



## New England Fishery Management Council

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E.F. "Terry" Stockwell III, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

# DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

## Groundfish Advisory Panel Sheraton Colonial Hotel, Wakefield, MA April 1, 2014

The Groundfish Advisory Panel (GAP) met on April 1, 2014 in Wakefield, MA to: 1) continue development of Amendment 18 (A18) and, 2) to discuss Framework Adjustment 52 (FW52) that would revise commercial groundfish accountability measures (AMs) for Southern and Northern windowpane flounder stocks.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** Bill Gerencer (Chairman), Ms. Jackie Odell (Vice Chair), Mr. Carl Bouchard, Mr. Chris Brown, Mr. Richard Canastra, Mr. Jim Odlin, Mr. Paul Parker, Mr. Ted Platz, Ms. Maggie Raymond, Mr. Michael Russo, Mr. Geoff Smith, and Mr. Hank Soule, Dr. Jamie Cournane, Ms. Rachel Feeney, Dr. Fiona Hogan, Capt. Rachel Neild (NEFMC staff); Ms. Sarah Heil, Mr. Michael Ruccio, Dr. William Whitmore (NMFS GARFO staff), Dr. Paul Rago (NEFSC staff). In addition, approximately 5 members of the public attended.

**DOCUMENTATION:** Discussions were aided by: PDT memo regarding Amendment 18 dated March 21, 2014, PDT memo regarding Amendment 18 – accumulation limits dated March 25, 2014, Amendment 18 Discussion Document dated March 25, 2014, PDT memo regarding FW52 dated March 24, 2014, GAP meeting summary dated October 4, 2012, GAP meeting summary dated March 6, 2013, GAP meeting summary dated June 10, 2013, GAP meeting summary of September 16, 2013, Groundfish OSC meeting summary dated January 23, 2014, and Groundfish OSC meeting motions dated March 28, 2014.

### **KEY OUTCOMES:**

- The GAP recommended an in-season adjustment to address windowpane flounder AMs and the initiation of another framework to establish sub-ACLs for fisheries in the other sub-components.
- The GAP does not recommend US/CA trading at this time but if pursued supports the Committee preferred alternative.
- The GAP does not recommend set asides for new entrants or permit banks at this time or the creation of inshore/offshore areas.
- The GAP recommends that individuals and permit banks should be subjected to the same accumulation limit, if any.
- The GAP made a series of recommendations to the Research Steering Committee.

**AGENDA ITEM #1: FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 52 – WINDOWPANE FLOUNDER ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES**

***PRESENTATION: DEVELOPMENT OF FRAMEWORK 52 TO THE MULTISPECIES FMP***

Staff provided an overview of the projected timeline for the development of Framework 52 (FW52), which would have the Council taking final action in June 2014. The purpose of FW52 is to revise Accountability Measures (AMs) for the commercial groundfish fishery for northern and southern windowpane flounder stocks. Due to overages for both stocks in FY2012, the AMs will be implemented in FY2014. Based on preliminary FY2013 data, an overage for northern windowpane flounder has occurred. At the February 2014 Council meeting, the Council requested that any revision to the current AMs be applied to FY 2014, retroactively, or any overages that occurred prior to FY2014 and initiated FW52. The two stocks have differing statuses; northern windowpane flounder is overfished and overfishing is occurring while southern windowpane flounder is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. On a recent PDT conference call, the PDT did not have any major concerns regarding the discard methodology but plans to further examine FY2013 trips with high discards. The PDT does not conduct stock assessments but did look at updated survey indices, which suggest increases in stock sizes. Potential alternatives discussed included revising the AM triggers based on stock status, using survey information and utilizing catch performance. Staff requested guidance from the GAP regarding potential alternatives.

**Discussion on the Presentation:**

The GAP thought all participants in fisheries that catch windowpane flounder should be held accountable for their respective catch, not just the Groundfish fishery. Staff noted that if the Committee decided to create a sub-ACL for other fisheries that would extend the timeline for FW52. To accommodate that, a GAP member proposed a two prong approach: FW52 could make changes in season while sub-ACLs could be addressed in the next available action. To date, there has been no official response from the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council but they are represented on the Groundfish Committee. If a sub-ACL was established for scallops, it would be established in the next available Groundfish action and the associated AM would be developed in the next available scallop action.

The PDT discussed recent high discards on a small number of trips but based on analysis decided to keep these outliers in the dataset. A GAP member was concerned that on those few trips the discards appeared to be especially high and associated with a single vessel. The PDT did hear from industry regarding their proposal to allow sectors to manage that sub-ACL themselves. One GAP member thought that proposal would work well enough that an AM may not be triggered again. There are difficulties associated with allocating windowpane flounders to sectors. There is no current appropriate methodology to allocate windowpane to sectors; the allocation methodology for groundfish stocks is not appropriate for windowpane. Staff proposed using co-catch as a proxy for windowpane catch history but this would have to be analyzed by the PDT.

There was strong concern regarding the economic loss the fishery was facing because of the AM. It was estimated by a GAP member that New Bedford would lose \$10 million because of the inability to catch winter flounder in the AM areas with the approved modified gears. A full economic analysis that looks at all ports would be conducted as part of the impacts analysis in the FW52 document.