



New England Fishery Management Council

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Monkfish Specifications Expected to Rise in FY 2017-2019

Monkfish total allowable landing (TAL) limits for the 2017-2019 fishing years are on track to increase under Framework Adjustment 10 to the federal Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). So are: (1) days-at-sea allocations and trip limits for the Southern Fishery Management Area; and (2) incidental catch limits for monkfish C and D permit holders working under groundfish days-at-sea in the Northern Management Area.

The New England Fishery Management Council approved the framework today at its meeting in Newport, RI. The Mid-Atlantic Council, which jointly manages monkfish, is scheduled to take action at its Dec. 12-15 meeting in Baltimore, MD. The National Marine Fisheries Service must approve the framework before the new days-at-sea allocations and trip limits can be implemented.

The New England Council adopted the following allocations for days-at-sea:

- **Northern Fishery Management Area:** status quo, 45 monkfish days-at-sea; and
- **Southern Fishery Management Area:** 37 monkfish days, a 15% increase from 32.

Monkfish days-at-sea allocations have not been restricting fishing effort in the northern area, where the majority of fishermen catch monkfish while groundfish fishing. Therefore, the Council decided to leave monkfish days-at-sea at status quo in the north – 45 days – and instead raise the incidental landing limit for Category C and D monkfish permit holders working under a groundfish day-at-sea. The Council took this step to help northern area fishermen better utilize the available TAL. In 2015, for example, only 71% of the TAL was harvested in the north.

Northern area landing limits by permit category are shown in the table at right.

Monkfish Northern Fishery Management Area 2017-2019 Landing Limits

Permit category	Incidental	A, C	B, D
Day-at-sea (DAS) landing limit, tail weight	900 pounds for C permits and 750 pounds for D permits when fishing under a groundfish DAS in the northern area	1,250 pounds when fishing on a monkfish-only day-at-sea	600 pounds when fishing on a monkfish-only day-at-sea

Framework 10 **will not**:

- Modify the existing measure that allows unlimited monkfish landings for C and D vessels working under a monkfish *and* groundfish day; or
- Change the incidental landing limit, which allows monkfish landings of up to 25% of the total weight of fish onboard, not to exceed 300 pounds, that's currently in place for E, F, and H vessels on a groundfish day in the northern area.



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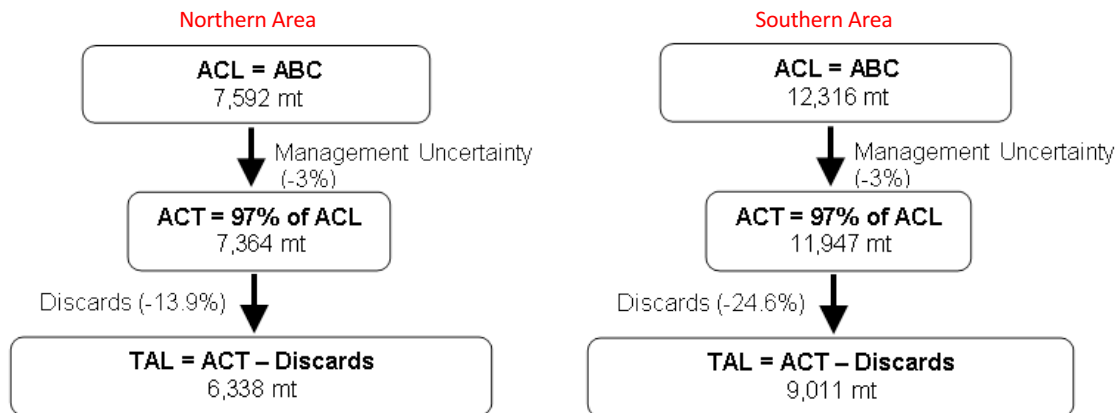
For the southern area, the Council approved a 15% increase in landing limits per day-at-sea, which are reflected in the table at right. Landings in the southern area primarily come from fishermen who directly target monkfish with gillnets. The Council determined that the increase was warranted since, for example, monkfish fishermen in 2015 only harvested 53% of the TAL specified for the southern area.

Monkfish Southern Fishery Management Area 2017-2019 Landing Limits			
Permit category	Incidental C, D, F	A, C	B, D, H
Day-at-sea landing limit, tail weight	300 pounds when using trawl gear and 50 pounds when using non-trawl gear on a groundfish day	700 pounds	575 pounds

How Total Allowable Landings Specifications are Calculated

Under the Monkfish FMP, the formula for establishing total allowable landings (TALs) is as follows:

- Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) is equal to the Annual Catch Limit (ACL).
- The ACL is reduced by a management uncertainty buffer to obtain the Annual Catch Target (ACT).
- The ACT is reduced by a discard estimate to determine the TAL.



Here are the Northern (left) and Southern (right) Fishery Management Area Flow Charts used to calculate 2017-2019 TALs for each area based on ABC recommendations from the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The SSC did not recommend a change to the ABC. However, the Council modified the management uncertainty buffer in both areas and updated the discard estimates, which led to higher TALs for both areas.

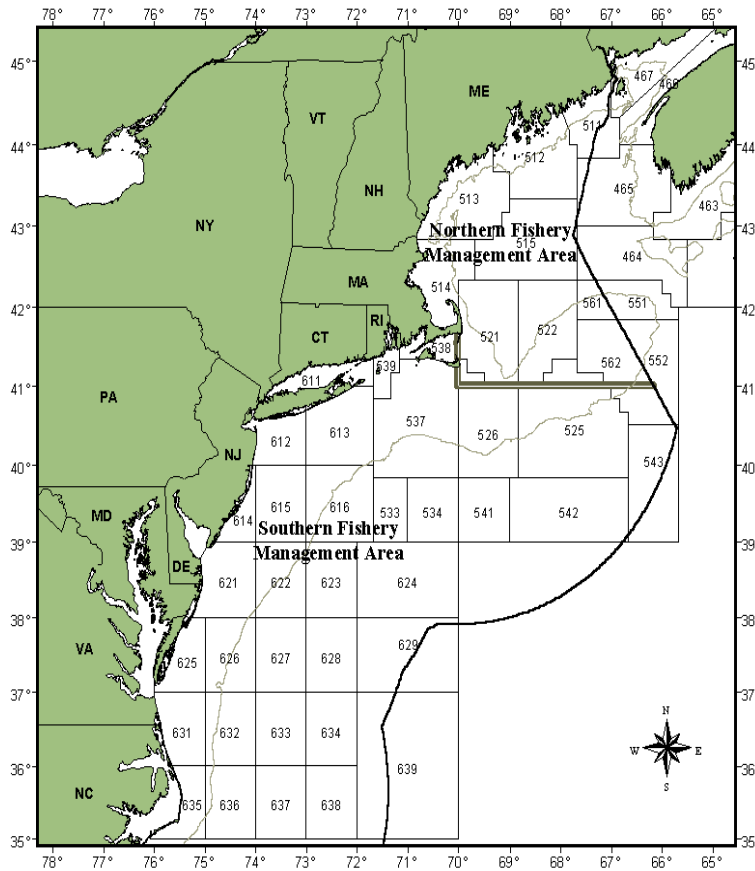
This year, the New England Council agreed to reduce the management uncertainty buffer from 13.5% in the north and 6.5% in the south to 3% in each area. The Monkfish Committee, which includes members from both the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils, expressed confidence that reducing the uncertainty buffers would not result in any increased risk of exceeding the TAL in either area given that landings in recent years have been well below allowable levels.



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The New England Council also agreed to use updated discard rates based on the recent 2016 monkfish operational assessment in the latest TAL calculations.

- North: The previous 10.9% discard rate was updated to 13.9%
- South: The previous 22.5% discard rate was updated to 24.6%



As a result of these discard rate and management uncertainty buffer changes, which funneled down from the SSC's status quo ABC recommendations, here are the resulting 2017-2019 monkfish TALs adopted by the New England Council:

- Northern Fishery Management Area TAL: 6,338 metric tons (mt)
- Southern Fishery Management Area TAL – 9,011 mt

For more information, contact Monkfish Plan Coordinator Dr. Fiona Hogan at (978) 465-0492 ext. 121, email fhogan@nefmc.org. Or visit the Council's monkfish webpage at <http://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/monkfish>.

All materials used in today's monkfish discussion can be downloaded directly from the New England Council's website at <http://www.nefmc.org/library/monkfish-committee-november-2016>.