

# Northeast Skate 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 part 648. Please contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315 for more information.*

Updated July 27, 2012

The Northeast (NE) skate complex fishery in the Northeastern U.S. includes seven skate species and operates from Maine to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina (Figure 1). Skates are mostly harvested incidentally in trawl and gillnet fisheries targeting groundfish, monkfish, and sometimes scallops. Skates are harvested for their wings for human consumption, and small skates are harvested as bait for the lobster fishery. Skates are managed by NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the New England Fishery Management Council.

### What Federal permits are available for skates?

An open access commercial skate permit is required to possess, land, or sell skates. To obtain a permit application, contact our Permits Office at [www.nero.noaa.gov/permits](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/permits) or (978) 281-9370.

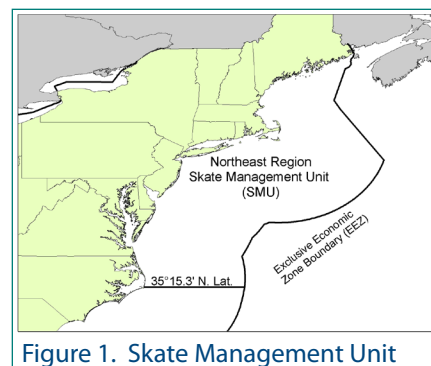


Figure 1. Skate Management Unit

### How are skate allowable landings allocated?

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

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	25,000*
	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.

### PROHIBITIONS

Possession or landing of barndoor, thorny, and smooth skates is prohibited: see pages 3 and 4 for more information.

A vessel not fishing in any DAS program, including sector vessels, 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.

### What are the skate wing fishery possession limits?

Vessels fishing on a NE multispecies “A” scallop, or monkfish day-at-sea (DAS) may possess and land:

- 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. (Table 1)

Vessels fishing on a NE multispecies category “B” DAS (regardless of gear type) may only possess 220 lb of skate wings (500 lb whole weight).

## What is the inseason adjustment of wing possession limits?

When 85 percent of the skate wing TAL is landed, the skate wing possession limit will be reduced 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.

## Which forms of skate are allowed in the skate fishery?

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.

## What are the NE multispecies DAS exemption programs in the skate fishery?

If you are fishing for skate wings, there are no DAS exemption programs and you must be fishing on a DAS in order to possess and land more than the incidental limit of 500 lb of skate wings (1,135 lb whole weight).

If you are fishing for skate bait, and possess a Skate Bait Letter of Authorization (LOA), you do not have to be on a DAS to possess more than the incidental limit of 500 lb of skate wings (1,135 lb whole weight) in the Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area as well as the skate exemption areas in Southern New England.

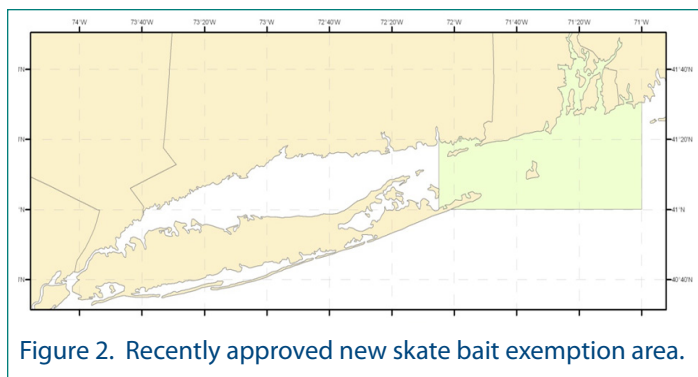


Figure 2. Recently approved new skate bait exemption area.

If you are fishing in a NE multispecies DAS exemption program that permits skate retention, without a Skate Bait LOA, you 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 NE multispecies DAS exemption programs can be found at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/sfdmulti.htm>.

## What is a Skate Bait LOA?

A Federal skate permit holder may request from NMFS 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 LOA may possess and land up to 25,000 lb of whole skates (Table 1). The LOA can be obtained from the Permits Office at (978) 281-9370.

If you have a Skate Bait LOA, you must follow these requirements:

- Possession/landing of only whole skates less than 23 inches total length;
- Compliance with the at-sea transfer provision, 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, unless fishing in a DAS exemption program as described above.

## What are the 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).

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

## What is the inseason adjustment of the 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 directed fishery will be closed 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, or 9,307 lb, or 1,135 lb).

## Can I transfer skate bait at sea?

Yes. A vessel issued a Federal skate permit may transfer skates at sea, provided:

- The transferring vessel has an LOA onboard (see above);
- The transferring vessel maintains a record of the quantity of skates transferred according to the current vessel trip report (VTR) 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.

### What are the 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 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).

For vessels not holding a limited access NE multispecies permit, VTRs must be received by NMFS or postmarked within 15 days after the end of the reporting month. For NE multispecies limited access permit holders, VTRs must be submitted weekly and received by NMFS or postmarked by midnight of the Tuesday following the reporting week. Copies of VTRs must be retained on board the vessel for 1 year after the date of the last entry on the log. If no fishing took place during a fishing month, then a VTR must be submitted stating that no fishing trips were taken. Instructions for completing the VTR can be found at: [www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/vtr.htm](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/vtr.htm).

All federally permitted seafood dealers must report the purchase of skate 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 Filed Office: [www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/portoff.pdf](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/portoff.pdf).

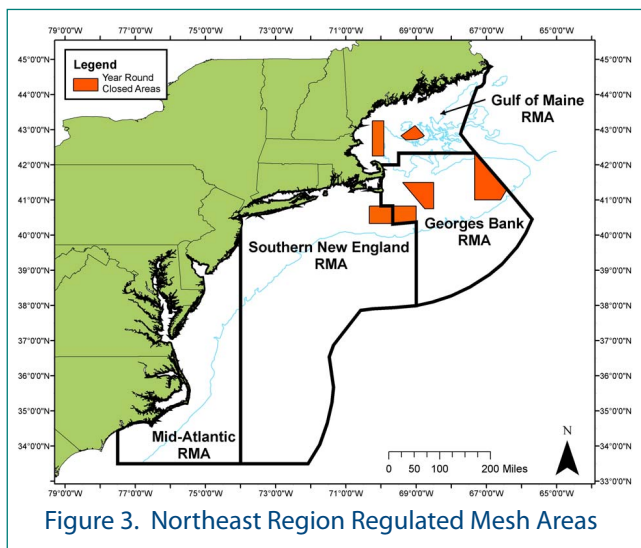


Figure 3. Northeast Region Regulated Mesh Areas

### Prohibited Species

Possession or landing of barndoor and thorny skates is prohibited throughout the Skate Management Unit (Figure 1). In addition, possession or landing of smooth skates from the Gulf of Maine Regulated Mesh Area (Figure 3) is prohibited.

#### Barndoor Skate (*Dipturus laevis*)

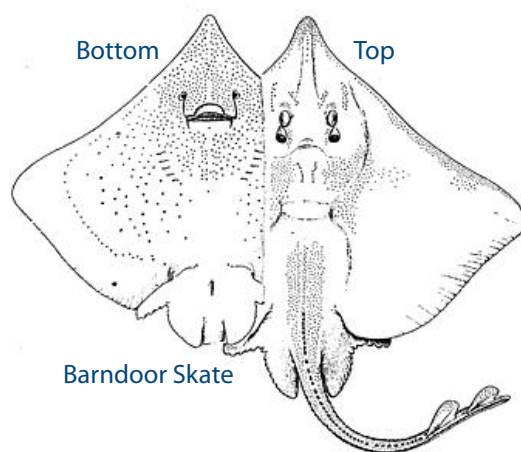
Prohibited throughout the Skate Management Unit

Range: Canada to 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; and no spines on wings



Barndoor Skate

#### Thorny Skate (*Amblyraja radiata*)

Prohibited through the Skate Mangement Unit

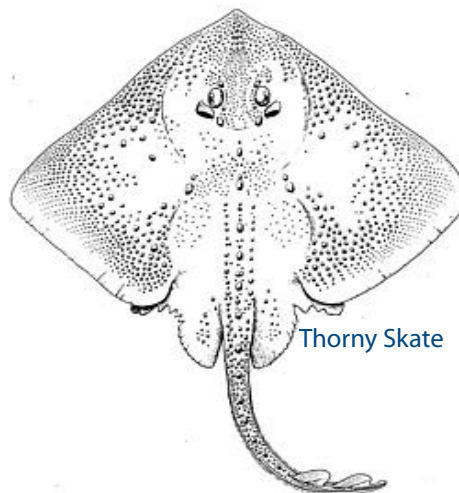
Other Names: Mud Skate, Starry Skate

Range: Greenland to 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



Thorny Skate

## Prohibited Species (Continued)

### **Smooth Skate (*Malacoraja senta*)**

Prohibited in the Gulf of Maine

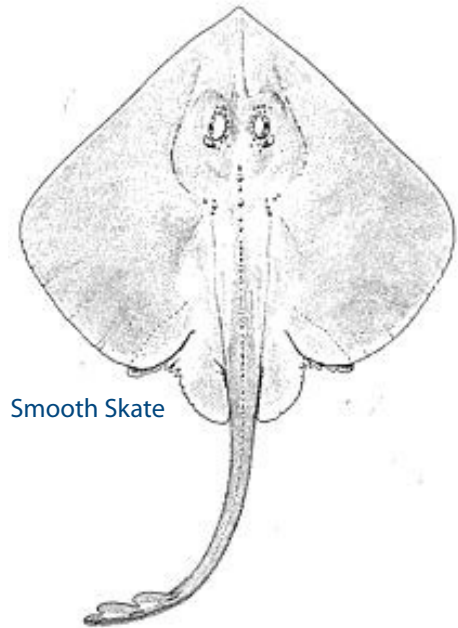
Other Names: Prickly Skate, Smooth Tailed Skate

Range: Canada to 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



Smooth Skate