might have experienced losses in economic opportunity, but this loss might have been negligible since the size limit would have applied on trips that would have been required to use large mesh anyway.

6.4.2.5 Closed season or time out of the fishery

The Councils considered three alternatives for closed seasons (spawning closures, or blocks of time out of the fishery) including no action, and propose Alternative 2, eliminating the closed season requirement. Under Alternative 3, the current 20-day block requirement would be extended to 40 days, although the days could be taken in two 20-day blocks within the months specified under the current regulations. The Councils also considered, if DAS were decoupled, requiring all limited access permit vessels, including Category C and D permits with scallop limited access permits, to take the block of time out of the monkfish fishery under either Alternative 1 (no action, 20-day block) or Alternative 3 (2 20-day blocks).

Alternative 3 would have doubled the current 20-day block to 40 days where vessels may choose to take the entire 40-days consecutively or may take two 20-day blocks. This change would have meant that out of a 90-day period vessels would have needed to identify 40 days in 20-day increments to take time out of a directed monkfish fishery. This would have placed a greater burden on trip scheduling and planning since the period (March to May for Category C and D groundfish and April to June for Category A and B vessels) corresponds to a time of year where weather can be quite variable. This could have left vessels with few opportunities to actually fish if weather conditions were poor during the time a vessel had declared into the fishery. As noted in the economic impacts of the proposed action, the economic impact of blocks out of the fishery are difficult to assess since vessels may still engage in other fisheries and may retain monkfish up to bycatch limits for the specified fishery. In a relative sense, however, Alternative 3 would have been more burdensome than Alternative 1 (No Action).

The No Action Alternative 1 would have preserved the current 20-day block out of the fishery requirement for limited access permit vessels. This requirement places a greater burden on trip scheduling and planning since the period (March to May for Category C and D groundfish and April to June for Category A and B vessels) corresponds to a time of year where weather can be quite variable. This can leave vessels with few opportunities to actually fish if weather conditions are poor during the time a vessel had declared into the fishery. As was noted in the economic impacts of the proposed action, the economic impact of blocks out of the fishery are difficult to assess since vessels may still engage in other fisheries and may retain monkfish up to bycatch limits for the specified fishery. While this would have been a continuation of the status quo in the fishery, there is some positive burden associated with the requirement that would be alleviated by the proposed action.

Alternative 3 would have doubled the current 20-day block to 40 days where vessels may choose to take the entire 40-days consecutively or may take two 20-day blocks. This change would have meant that out of a 90-day period vessels would have needed to

identify 40 days in 20-day increments to take time out of a directed monkfish fishery. This would have placed an even greater burden on trip scheduling and planning due to the variability of weather during the period, and could have left vessels with even fewer opportunities to actually fish than the No Action Alternative. As was previously noted, the economic impacts of blocks out of the fishery are difficult to assess, but Alternative 3 would have been more burdensome than Alternative 1 (No Action).

If monkfish DAS had been separated, scallop vessels would have also been required to take time out of the monkfish fishery. This would represent a change from the flexibility currently available to scallop vessels, but may not have had a substantial impact. Since implementation of the Monkfish FMP, scallop vessel landings of monkfish have fallen primarily because of improvements in the scallop resource itself. The scallop fishing year begins in March, which corresponds with the beginning of the proposed spawning closure period where a 20-day block (or two 20-day blocks) out of the directed monkfish would have been required. Most scallop vessels would more likely be engaged in a directed scallop fishery than a monkfish fishery even if monkfish DAS were separated from scallop DAS. Further, prior to FMP implementation monkfish landings by scallop vessels peaked during the fall and early winter months when monkfish prices (livers in particular) were peaking, and were lowest during spring. This suggests that if scallop vessels were to take advantage of separated monkfish DAS to take a monkfish-only trip, they would most likely use those days during a season other than spring. Therefore, the requirement to take time out of a directed monkfish fishery for 20 or 40 days during March to May would not likely have had a substantial adverse impact on scallop vessels.

6.4.2.6 Offshore SFMA Fishery

The Councils are proposing establishment of an enrollment program for vessels wanting to fish offshore in southern New England, Alternative 2. Within Alternative 2, however, the Councils considered, but non-preferred options for the area covered under this program (Area Option 2), and for the applicable trip limits and associated DAS (DAS/Trip Limits Option 1).

The No Action Alternative would have continued to subject vessels fishing offshore to the same DAS, trip limits, and gear requirements applying to the same permit category inshore. As a result, the offshore fishery would continue to be unprofitable for most vessels due to the trip limits and, for some vessels, the requirement to use a multispecies or scallop DAS.

As was the case with the proposed action, the non-preferred alternative would have been subject to VMS requirements, so vessels without VMS currently installed would have to bear the cost of installation. However, since this would be a voluntary program, each vessel owner would have been able to weigh the benefits and costs of obtaining VMS. As the non-preferred area option is not significantly different from the proposed area, and given the proposed distance from shore, it is likely that participation in the fishery would be limited to larger vessels.

6.4.2.7 Modification of permit qualification for south of 38°N

The Councils took to public hearings four alternatives that would revise the limited entry qualification period for certain vessels that did not qualify for a permit under the original FMP, plus the no action alternative. The Councils are proposing Alternative 3 in this amendment. Under the no action alternative, no additional vessels would qualify for a monkfish limited entry permit, since the permit appeals period has ended. The landings qualification criterion would remain the same as in the original FMP, that is 50,000 lbs. (tail wt.) for a Category A or C permit, and 7,500 lbs. (tail wt.) for a Category B or D permit, except that landings must have occurred south of 38°N.

	Qualification period – four years prior to:	
Alternative 1	June 15, 1998	(full year)
Alternative 2	June 15, 1997	(full year)
Alternative 3	June 15, 1998	(March 15 – June 15)
Alternative 4	June 15, 1997	(March 15 – June 15)
Alternative 5 (no action)	February 27, 1995	

Table 116 Four alternative limited access permit qualification periods for vessels fishing south of 38°N, plus no action. The Councils are proposing Alternative 3.

Analysis of the NMFS weighout and NCDMF data indicate that the number of vessels/owners that would qualify for monkfish limited access permits range from three under Options 2 and 4 to seven under Option 1. No vessels in the NMFS weighout database would qualify for a permit under options that only include landings south of 38° N (Options 1-4). NMFS NERO appeals records and permit file data indicate that the 2 vessels that applied for an appeal would qualify for permits under all four options considered.

The vessel level economic impact on affected vessels is likely to be positive, due to the increased opportunity to fish for monkfish in the EEZ, but the magnitude of this impact cannot be determined. These vessels already prosecute a monkfish fishery in state waters and during the same limited season when they would be able to fish in the EEZ if they qualified for a federal permit. Secondly, it is unclear how the limitations on this fishery resulting from the sea turtle closures would offset any immediate benefit these vessel might realize by obtaining a federal monkfish permit.

Depending on the number of vessels actually qualifying for a limited access permit under this program, their DAS used, and catch rates, the four alternatives allowing for new permits could have an impact on the trip limits for other vessels fishing in the SFMA, since the TAC would now be distributed over an increased number of vessels (3-7 vessels). An analysis done by the PDT that assumed the same average DAS usage rate and average catch per DAS as the rest of the fleet, concluded that Category A and C vessels’ trip limits would need to be reduced 13.6 lbs./DAS per vessel, while B and D trip limits would have to be reduced 10.1 lbs./DAS per vessel. If 5 new permits were issued, the trip limits would be reduced by approximately 100 lbs./DAS (tail wt.) if the trip limits were originally at 1,200 lbs./DAS (roughly the FY2003 limits), and would be reduced by proportionally less amounts at lower trip limits. Comments by the public and the

Monkfish Committee, however, suggest that these effects are unrealistically high due to the DAS usage and catch rate assumptions. For that reason, it is not possible to estimate with any degree of confidence what the economic impact would be on the rest of the fleet from the addition of 3-7 new permits.

Under the No Action Alternative, no additional permits would have been issued. Consequently, there would not be a potential change to the trip limits for vessels fishing in the SFMA due to this action. Therefore, there should be no economic impacts on those vessels currently participating in the fishery. However, those vessels that would have been denied permits under the No Action Alternative would have had reduced economic opportunities.

6.4.2.8 EFH Alternative 4 Options 1 and 2 (Monkfish trawl configuration)

The Councils considered 3 alternative trawl configurations, including no action, specifically designed to minimize the impact of the monkfish fishery on EFH for other groundfish species if DAS usage requirements were separated. Under Option 2, the Councils considered six individual elements, described in Section 4.2.2.9.3, that could be taken together or separately, and sought public comment on the specific components. However, this option would only be considered if DAS were de-coupled. The intent of this alternative was to increase efficiency of bottom trawls for catching monkfish on muddy bottom and to reduce the likelihood that they will be used in hard bottom areas that provide EFH for other groundfish species. The Councils adopted Option 3, to establish a maximum disc diameter of 6-inches in the SFMA.

Option 1 of Alternative 4 was the No Action alternative, under which trawl vessels would not have been subject to any specific gear restrictions other than the minimum mesh size and gear/area-based restrictions that may apply because of other FMP regulations. Since this would not have necessitated any gear changes for vessels currently participating in the fishery, there would have been no economic effects.

Some short-term negative economic effects may have arisen from Option 2 of this alternative, depending on the specific trawl configuration selected and the management area to which the configuration requirements would have applied. Option 2 would have affected only trawl vessels electing to fish on a monkfish-only DAS and, absent an exempted fishery status in the Northern Area, would only have affected vessels fishing in the Southern area. Changing the trawl configuration would require vessels using non-conforming gear to bear the cost of making the necessary changes.

6.4.2.9 EFH Alternative 5C (up to 12 large, steep-walled canyons closures)

The Councils considered two closure options to minimize the impacts of the directed monkfish fishery on deepwater corals and adopted Alternative 5AB. Non-preferred Alternative 5C proposed to close waters above up to 12 large canyons from Norfolk Canyon to the Hague Line.

Within these areas, 30 trips that would be affected by this alternative were identified from the 1999 and 2001 VTR database. Assessment of all non-directed monkfish trips

indicates that the majority were targeting squid or whiting while most other trips were associated with a directed summer flounder fishery. Under closure option 1, 9 trawl trips would have been affected based on 1999 data and less than 3 trips would have been affected based on 2001 data. Option 2 would have affected an additional 21 gillnet trips based on 2001 data.

6.4.2.10 NFMA Monkfish trawl experimental fishery

The Councils considered a two-year monkfish trawl experimental fishery for the purpose of establishing a trawl exempted fishery in the NFMA to streamline the process of determining where, when and under what gear restrictions trawl vessels could target monkfish while on a monkfish, but not a multispecies DAS.

Participating vessels would have been able to retain both their groundfish and monkfish catch while engaged in the experiment. Should the experiment have proven successful, an exempted trawl fishery could have been established allowing a larger number of vessels increased fishing opportunities under DAS separation. Without separated DAS, there would be little economic benefit for trawl vessels to use larger mesh since they would be better off by using groundfish gear and fishing with no trip limit in the NFMA.

6.4.2.11 Change fishing year

The NEFMC considered changing the multispecies fishing year in Amendment 13 to the Multispecies FMP. The Councils (NEFMC and MAFMC) proposed changing the monkfish fishing year in this amendment to be consistent with any changes under Multispecies Amendment 13, and considered three alternatives. Under Alternatives 2, 3 and 4, the fishing year would be changed to calendar year, October – September, or July – June, respectively.

Alternative 2 would have changed the fishing year to correspond to a calendar year. Current reliance on the fall survey index makes the change to a calendar year less of an issue since adequate time is available to make the survey data available, and still have adequate time to make annual adjustments. Alternative 2 would also have aligned the monkfish fishing year with the calendar year fishing years of several other Mid-Atlantic fisheries, potentially assisting vessel owners with annual planning of fishing activities. However, Alternative 2 would have meant that the fishing year would not be aligned with either multispecies or scallop fishing years, which would make the permit renewal process cumbersome, especially since the permit renewal cycle for most fisheries (with the exception of scallops and red crab) is based on the multispecies fishing year. Additionally, whether or not DAS had been separated, the allocation, monitoring, and enforcement of DAS allocations that become renewed at different times of the year would have been complicated. Note that this complication would also extend to vessel owners, as they would also have had to make annual planning decisions based on receiving different DAS allocations at different times of the year.

Alternative 3 would have changed the monkfish fishing year to October - September. This alternative would put monkfish at odds with the permit renewal schedule for every other FMP in the Northeast region and would have increased the cost of applying for and

administering these renewals. This alternative would also have introduced some of the same complications noted above both from an administrative and a fishing vessel perspective.

Alternative 4 would have changed the monkfish fishing year to July – June. This alternative offers no clear advantage over Alternative 1, especially since the multispecies fishing year did not change under the Amendment 13 preferred alternative. Given this fact, this alternative would have introduced the same administrative complications and would have complicated vessel business planning.

6.4.2.12 DAS prorating alternatives if the fishing year is changed

Since DAS are allocated on a fishing year basis, if the Councils had decided to change the fishing year in this amendment, they would have had to adopt a procedure to allocate DAS for the partial years during the transition period. The Councils considered two alternatives are based on the prorating alternatives under consideration in Multispecies Amendment 13, adapted to the different implementation schedule of this amendment. Since the Councils took no action to change the fishing year, these administrative alternatives are irrelevant.

6.5 Social and Community Impacts

6.5.1 Introduction

This Social Impact Assessment (SIA) characterizes the magnitude and extent of the social impacts likely to result from the proposed management action as well as from other alternatives considered by the Council during the development of Amendment 2 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This SIA will identify and describe all groups of participants and the communities involved in the monkfish fishery both in this section and by reference to the Affected Human Environment section of this document. It will build on information from social impact assessments within previous monkfish actions. A social impact assessment identifies the probable positive and negative impacts from a particular action on the “quality of life” of a community. In addition to the biological and economic impact analysis, this information is provided to help fishery managers make better decisions by clarifying the social and cultural effects of the proposed action.

The mandate to consider the social impacts from proposed federal actions comes from two major laws: the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA). NEPA regulations require federal agencies to assess the proposed action’s effects on the quality of the human environment, which includes the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the economic and social aspects of the community (40 CFR 1508.14). In addition, SFA contains a National Standard that requires the Council to consider the importance of fishery resources to affected communities and provide those communities with continued access to the fishery, within the constraints of the conservation objectives and condition of the resource.

National Standard 8 of the SFA states that: