

Monkfish Information Sheet



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

This summary provides a broad overview of restrictions and requirements; the regulations summarized here may be found at 50 CFR 648. Please contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315 for more information.



The Sustainable Fisheries Division provides stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management and the promotion of healthy marine ecosystems.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Commercial monkfishing is conducted from North Carolina to Maine, mostly with trawl gear in northern waters, and gillnet gear in southern waters. Because it is common for monkfish to be caught in conjunction with groundfish, a lot of the information in this sheet also relates to the Northeast (NE) multispecies (groundfish) fishery. The fishery is managed using a days-at-sea (DAS) and trip limit management system. There is no known directed recreational fishery for monkfish.

What Commercial Permits are available for monkfish? (§ 648.92)

There are eight categories of monkfish permits (A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H) in our region:

- Category A and B permits are for vessels that do not have a NE multispecies or an Atlantic sea scallop limited access permit.
- Category C and D permits are for vessels that also have either a NE multispecies or an Atlantic sea scallop limited access permit.
- Category G or H permits may only use their monkfish DAS in the portion of the Southern Fishery Management Area south of 38° 40' N latitude.
- Category F is designed for fishing only in an offshore area and during a specific season. Please see the offshore fishery section below for more details.
- Category E is the open access or incidental catch permit. This permit can be obtained by anyone with a valid vessel operator's permit.

To obtain a permit application, contact our Permit Office at: www.nero.noaa.gov/permits/ or (978) 281-9370.

What if I am also catching highly migratory species such as sharks and tuna?

If you also hold an Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Permit, the regulations at 50 CFR Part 635 will apply to your activities. Please visit the website at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/ or call (978) 281-9260 for more information.

Are there recreational requirements for monkfish? (§ 648.88, 600 Subpart P)

Not specifically. Recreational anglers need to get a general recreational fishing license either from their state or from us to fish recreationally for marine species. Please visit www.countmyfish.noaa.gov/register/home.jsp for more information, and www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/RecFishing/ for general information on all recreational fishing in our region.

What are the commercial reporting requirements? (§ 648.93)

You must keep on board the vessel and submit to us vessel trip reports (VTRs) for all fishing trips, regardless of species retained. These reports may be submitted electronically. Instructions for completing the VTR can be found at: www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/vtr.htm. VTRs must be received or postmarked within 15 days after the end of the reporting month. For vessels that also hold a NE multispecies permit, VTRs must be submitted weekly by Tuesday of the week after the fishing trip ends.

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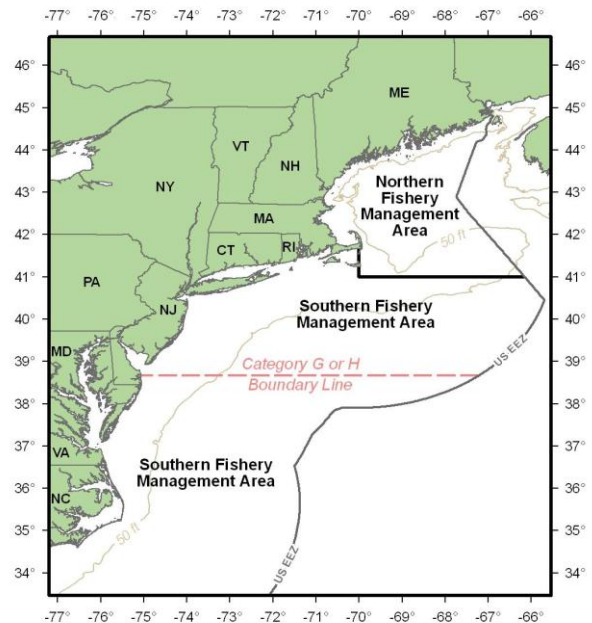


FISHING AREA INFORMATION (§§ 648.91, 648.97)

Are regulations different in different areas?

Yes. There are two management areas in the monkfish fishery: the Northern (NFMA) and Southern (SFMA) area. The boundary between the NFMA and the SFMA runs south along the 70° W longitude line from the south-facing shoreline of Cape Cod, MA, to 41° N latitude, then eastward to the U.S.-Canada maritime boundary (see map at right). For commercial vessels, these management areas have different possession limits and regulatory requirements. In addition to different possession limits per area, please see the NFMA section below for more details on requirements specific to the NFMA.

Please note that this map also depicts the Category G or H Boundary Line, north of which Category G and H permits may not fish.



What about commercial closed areas?

There are also two closed areas affecting commercial monkfish vessels. Vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS are prohibited from fishing in these areas regardless of gear used. These areas are not closed to recreational anglers or vessels with a monkfish permit that are not fishing on a monkfish DAS. Please see the DAS section below for more DAS information, and page 4 for a map of these closed areas.

A number of other NE multispecies closure areas may also apply to you, depending upon your fishing activity. A copy of the NE multispecies closed areas information sheet is available by calling us, or online at www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/regs/infodocs/MultsClosedAreas.pdf

Lydonia Canyon Closed Area		
Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
(1) LC1	40°16'	67°34'
(2) LC2	40°16'	67°42'
(3) LC3	40°20'	67°43'
(4) LC4	40°27'	67°40'
(5) LC5	40° 27'	67°38'
(6) LC1	40°16'	67°34'

Oceanographer Canyon Closed Area		
Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
(1) OC1	40°10'	68°12'
(2) OC2	40°24'	68°09'
(3) OC3	40°24'	68°08'
(4) OC4	40°10'	67°59'
(5) OC1	40°10'	68°12'

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NORTHERN FISHERY MANAGEMENT AREA INFORMATION (§§ 648.92, 648.94)

What are the different requirements for the NFMA?

Because the regulations for the SFMA are more restrictive (lower possession limits) than the NFMA, a federally permitted monkfish vessel fishing exclusively in the NFMA must obtain a monkfish exemption certificate from us. This certificate is issued for a minimum of 7 days and may be obtained by calling our Permit Office at (978) 281-9370. The vessel must also make the proper trip declaration through the interactive voice response (IVR) call-in system. If a vessel has not obtained the exemption certificate and makes a trip declaration through the IVR, it is presumed to have fished in the SFMA, and will be held to the more restrictive requirements of the SFMA.

This does not apply to vessels using a vessel monitoring system (VMS) unit. Such vessels must instead declare the area to be fished using VMS.

But what if I am fishing only in the NFMA and need to transit through the SFMA?

If you have made the required declarations into the NFMA (exemption certificate and IVR, or through VMS), you may transit the SFMA, provided you do not harvest or possess monkfish or any other fish from the SFMA, and your fishing gear is properly stowed and not available for immediate use.

What if I am fishing on a NE multispecies DAS or a sector trip and I exceed the incidental monkfish possession limit?

First, you must have declared the "monkfish option" on your VMS unit before leaving port and can only have fished in the NFMA. If so, you can then change your NE multispecies A DAS declaration to a monkfish DAS declaration during the course of a trip, but before crossing the demarcation line on your return to port. If necessary, call our Office of Law Enforcement (OLE)

VMS team at (978) 281-9149 for assistance with your VMS codes.

CATEGORY F (OFFSHORE) PERMIT INFORMATION (§ 648.95)

What is the Category F or offshore permit?

It is a permit category that gives you a higher possession limit in exchange for a reduction in DAS allocation and a requirement to fish offshore. Any category A-D permit holder can switch to this category. You can request to change to this permit category within 45 days of your permit's effective date. You must also not have used any DAS for the fishing year and you must meet the criteria below. If you meet these criteria and you would like to change categories, please contact our Permit Office at: www.nero.noaa.gov/permits/ or (978) 281-9370.

What will my monkfish DAS allocation and possession limit be if I switch to a Category F (offshore) permit?

Your possession limit will be 1,600 lb tail weight or 4,656 lb whole weight. Your DAS allocation will vary. Please call the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315 if you would like to know what your DAS allocation would be if you were to switch to a Category F (offshore) permit.

What are the requirements of the offshore fishery?

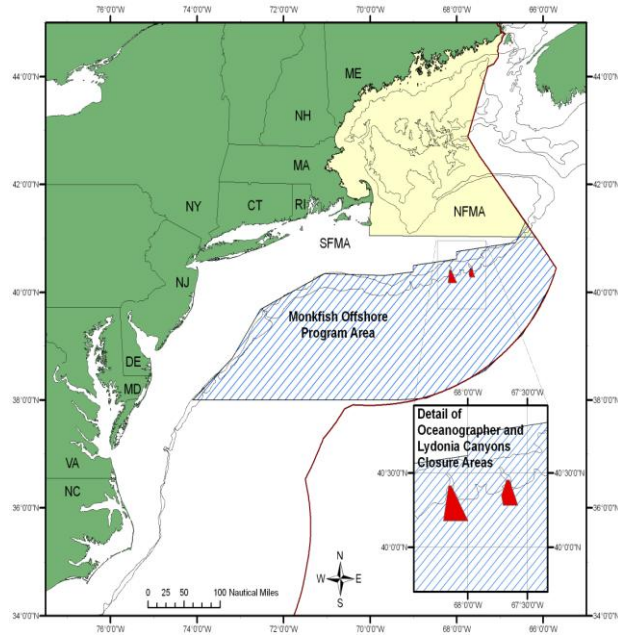
You must:

- Have an operational VMS unit;
- Properly stow gear when transiting to or from the designated area (see below for coordinates and a map);
- When not fishing on a monkfish DAS, you will be held to the incidental monkfish possession limits; and
- Only use your monkfish DAS during the offshore season from Oct. 1–Apr. 30 in the area below (see below for coordinates and a map).

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Monkfish Offshore Program Area		
Point	N Lat.	W Long.
M10	41°18.6'	66°24.8'
M11	40°55.5'	66°38.0'
M12	40°45.5'	68°00.0'
M13	40°37.0'	68°00.0'
M14	40°30.0'	69°00.0'
M15	40°22.7'	69°00.0'
M16	40°18.7'	69°40.0'
M17	40°21.0'	71°03.0'
M18	39°41.0'	72°32.0'
M19	38°47.0'	73°11.0'
M20	38°04.0'	74°06.0'



GEAR INFORMATION (§ 648.91)

Can I use dredge gear on a monkfish DAS?

No. You also cannot have a dredge onboard while on a monkfish DAS.

What are the trawl gear requirements while on a monkfish DAS?

- The minimum mesh size is 10-inch square or 12-inch diamond mesh throughout the codend for at least 45 continuous meshes forward of the terminus of the net. The minimum mesh size for the remainder of the trawl net is the regulated mesh size specified by the regulated mesh area being fished.
 - Exception:** If you have a Category C, D, or H permit and are fishing with trawl gear under both a monkfish and NE multispecies DAS you are subject to the minimum mesh size determined by the NE multispecies fishery.
- The maximum roller size in the SFMA is 6-inch diameter.

What are the gillnet requirements while fishing on a monkfish DAS?

- The minimum mesh size is 10-inch diamond mesh.
 - Exception:** If you have a Category C, D, or H permit and a NE multispecies permit, and you

switch from a NE multispecies VMS declaration to a monkfish VMS declaration by using the “monkfish option” on your VMS unit you may continue to use gillnet gear with less than 10-inch diamond mesh. However, you must go by the more restrictive mesh sizes as outlined in the NE multispecies regulations.

- If you have a Category A or B permit you may not fish with, haul, possess, or set more than 160 gillnets at any time.
- If you have a Category C, D, F, or H permit and a limited access NE multispecies permit you may not fish with, haul, possess, or set more than 150 gillnets.
 - Note:** If you are also fishing on a NE multispecies DAS you must go by the more restrictive net limits of the NE multispecies regulated mesh areas (§ 648.80).
- Gillnets must be tagged with one tag per net, and cannot be longer than 300 ft.

What about other gillnet gear requirements such as markings, pinger, and marine mammal requirements?

Gillnet and trap/pot fisheries also have Protected Resources requirements to protect marine mammals and other protected species. Please contact the Protected Resources Division at 978-281-9328 for more information.

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DAYS-AT-SEA (DAS) INFORMATION (§§ 648.82, 648.87, 648.92)

What are the DAS allocations for 2011?

39.3 DAS for limited access vessels. Of these, only 28 can be used in the SFMA. You may also carry-over up to four unused monkfish DAS from the previous year. You can use carry-over DAS in either area. However, you cannot carry over DAS that are not usable because they are tied to a NE multispecies DAS. For example, if you have 39.3 unused monkfish DAS and have a NE multispecies DAS allocation of 44.3 DAS and you leased out 10 of your NE multispecies DAS to another vessel, you would forfeit 5 of your monkfish DAS ($10 - (44.3 \text{ NE multispecies DAS} - 39.3 \text{ monkfish DAS}) = 5$). If you then fished the remainder of your NE multispecies DAS and used all of your monkfish DAS except 5, you could not carry over your 5 remaining monkfish DAS into the next fishing year.

What is the charging rate for monkfish DAS?

All monkfish DAS trips using gillnet gear under 15 hours will be rounded up to 15 hours. For example, if you take a trip using gillnet gear that lasts 10 hours, you will be charged 15 hours. Trips over 15 hours will be charged actual-time. Trips using trawl gear are charged actual-time.

What if I also have a NE multispecies DAS permit?

The monkfish DAS and NE multispecies DAS interactions are very complicated and are summarized below. Please call us if you have any questions.

- If you also hold a NE multispecies or limited access scallop permit, you must use either a NE multispecies DAS or scallop DAS whenever you use a monkfish DAS.
- If your initial allocation of NE multispecies DAS is less than your monkfish DAS allocation, you will receive an allocation of monkfish-only DAS equal to the difference. These monkfish-only DAS are treated separately and can only be used after your allocation of NE multispecies DAS has been used. Monkfish-only DAS can only be used in an exempted fishery. Please see the Large Mesh Fishery Exemptions Information Sheet for more information. A copy of this information sheet is available by calling us or online at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/sfdmulti.html>.
- If you have monkfish-only DAS, you may choose to lease in NE multispecies Category A DAS, but these leased DAS will

then be tied to the monkfish DAS and will no longer be monkfish-only DAS.

- If you lease out NE multispecies Category A DAS, you must forfeit a monkfish DAS for each NE multispecies DAS leased to another vessel, equal to the difference between the number of remaining NE multispecies DAS and the number of unused monkfish DAS.

How are my DAS affected if I have a NE multispecies permit and I am in the common pool?

Your NE multispecies DAS will be charged in 24-hour increments. So if you fish for 15 hours, you will be charged 24 hours against your NE multispecies DAS balance and 15 hours against your monkfish DAS balance. Because of this you may run out of NE multispecies DAS faster than your monkfish DAS. These monkfish DAS do not become monkfish-only DAS and are unusable. You must lease in NE multispecies DAS to use these unusable monkfish DAS.

What if I am in a NE multispecies sector?

- You are exempt from the requirement to use a NE multispecies DAS to land allocated groundfish stocks. However, you must still use a NE multispecies DAS when using a monkfish DAS. Your NE multispecies DAS will be charged actual time based on the time fishing, regardless of your monkfish DAS charge.
- Catch (landings and discards) of allocated NE multispecies stocks while on a DAS (i.e., but not in an exempted fishery) will count against your sector's ACEs. This means that your sector must have ACE available for all stocks in the area you're fishing your monkfish DAS.
- If you are fishing on a monkfish DAS (i.e., but not in an exempted fishery), you are required to participate in the at-sea monitoring program, because all catch of allocated groundfish stocks on that trip (including discards) counts against your sector's ACE.
- If you are fishing only in the NFMA, you can still change your declaration from a NE multispecies Category A DAS, or sector trip declaration that does not charge a DAS, to the corresponding monkfish DAS declaration during the course of the trip.

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POSSESSION AND SIZE LIMIT INFORMATION (§§ 648.93, 648.94)

What is the minimum fish size?

The minimum size for monkfish is 17 inches total length, or 11 inches tail length, for both commercial and recreational anglers.

How does the automatic DAS adjustment trip limit overage provision work?

A limited access monkfish vessel may land up to one additional day's worth of trip limit more than would otherwise be authorized based on the vessel's actual monkfish DAS usage for that trip. You must declare the extra fish via VMS prior to crossing the demarcation line upon returning to port, or via the IVR line 1 hour prior to landing to land the additional day's worth of monkfish. To account for the trip limit overage, your monkfish DAS charge will be rounded to the next 24-hr period plus 1 minute.

Example: If you have two monkfish trip limits worth of fish on board and you have declared into the DAS program for 15 hours you would be permitted to land two monkfish trip limits. Your DAS charge for the trip would be adjusted from 15 hours to 24 hours and 1 minute. Also, after using the DAS adjustment provision, you may go right back out, even if the additional time has not passed for which your previous trip was charged.

What are the monkfish possession limits?

Monkfish possession limits vary by permit, area, gear, as well as what type of DAS you are fishing on. The specifics of the catch limits for limited access permit holders and incidental catch limits are outlined in the tables below. When viewing the tables, please be aware of the footnotes that are outlined in 1-7 below.

Possession limits while on a monkfish DAS

Permit Category →	A or C	B or D	A, C, or G	B, D, or H	F
Area	NFMA		SFMA		Offshore Fishery Program Area
Landing Limit¹ (tail weight per DAS²)	1,250 lb (3,638 lb whole weight)	600 lb (1,746 lb whole weight)	550 lb (1,601 lb whole weight)	450 lb (1,310 lb whole weight)	1,600 lb (4,656 lb whole weight)

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Incidental Trip Limits while on a NE Multispecies DAS but not on a Monkfish DAS

Permit Category →	C, D, E, F, or, H	E or H	C, D, or F	C, D, or F
Area	NFMA	SFMA		
Gear	All gear		Non-trawl	Trawl
Landing Limit¹ (tail weight per DAS²)	Up to 25% (where all monkfish is converted to tail weight ²) of the total weight of fish on board, not to exceed 300 lb (873 lb whole weight/DAS)	50 lb (146 lb whole weight)		300 lb (873 lb whole weight)

If you are under a NE multispecies DAS, you may have additional possession restrictions based on the fishery in which you are participating (e.g., Regular B-DAS Program, Closed Area I Hook-Gear Haddock Special Access Program, or the U.S./Canada Management Areas). Please visit www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/regs/infodocs/USCABDASSAP.pdf for more information on these areas.

Incidental Trip Limits while on a Scallop DAS or in the Sea Scallop Access Area Program

	Sea Scallop Access Area DAS Program ³	Scallop DAS Program
Area	NFMA & SFMA	
Gear	All gear	
Landing Limit¹ (tail weight per DAS²)	300 lb (873 lb whole weight)	

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Incidental Monkfish Trip Limits for Vessels not under a DAS Program

DAS Program	Area	Gear	Landing Limit ¹ (per trip unless stated otherwise)
No DAS	Gulf of Maine (GOM) or Georges Bank (GB) Regulated Mesh Areas (RMAs)	Minimum mesh size or larger. See next page.	Up to 5% (where all monkfish is converted to tail weight ²) of the total weight of fish on board.
	Southern New England RMA east of the Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area boundary at 72° 30' W longitude		Up to 5% (where all monkfish is converted to tail weight ²) of the total weight of fish on board, not to exceed 50 lb (146 lb whole weight) per day ⁵ , up to 150 lb (437 lb whole weight) per trip.
	SNE RMA west of the Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area boundary or Mid-Atlantic RMA.		Up to 5% (where all monkfish is converted to tail weight ²) of the total weight of fish on board, not to exceed 450 lb (1,310 lb whole weight) per trip.
	NFMA or SFMA	Mesh smaller than minimum. See next page. Rod and reel or handlines only	50 lb (146 lb whole weight) per day ⁵ , or partial day, not to exceed 150 lb (437 lb whole weight) per trip.
No DAS and fishing under a skate bait Letter of Authorization	SNE RMA	Minimum mesh size or larger. See next page.	Up to 5% (where all monkfish is converted to tail weight ²) of the total weight of fish on board, not to exceed 50 lb (146 lb whole weight) per day ⁵ , up to 150 lb (437 lb whole weight) per trip.

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Incidental Monkfish Trip Limits for Vessels not under a DAS Program that also hold permits in other fisheries:

Additional Permit	Area	Gear	Landing Limit ¹ (per trip unless stated otherwise)
And a NE Multispecies Small Vessel Permit ⁶	NFMA or SFMA	All gear	50 lb (146 lb whole weight) per day ⁵ , or partial day, not to exceed 150 lb (437 lb whole weight) per trip.
And a surfclam or ocean quahog permit		Hydraulic clam dredge or mahogany quahog dredge	
And a sea scallop permit		Scallop dredge only (except scallop dredge exemption areas) ⁷	If in a scallop dredge exemption area, 50 lb (146 lb whole weight) per trip. Otherwise, 50 lb per day ⁵ , or partial day, not to exceed 150 lb (437 lb whole weight) per trip.

¹ Vessels may also land monkfish heads separate from tails, provided the total head weight does not exceed 1.91 times the total weight of tails onboard.

² Or any prorated combination of tail weight and whole weight is based on the conversion factor for tail weight to whole weight of 2.91 (tail weight x 2.91 = whole weight; or whole weight/2.91 = tail weight). NOTE: A vessel may possess or land monkfish livers up to 25% of the tail weight of monkfish, or up to 10% of the whole weight of monkfish, per trip. If a vessel possesses or lands both monkfish tails and whole monkfish, the vessel may land up to 10% of the whole weight of monkfish per trip using the following weight ratio: $(0.10) \times [(tail\ weight \times 2.91) + (whole\ fish \times 1)]$.

³ For vessels with limited access sea scallop permits fishing in an established Sea Scallop Access Area, the monkfish possession limit is per day fished inside the access area (as determined by VMS), not including steaming time.

⁴ A day is the 24-hour period that begins when the vessel leaves port or, if the vessel has an operational VMS, when the vessel crosses the VMS demarcation line when leaving port and ends when the vessel returns to port or, if the vessel has an operational VMS, crosses the VMS demarcation line on its return to port.

⁵ These vessels are exempt from a NE multispecies DAS provided they meet the vessel size requirements applicable to the limited access NE multispecies small vessel permit category (vessels < 30 ft in length).

⁶ In order to possess monkfish in the scallop dredge exemption areas, small dredges must be used (combined width not to exceed 10.5 ft)

⁷ Tail weight is converted to whole weight by multiplying by 2.91

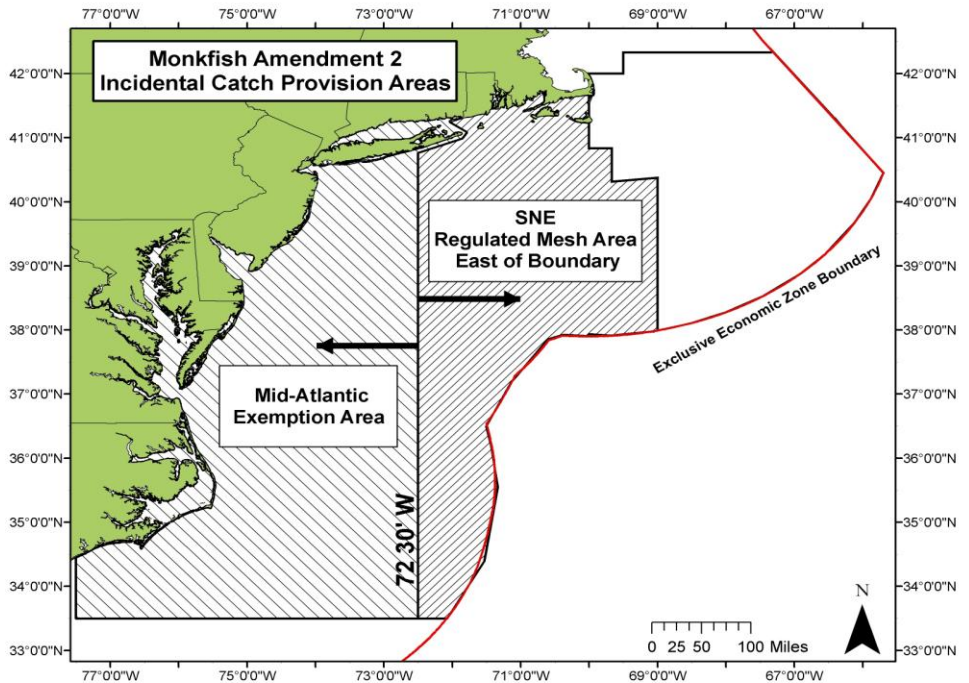
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What are the different possession limits and mesh sizes associated with the Southern New England (SNE) and Mid-Atlantic (MA) Exemption Areas?

If you are using trawl gear, you need to be aware that your monkfish incidental trip limits depend upon whether you are fishing on either the east side or the west side of the NE multispecies MA exemption areas boundary. The chart to the right depicts this area and the tables below display the different incidental trip limits.

Your monkfish incidental catch limit is based upon the mesh size of the smallest mesh you used during the trip. For example, if you are fishing for squid using a 1-7/8-inch diamond mesh and for summer flounder using a 5.5-inch diamond mesh on the same trip west of the 72° 30' W boundary line, you are subject to the more restrictive possession limit of 50 lb tail weight per day, up to 150 lb tail weight per trip.



Minimum mesh size is defined by the summer flounder regulations when fishing west of the MA Exemption Area boundary, but is defined by the NE multispecies regulations when fishing east of this boundary, in the SNE Regulated Mesh Area.

Side of MA Exemption Area boundary →	West		East	
	Smallest mesh fished during the trip	5.5-inch diamond/6-inch square, or larger, in body, extensions, and cod end	Smaller than 5.5-inch diamond/ 6-inch square in body, extensions, and cod end	Smaller than 6-inch diamond/ 6.5-inch square in the body and extensions and 6.5-inch square or diamond in the cod end
Landing Limit¹ (per trip unless stated otherwise⁷)	5% of total weight of fish aboard, up to 450 lb per trip	50 lb per day ⁴ , up to 150 lb per trip		In SNE RMA: 5% of total weight of fish aboard, not to exceed 50 lb per day ⁴ , up to 150 lb per trip.