

Request to ICES

The 2nd April, the NWWRAC asked the Commission by mail on concerns arising from the Focus Group meeting on Skates, Rays and Sharks. This meeting was held in Paris on the 29 February 2012 – report is available on the NWWRAC website:

http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/MINUTES_NWWRAC_FOCUS_GROUP_SKATES_RAYS_SHARKS_PARIS_290212_EN.pdf

Dipturus batis, the common skate, is now considered to consist of two species. *Dipturus cf. flossada* and *Dipturus cf. intermedia* are considered to form part of the *Dipturus complex*. According to its depleted situation (stock described in scientific papers as the first clear case of a fish species brought to the brink of extinction by commercial fishing), there is an existing management scheme as for *Dipturus batis*, mainly a ban on landing. It is worth to know whether there are different abundances/distributions of the two species concerned.

A special request is addressed to ICES for advice on an individual species basis for the two components of the common skate. Clarification on identification aspects of the two species of common skate in the advice is also needed.

ICES is requested to answer the following questions:

1. Are the spatial distributions of these species different? Particularly important is to determine whether the distribution of this two species overlaps.
2. What is the status of these stocks and the catch advice in all relevant ecoregions (special interest in the ICES areas IIa, VI, VII and IV)?
3. On a practical basis, is there any relatively straightforward way to distinguish this two species on vessel's deck by the crew?