

Northeast Skate Fishery Information Sheet

Last update: May 24, 2011



GENERAL INFORMATION

This summary provides a broad overview of restrictions and requirements of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) that apply to the skate fishery; it is not a substitute for the regulations. You are strongly encouraged to read the regulations in conjunction with this information sheet to fully understand how the commercial skate fishery is managed. Skate fishery regulations may be found in the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR part 648, subpart O.

SKATE MANAGEMENT UNIT

The management unit of the Northeast (NE) skate fishery encompasses the area of the Atlantic Ocean from 35°15.3' N. lat., the approximate latitude of Cape Hatteras Light, North Carolina, northward to the U.S.-Canada border, extending eastward from shore to the outer boundary of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and northward to the U.S.-Canada border (Hague Line) (Figure 1).

COMMERCIAL FISHING PERMITS

Any vessel that fishes for, catches, possesses, transports, lands, sells, trades, or barter skates in or from the Skate Management Unit must have a valid Federal skate permit. The operator of a permitted skate vessel must have a valid operator's permit. To obtain an application for the permits, contact the NE Region Permit Operations Office at (978) 281-9370 or online at: www.nero.noaa.gov/permits/.

NORTHEAST SKATE COMPLEX

Seven species comprise the NE skate complex:

Winter skate	<i>Leucoraja ocellata</i>
Barndoor skate	<i>Dipturus laevis</i>
Thorny skate	<i>Amblyraja radiata</i>
Smooth skate	<i>Malacoraja senta</i>
Little skate	<i>Leucoraja erinacea</i>
Clearnose skate	<i>Raja eglanteria</i>
Rosette skate	<i>Leucoraja garmani</i>

Information on how to distinguish among the seven skate species in the NE skate complex can be found at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/sfdskate.html>.

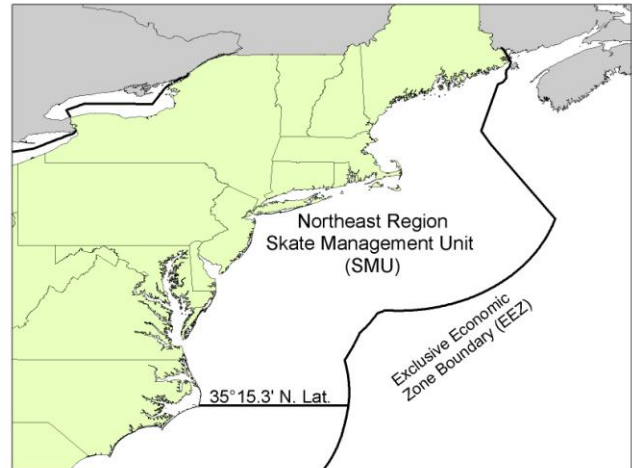


Figure 1. Skate Management Unit

PROHIBITIONS

Possession or landing of barndoor and thorny skates **is prohibited** throughout the Skate Management Unit. In addition, possession or landing of smooth skates from the Gulf of Maine Regulated Mesh Area (Figure 2) **is prohibited**. For more information on the prohibited species, see the last page of this information sheet.

SKATE TOTAL ALLOWABLE LANDINGS (TAL)

Each fishing year (May 1-April 30), the skate wing fishery is allocated 66.5 percent of the Federal TAL for skates. The skate bait fishery is allocated 33.5 percent of the Federal TAL for skates.

SKATE WING FISHERY POSSESSION LIMITS

DAS Vessels

A vessel fishing on a NE multispecies, scallop, or monkfish Day-At-Sea (DAS) may possess and land up to 2,600 lb of skate wings (5,902 lb whole weight) per trip from May 1 to August 31, and 4,100 lb of skate wings (9,307 lb whole weight) per trip from September 1 to April 30, except that a vessel fishing on a NE multispecies category B DAS (regardless of gear type) may only possess 220 lb of skate wings (500 lb whole weight) (Table 1).

Non-DAS Vessels and Sector Vessels

A vessel not fishing in any DAS program, including a NE multispecies sector vessel, may possess and land an incidental limit of 500 lb of skate wings

(1,135 lb of whole weight) per trip, as long as the vessel possesses a valid skate permit. A sector vessel that lands the higher trip limit described above must use a DAS.

Multispecies DAS Exemption Programs

Unless fishing in the Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area, a vessel fishing in a multispecies DAS exemption program that permits skate retention may possess and land skate or skate parts equal to 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board, or 500 lb of skate wings (1,135 lb whole weight), whichever is less. Additional information on the multispecies DAS exemption programs can be found at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/sfdmulti.html>.

Inseason Adjustment of Wing Possession Limit

When 85 percent of the Skate Wing TAL is landed, the Regional Administrator will reduce the skate wing possession limit to the incidental limit of 500 lb of skate wings (1,135 lb whole weight) for all vessels for the remainder of the fishing year, provided that doing so would not prevent the Skate Wing TAL from being attained.

Table 1. Skate Possession Limits During Open Fishing Seasons

		Trip Limit (lb)		
		Skate Wings	Whole Skates	Whole Skate Bait w/ LOA
NE Multispecies, Scallop, or Monkfish DAS	May 1 - Aug 31	2,600	5,902	20,000*
	Sept 1 - April 30	4,100	9,307	
NE Multispecies B DAS	May 1- April 30	220	500	500
Non-DAS	May 1 - April 30	500	1,135	1,135

*These limits also apply to vessels fishing in an approved Skate Fishery Exemption Area defined in the NE multispecies regulations at § 648.80.

SKATE WING FISHERY ALLOWABLE FORMS

Vessels may possess and land skate wings, skate carcasses, and/or whole skates. The weight of skate carcasses may not exceed 1.27 times the weight of skate wings, and vessels may not possess skate carcasses without retaining the associated wings. Any combination of landed skate products must adhere to the trip limits described above.

SKATE BAIT FISHERY

Skate Bait Fishery Letter of Authorization

A holder of a Federal skate permit may request and receive from the Regional Administrator an exemption from the skate wing possession limits described above to land whole skates for use as bait. A vessel with a valid Skate Bait Letter of Authorization (LOA) may possess and land up to 20,000 lb of skates (Table 1). The exemption is granted in an LOA and can be obtained from the Permit Operations Office at (978) 281-9370.

The exemption program requires the following of participants:

- Possession/landing of **only** whole skates less than 23 inches total length;
- compliance with the at-sea transfer provisions, if applicable (see below); and
- enrollment for at least 7 days.

The Skate Bait LOA **does not exempt the participating vessel from DAS** requirements of the NE multispecies, monkfish, or scallop fisheries. Therefore, unless a skate bait vessel is fishing in a skate exemption area or is fishing with exempted gear (as defined in the NE multispecies regulations), it must still fish on a NE multispecies, monkfish, or scallop DAS. The LOA only exempts the vessel from the skate wing possession limits described above.

Skate Bait Fishery Seasons and Possession Limits

The Skate Bait TAL is divided into three seasons to help maintain a supply of bait throughout the fishing year (Table 2).

Table 2. Skate Bait Fishery Seasons

Season		Percentage of Skate Bait TAL
1	May 1–July 31	30.8
2	August 1–October 31	37.1
3	November 1–April 30	Remainder of Skate Bait TAL

Inseason Adjustment of Bait Possession Limit

When 90 percent of the seasonal quota is landed in either Season 1 or 2, or when 90 percent of the annual Skate Bait TAL is landed, the Regional Administrator will close the directed fishery by reducing the skate bait possession limit to the whole weight equivalent of the skate wing possession limit

in effect at that time (either 5,902 lb, 9,307 lb, or 1,135 lb).

SKATE BAIT TRANSFERS AT SEA

A vessel issued a Federal skate permit may transfer at sea skates taken in or from the Skate Management Unit, provided:

- The transferring vessel has an LOA onboard (see above);
- the owner/operator complies with the requirements of the skate bait exemption program;
- the transferring vessel maintains a record of the quantity of skates transferred according to the current logbook reporting requirements;
- the transferring vessel provides the receiving vessel documentation showing the date and amount of skates transferred, regardless of monetary exchange; and
- the transferring vessel maintains onboard, for at least 1 year from the date of the transfer, a copy of the documentation.

RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The owner or operator of any vessel issued a Federal skate permit must maintain on board the vessel and submit an accurate Federal fishing vessel trip report (VTR) for all fishing trips (regardless of species retained). Skates must be identified according to the following categories: Winter skate; little skate; little/winter skate; barndoor skate; smooth skate; thorny skate; clearnose skate; rosette skate; or unclassified skate. All discards of skates must be reported according to two size classes: Large skates (greater than or equal to 23 inches total length) and small skates (less than 23 inches total length).

VTRs must be received by NMFS or postmarked within 15 days after the end of the reporting month. Instructions for completing the VTR can be found at: www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/vtr.htm

Copies of VTRs must be retained on board the vessel for 1 year after the date of the last entry on the log and otherwise retained for 3 years after the data of the last entry on the log. If no fishing activity took place during a fishing month, then a VTR must be submitted stating that no fishing trips were taken. Any change in the permit information, such as vessel name, vessel owner, address, etc., must be submitted in writing to the Regional Administrator

within 15 days of the change, or the permit is not valid.

All federally permitted seafood dealers are required to report the purchase of skates via computer, using one of the approved electronic means, unless otherwise directed by the Regional Administrator. For more information on dealer reporting, please call the dealer electronic reporting help desk at (978) 281-9212 or contact your local NMFS Field Office: www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/portoff.pdf.

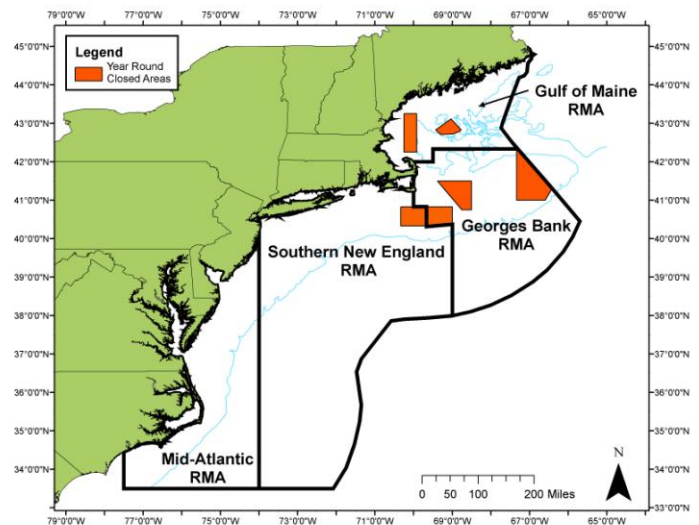


Figure 2. Northeast Region Regulated Mesh Areas (RMAs)

Prohibited Skate Species of the Northeast Region

The following species may not be possessed or landed.

BARNDOR SKATE (*Dipturus laevis*)

Prohibited throughout the NE Region

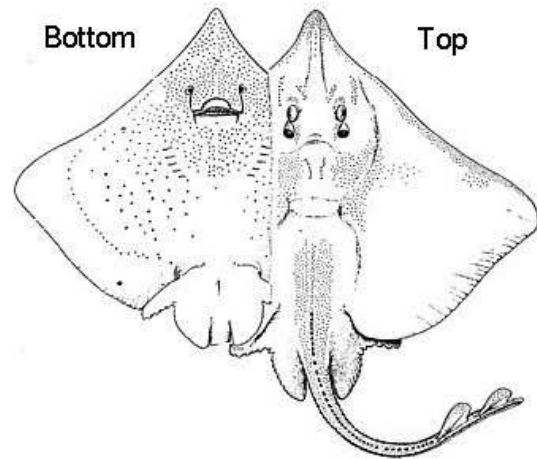
Range: Canada–North Carolina, rarely south of Hudson Canyon

Depth: 0-235 fathoms, common 25-50 fathoms on Georges Bank

Max Length: 60 in (152 cm)

Features:

- Very pointed snout
- Reddish brown on top/gray on bottom
- Small dark spots covering body
- No spines on wings



THORNY SKATE (*Amblyraja radiata*)

Prohibited throughout the NE Region

Other Names: Mud Skate, Starry Skate

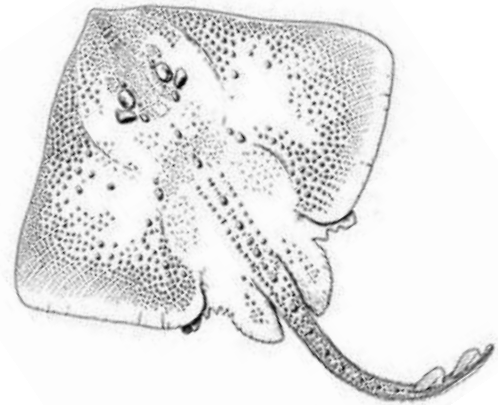
Range: Greenland–South Carolina

Depth: 10-545 fathoms, common in 50+ fathoms in the Gulf of Maine

Max Length: 41 in (104 cm)

Features:

- Large thorns along back and shoulders
- Brown/Grayish body surface
- Tail shorter than body



SMOOTH SKATE (*Malacoraja senta*)

Prohibited in the Gulf of Maine

Other Names: Prickly Skate, Smooth Tailed Skate

Range: Canada–South Carolina, rarely south of Georges Bank

Depth: 25-500 fathoms, common in 50+ fathoms in the Gulf of Maine

Max Length: 26 in (64 cm)

Features:

- Pointed snout
- No hard spines on wings
- Pale brown coloration

