



# Northeast (NE) Multispecies Large Mesh Fishery Exemptions

Last Updated: August 25, 2016

*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:

<u>Topic/Exemption Area</u>	<u>Page(s)</u>
• General information on exemption programs.....	1
• Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Monkfish Gillnet Exemption.....	2
• Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Dogfish Gillnet Exemption.....	2
• Southern New England Monkfish and Skate Trawl Exemption Area.....	3
• Southern New England Monkfish and Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area.....	4
• Southern New England Skate Bait Trawl Exempted Fishery.....	5
• Mid-Atlantic (MA) Exemption Area.....	5
• MA Monkfish/Spiny Dogfish Exempted Gillnet Fishery .....	6

Please refer to the Monkfish Fishery Information Sheet 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 minimized. 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 land and possess monkfish, vessels are required to obtain a Federal monkfish permit and adhere to any applicable monkfish regulation.

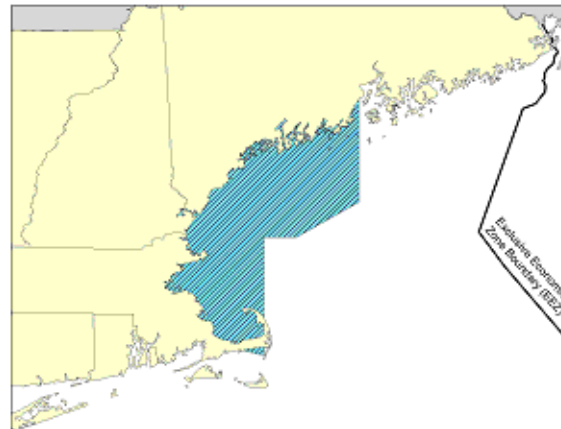


Figure 1. GOM/GB dogfish and monkfish gillnet exemption area.

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 land and possess dogfish, vessels are 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 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 Mid-Atlantic Regulated Mesh Area (Figure 2).

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 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**

<sup>1</sup> 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.

- the vessel possesses and/or lands skates or skate parts in an amount not to exceed 10 percent by weight of all other species on board.

Please see the NE Region Commercial Skate Fishery information sheet for further details on skate possession requirements.

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

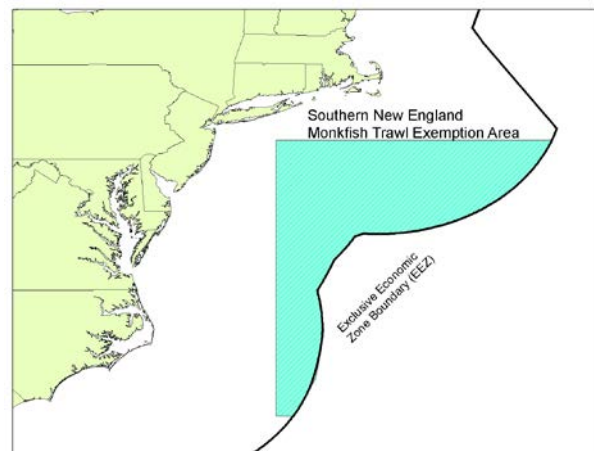


Figure 2. SNE Monkfish and Skate Trawl Exemption Area

## SNE Monkfish, Skate, and Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area

§§ 648.80(b)(6) and 648.80(b)(7)

### Area

Defined by a line running from the Massachusetts shoreline at 41°35' N. latitude and 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 western boundary of the SNE Exemption Area (Figure 3).

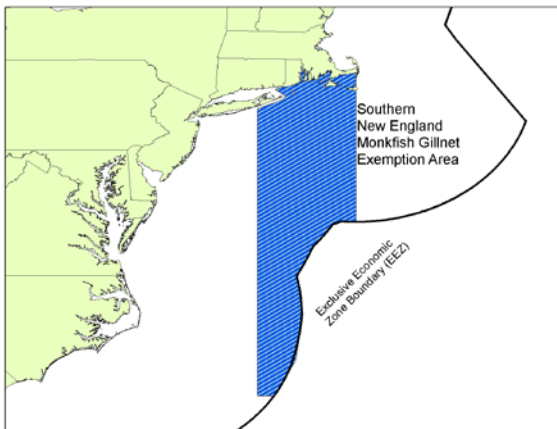


Figure 3. SNE Monkfish, Skate, and Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area

### 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 may not fish for, possess, or land any species of fish other than:

- monkfish within applicable permit possession limits;
- dogfish within applicable possession limits;
- incidentally caught species allowed in the SNE Regulated Mesh Area<sup>2</sup>; and

<sup>2</sup> Conger eels; sea robins; *black sea bass*; *red hake*; tautog (blackfish); blowfish; cunner; John

- 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 skates or skate parts in an amount not to exceed 10 percent by weight of all other species on board.

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

### 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 monkfish within applicable possession limits, and the current bycatch species allowed in the SNE Exemption Area.

**Note 1:** Unless fishing exclusively in state waters, to land and possess dogfish and monkfish, vessels are required to possess Federal dogfish and monkfish permits and adhere to any applicable dogfish and monkfish regulations.

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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.

### SNE Skate Bait Trawl Exempted Fishery

§ 648.80(b)(12)

#### Area

The SNE Skate Bait Trawl Exemption Area is defined by the straight lines connecting the following points (Figure 4).

N. Latitude	W. Longitude
Southeastern, MA	71°00'
41°00'	71°00'
41°00'	72°05'
Southern CT	72°05'

#### Season

July 1 – October 31

#### Gear

Legal Northeast multispecies trawl gear must be used (6.5-inch mesh codend or larger).

#### Possession limits

Currently, vessels fishing in the exemption area may possess and land up to 25,000 lb of skates of less than 23 inches total length. Vessels fishing in the exemption area must have a Federal skate permit and a valid Skate Bait LOA from the Regional Administrator with an exemption from the skate wing possession limits.

Groundfish may not be retained on these trips. If you would like to retain groundfish in addition to skate bait, you must declare into the groundfish fishery at the beginning of the trip.

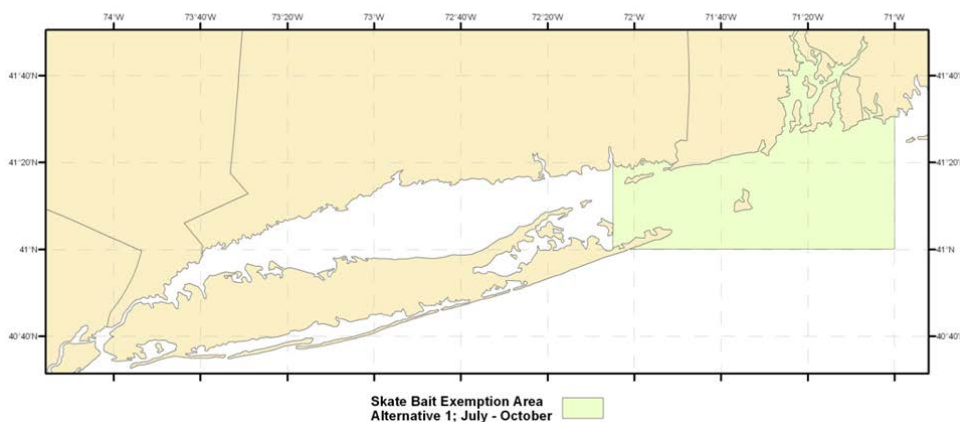


Figure 4. SNE Skate Bait Trawl Exempted Fishery

### Mid-Atlantic (MA) Exemption Area

§ 648.80(c)

Vessels fishing in the MA Exemption area (Figure 5) 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 multispecies finfish.

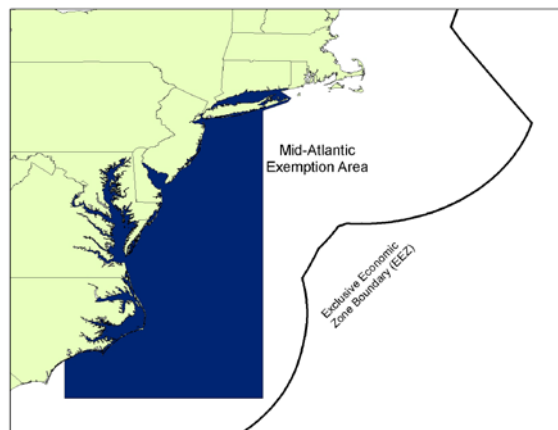


Figure 5. Mid-Atlantic exemption area.

**MA Monkfish/Spiny Dogfish Exempted  
Gillnet Fishery**  
§ 648.80(c)(5)(ii)

Area

The MA Monkfish/Spiny Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area may be used anywhere in the Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area (Figure 5).

Season

Year-round.

DAS Requirements

Vessels must be on a monkfish DAS to participate in this exempted fishery.

Gear

Vessels fishing under this exemption are restricted to using only gillnet gear with a minimum mesh size of 5 inches. In addition, vessels are limited to 50 stand-up gillnets.

Possession limits

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

- monkfish within applicable permit possession limits;
- dogfish within applicable possession limits;
- incidentally caught species allowed in the SNE Regulated Mesh Area<sup>3</sup>.

**Note 1:** Unless fishing exclusively in state waters, to land and possess dogfish and monkfish, vessels are required to possess Federal dogfish and monkfish permits and adhere to any applicable dogfish and monkfish regulations.

**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), One Blackburn 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.

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<sup>3</sup> 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.