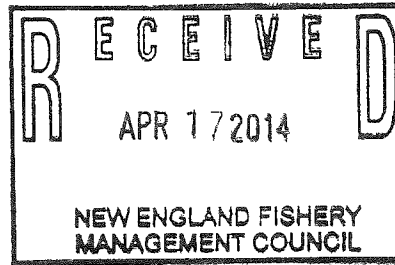


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# Additional Correspondence



91 FAIRVIEW AVE  
 PORSTMOUTH NH 03801

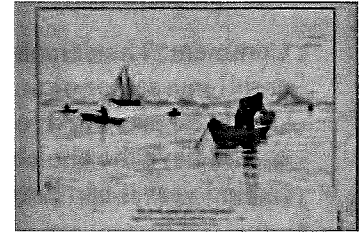


**NORTHEAST HOOK  
 FISHERMAN'S ASSOCIATION**

April 16, 2014

New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116  
 Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*



Dear NEFMC:

We represent a small group of Commercial Fishermen with the Limited Access Handgear HA Permits, employing the use rod and reel, handlines or tub trawls to catch Cod, Haddock and Pollock along with small quantities of other regulated and non-regulated marine fish. Historically and currently our fishermen account for a small percentage of the groundfish landed in New England. However, the monetary gains obtained by the participants in this fishery are very important to us.

We are very concerned that the NEFMC thru the Groundfish Committee is not fulfilling one of the goals of Amendment 18 that states:

- Promote a diverse groundfish fishery, including different gear types, vessel sizes, ownership patterns, geographic locations, and levels of participation through sectors and permit banks;**

The handgear fishery is 400 years old in New England and is now at the cusp of extension. We fish inshore waters and have had no capacity due to our traditional fishing methods, restrictive trip limits and management actions to accumulate large amount of history. The small boat fishery, in the 30' or less vessel size, has seen the most significant drop in participation in the commercial fishery.

The NEHFA has spent a considerable amount of time trying to preserve this fishery with real measures that will protect the history of handgear landings into the future. Without the history of handgear landings preserved for the future this fishery will be lost and the NMFS/NEFMC will have not fulfilled a goal of A18 to "Promote a diverse groundfish fishery, including different gear types, vessel sizes...".

**The handgear fishery is like the right whales where we are both now endangered species. If real measures are not placed in A18 the handgear fishery will be extinct and the NEFMC/NMFS will have failed to protect a 400 year old fishery.**

In the interest of fairness and to protect this historical fishery we are asking that the NEFMC continue to move all the provisions made at the last council meeting forward for public comment. The PDT has developed further sub-options that we are addressing below:

*If you are a holder of a groundfish HA permit and wish to join the NEHFA, please contact the NEHFA at the address above.*

*cc: Council, CS(4/16)*

### **Quota allocation system**

**Sub-Option B.** Voluntary. Holders of HA permits may elect to enroll in the HA fishery, the common pool, or a sector. The PSC from HA permits would contribute to whichever sub-ACL their permit is enrolled in.

Comment: The default should be the HA fishery unless the fisherman specifically requests to enroll in a sector or the common pool. At the time of permit renewal the basic regulations should be presented for a HA fisherman to make an informed decision. The HA fisherman should have the choice to opt-out of one choice or the other some point after the start of the fishing year if trip limits are projected to be too low to meet their individual needs.

**We recommend this option is adopted as modified by the comment.**

### **Discards**

**Sub-Option D.** Assume all discards from trips fishing within the HA fishery to be *de minimis*, and not account for them under any sub-ACL. This sub-option would require the *de minimis* discards to be explicitly considered within the management uncertainty of the fishery.

Comment: This is a very selective fishery and the few fish that we do not keep represent a truly *de minimis* quantity of fish. If this option is selected the NMFS can inform the council if discards become a deciding factor contributing to rebuilding plans. We suspect this will never happen considering the gear and quantity of discards of this fishery.

**We support Sub-Option D.**

### **Proactive accountability measures**

**Sub-Option A.** When 100% of the HA sub-ACL is reached for a stock, the HA fishery for that stock would close and all vessels fishing under the HA fishery would be subject to a zero possession limit for that stock for the remainder of the fishing year.

**We support Sub-Option A.**

**Sub-Option C.** When 100% of the HA sub-ACL is reached for a stock, the stock area would close for all HA fishery participants.

Comment: **We very strongly reject this option.** We are able to selectively target the three primary species (cod, haddock or Pollock). We are using the same gear as Recreational fishermen and they are not closed out to all fishing once their quota is reached or exceeded. Any *de minimis* overages would be subtracted the following year. The overall ACL for the ground fishery would not be jeopardized at all by a *de minimis* overage of the allocated sub-ACL stocks to the HA fishermen.

### **Reactive AM timing**

**Sub-Option B.** Reactive AMs would be triggered if the HA fishery sub-ACL and the total ACL are exceeded.

**We support Sub-Option B.**

### ***Managing small ACLs***

We propose 24-72 hrs after a HA trip the fishermen would send an email to the NMFS to report their estimated catch. The email would simply state the following info:

Name Vessel  
Date of trip  
Owners Name  
Permit #  
lbs Cod landed  
lbs Haddock landed  
lbs Pollock landed

This would be sufficient for the NMFS to easily deduct the catch from a simple spreadsheet to get an idea how the fishery proceeding. NMFS should understand from history of this fishery the catch rates are slow and due to this in season monitoring is very easily done with di minimis NMFS resources. The time required for a fishermen to fill out a VTR is much more than for the NMFS to deduct quantities of 3 species off an excel spreadsheet. The PDT states that “given staff constraints and commitments to data systems that were made to support the catch share management program” as a reason that may prevent adequate monitoring. **The NMFS should be committed to doing what is necessary to maintain this fishery as they have done for other substance or small scale fisheries around the country.**

Respectfully,

Marc Stettner /s/

NEHFA MEMBERS: Marc Stettner, Timothy Rider, AJ Orlando, Hilary Dombrowski, Paul Hoffman, Christopher DiPilato, Ed Snell, Scott Rice, Roger Bryson, Brian McDevitt, Anthony Gross, Doug Amorello

