



# Northeast (NE) Multispecies Large Mesh Fishery Exemptions

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*Unless otherwise noted, the regulations described below apply to fishing vessels issued valid Federal fishing permits or any vessel fishing in Federal waters. (See 50 CFR 648.4 for Federal fishing permit requirements.) This information sheet is only a summary of applicable fishing regulations and is not a substitute for the actual regulations, which can be found at 50 CFR part 648.*

Within this information sheet you will find information on the various large mesh exemption programs in the Northeast (NE) Region. To assist you in navigating the information, this sheet is arranged by topic, as follows:

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Please refer to the NE Multispecies and the Monkfish Fishery Information Sheets for additional information on possession limits and day-at-sea (DAS) requirements.

## **Exempted Fisheries**

Exempted fisheries allow fishing vessels to fish for specific species without being subject to certain NE multispecies regulations, including DAS, provided the bycatch of regulated species is minimal. To be approved and implemented, exemption programs must have demonstrated that incidental catch of regulated species is less than 5 percent of the total catch, by weight, and that the exemption will not jeopardize fishing mortality objectives. For directions on how to request an exempted fishery, see page 5.

**Gulf of Maine (GOM) / Georges Bank (GB)  
Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Fishery  
Exemptions**

§§ 648.80(a)(13) and 648.80(a)(14)

Area

The GOM/GB Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Exemption Area is defined by straight lines connecting the following points (Figure 1).

<u>N. Latitude</u>	<u>W. Longitude</u>
41°35'	70°00'
42°49.5'	70°00'
42°49.5'	69°40'
43°12'	69°00'
Maine Shoreline	69°00'

**GOM/GB Monkfish Gillnet Exemption**

Season

July 1–September 14

Gear

Vessels fishing under this exemption are restricted to using gillnets with a minimum mesh size of 10 inches (diamond) throughout the net.

Possession limit

No species other than monkfish and American lobster (up to 10 percent by weight of all other species on board, up to 200 lobsters).

**NOTE:** Unless fishing exclusively in state waters, to possess and land monkfish, a vessel is required to obtain a Federal monkfish permit and adhere to any applicable monkfish regulation.

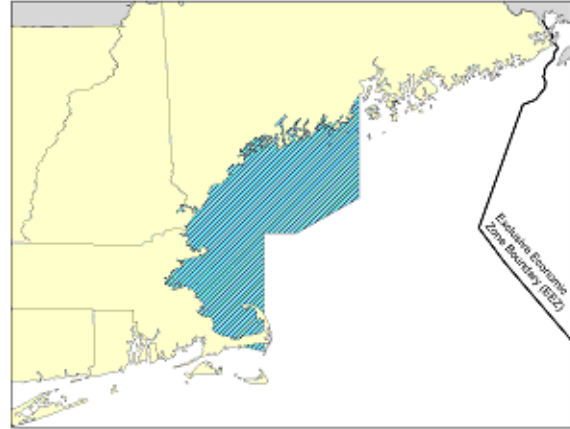


Figure 1. GOM/GB Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Exemption Area.

**GOM/GB Dogfish Gillnet Exemption**

Season

July 1–August 31

Gear

Vessels fishing under this exemption are restricted to using gillnets with a minimum mesh size of 6.5 inches (diamond) throughout the net.

Possession limit

No species other than dogfish and American lobster (up to 10 percent by weight of all other species on board, up to 200 lobsters).

**NOTE 1:** Unless fishing exclusively in state waters, to possess or land dogfish, a vessel is required to obtain a Federal dogfish permit and adhere to any applicable dogfish regulation.

**NOTE 2:** A vessel may fish in both the monkfish and dogfish exempted fisheries during the same period, but not on the same trip (i.e., the vessel may only land either dogfish and lobster bycatch, or monkfish and lobster bycatch, for each individual fishing trip).

**Southern New England (SNE) Monkfish and Skate Trawl Exemption Area**  
§ 648.80(b)(5)

Area

The SNE Monkfish and Skate Trawl Fishery Exemption Area (Figure 2) is defined as the area bounded on the north by a line extending eastward along 40° 10' N. lat., and bounded on the west by the eastern boundary of the MA Exemption Area.

Season

Year round

Gear

Vessels fishing under this exemption are restricted to a minimum mesh size of 10-inch square or 12-inch diamond mesh applied throughout the codend for at least 45 continuous meshes forward of the terminus of the net. All nets with a mesh size smaller than the minimum mesh size must be properly stowed. Since vessels are not using multispecies DAS, all nets must be stowed when transiting to and from the SNE Monkfish and Skate Trawl Exemption Area.

Possession limits

Vessels fishing in this exemption area may not fish for, possess, or land any species of fish other than:

- monkfish within applicable permit possession limits;
- incidentally caught species allowed in the SNE Regulated Mesh Area<sup>1</sup>; and
- skates, provided that
  - the vessel is called into the monkfish DAS program and complies with the skate wing possession limit restrictions;
  - or**
  - the vessel has a Letter of Authorization on board to fish for skates as bait only;
  - or**
  - the vessel possesses and/or lands whole skates or the whole weight equivalent of skate wings in an amount not to exceed

<sup>1</sup> Butterfish; dogfish (trawl only); herring; Atlantic mackerel; ocean pout; scup; shrimp; squid; summer flounder; silver hake and offshore hake; weakfish; conger eels; sea robins; *black sea bass*; *red hake*; tautog (blackfish); blowfish; cunner; John Dory; mullet; *bluefish*; *tilefish*; longhorn sculpin; fourspot flounder; alewife; hickory shad; American shad; blueback herring; sea raven; Atlantic croaker; spot; *swordfish*; and *American lobster*--up to 10 percent by weight of all other species on board up to 100 lobsters for trips of 24 hours or less or 200 lobsters for trips longer than 24 hours, whichever is less.

10 percent by weight of all other species on board, or 500 lb of skate wings (1,135 lb whole weight)<sup>2</sup>, per trip, whichever is less.

Additional information on the NE Region Commercial Skate Fishery can be found at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/sfdskate.html>.

Unless fishing exclusively in state waters, to land and possess monkfish and/or skates, vessels are required to obtain a Federal monkfish and/or skate permit and adhere to any applicable monkfish and skate regulations.

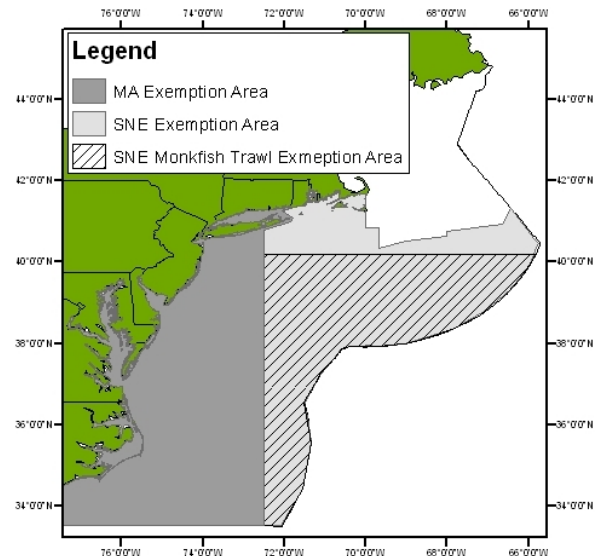


Figure 2. SNE Monkfish and Skate Trawl Exemption Area

<sup>2</sup> Or any prorated combination of skate wings and whole skates based on the conversion factor of 2.27 for wing to whole weight. For example, 100 lb of skate wings x 2.27 = 227 lb of whole skate.

**SNE Monkfish, Skate, and Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area**  
§§ 648.80(b)(6) and 648.80(b)(7)

Area

The SNE Monkfish, Skate, and Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area (Figure 3) is defined by a line running from the Massachusetts shoreline at 41°35' N. latitude along the 70°00' W. longitude south to its intersection with the outer boundary of the EEZ, southwesterly along the outer boundary of the EEZ, and bounded on the west by the eastern boundary of the MA Exemption Area.

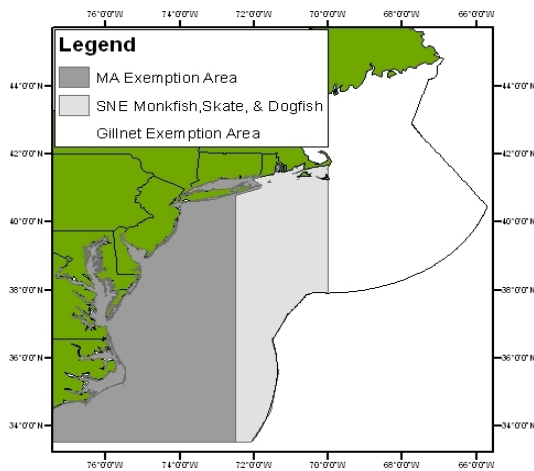


Figure 3. SNE Monkfish, Skate, and Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area

**SNE Dogfish Gillnet Exempted Fishery**

Season

May 1–October 31

Gear

Vessels fishing under this exemption are restricted to using gillnet gear only, with a minimum mesh size of 6 inches (diamond) throughout the net.

Possession limits

Vessels fishing under this exemption may not fish for, harvest, possess, or land any species of fish other than dogfish, and the current bycatch species allowed in the SNE Exemption Area.

**NOTE 1:** Unless fishing exclusively in state waters, to land and possess dogfish, vessels are required to obtain a Federal dogfish permit and adhere to any applicable dogfish regulations.

**NOTE 2:** Vessels may fish in both the monkfish and skate and dogfish exempted fisheries during

the same time period, provided that they only land dogfish and bycatch species or monkfish, skate, and bycatch species, for each fishing trip.

**SNE Monkfish and Skate Gillnet Exempted Fishery**

Season

Year round

Gear

Vessels fishing under this exemption are restricted to using only gillnet gear with a minimum mesh size of 10 inches (diamond) throughout the net.

Possession limits

Vessels fishing in this exemption area may not fish for, possess, or land any species of fish other than:

- monkfish within applicable permit possession limits;
- incidentally caught species allowed in the SNE Regulated Mesh Area<sup>3</sup>; and skates, provided that:
  - the vessel is called into the monkfish DAS program and complies with the skate wing possession limit restrictions; **or**
  - the vessel has a Letter of Authorization on board to fish for skates as bait only; **or**
  - the vessel possesses and/or lands whole skates or the whole weight equivalent of skate wings in an amount not to exceed 10 percent by weight of all other species on board, or 500 lb of skate wings (1,135 lb whole weight)<sup>4</sup>, per trip, whichever is less.

**NOTE:** Unless fishing exclusively in state waters, to land and possess monkfish and/or skates, vessels are required to obtain a Federal monkfish and/or skate permit and adhere to any applicable monkfish and skate regulations.

<sup>3</sup> Butterfish; dogfish (trawl only); herring; Atlantic mackerel; ocean pout; scup; shrimp; squid; summer flounder; silver hake and offshore hake; weakfish; conger eels; sea robins; *black sea bass*; *red hake*; tautog (blackfish); blowfish; cunner; John Dory; mullet; *bluefish*; *tilefish*; longhorn sculpin; fourspot flounder; alewife; hickory shad; American shad; blueback herring; sea raven; Atlantic croaker; spot; *swordfish*; and *American lobster*--up to 10 percent by weight of all other species on board up to 100 lobsters for trips of 24 hours or less or 200 lobsters for trips longer than 24 hours, whichever is less.

<sup>4</sup> Or any prorated combination of skate wings and whole skates based on the conversion factor of 2.27 for wing to whole weight. For example, 100 lb of skate wings x 2.27 = 227 lb of whole skate.

**Mid-Atlantic (MA) Exemption Area**  
§ 648.80(c)

Vessels fishing in the MA Exemption Area (Figure 4) are exempt from the 5-percent bycatch criteria specifications and may, therefore, fish in a fishery outside of a NE multispecies DAS, provided that the vessel does not possess or land regulated NE multispecies.



Figure 4. Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area.

**How to Request Fishery Exemptions**

An exempted fishery may be added, deleted, or modified pursuant to the procedure described below:

1. Applicants must submit a written request to the Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298. The request should describe the area in which the fishery would operate, the period in which it would operate, the gear it would use, the approximate number of vessels likely to participate, and the species it would target, retain, and land.

2. Those proposing that a fishery should be exempt should describe the fishery and present all information possible that helps determine that the fishery meets the bycatch standard. The Regional Administrator will investigate NMFS data sources, but proposals for exemptions should be complete and clear to facilitate the process. State agencies and universities, for example, may have additional data available and applicants may contact them for assistance.

3. When a request for an exempted fishery is submitted, the request and any accompanying data are reviewed by the Regional Administrator to determine whether such a fishery would meet the exemption qualifying criteria, which are described in the first paragraph of this information sheet. The Regional Administrator will also consult with the New England Fishery Management Council on any exemptions requested. This process may take several weeks to complete.