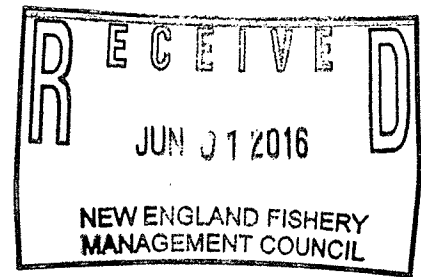


CORRESPONDENCE

Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2016 5:06 AM
To: Pat Fiorelli
Cc: John Bullard
Subject: Lisa ann

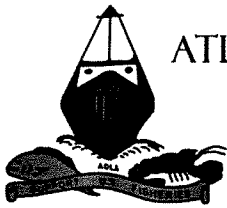


Council, Noaa,

We are running into a issue with Plaice

(Dabs). Our buyers Wholefoods and Legal Seafood do not want small dabs along with most buyers they try to move them to. We had a bunch of dabs the other day go for 10 cents. The processors cannot put 12 inch dabs through a skinning machine, it takes the whole fillet through. I think we need to revisit such a small size on dabs. I understand that we are trying to eliminate discard but it's all ready going on. When lease price is 1.50 on dabs and you can't make that catching them you'll see mediums and large on the auctions. I think you see that already by what is landed just like you don't see a lot of scrod cod just market and large. When you try to use landings for science it doesn't work. I just hope this is something to consider looking at. The same is true on 12 in yellows.

Thanks,
Jim Ford
F/V Lisa Ann III

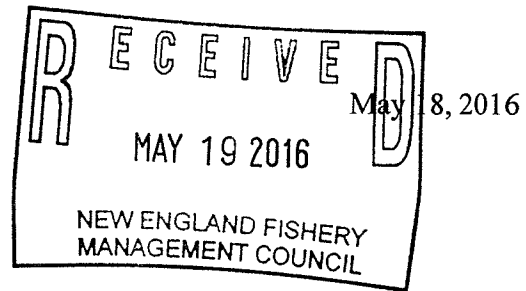


ATLANTIC OFFSHORE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Grant Moore, President
exec@offshorelobster.org

David Borden, Executive Director
dborden@offshorelobster.org

23 Nelson St Dover, NH 03820 | P: 603-828-9342 | www.offshorelobster.org | heidi@offshorelobster.org



President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write to oppose the designation of a marine monument in the Atlantic Ocean canyon and seamount area in depths less than 900 meters. There are no immediate nor documented threats to these areas that would warrant the use of the unilateral Presidential authority encompassed in the Antiquities Act. This Congressional Act was authored in 1906, long before the movement to promote open government. I urge you to not supersede the transparent, public processes currently underway in New England to protect Atlantic Ocean habitat and coral.

Despite the claims of proponents, there are no imminent threats to the habitat and coral in these areas that require expedient action by your Administration. There are no active proposals for oil, gas, or mineral exploration, nor could there be such activity without years of environmental impact assessment and permitting review. Further, multiple fisheries, some Marine Stewardship Council certified, have worked in these canyon areas for decades with such little habitat impact that monument proponents themselves call these areas "pristine" despite 40 years of fishing activity. Importantly, most Atlantic corals are in waters deeper than the areas fished (NOAA's Deep-Sea Coral Database) and there are no plans or technologies available which would allow these fisheries to shift to deeper waters.

Therefore, I urge you to allow the open, transparent, public processes that now govern ocean planning and habitat protection in the region to continue without threat of unilateral Presidential action. There are a number of federal laws, federal advisory committees, and Executive Orders involved in this issue, and all require transparency in the rule making process. These include: deep-sea coral protections being developed by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); and the forthcoming northeast regional ocean plan, an outcome of the National Ocean Policy established by your Executive Order in 2010. Unlike the Antiquities Act, these directives offer the public an opportunity for meaningful input, require cost benefit analyses, and allow stakeholders opportunities to offer strategies to mitigate

negative impacts. In addition, the above align with the ocean policies set out by your Administration, specifically Executive Order 13563 which states:

"Sec. 2. Public Participation. [...] Regulations shall be adopted through a process that involves public participation. To that end, regulations shall be based, to the extent feasible and consistent with law, on the open exchange of information and perspectives among State, local, and tribal officials, experts in relevant disciplines, affected stakeholders in the private sector, and the public as a whole."

As noted in the attached May 4, 2016 letter from Kelley Drye & Warren, Counsel for Fisheries Survival Fund, the Antiquities Act does not require public hearings or public input, and is the antithesis of the goals and objectives you sought by signing Executive Order 13563 "Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review". I very much applaud your efforts to promote transparency in the governmental regulatory process. Notwithstanding your prior efforts, open government is not merely a short term political convenience, and should be a corner stone of every Administration. Either you believe in open government or not, and conduct yourself accordingly.

I therefore urge you to endorse and implement a transparent public process on this issue and direct the White House's Council for Environmental Quality to do likewise. To date they have not provided any specifics describing what they intend to advocate on this issue, which makes it virtually impossible to offer comments, suggestions, or gauge impacts.

Should you decide to unilaterally move forward on this issue, I urge you to implement the position put forward by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. That alternative is reasonable, will protect the environment, protect a majority of the deep water corals, and allow for continuation of historic fishing practices in the offshore areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment; I am happy to discuss the specifics and any questions with your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grant Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G".

Grant Moore
President, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Assn.

CC:

Christy Goldfuss, White House CEQ
Whitley Saumweber, White House CEQ
Senator Susan Collins
Senator Angus King
Congresswoman Chellie Pingree
Congressman Bruce Poliquin
Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Kelly Ayotte
Congressman Frank Guinta
Senator Elizabeth Warren
Senator Ed Markey
Congressman Bill Keating
Congressman Seth Moulton
Senator Jack Reed
Congressman Stephen Lynch
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Congressman David Cicilline
Congressman James Langevin
Senator Robert Menendez
Senator Cory Booker
Congressman Frank LoBiondo
John Bullard, NOAA NMFS GARFO
Robert Beal, ASMFC
Thomas Nies, NEFMC
Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association
Maine Lobstermen's Association
Rhode Island Lobstermen's Association
Boston Globe
Commercial Fisheries New
New Bedford Standard Times
Saving Seafood

KELLEY DRYE & WARREN LLP

A LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP

WASHINGTON HARBOUR, SUITE 400

3050 K STREET, NW

WASHINGTON, DC 20007

NEW YORK, NY
LOS ANGELES, CA
CHICAGO, IL
STAMFORD, CT
PARSIPPANY, NJ

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

AFFILIATE OFFICE
MUMBAI, INDIA

(202) 342-8400

FACSIMILE
(202) 342-8451
www.kelleydrye.com

DAVID E. FRULLA
DIRECT LINE: (202) 342-8648
EMAIL: dfrulla@kelleydrye.com

May 4, 2016

Christy Goldfuss
Managing Director
White House Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson PI NW
Washington, D.C. 20506

Whitley Saumweber, Ph.D.
Associate Director for Oceans and Coasts
White House Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson PI NW
Washington, D.C. 20506

Dear Ms. Goldfuss and Dr. Saumweber:

We represent the Fisheries Survival Fund, an organization that consists of the vast majority of Limited Access Atlantic sea scallop vessels that are homeported from Massachusetts to North Carolina. FSF opposes the President's consideration of several areas within New England waters as marine monuments. FSF believes in, and heavily participates in, the public process of fisheries management via the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. A monument designation, with its unilateral implementation and opaque process, is the exact opposite of the fisheries management process in which we participate.

Public areas and public resources should be managed in an open and transparent manner, not an imperial stroke of the pen. Fisheries conservation and management measures developed and implemented through the Council process require compliance with a wide range of substantive and procedural legal requirements. These include the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Unfunded Mandates Act, to name a few.

May 4, 2016
Page Two

Furthermore, we didn't write Executive Order 13563 which states, in relevant part:

Section 1. General Principles of Regulation. Our regulatory system must protect public health, welfare, safety, and our environment while promoting economic growth, innovation, competitiveness, and job creation. It must be based on the best available science. [...]

Sec. 2. Public Participation. [...] Regulations shall be adopted through a process that involves public participation. To that end, regulations shall be based, to the extent feasible and consistent with law, on the open exchange of information and perspectives among State, local, and tribal officials, experts in relevant disciplines, affected stakeholders in the private sector, and the public as a whole. [...]

Sec. 3. Integration and Innovation. Some sectors and industries face a significant number of regulatory requirements, some of which may be redundant, inconsistent, or overlapping. Greater coordination across agencies could reduce these requirements, thus reducing costs and simplifying and harmonizing rules. [...]

Sec. 4. Flexible Approaches. Where relevant, feasible, and consistent with regulatory objectives, and to the extent permitted by law, each agency shall identify and consider regulatory approaches that reduce burdens and maintain flexibility and freedom of choice for the public. [...]

Sec. 5. Science. Consistent with the President's Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, "Scientific Integrity" (March 9, 2009), and its implementing guidance, each agency shall ensure the objectivity of any scientific and technological information and processes used to support the agency's regulatory actions. [...]

These standards President Obama authored describe the fisheries management process better than the monuments designation vehicle, which can be instigated and steered by a few select insiders.

We strongly urge the President not to designate any marine monuments in New England, but rather to allow the public process to continue moving forward. The New England Council is already protecting Cashes Ledge, and the Mid-Atlantic Council is already protecting deep water corals, with more action on corals to follow. Let the President's legacy be that he allowed the public to have a voice in how we manage our shared resources.

KELLEY DRYE & WARREN LLP

May 4, 2016
Page Three

In the event the Administration does not heed our call for a public process and dialogue on how best to manage our offshore waters, we strongly encourage the President to accept the proposal of the Atlantic Offshore Lobster Association (AOLA). We understand that the AOLA has provided you with coordinates denoting the shoalest area that is acceptable to them for possible management. While we cannot condone fisheries management by fiat, this proposal is at least coming from fishermen who work in these areas. No matter what area is chosen, moreover, any associated management should be tailored to the purposes and goals of that particular monument designation. Therefore, if the stated purpose of the monument designation is to protect deep water corals and ocean canyon sub-strates, then there should be no restriction on pelagic fishing, as it will have no impact on the deep corals and the ocean bottom.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter and we sincerely hope that the established public processes will be allowed to endure and prevail.

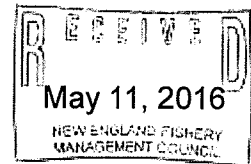
Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David E. Frulla', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David E. Frulla
Andrew E. Minkiewicz

Counsel for Fisheries Survival Fund

From: Michael Pierdinock [<mailto:cpfcharters@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, May 11, 2016 6:18 PM
To: Moira Kelly; Mark Grant
Cc: John Bullard; Tom Nies; Barry Gibson; Dave Waldrup; David Pierce
Subject: Cod



Team:

There are so many cod being landed that there are no words to be said that can express my disappointment with the emergency measures and bag limits that are in place. This time of year you could go to Green Harbor and the parking lot would be full with clients going on charters. The parking lot is empty, few people are going. The clients want cod, the 15 haddock bag limit doesn't cut it. It is sad what we are observing and the impact it has had on the charter boat fleet, recreational anglers and all that rely on such to make a living.

Thanks

Capt. Mike Pierdinock

CPF Charters "Perseverance" - New Bedford

Recreational Fishing Alliance - Massachusetts Chairman

Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association - Board of Directors

NMFS - Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel

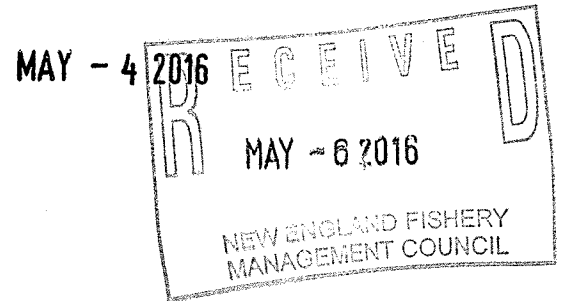
New England Fishery Management Council - Recreational & Enforcement Advisory Panels
(617) 291-8914

je - 5/20/16



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

Captain Mark S. Phillips
F/V Illusion
201 Atlantic Avenue
Greenport, NY 11944



Dear Capt. Phillips,

It was good to see you again while serving with you on the Rhode Island College panel on sustainability. During that discussion, you objected to the lack of limits that recreational fishermen have in southern New England while fishing for cod, compared to the strict limits imposed on commercial fishermen such as yourself. You referenced a letter you had sent to me (actually to the New England Fishery Management Council).

Ironically, I get letters from recreational fishermen saying they feel they are being unjustly cut back, and it is the commercial fleet that is the problem.

We work with the New England Fisheries Management Council to manage fishery resources for the benefit of the nation, which includes establishing catch limits that are based upon the best information available and ensuring the recreational and commercial fleets stay within their allocated limits. This is done through a very democratic process that involves our staff in the region and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, as well as the Council's scientific, commercial, and recreational advisors. The Council uses these advisors to help them develop management measures that will ensure both fleets stay within their allocated catch limits.

Back in 2010, the Council set allocations for different commercial and recreational components of the groundfish fishery through Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Amendment 16 only created recreational allocations and accountability measures (AMs) for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod and haddock, and did not establish recreational allocations or AMs for any other groundfish stocks. Amendment 16 specified that a recreational allocation would only be made if recreational catch, after accounting for recreational state waters catch, is greater than 5 percent of total removals. At that time, recreational catches of Georges Bank (GB) cod did not meet this standard, and no recreational allocation was made. The other stocks mentioned in your letter, including GOM winter flounder, Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) winter flounder, pollock, and redfish, do not have specific recreational allocations for the same reason.

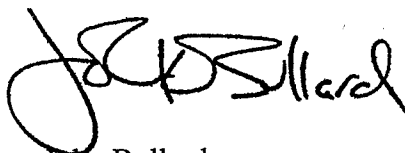
Since 2010, recreational GB cod catch has remained below the 5 percent of total removals threshold, and total GB cod catch has not exceeded the overall annual catch limit established for this stock. For these reasons, the Council has yet to consider whether a recreational allocation for GB cod is necessary. If the Council determines it is necessary to create a recreational allocation for GB cod, or any of the other species you listed, it would need to do so in a framework adjustment or amendment to the Northeast Multispecies FMP.



jc, mb - 5/13/16

We will continue to carefully monitor the catch of all groundfish stocks to ensure that catch remains within established limits. If you have additional questions about recreational allocations for the Northeast multispecies fishery, please contact Sarah Heil, Groundfish Team Lead, at 978-281-9257.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bullard", with a large, stylized initial "J" and "B".

John Bullard
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region

Cc: Tom Nies, NEFMC Executive Director
Terry Stockwell, NEFMC Chairman



FY 2016 Groundfish Landing/Possession Limits Common Pool Fishery

These landing/possession limits are subject to change during the fishing year. This summary provides a broad overview of restrictions and requirements; the regulations described here can be found at 50 CFR 648.82, 648.83, 648.85, 648.86, and 648.88.

May 1, 2016

Species	Minimum Size	Stock Area ¹	A DAS	Handgear A	Handgear B	Regular B DAS Program	
						Separator or Rule Trawl ³	Non-Trawl Gear
Cod	19"	GOM	25 lb per DAS up to 100 lb per trip	25 lb per trip	25 lb per trip	100 lb per DAS, up to 1,000 lb per trip	25 lb per trip
			500 lb per DAS, up to 2,500 lb per trip (outside of the Eastern U.S./Canada Area) ²				
			100 lb per DAS up to 500 lb per trip (E. U.S./Canada Area)				
			Closed Area I Hook Gear Haddock SAP -or- Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP (for targeting haddock)	300 lb per trip	25 lb per trip		
Haddock	16"	GOM		200 lb per DAS, up to 600 lb per trip			
		OFF GB, IN GB, and SNE		100,000 lb per trip			
Pollock	19"	All Areas		Unlimited			
Redfish	7"	All Areas		Unlimited			
White hake	none	All Areas		1,500 lb per trip			
Atlantic halibut	41"	All Areas		1 fish per trip			
Yellowtail flounder	12"	GOM, IN GB	750 lb per DAS up to 1,500 lb per trip	25 lb per DAS up to 500 lb per trip		25 lb per DAS to 250 lb per trip	100 lb per trip
		SNE		250 lb per DAS, up to 500 lb per trip			
American plaice (dabs)	12"	OFF GB	100 lb per trip			500 lb per trip of all flatfish combined. However, may not exceed A-DAS limit for any stock	100 lb per DAS, up to 1,000 lb per trip
		All Areas	1,000 lb per trip				100 lb per DAS, up to 250 lb per trip
Witch flounder (gray sole)	13"	All Areas	250 lb per trip			500 lb per trip of all flatfish combined. However, may not exceed A-DAS limit for any stock	100 lb per DAS, up to 250 lb per trip
		OFF GB	250 lb per trip				100 lb per DAS, up to 1,000 lb per trip
Winter flounder	12"	IN GB, SNE	2,000 lb per DAS, up to 4,000 lb per trip			500 lb per trip of all flatfish combined. However, may not exceed A-DAS limit for any stock	100 lb per DAS, up to 1,000 lb per trip
		GOM	2,000 lb per trip				100 lb per DAS, up to 1,000 lb per trip
Windowpane Flounder		All Areas				Zero possession prohibited	
Ocean Pout							
Atlantic Wolffish							

¹ Broad Stock Areas: Gulf of Maine (GOM), Inshore Georges Bank (IN GB), Offshore Georges Bank (OFF GB), and Southern New England (SNE)

² Vessel must submit GOM Cod Trip Limit Exemption Form via VMS

³ Gear performance trip limits of 500 lb all flatfish combined, 500 lb whole monkfish (unless restricted by the monkfish FMP), 500 lb whole skate, and zero lobsters also apply

JC/rf - 5/13/16



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116
E.F. "Terry" Stockwell III, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

May 2, 2015

Dr. Gregory DeCelles
MA Division of Marine Fisheries
251 Causeway Street, Suite 400
Boston, MA 02114-2152

Dear Dr. DeCelles:

Dr. David Pierce has recommended you to represent Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries on the Council's Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT). The PDT is currently involved in supporting the Groundfish Committee with respect to commercial and recreational fisheries management issues. Your groundfish research expertise through collaborative research with industry and experience in the scientific and management process will be very valuable to the PDT.

PDTs are tasked with providing objective analyses to the Council. For this reason, PDT members are not allowed to address the Committee or Council in order to advocate for any specific Council decisions unless they are presenting a PDT position. This task is normally the responsibility of the PDT Chair.

Dr. Jamie Cournane, Groundfish PDT Chair, will be contacting you shortly with more information. Feel free to contact her at your convenience by email (jcournane@nefmc.org) or telephone: 978-465-0492, ext. 103.

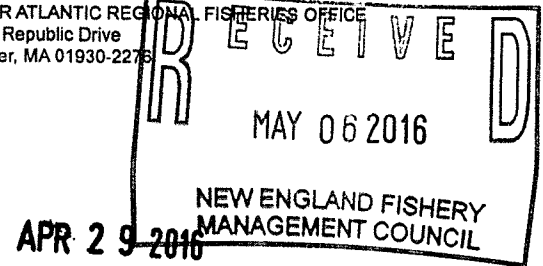
I am pleased to appoint you to the Groundfish PDT. We appreciate your assistance and technical support for the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan. Please contact me if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2278



E.F. "Terry" Stockwell, III
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, Massachusetts 01950

Dear Terry:

On behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, I have approved Framework Adjustment 55 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). We have also finalized recreational management measures for the 2016 fishing year. The final rules implementing the approved measures become effective on May 1, 2016, and will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 2, 2016. I would like to call your attention to some key issues associated with Framework 55 and the recreational fishery. A more detailed discussion of these issues, and all of the approved measures, can be found in the final rules for these actions.

Framework 55 Measures

2016-2018 Catch Limits

We have approved the Council's updated status determination criteria and catch limits for all 20 groundfish stocks, including the catch limits for the U.S./Canada stocks. Assessment updates are scheduled for 2017 for most groundfish stocks, which will provide the opportunity to update the 2018 catch limits implemented in Framework 55.

For witch flounder, we approved an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 460 mt for the 2016-2018 fishing years. We considered the witch flounder catch limit in relation to stock growth, the probability of overfishing, and the economic impacts of the various ABC alternatives. We determined that an ABC of 460 mt complies with Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requirements, including achieving optimum yield and taking into account the needs of fishing communities, without compromising conservation objectives to prevent overfishing and rebuild the stock. A benchmark assessment for witch flounder is scheduled for fall of 2016. We expect the assessment results will be available in time to re-specify witch flounder catch limits for the 2017 fishing year, if necessary.

Groundfish At-Sea Monitoring Program Adjustments

We approved the Council's clarification of the at-sea monitoring (ASM) program goals and objectives, as well as all of the Council's proposed modifications to the method used to set the target coverage level for the industry-funded ASM program. This includes:

- Removal of the administrative standard of monitoring 80 percent of discard pounds at a 30-percent coefficient of variation (CV) or better;
- Exclusion of certain extra-large gillnet trips from the ASM coverage requirement;
- Using 3 years of discard information to predict sufficient ASM coverage levels; and,



jc, pmf

- Basing the target coverage level on stocks that have a higher risk for error in the discard estimate.

These adjustments do not remove the 30-percent CV requirement established in Amendment 16, but are expected to make the program more cost effective and smooth the fluctuations in annual coverage levels. This should provide additional stability for the fishing industry and ASM service providers.

We applied these changes in setting the target ASM coverage level for the 2016 fishing year. The resulting 2016 target ASM coverage level is 14 percent, including Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) coverage paid in full by the Northeast Fishery Observer Program (NEFOP). Assuming NEFOP covers 4 percent of trips as it has in recent years, sectors would be responsible for ASM on approximately 10 percent of their vessels' trips in 2016. We expect this coverage level will meet the 30-percent CV requirement. While these adjustments result in a lower target ASM coverage level for the 2016 fishing year compared to previous years, there is no guarantee that the changes will result in reduced target coverage levels in future fishing years (i.e., using the same methods approved here could result in higher coverage in 2017 or 2018 than in recent years).

A number of comments on Framework 55 questioned the effectiveness of the 30-percent CV standard for setting ASM coverage levels. Commenters also expressed fear that the ASM coverage level for 2016 will be too low, and when combined with low catch limits on some stocks, will add a clear incentive to misreport discarded fish and create harmful bias. Our analysis indicates that the changes to the method used to set target ASM coverage levels, in conjunction with existing sector monitoring programs, would maintain both the FMP's precision requirement and our ability to effectively monitor sector catch. Nonetheless, we agree that further evaluation of the groundfish monitoring program is warranted in light of the 2015 assessment results, changes in the fishery since 2010, and 5 years of experience with the sector program. We are supportive of the Council's ongoing efforts to evaluate the groundfish monitoring program beyond this action, including the issue of observer bias, whether the 30-percent CV standard is the most appropriate way to set ASM coverage levels, and a re-evaluation of whether the current groundfish monitoring program meets the Northeast Multispecies FMP's goals and objectives.

New Sector Exemption

We have also granted a new exemption intended to complement the Framework 55 measure that removes the ASM coverage requirement for certain sector trips using extra-large mesh gillnets. This sector exemption allows vessels on these non-ASM sector trips to also target dogfish using 6.5-inch mesh gillnet gear within the footprint and season of either the Nantucket Shoals Dogfish Exemption Area, the Eastern Area of the Cape Cod Spiny Dogfish Exemption Area, or the Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area.

Sector trips using this exemption will be excluded from ASM coverage, but all legal-sized allocated groundfish stocks caught during these trips must be landed and the associated catch of groundfish will be deducted from the sector's ACE. We will grant this exemption to any sectors that modify their operations plans to include this exemption.

Recreational Management Measures

As recommended by the Council in Framework 55, we are removing the prohibition on recreational possession of GOM cod that was established as part of the protection measures implemented for this stock in Framework 53. In removing the permanent prohibition on recreational possession of GOM cod, this measure returns the authority to us to set the recreational bag limit for GOM cod.

We consulted with the Council, including its Recreational Advisory Panel and Groundfish Oversight Committee, in November and December last year to develop bag limits for 2016 as proactive accountability measures. Based on this consultation and the comments on our proposed rule, we are implementing the Council's recommendation to increase the recreational GOM haddock bag limit from 3 to 15 fish per day and extending the haddock season to most of the fishing year. For GOM cod, we are implementing the Council's recommendation to open August and September for cod fishing because it protects spring-spawning cod, provides more conservation than a spring opening, and strikes a balance between the summer season preferred by many private recreational anglers and tourists relying on for-hire vessels in the southern GOM, and the longer fall season favored by the for-hire vessels further north in the GOM looking to extend their season. We have determined that these measures would lessen the severe economic impacts of recent catch limit reductions while retaining necessary conservation measures, particularly for cod.

While we received comments regarding the potential negative economic impact of a small cod bag limit and short cod open season, our analysis shows that increasing the cod bag limit beyond one fish or extending the open season would likely cause the recreational fishery to exceed its quota. Rather than converting discarded cod to landings, an increased bag limit would lead to increased effort targeting cod. Our economic analysis of these measures estimates that the number of angler trips in 2016 will increase more than 60 percent from 2015. Based on an increased number of trips, and increased catch, we anticipate these measures will have a positive economic impact in comparison to measures currently in place for 2015. Table 1 summarizes the final recreational management measures that we are implementing for the 2016 fishing year.



Table 1. Fishing Year 2016 Recreational Management Measures

Stock	Per Day Possession Limit (fish per angler)	Minimum Fish Size	Possession Permitted
GOM Cod	1	24 inches (60.9 cm)	August 1, 2016 – September 30, 2016
GOM Haddock	15	17 inches (43.2 cm)	Year Round Except March 1, 2017 – April 14, 2017

Conclusion

The Council has identified groundfish monitoring as a priority for 2016, and the Groundfish Plan Development Team is already working on analysis to inform more extensive changes to the groundfish monitoring program in a future action. We agree that this effort is a priority, and will support the Council's work through our membership on the Groundfish PDT, the Groundfish Committee, and the Council. If you have questions about our approval of Framework 55, please contact Michael Pentony, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, at (978) 281-9315.

Sincerely,


 John K. Bullard
Regional Administrator

cc: Tom Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council
Dr. Bill Karp, Director, Northeast Fisheries Science Center



This document is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register on 05/02/2016 and available online at <http://federalregister.gov/a/2016-10051>, and on FDsys.gov

Billing Code 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 151211999-6343-02]

RIN 0648-BF62

**Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions;
Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Groundfish Fishery;
Framework Adjustment 55**

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This final rule approves and implements Framework Adjustment 55 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. This rule sets 2016-2018 catch limits for all 20 groundfish stocks, adjusts the groundfish at-sea monitoring program, and adopts several sector measures. This action is necessary to respond to updated scientific information and achieve the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan. The final measures are intended to help prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks, achieve optimum yield, and ensure that management measures are based on the best scientific information available.

DATES: Effective on May 1, 2016, except for the amendment to § 648.85(a)(3)(iii)(A), which is effective [insert date 180 days after date of publication in the *Federal Register*].



This document is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register on 05/02/2016 and available online at <http://federalregister.gov/a/2016-10053>, and on FDsys.gov

Billing Code 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 160120042-6337-02]

RIN 0648-BF69

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Groundfish Fishery; Fishing Year 2016; Recreational Management Measures

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This action sets the recreational management measures for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock for the 2016 fishing year. This action is intended to increase recreational fishing opportunities for cod and haddock consistent with the 2016 catch limits for these stocks, while ensuring the quotas are not exceeded. This action is expected to facilitate the recreational fishery achieving the recreational quotas for 2016.

DATES: Effective May 1, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Copies of a supplemental environmental assessment (EA) to Framework Adjustment 55 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan prepared by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office and Northeast Fisheries Science Center; and the Framework 55 EA prepared by the New England Fishery Management Council for this rulemaking are available from: John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, 55

