

CORRESPONDENCE



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

JUN - 1 2015

Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Tom:

At the April 23, 2015, meeting the Council passed a motion requesting more information about at-sea monitoring (ASM) costs for use in the potential development of a framework to address concerns that the fishery will not be viable under the current approach for ASM. When you conveyed the request, you asked for analyses to be completed as soon as possible, noting that the next Groundfish Committee meeting is June 4, 2015.

My staff is working with staff from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to prepare analyses that will enable the Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT), Committee and Council to evaluate the issues surrounding ASM coverage and associated costs. Several analyses have been completed and were shared with the PDT at their meeting on May 28th. We recognize the widespread interest in this issue, and these analyses should provide an opportunity for the Council to carefully consider the April motion.

You also requested that we share the report we have been working on to compare ASM costs with electronic monitoring (EM) costs. The report is in the final stages of completion, and we will share it with you as soon as possible.

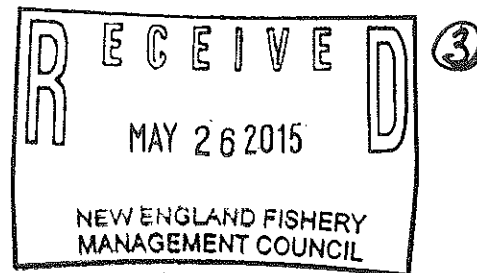
Bill and I both recognize the importance of this issue to the Council, and assure you our staff will make every effort to provide analyses as needed, while still meeting their other obligations. If you have further questions, please contact Michael Pentony (978-281-9283).

Sincerely,

John K. Bullard
Regional Administrator

Cc: Dr. Bill Karp, NEFSC
Michael Pentony
Hannah Goodale





From: Michael Pierdinock [mailto:cpfcharters@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2015 8:56 AM

To: David Pierce

Cc: Melanie Griffin; Barry Gibson; 'Charlie Wade'; Dave Waldrip; John Bullard; Tom Nies; Bob Briggs

Subject: Public Comment - Gulf of Maine Haddock Recreational Rule Clarification & Cod Observations in our Waters

Dave:

The Marine Fisheries Advisory dated 30 April 2015 titled "Gulf of Maine Haddock Recreational Rule Clarification" proposes a size limit of 21 inches for haddock in state waters, where there is presently a 17 inch size limit for haddock in federal waters. This appears to contradict the intention of the NEFMC and RAP recommendation for a 17 inch haddock size limit in order to reduce dead discards of haddock between 17 and 21 inches. We are requesting a reduction in the proposed size limit to 17 inches in order to mirror the current federal regulations and subsequently reducing the dead discards.

In addition, I feel it is necessary to report that recreational fisherman and charter boat captains that are fishing for haddock or pollack are catching plentiful levels of cod ranging from 12 to 30 inches that are significantly more plentiful than what was observed or landed last year. The status of the cod fishery appears inconsistent with the projections. We will keep you updated as the season progresses on the status of the cod in our waters.

If you have any questions, feel free to email or give me a call.

Thanks

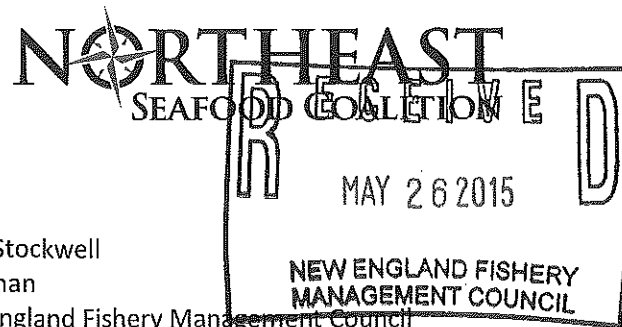
Capt. Mike Pierdinock

RFA - Massachusetts Chairman

617-291-8914 (cell)



.ic/ip - 5/29/15



May 26, 2015

John Bullard
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries - Northeast Regional Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Terry Stockwell
Chairman
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Frank Blount
Chairman of the Groundfish Committee
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

David Preble
Chairman of the Habitat Committee
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear John, Terry, Frank and David,

The Northeast Seafood Coalition (NSC) is a membership organization that represents 250 groundfish related fishing business entities. Collectively our members hold over 500 federal limited access multispecies permits. NSC membership is comprised of small, independent, entrepreneurial groundfish businesses that operate in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank and Southern New England.

Today, NSC is writing on behalf of our members that are directly impacted by the Georges Bank habitat management alternatives considered under the Omnibus Habitat Amendment (OHA2). Notably this includes NSC fishing members that are based in Southern New England / New Bedford which are enrolled in Northeast Fishery Sectors 7, 8, 9 and 13 but also includes NSC fishing members enrolled in Northeast Fishery Sectors 2 and 6. We are writing in specific reference to the New Georges Bank Alternative – Alternative 9.

OHA2 Process:

For many years NSC leadership has participated in a diligent and sincere manner in the OHA2 process. We've collaborated with the Associated Fisheries of Maine and Fisheries Survival Fund to put forth blended alternatives that were based upon scientific information made available by the Council. These efforts have been aimed at meeting the objectives of the Amendment and the suite of Magnuson requirements and standards.

On April 23, 2015, after years of industry participation and New England Fishery Management Council (Council) deliberation on the alternatives included in OHA2, the Council passed a motion to include a NEW habitat management alternative on Georges Bank, referred to as Alternative 9, to be analyzed and brought back for final action at the June Council meeting.

This "New" Georges Bank Alternative (Alternative 9) includes a substantially larger habitat management area (HMA) on the Northern Edge and adds a *groundfish mortality closure* on the Northern Edge that is nearly as large as the HMA *but only prohibits groundfish gear*. The Northern Edge HMA under Alternative 9 is contiguous to the Hague Line and precludes United States groundfish fishermen from approximately 25 miles of the shared boundary and 12 miles for the scallop fleet. Alternative 9 also

proposes a large Georges Shoals HMA that is 13 miles north and 5 miles east of the Georges Shoal HMA considered under Alternative 7.

During the April meeting, Vito Giacalone, NSC Policy Advisor, publicly notified the Council that NSC could not support this New Alternative based on the process alone that occurred to create this alternative. Not only were the new habitat management areas (HMA) on the Northern Edge and the Georges Shoals contained in Alternative 9 constructed *without groundfish industry involvement* but a new and substantial groundfish mortality closure was offered without meaningful consultation with groundfish interests.

Although the newly constructed HMA on the Northern Edge may be within the realm of Council discussions and analyses to date, *the differential treatment that Alternative 9 places on the two areas on the Northern Edge (mortality closure area and habitat HMA area) for scallops and groundfish is a serious issue that falls clearly outside of all prior Council discussions.* Additionally, the newly constructed Georges Shoals HMA proposed in Alternative 9 is far outside the realm of what could be expected by groundfish interests based upon prior Council discussions.

NSC is thus grateful to the Council for their decision to defer final action on OHA2 until the June Council meeting to give impacted stakeholders an opportunity to consider the implications of the New Alternative – Alternative 9.

Newly Proposed Groundfish Mortality Closure on Northern Edge in Alternative 9:

The groundfish mortality area was constructed without groundfish consultation and it was offered with no clear biological purpose and / or objective. When asked numerous times at the Council meeting no one from the proposing side of Alternative 9, nor the Northeast Regional Office or Council staff, could provide an answer as to which stock or stocks were being protected / enhanced by the NEW Northern Edge mortality closure and why a closure was necessary as an additive measure to the groundfish output controlled management system already in place. As of the date of this letter NSC has yet to learn what the specific groundfish mortality objectives were when Alternative 9 was created. At this time we can only conclude that the objective was to provide access to valuable scallop grounds while providing the appearance of habitat protection at the explicit expense of groundfish fishermen.

Justification for this area as a groundfish mortality closure will now come after the fact. However, if the area was proposed as a habitat management area at least it would be a universally applicable closure to all MBTG and SASI / LISA evaluation could have been conducted. But to justify a mortality closure, especially into areas not currently closed (bump out west of 67 20) that applies only to one user group while exempting other MBTG should require a very high burden of justification and objective criteria.

Georges Bank West Habitat Management Area contained in Alternative 7:

As noted by NSC throughout the OHA2 process, the Georges Shoals area is a very important fishing ground for Georges Bank winter flounder and other groundfish stocks. NSC is acutely aware of this fact based on input received at countless meetings held over the years with our membership and other groundfish interests. The boundaries associated with Alternative 7, Georges Shoals West area, were designed to capture high scoring blocks on the SASI / LISA Cluster maps made available to the public.

Alternative 7 was created with great reservation as the two boundaries that extend north of 41 40 were drawn to capture high scoring blocks on the SASI / LISA Cluster maps.

Ultimately, groundfish fishermen compromised to the boundaries associated with the Georges Shoals West HMA under Alternative 7 because they knew they needed to utilize the SASI / LISA information to put forward a sound alternative for the Council's consideration under OHA2. This resulted in a serious tradeoff for these fishermen because they knew they were losing important fishing grounds.

Also, contrary to the views expressed by the Northeast Regional Office and Council's Plan Development Team (PDT) that the Georges Shoals West area contained in Alternative 7 is sparsely fished by groundfish vessels, our deeper inquiry suggests this is not the reality.

Furthermore, contrary to the data used to inform OHA2, many fishermen have described the Georges Shoals area in Alternative 7 as notorious for juvenile cod habitat. It is concerning that this is not reflected in the charts and other data used in this Amendment. If numerous fishermen describe this area as a known juvenile cod habitat area - the Council should question why there is little or no supporting data contained in OHA2. Perhaps the trawl survey does not tow the Georges Shoals area with enough frequency to provide sufficient data for that area? Perhaps there could be a seasonal component that is not being captured in the data? Perhaps there are limited scallop surveys and thus minimal survey data available for the Georges Shoals area? This is an important topic NSC urges the Council to address before making any final decisions.

Georges Bank Shoals (NEW) HMA contained in Alternative 9:

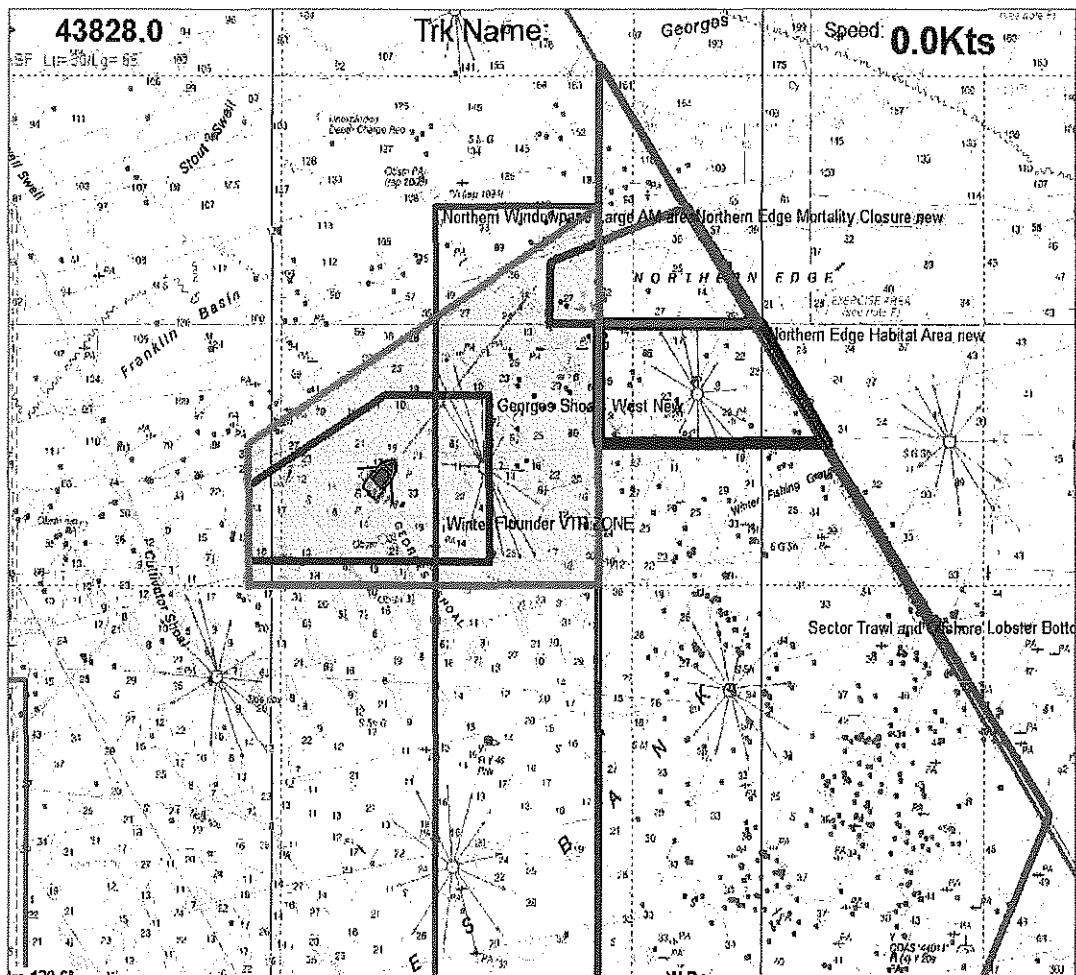
Since the April Council meeting, NSC leadership has spoken with many of our fishing members, other groundfish industry members and reviewed available groundfish fishing data for the Georges Shoals.

We strongly urge the Council to consider the following data review conducted for groundfish fishing activity on the Georges Shoals area contained in Alternative 9.

The figure provided below displays the current Alternative 9 boundaries (outlined in purple) on the Georges Shoals combined with the most recent five years of groundfish fishing activity.

Groundfish fishing activity was identified by gathering and plotting point location (blue box) from Vessel Trip Reports (VTR) available on the NOAA Fisheries Sector Information Management Module (SIMM) for Northeast Fishery Sectors (NEFS) 7, 8, 9 and 13 for Fishing Years 2010 through 2014. NSC plotted the vessel reported point location for all VTRs that had at least 3,000 pounds of winter flounder documented as kept catch from statistical area 522. NSC used the point location because an industry standard for most captains is to document the area in which they have spent the majority of time/activity in the Lat/Long fields of a VTR page.

The fishing data plotted below represents fishing activity of 42 unique vessels that have conducted at least one trip (or a portion of a trip) in the last five fishing years (2010-2014). These trips landed nearly eight million pounds of Georges Bank winter flounder ALONE.



This groundfish data review provides a snap shot of the historical importance to the majority of groundfish vessels who fish in the proposed Georges Shoals HMA now considered under Alternative 9. The Council's analysis for Alternative 9 can easily elaborate on this data review by looking at the vessel track information available for all groundfish vessels provided by the Northeast Regional Office who have fished in this area, not just vessels enrolled in Northeast Fishery Sector 7, 8, 9 and 13. Notably this would include Northeast Fishery Sector 2 and 6 as well as those enrolled in the Sustainable Harvest Sector.

This review, which has been confirmed by our recent discussions with our groundfish members and other groundfish interests, clearly reveals **great economic impacts will occur to the groundfish fishery under the newly proposed HMA for the Georges Shoals area included in Alternative 9.** The impacts to the groundfish fishery, exclusively, should serve as confirmation to the Council's wise decision to delay a final vote until more analysis and public input was provided for this NEW Alternative.

Conclusion and NSC Recommendation:

As the Council discusses the Georges Bank alternatives in the days ahead, NSC expects that the groundfish industry's interests will be considered no less important than any other fishery managed

under the Council and NOAA Fisheries process. Equitable treatment must be applied at each and every step in the evaluation process when considering alternatives. The interests of struggling groundfish fishermen who have endured years of progressive management reform cannot be placed at a different level than any other fishery.

To conclude, it will be the collective result of the combination of areas and treatments selected by the Council on Georges Bank Northern Edge and the Georges Shoals that truly matters to NSC and our membership. Alternative 9 does propose substantially increased habitat protected areas on the Northern Edge as compared to Alternative 7. Notwithstanding the issue of differential treatment resulting from a groundfish mortality closure included under Alternative 9, the George Shoals West HMA that is contained in Alternative 7 should be considered in the context of a complete alternative on Georges Bank.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide meaningful input on behalf of NSC groundfish fishing members directly impacted by the Georges Bank alternatives considered under OHA2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jackie Odell".

Jackie Odell
Executive Director



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 21, 2015

Mr. John Bullard
GARFO Regional Administrator
NMFS/NOAA Fisheries
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

RE: Submission of Amendment 18 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP

Dear John:

On May 21, my staff electronically submitted Amendment 18 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, including the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), for preliminary review to your staff in the Sustainable Fisheries Division at the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office. The measures proposed in Amendment 18 recommend accumulation limits for the holdings of Potential Sector Contribution and Northeast Multispecies permits, measures for Handgear A permits including creation of a sub-ACL, and establishment of a Redfish Exemption Area for sector vessels.

Please note that, for the formal submission of the DEIS, Section 9.3 Regulatory Impact Review, including the Regulatory Flexibility Act analysis, will be completed prior to final submission of the action.

The timeline for the preliminary DEIS review, which was agreed to by the Executive Committee, calls for the Council to receive comments from NMFS by June 11, 2015. Keeping this action on track will be needed for the Council to make final decisions about the amendment at its meeting in September. Upon review of the Amendment 18 document, please communicate any comments and/or need for further document revision directly to me. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director

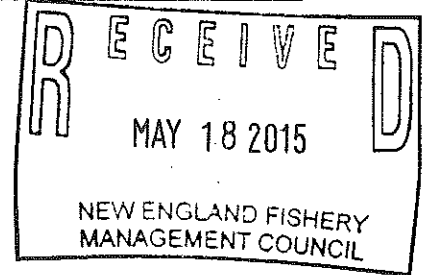
SUSTAINABLE HARVEST SECTOR

PO Box 356, So. Berwick ME 03908 | 207-956-8497 | www.groundfish.org

*Draft EA was also received

May 18 2015

Terry Stockwell, Chair
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950



Dear Terry,

This letter requests Council approval for a new sector to operate in FY2016, tentatively named 'Sustainable Harvest Sector II.' Enclosed please find (1) a preliminary sector operations plan (largely identical to the existing Sustainable Harvest Sectors plans) and (2) an environmental assessment consisting of the actual EA written by the NMFS for FY2014 (we expect the FY2016 EA to be largely identical to the FY2014 version).

We request this sector because the rapidly changing pace of fishery regulations requires our members to change our fishing practices and organizational structures to remain solvent. For example, in light of FY2015's unexpected reduction in GOM cod ACE, our members split into two sectors with different fishing restrictions designed to avoid GOM cod. This in turn forced us to eliminate the 'lease-only' nature of one of our sectors, which subsequently changed the legal liability of lease-only members. These decisions had to be made just months before the start of the new year.

The fundamental problem is that sectors must apply for membership one year in advance of operations, but fishing regulations are being changed more rapidly than that – not just even weeks before the start of a new fishing year, but even mid-year. It behooves us to plan that this fall's suite of groundfish stock assessments will trigger some untold management measures that will compel another rejigging of our membership to adapt.

So our purpose is to lay the foundation for a new sector that would not reflect any new or significant change in fishing effort, but simply allow the membership to adapt to changing regulatory and legal circumstances at the same pace they are implemented on the industry.

Thank you,

Hank Soule
Manager, Sustainable Harvest Sectors

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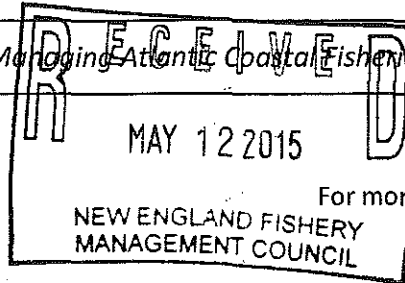


Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

2015 Spring Meeting Summary

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

2015 Spring Meeting
Alexandria, Virginia
May 4-7, 2015



Toni Kerns, ISFMP, or
Tina Berger, Communications
For more information, please contact
the identified individual at
703.842.0740

Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

ATLANTIC HERRING SECTION (MAY 4, 2015).....	3
Press Release.....	3
Motions	4
AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 4, 2015).....	4
Press Release.....	4
Meeting Summary.....	4
Motions	5
ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2015).....	6
Press Release.....	6
Motions	7
SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2015).....	8
Meeting Summary.....	8
Motions	8
BLANK ROME WORKSHOP (MAY 5, 2015).....	8
Meeting Summary.....	8
LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE (MAY 5, 2015).....	8
Meeting Summary.....	8
ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2015).....	9
Meeting Summary.....	9
Motions	10
ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE (MAY 5, 2015)	10
ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence	10
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (MAY 6, 2015)	14
Meeting Summary.....	14
INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (MAY 6, 2015).....	14
Meeting Summary.....	14
Motions	15

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SHAD & RIVER HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 6, 2015)	16
<i>Meeting Summary</i>	16
<i>Motions</i>	16
TAUTOG MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 7, 2015).....	18
<i>Press Release</i>	18
<i>Motions</i>	18

ATLANTIC HERRING SECTION (MAY 4, 2015)

Press Release

ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section Approves Draft Amendment 3 for Public Comment

Alexandria, VA – The Commission's Atlantic Herring Section has approved Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for public comment. Draft Amendment 3 was initiated to strengthen spawning sea herring protections in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) and address concerns raised by the commercial Atlantic herring industry. The Draft Amendment proposes (1) changing the spawning monitoring program (default start dates, area boundaries, and length of the closure period); (2) removing the fixed gear set-aside rollover provision, and (3) requiring a vessel's fish hold to be emptied before leaving on a fishing trip. The empty fish hold provision is also being addressed by the New England Fishery Management Council under Framework Adjustment 4 to the Federal Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring.

The Commission's Plan Development Team conducted a review of the current spawning monitoring program and recommended new tools and adjustments to improve protection for spawning fish. The review revealed spawning events occur at different times each year and typically last six weeks. Therefore, a modification to the spawning protection program would be appropriate to protect the herring resource. The suite of options include a new forecast system to allow fisheries biologists to pool samples of herring from Maine and Massachusetts and project the date of peak spawning. A range of options for adjusting the default closure start dates are based on analysis of spawning data from the past decade, and provides flexibility in the proportion of spawning fish protected. The Draft Amendment proposes merging the Western Maine (WM) and Massachusetts-New Hampshire (MA-NH) spawning areas because there have been no significant differences in the starting dates of spawning events. Lastly, an option proposes to extend the closure period in MA-NH (or WM-MA-NH) to six weeks reflecting the current characteristics of the rebuilt herring population, which is characterized by a broader age class structure and longer overall spawning season since the current spawning program was developed.

At the request of the fishing industry, the Draft Amendment also includes options to remove the fixed gear set-aside provision and establish a requirement for empty fish holds. Currently, 295 mt is set-aside for the fixed gear fishery in Area 1A until November 1, after which the remaining set-aside is made available to all Area 1A gear types. Maine fixed gear fishermen have requested access to the set-aside until the overall total allowable landings limit has been harvested. Draft Amendment 3 also includes a proposal to establish a requirement for fish holds to be empty of fish prior to trip departures. Members of industry initiated the empty fish hold provision because it would prevent mixing of catch from multiple trips, which can improve accounting of catch and bycatch. In addition, the provision could encourage less wasteful fishing practices by creating an incentive to catch amounts of herring as demanded by markets.

Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, and possibly the states of Rhode Island through New Jersey, will be conducting public hearings on the Draft Amendment this spring and summer. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Amendment either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. The Draft Amendment will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org, on the Public Input page no later than May 15th. A subsequent press release will announce the details of the scheduled hearings as well as the deadline for the submission of public comment, which will be 14 days following the last public hearing. For more information, please contact, Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR15-12

Motions

Move to approve draft Amendment 3 for public comment.

Motion made by Mr. Adler and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion carries unanimously.

Move to approve the 2014 FMP Review and state compliance reports and *de minimis* status for NY.

Motion made by Dr. Pierce and seconded by Mr. Gilmore. Motion carries unanimously.

Move to accept John Stanley joining the Advisory Panel.

Motion made by Mr. Train and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion carries unanimously.

AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 4, 2015)

Press Release

ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Addendum XXIV

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board has approved Addendum XXIV to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Lobster Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum aligns state and federal measures trap transfer programs for Lobster Conservation Management Areas 2, 3, and Outer Cape Cod regarding the conservation tax on trap allocations when whole fishing businesses are transferred, trap allocation transfer increments, and restrictions on trap allocation transfers among permit holders who are authorized to fish both state and federal waters (dual permit holder) within a single lobster management area.

Addendum XXIV removes the 10% conservation tax on full business transfers. Transfer tax on full business transfers was found to be not necessary to prevent the activation of latent effort and that current regulations provide sufficient controls for latent effort. Addendum XXIV also specifies traps shall be transferred in 10 trap increments in all areas that currently have a trap transferability program, unless specified otherwise. This change allows for fewer traps to be transferred at one time thus allowing more flexibility for a permit holder in the trap transfer process. This repeals restrictions on vessel size and trap allocation transfers and does not require a permit be retired if the permit holder has less than 50 traps.

Finally, Addendum XXIV allows dual permit holders to transfer allocation with dual permits holders from other states. If a dual permit holder chooses to purchase a federal trap allocation from a dual permit holder from another state, only the federal allocation will transfer. Therefore, the buyer must also purchase state allocation from a permit holder in their own state to align the federal and state allocations. If the state and federal allocations do not align, the most restrictive rule applies. The Addendum’s measures are effective immediately.

The Addendum will be available on the Commission’s website, www.asmfc.org, on the American lobster page. For more information, please contact, Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR15-12

Meeting Summary

The American Lobster Management Board reviewed a series of issues including the Draft Jonah Crab FMP, the Draft Addendum XXIV, and the progress of the Lobster Trap Transfer Database. The Draft Jonah Crab FMP, which proposes the first management measures for the species, was approved for public comment. The document proposes goals and objectives, measures for permits including options for a lobster/crab permit and a crab only permit, spawning stock biomass protections, non-trap limits, and data collection elements. A press release will

announce the availability of the document for public comment and public hearing dates and locations. A motion to establish a Jonah crab fishery control date immediately was passed to notify that individuals entering the fishery after the control date may be treated differently than those participating prior to the control date. The Commission will work with NOAA fisheries to finalize the control date. The Board also finalized measures for Addendum XXIV (see above press release).

In response to a recommendation from the Fishing for Energy Workshop, which highlighted the persistence of derelict gear, the Board voted to recommend to the ISFMP Policy Board to convene the Gear Technology Working Group. The working group, in conjunct with industry, will assess the effectiveness of ghost panels. An update on the Lobster Trap Transfer Database stated that the Database will be ready for the August and September trap transfer window. The peer reviewed Lobster Stock Assessment will be presented at the August meeting.

The Board also recommended to the ISFMP Policy Board to have the Commission send a letter to the NEFMC requesting a prohibition on all bottom tending mobile gear in Closed Area II from July 15th to October 31st. This provision aligns with the language in the groundfish and offshore lobster industry agreement as well as Addendum XX. The Commission previously sent comments to NEFMC identifying the importance of the large seasonal migration of lobster into and out of Closed Area II and the contribution these migrating lobster have on the overall health of the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank lobster stocks. During the summer and fall months, the abundance of large female and egg-bearing lobsters is high (~35% of all egg-bearing lobster biomass). The Board discussed a motion to initiate the process to develop an addendum to prohibit all mobile gear in Closed Area II, but this motion was tabled until the August meeting after the NEFMC meets in June to take action on Closed Area II measures. The Jonah Crab Advisory Panel was populated with seven individuals. For more information please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0748.

Motions

Motion to approve the document for public comment as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Train and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to establish a Jonah crab fishery control date immediately. The intention of the control date is to notify current and potential new entrants to the fishery, especially those who fish in jurisdictions that do not require a specific permit for harvest of Jonah crabs, that should the Board establish limited entry programs for the Jonah crab fishery, eligibility to participate in the commercial fishery in the future may be affected by the person's or vessel's past participation based on verifiable documentation of landings and effort and/or licenses possessed prior to that date.

Motion made by Mr. Train and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes (10 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 null).

Motion to approve the addendum with the following options: Issue 1- option B; Issue 2- option B; Issue 3- include option 2.

Motion made by Mr. Borden and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes unanimously

Motion to approve the addendum as written.

Motion made by Mr. Adler and seconded Mr. Gibson. Motion passes unanimously.

Recommend to the Policy Board to task the Gear Technology Working Group to work with industry to assess lobster ghost panel effectiveness.

Motion made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes unanimously

Move to approve Todd Richards Ellis (NH), Captain Jan Horecky (MA), William Purtell (MA), David Spencer (RI), Brian Thibeault (RI), Chris Scola (NY), and Earl Gwin (MD) to the Jonah Crab Advisory Panel.

Motion made by Mr. Adler and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to request the Policy Board to send a letter to the NEFMC reiterating our concerns for lobster and request a prohibition on all bottom tending mobile gear in closed area 2 from June 15th to October 31st north of 41 degrees 30 minutes.

Motion made by Mr. Borden and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion passes (7 in favor, 4 abstention).

Move to direct staff to initiate the process of developing an addendum to the Lobster FMP to prohibit all mobile gear in closed areas 2 north of 41 degrees 30 minutes during June 15th to October 31st should the area reopen.

Motion made by Mr. Borden and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion tabled until August Meeting.

Motion to table the motion to the August meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes unanimously

ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2015)

Press Release

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Sets 2015 and 2016 TAC at 187,880 MT & Initiates Amendment to Establish Ecological Reference Points

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved a total allowable catch (TAC) for the 2015 and 2016 fishing seasons at 187,880 mt per year, a 10% increase from the 2014 TAC. The increase responds to the positive findings of the 2015 Atlantic menhaden benchmark assessment which indicates the resource is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing relative to the current biological reference points. The TAC will be made available to the states/jurisdictions based on the state-by-state allocation established by Amendment 2 (see accompanying table). The Board also committed to moving forward with the development of an amendment to establish ecological based reference points that reflect Atlantic menhaden’s role as a forage species. The amendment will also consider changes to the current state-by-state allocation scheme.

“The Board struck an important balance by increasing fishing opportunities to both the reduction and bait fisheries and committing to fully evaluating the ecological role of Atlantic menhaden through the amendment process,” stated Board Chair Robert Boyles from South Carolina.

2015 ATLANTIC MENHADEN QUOTAS*		
STATE	QUOTA (MT)	QUOTA (LBS)
ME	73.24	161,466
NH	0.06	123
MA	1,559.74	3,438,630
RI	33.32	73,457
CT	32.45	71,537
NY	103.13	227,365
NJ	20,816.87	45,893,335
DE	24.56	54,153
MD	2,553.08	5,628,568
PRFC	1,154.66	2,545,595
VA	158,700.12	349,873,884
NC	916.55	2,020,645
SC	-	-
GA	-	-
FL	33.43	73,695
TOTAL	186,001.20	410,062,453
*Quotas may be adjusted pending final 2014 landings. Total landings after 1% set-aside for episodic events.		

The Board has established a working group to aid in the development of issues to be addressed in the Public Information Document (PID) and draft amendment. The Board will meet later this year to review the working group's progress. The PID is the first step in the Commission's amendment process. It will gather information concerning the Atlantic menhaden fishery and resource and provide an opportunity for the public to identify and comment on major issues relative to the management of this species. For more information, please contact Mike Waine, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mwaine@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR15-15

Motions

Move to accept the 2015 FMP Review report and approve the states of Maine, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida for *de minimis* status for the 2015 fishing season.

Motion made by Dr. Daniel and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion passes.

Main Motion

Move that the Commission maintain the coastwide TAC at 170,800 metric tons for 2015 to promote conservation, and initiate Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden FMP to establish ecological reference points to provide for predators, set a new coastwide TAC based on these new ecological reference points for implementation in the 2016 fishing season, and review state allocations as required by Amendment 2.

Motion by Dr. Daniel and seconded by Rep. Peake. Motion substituted.

Substitute Motion

Move to substitute the TAC at 187,880 mt for 2015 and initiate Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden FMP to establish ecological reference points and to review state allocation as required by Amendment 2. The TAC would increase by 10% in 2016 and 2017, or until a new coastwide TAC could be set based on ecological reference points developed by Amendment 3.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Train. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend the Substitute Motion

Move to amend the substitute motion by removing "The TAC would increase by 10% in 2016 and 2017, or until a new coastwide TAC could be set based on ecological reference points developed by Amendment 3" and adding "and 2016" to set TAC at 187,880 mt.

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Sen. Watters. Motion carries by roll call vote (In favor – ME, NH, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NOAA Fisheries, USFWS; Opposed – MA, RI).

Substitute Motion as Amended

Move to substitute the TAC at 187,880 mt for 2015 and 2016, initiate Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden FMP to establish ecological reference points, and to review state allocation as required by Amendment 2.

Motion divided.

Motion to Divide Substitute Motion

Move to divide the motion so TAC of 187,880 mt for 2015 and 2016 is one motion, and second motion initiates an amendment for development of ERPs and allocation.

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion carries.

Part 1 of Divided Substitute Motion

Move to substitute the TAC at 187,880 mt for 2015 and 2016.

Motion carries (12 in favor, 4 opposed, 1 null).

Part 2 of Divided Substitute Motion

Move to initiate Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden FMP for development of ERPs and allocation.

Motion carries unanimously.

Main Motion as Substituted

Move that the Commission establish the coastwide TAC at 187,880 metric tons for 2015 and 2016 to promote conservation, and to initiate Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden FMP for development of ERPs and allocation.

Motion carries by roll call vote (In favor – ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NOAA Fisheries; Opposed – USFWS).

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2015)

Meeting Summary

The South Atlantic Board met to receive a presentation from the NOAA Southeast Regional Office on its Draft Strategic Plan for FY2016-2020. The report outlined five strategic goals which include improving organization effectiveness, promoting economically vibrant fisheries and communities, improving the scientific basis for managing resources, leveraging resources in support of organization priorities, and maximizing the benefit of consultation resources. Comments from the Board included the inclusion of South Atlantic seismic testing as a priority; greater consistency in the application of protected species measures between the Greater Atlantic Regional Office and the Southeast Regional Office for coastwide species (i.e., Northern right whale); and a need for greater flexibility for states to modify their Section 10 incidental take plans when changes in the fishery occur (i.e., sea turtles in North Carolina). Public comments on the Draft Strategic Plan will be accepted until July 11, 2015 and can be sent to Heather.Blough@noaa.gov. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org, or 703.842.0748.

Motions

No motions made.

BLANK ROME WORKSHOP (MAY 5, 2015)

Meeting Summary

CJ Zane (Managing Principal) and Kate Anderson (Public Policy Advisor) of Blank-Rome Government Relations LLC updated Commissioners about a number of federal legislative topics including a status of the fiscal year 2016 budget and appropriations, the Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization, Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey funding, and Congressional Committee membership changes. CJ and Kate also attended the Annual Awards of Excellence Reception and answered individual Commissioner questions there. For more information, please contact deke Tompkins, Legislative Executive Assistant at dtompkins@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE (MAY 5, 2015)

Meeting Summary

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) met over two days during the Commission's 2015 Spring Meeting to discuss a number of issues. Following are the highlights of its meeting.

Species Issues

Striped Bass — Mark Robson briefed committee members on the latest conservation equivalency measures being adopted by the states. The committee noted the effort of states to adopt the same or similar size and bag limits, in partial response to LEC comments for consistency and simplicity.

Jonah Crab — The LEC received an update from staff on draft management options for this new fishery that is closely tied to the American lobster fishery. After reviewing possible permit options, minimum size limits, and possible harvest tolerances, the LEC appointed a sub-committee to review the fishery and the management plan. Written comments will be prepared and presented to the American lobster Management Board.

Atlantic Herring — Mike Eastman briefed the committee on draft measures for an empty-hold provision and his recommendation that the language in the draft document is sufficient to address any enforcement concerns about checking or certifying empty holds.

Action Plan Issues

Committee members shared information on the most recent AFWA/NACLEC meetings, and the second enforcement Leadership Academy that is underway. A few members of the LEC participate in AFWA, and will likely be attending the annual meeting this September, in Arizona.

The LEC also discussed a possible joint meeting of the ASMFC and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) during the fall 2015 meeting in Florida. There is interest in a possible joint meeting with the GSMFC LEC, and some common agenda items will be developed for that meeting.

To better support ASMFC management boards, the LEC appointed alternate representatives to the various species boards. This will allow newer members to learn more about the ASMFC process, and be available to fill in for primary LEC representatives.

Other Issues

Jason Snellbaker introduced a concern regarding possible abuse of safe-harbor requests in New Jersey. Other LEC members exchanged information about how their respective states handle safe harbor requests. There was not a general consensus for mechanisms to evaluate safe harbor requests, but members discussed a range of procedures ranging from no formal policies to a regulatory framework.

Based on discussions during development of revised Enforceability Guidelines, members reviewed recommendations for establishing boundaries of closed or protected areas. All agreed that the recommendations contained in the revised guidelines are adequate to address improvements in tracking and mapping technology and enforcement tools.

Special Recognition

Members of the LEC thanked Elizabeth Buendia (USCG), Lloyd Ingerson (MD), and Doug Lewis (GA) for their contributions to the committee. All three are moving on to bigger and better things.

Election

Because of the retirement of Lloyd Ingerson, the current chairman, members elected Mike Eastman and Steve Anthony to serve as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.

For more information, please contact Mark Robson, LEC Coordinator, at markrobson2015@outlook.com.

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2015)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to (1) review progress on the development of three area-specific fishing mortality reference points (i.e., Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay, and the Hudson River), (2) review proposed changes to the Virginia striped bass tagging and monitoring program, and a calibration proposal to the Virginia and Maryland seine survey, and (3) review the implementation status of Addendum IV.

The Technical Committee (TC) presented its report on area-specific fishing mortality (F) reference points. For the Chesapeake, the TC found the Statistical-Catch-at-Age model, which was used in the 2013 benchmark stock assessment, is an appropriate tool to develop Bay-specific reference points since the Chesapeake Bay already exists as a separate fleet within the model. The TC will develop those reference points for Board consideration in August, with the caveat that projections regarding how those reference points would impact management in the Bay and coast would not be available for Board consideration until the Commission's Annual Meeting in November. The TC recommended development of F reference points for the Delaware Bay, via the same methods identified for the Chesapeake Bay, as part of the next benchmark stock assessment. Lastly, the Board did not move forward with Hudson River F reference points because fish from that stock quickly join the coastal population and are therefore considered as part of the coastal fleet.

The Board approved the proposed changes to the Virginia tagging and monitoring program, specifically to the gillnet survey in the Rappahannock and James Rivers. The proposed changes are to replace the 24 hour soak time gillnet survey in the Rappahannock and James Rivers with a short set (0.5-2 hours) gillnet survey in the Rappahannock, James, and York Rivers. Expanding tagging efforts on the James and York Rivers will provide additional information on the multiple stocks that make up the Virginia striped bass population. The Board also approved the Virginia and Maryland seine calibration proposal since the material from which these nets are currently constructed is no longer available, and new material of unknown efficiency will need to be used starting 2015. The Virginia Institute of Marine Science is proposing to conduct side-by-side comparison sweeps using seine nets constructed with the new material and the material currently being used, as well as two block net studies to determine the relative catch efficiency of the new seine mesh material.

The Board also reviewed the status of the states' Addendum IV management measures and found that all states have either finalized or will finalize this week the required measures to Addendum IV's required reductions in removals. Go here http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/554cd8202015StripedBassRegulations_May2015.pdf for a list of final 2015 state management measures. For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to initiate development of an addendum to establish a Chesapeake Bay fishing mortality reference point consistent with the Technical Committee's Option 3, Statistical Catch-at-Age based reference point, and management options to achieve this reference point.

Motion made by Mr. O'Connell and seconded by Mr. O'Reilly. Motion fails (5 in favor, 9 opposed, 2 abstentions)

ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE (MAY 5, 2015)

ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence

Alexandria, VA - The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented Steven Heins, Dr. Matthew Cieri, Jeffrey Brust, Michael Hendricks, Sergeant James Kane, and Janice Plante with its Annual Awards of Excellence for their outstanding contributions to fisheries management, science, law enforcement, and outreach along the Atlantic coast.

"Every year a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence recognize outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries," said ASMFC Chair Louis B. Daniel, III of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. "This evening, we honor several exceptional individuals for their contributions to the management and conservation of Atlantic coast fisheries."

Management & Policy Contributions

Steven Heins, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC)

Steven Heins has been dedicated to state, interstate and federal management issues for nearly three decades, providing of leadership, innovation and technical excellence that represents the core mission and values of the Commission. From 1988 – 2000, Mr. Heins oversaw New York's species monitoring programs, playing an important role in helping to inform management decisions at the Commission and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) level. He developed and implemented New York's Artificial Reef and Access Program, authoring the original Reef Management Plan and environmental impact statement that made the program a reality. He is also a longstanding member and past chair of the Commission's Artificial Reef Committee, which has been providing guidance on and coordinating artificial reef development activities along the Atlantic coast since the mid-1980s.



Award Recipients (from left): Sergeant James Kane, Michael Hendricks, Steven Heins, Jeffrey Brust, Janice Plante, Dr. Matthew Cieri

Since 2006, with his promotion to Chief of Finfish and Crustaceans Section, Mr. Heins has represented NYS DEC on the MAFMC and a number of its committees including Atlantic mackerel, squid and butterfish; surf clam, ocean quahog and tilefish; and demersal and coastal migratory species. He is the lead for management and compliance information for all Commission-managed species in New York and has been a longstanding member and active participant on the Management & Science Committee. He is also a member and current chair of the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) Board, which oversees three fishery-independent data collection surveys for the coastal waters of Maine to North Carolina. When other funding was unavailable to support the program, Steven played a pivotal role in securing over \$500,000 to support NEAMAP. Recently, he helped craft the current summer flounder regional management approach and he continues to work to find solutions to current management challenges with striped bass, black sea bass, tautog and Atlantic sturgeon.

Scientific & Technical Contributions

Matthew Cieri, Ph.D., Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR)

Throughout his career, Dr. Matthew Cieri has provided critical assessment expertise to aid in the management of marine resources in Maine, New England and along the Atlantic coast. Since 2001 as a marine resource scientist, Dr. Cieri has led ME DMR Maine's Atlantic herring monitoring and stock assessment activities, providing technical advice and data analysis for resource assessment and management purposes. The monitoring program, which Dr. Cieri oversees, encompasses the collection and verification of landings data and biological information, and management of the herring ageing program and portside bycatch sampling program. On the regional front, Dr. Cieri has helped formulate herring "days out" options for managers and industry decision making, and worked closely with the New England Fishery Management Council's Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team to develop river herring and shad catch cap options for use in the Council's Framework 3.

He is also a member and important contributor on numerous Commission and Council committees, including technical/stock assessment committees for Atlantic menhaden, spiny dogfish, American eel, and Atlantic herring, which he chaired for many years. He chaired the Commission's Multispecies VPA (MSVPA-X) Subcommittee and the American Eel Stock Assessment Committee. His efforts led to the successful review of the MSVPA-X, as well the timely and successful completion of the first coastwide benchmark stock assessment for American eel. The findings of the American eel benchmark assessment led to the current American eel management program.

Jeffrey Brust, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJ DFW), Marine Fisheries Administration

For the past 16 years, Jeffrey Brust's hard work, dedication and innovative approaches to assessment science has made significant improvements to the Commission's stock assessment process and modelling techniques. For the last decade, Mr. Brust has either chaired or been one of the lead scientists for a number of species assessments, including weakfish, American eel and tautog, developing innovative modelling approaches and successfully navigating them through peer review for their use in management. He is one of the lead scientists for assessing data poor species by employing methods traditionally used on the West Coast and applying those techniques to Commission species, such as American eel. Even when not serving on the stock assessment subcommittee, our recipient has a way making an impact on the success and utility of an assessment. As a member of the Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee, which he also chaired through the development and implementation of Amendment 2, Mr. Brust conducted a review and analysis of the historical menhaden fecundity studies, finding an error in the interpretation of those results which led to new fecundity-at-age/size estimates and a significantly improved stock assessment.

Dedicated to increasing the stock assessment capabilities of state biologists, Mr. Brust has taught a number of beginner and intermediate stock assessment training courses. He also created, through the Assessment Science Committee, a stock assessment mentoring program to help technical committee members get exposed to the assessment process in an effort to develop future lead assessment scientists.

Michael Hendricks (retired), Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Michael Hendricks dedicated his 32-year career to restoring American shad to Pennsylvania's Susquehanna, Delaware, Lehigh and Schuylkill Rivers. As a past member and chair of the Commission's Shad and River Herring Technical Committee, he pioneered the use of oxytetracycline (OTC) for marking American shad. He chaired the OTC Tagging Task Force which coordinates otolith tagging of hatchery produced American shad among the Commission member states. He developed and implemented culture techniques for American and hickory shad, and led research activities at the Van Dyke hatchery, located on the Juniata River, for over 25 years. The Van Dyke hatchery was constructed in 1976 and was the first modern American shad hatchery in the nation. Under our recipient's direction, approximately 237 million American shad fry have been reared and stocked in Pennsylvania's rivers. Mr. Hendricks has also chaired the Technical Committee of the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Cooperative, playing a lead role in drafting the current comprehensive Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Plan. He has served on the Delaware River Fish and Wildlife Cooperative Committee.

Dedicated to improving the passage of anadromous fish both up and down stream, Mr. Hendricks provided consultation on fishway development and implementation on the Schuylkill and Lehigh Rivers and served on various Chesapeake Bay Commission fish passage and fisheries management plan committees. He was an active participant on fish passage technical committees for four Susquehanna River hydroelectric dams and was a key player in the ongoing FERC relicensing of four hydroelectric facilities on the Susquehanna River from 2004 - 2013 to ensure that anadromous fish protection and restoration are in the forefront in the negotiations.

Law Enforcement Contributions

Sergeant Jim Kane of the Connecticut State Environmental Conservation Police

Sergeant Jim Kane's dedication, knowledge of fishing practices and laws, and ability to work well with other law enforcement agencies throughout the region has earned him the respect and admiration of his law enforcement colleagues. For a decade, he has worked to ensure fishery management regulations within Rhode Island and neighboring states are being upheld, consistently performing a high level of at-sea and dockside inspections of commercial and recreational fishing vessels in his state, as well as numerous recreational shoreside fisherman inspections. Sergeant Kane has worked with New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts Law Enforcement as well as NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) on a number of fisheries investigations and enforcement initiatives. Several of these multi-state investigations involved commercial and recreational lobster, scallop, striped bass, scup, American eels, winter and summer flounder. A couple of the investigations have been high level, such as one case which involved the illegal possession and sale of striped bass taken from Rhode Island and offloaded in Connecticut. Another case involved the successful prosecution of a Rhode Island commercial lobster fishing investigation, which involved New York and NOAA OLE; several hundred illegal lobster traps were seized as part of the investigation. During the past several years, Sergeant Kane has also been involved with numerous violations and federal referrals to NOAA OLE for commercial fishing vessels landing over the legal limits or possession of illegal species.

Outreach & Advocacy Contributions

Janice Plante, former writer and associate editor for Commercial Fisheries News (CFN) and Fish Farming News

Through her diligent reporting on fisheries issues, Janice Plante has significantly advanced stakeholder understanding of fisheries management and scientific activities along the Atlantic coast. No writer or journalist has done more to bridge the gap between fisheries managers/scientists and commercial fishermen than Ms. Plante. For the past three decades, Ms. Plante has not only been committed to, but also excelled at, breaking down complex fisheries management and science issues in clear, understandable, and accessible language that both inform and engage New England fishermen in the fisheries management process at all levels of government (state, interstate, regional and federal). Not an easy task given that she has had to digest complicated fishery stock assessments, gear requirements, and regulatory issues, translating the bottom line into terminology easily grasped by commercial fishermen and the public. She has covered a multitude of issues ranging from American lobster to Atlantic herring, northern shrimp, spiny dogfish, and groundfish. Even though the news that she reported on has not always been favorable from the perspective of the commercial fishing industry, she has always done it in an unbiased way, presenting both the facts of matter and the full range of viewpoints, allowing her readership to come to their own opinions about the issue at hand. Throughout her career with CFN, Ms. Plante has worked closely with Commission staff to ensure that her stories correctly characterize the management issues at hand and the science behind the Commission's management decisions, always with the intent to demystify and make more accessible the Commission's activities to the stakeholders it impacts the greatest. Ms. Plante's body of work is a true testament to her deep and abiding commitment to both the fisheries management process and the industries it seeks to support.

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PR15-14

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (MAY 6, 2015)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee met to discuss a number of issues including staff tenure and Commission finances. The Executive Committee approved the FY2016 budget. The Executive Committee also discussed revising ISFMP guidance documents to more accurately reflect current practices and procedures. For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance and Administration, at lleach@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (MAY 6, 2015)

Meeting Summary

The Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Board) met to consider a number of issues. The Board reviewed the results of the 2014 Commissioner survey, which measures the Commissioner opinions regarding the progress and actions of the Commission in 2014. There was an overall positive trend that the Commission was working towards its mission and vision. The Commission will continue its efforts to work effectively with state and federal partners, and stakeholders, as well as provide transparency and clear management documents for stakeholder use and consideration.

The Board approved stock status definitions used in many Commission documents including the annual performance of the stocks. Stocks are divided into 5 categories based on stock condition: rebuilt/sustainable, recovering/rebuilding, unknown, depleted, and concern. The document also provides general definitions of overfished, overfishing, and stable/unchanged.

The Board received a report from the Assessment Science Committee regarding updates to the Technical Support Group Guidance and Benchmark Stock Assessment Document as well as the ASFMC Stock Assessment Schedule. The Board approved a clarification on the submission timeline for benchmark assessment alternate analyses. Alternate analysis must be provided to the Stock Assessment Subcommittee a month before the first assessment workshop to allow sufficient time for review in subsequent assessment workshops. The Board also approved the addition of a Fisheries-Independent Data Policy to the Technical Support Group Guidance and Benchmark Stock Assessment Document. The Fisheries-Independent Data Policy formalizes how data will be used during and after assessments to inform fisheries management decisions, while protecting the rights of data providers. The Board reviewed the ASFMC Stock Assessment Schedule and approved the recommended additions from the Assessment Science Committee.

The Board received a report from the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS) as a follow-up to the previous February Board presentation regarding the updated role of the CESS within the Commission. The CESS will continue to provide socioeconomic data regarding commercial and recreational fisheries to the development of future management documents when applicable and data are both available and do not violate confidentiality standards.

The states discussed their concern over the poor status of the winter flounder resource, particularly the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) stock. The Commission agreed to send a letter to the New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries requesting the initiation of a broader dialogue on the co-management of SNE/MA winter flounder, with particular focus on the poor status of the stock and achieving more consistency in the application of management measures in state and federal waters. The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) updated the Board on highlights from the ACFHP Steering Committee Spring Meeting. An update on the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative-

funded decision support tool to assess aquatic habitats and threats in North Atlantic watersheds was provided including the winter flounder assessment and the river herring assessment. ACFHP will apply for funding from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council for offshore reef restoration and monitoring. National, Coastal, and Regional Fish Habitat Partnership updates were provided, which included details on the status of the 501(c)(3) fund, program rebranding and marketing, and 2015 and 2016 funding opportunities. ACFHP welcomed the North Carolina Coastal Federation into the Partnership, bringing the number of partners to 33. ACFHP discussed the National Marine Fisheries Service's National Recreational Fisheries Implementation Plan as well as the progress that states are making on creating task forces to address estuarine acidification. Its Steering Committee deliberated on updating funding criteria and edits to the draft ACFHP Business Plan. The Commission's Habitat Committee will be investigating energy development's impacts on Atlantic coastal fish habitat for the next issue of Habitat Hotline Atlantic. Jake Kritzer and January Murray are the new Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee, respectively.

The Board reviewed a progress report from Northeast Regional Ocean Council's ocean planning committee on best ways to address regional issues and coordinate ocean planning activities in New England. The Board reviewed and discussed maps of commercial fishing activity that have been developed with participation of the commercial fishing industry, scientists, and managers in order to characterize spatial patterns of commercial fishing for ocean planning discussions.

Based on a recommendation from the American Lobster Board, the Commission tasked the Gear Technology Working Group to work with industry to assess lobster ghost panel effectiveness. Also based on a recommendation from the American Lobster Board, the Commission will send a letter to the New England Fishery Management Council reiterating concern for American lobster. The letter will request the Council consider a prohibition on all bottom tending mobile gear in Closed Area II from June 15th to October 31st north of 41 degrees 30 minutes. The Commission previously sent comments to NEFMC identifying the importance of the large seasonal migration of American lobster into and out of Closed Area II and the contribution these migrating lobster have on the overall health of the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank lobster stocks.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to approve the Stock Status Definitions.

Motion made by Mr. Augustine and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion carries unanimously.

Move to approve the changes to the TC Guidance document and assessment schedule as presented.

Motion made by Mr. Augustine and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion carries.

Winter Flounder Motion from October 2014

Move that the Commission send a letter to NEFMC and NOAA Fisheries urging a reduction in the SNE/MA winter flounder possession limit to bycatch limits only for federal vessels based on sea sampling data for trips targeting other species.

Move that the Commission send a letter to the NEFMC and NOAA Fisheries requesting the initiation of a broader dialogue on the co-management of SNE/MA winter flounder, with particular focus on the poor status of the stock and achieving more consistency in the application of management measures in state and federal waters.

Motion made by Mr. Ballou and seconded by Mr. Gilmore. Motion carries unanimously.

On behalf of the American Lobster Board, recommend the Commission task the Gear Technology Working Group to work with industry to assess lobster ghost panel effectiveness.

Motion carries without objection.

On behalf of the Lobster Board, recommend the Commission send a letter to the NEFMC reiterating our concerns for lobster and request a prohibition on all bottom tending mobile gear in closed area 2 from June 15th to October 31st north of 41 degrees 30 minutes.

Motion carries with one abstention (NOAA Fisheries).

SHAD & RIVER HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 6, 2015)

Meeting Summary

The Shad and River Herring Board met to review recommendations from the Technical Committee (TC) on the stock assessment schedule, the need for a meeting to discuss data collection, and provide comment on the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group's (TEWG) River Herring Conservation Plan. The TC recommended that American Shad be added to the assessment schedule for an assessment update in 2017 and for river herring to have an assessment update in 2018 (these dates may be changed after discussions with federal partners). The TC also recommended that a data collection and standardization meeting be held later this year, where the TC would develop recommendations to standardize data collection methods for future survey programs, as well as discuss how best to standardize current survey data collected across the species' range. The Board approved the TC conducting this meeting later this year. Lastly, the Board was presented the Conservation Plan, which has been released this week for public review and comment (see joint NOAA Fisheries/ASMFC Press Release below). For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, FMP Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org, or 703.842.0740.

Press Release

NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Release River Herring Conservation Plan to Aid in Restoration Efforts

NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) announce the release of the River Herring Conservation Plan. The goals of the plan are to increase public awareness about river herring (alewife - *Alosa pseudoharengus*) and blueback herring - *A. aestivalis*), and to foster cooperative research and conservation efforts to restore river herring along the Atlantic coast. The plan, which is available online and will be refined over time with public input, builds upon past and current river herring conservation projects and coordinates ongoing activities. The Plan was developed with input and information provided by the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG), a group of scientists, industry representatives, conservation groups, tribal leaders, and government officials with expertise related to river herring. The Plan seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Increase coordination of river herring data collection, research and conservation
- Identify and undertake key research projects related to assessment and conservation
- Identify any further conservation actions to address threats
- Cultivate and engage research groups to address key topics in protecting or restoring herring populations
- Identify funding sources and secure funds for river herring research and conservation

- Improve information to be used in conservation efforts and incorporated into the next assessment
- Increase public outreach about river herring and the need for addressing impacts to these resources

“By focusing on areas where there is the greatest need, the plan is an ideal tool for anyone interested in restoring river herring populations coastwide,” said Kimberly Damon-Randall, Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources, Greater Atlantic Region, NOAA Fisheries. “It provides extensive background on each species’ life history, stock condition, and current management measures, and identifies areas where research and conservation efforts should be concentrated. Importantly, the plan and what it seeks to achieve represent the collective input and efforts of a broad constituency of individuals and agencies dedicated to the restoration of these important species. It is our hope that by following the roadmap we have laid out in the plan, restoration can be achieved.”

On August 12, 2013, NOAA Fisheries announced that listing river herring under the Endangered Species Act as either threatened or endangered was not warranted based on the analysis of available information. As part of that decision, NOAA Fisheries committed to working collaboratively with the Commission, which manages U.S. East Coast river herring stocks, and other partners to implement a coordinated coastwide effort to proactively conserve river herring and help to fill data gaps. The Conservation Plan and the TEWG are products of that commitment and collaborative effort. Since initiation of these efforts, important progress has been made towards each of the plan’s goals, including:

- Increased coordination among partners by establishing the TEWG and developing the Conservation Plan.
- Provided funding to:
 - A collaborative project involving the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, the University of California-Santa Cruz, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, The Nature Conservancy, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and the U.S. Geological Survey’s Massachusetts Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to advance our understanding of alewife and blueback herring bycatch in commercial Atlantic herring and mackerel fisheries and impacts of this fishing activity on river herring populations. The project will also gather information from six nursery systems between Maine and Connecticut to provide insights into what factors influence freshwater productivity of juvenile river herring. These efforts will then be combined to examine the importance of different life stages to river herring populations.
 - The Barnegat Bay Partnership and Rutgers University to conduct surveys and collect data to improve our understanding of historic and current distribution of alewife and blueback herring spawning habitats in Barnegat Bay and the Raritan River in New Jersey.
 - NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center to develop a river herring/ Atlantic herring oceanic habitat overlap forecast tool for use by the commercial Atlantic herring fishery to minimize incidental river herring catches.
 - The Atlantic Salmon Federation to continue river herring counts at the Milltown Dam fishway in the St. Croix watershed.
- Conducted a coastwide social science survey to document fishermen’s observations of river herring in commercial, recreational, and subsistence fisheries.
- Identified the Penobscot River in Maine and the Choptank River in Maryland as Habitat Focus Areas under NOAA’s Habitat Blueprint, targeting financial resources and technical assistance to support habitat conservation and restoration efforts in these high-priority watersheds.
- Incorporated information provided by the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Pleasant Point, on the cultural importance of river herring to the Tribe into this conservation plan.

NOAA Fisheries and the Commission are committed to strengthening river herring conservation. An important first step is to improve upon and ensure data collection consistency throughout the Atlantic coast, including the Canadian Provinces. The Commission's Shad and River Herring Technical Committee in conjunction with federal partners will convene later this year to develop recommendations to standardize data collection methods for future survey programs, as well as how best to standardize current survey data collected across the species range. NOAA Fisheries and the Commission will be providing support for this meeting.

While this conservation planning initiative is a committed long-term effort, your input is welcome on the River Herring Conservation Plan during its evolving early phase. Please send your comments on the structure and contents of the plan to nmfs.gar.riverherringplan@noaa.gov by June 1, 2015. The Conservation Plan is available at <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/riverherring/conserv/index.html>.

Motions

Move the board task the TC with conducting a meeting on data collection and standardization.

Motion made by Mr. Augustine and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion carries.

TAUTOG MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 7, 2015)

Press Release

ASMFC Tautog Board Initiates Amendment to Establish Regional Stock Areas & Associated Reference Points

Alexandria, VA – The Commission's Tautog Management Board has approved the development of an amendment to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Tautog. The amendment will explore the establishment of new regional stock areas and associated reference points. The amendment will propose two options for regional stock boundaries, each with three regional stock units. The first option will include the following regions: Massachusetts to Rhode Island, Connecticut to New Jersey, and Delaware to North Carolina. The second option will include Massachusetts to Connecticut, New York to New Jersey, and Delaware to North Carolina.

The regional options are based on the findings and recommendations of the 2015 Tautog Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report. Unlike previous assessments, which assessed the stock on a coastwide basis, the 2015 assessment evaluated stock status regionally to reflect differences in life history characteristics and harvest patterns. The three-region approach balances a smaller geographical scale and data integrity while also reducing the risk of overfishing.

As the first step in the amendment process, staff will begin to draft a Public Information Document for Board consideration at the Commission's Summer Meeting in August. The PID will gather information concerning the tautog fishery and resource and provide an opportunity for the public to identify and comment on major issues relative to the management of this species. The PID will also seek input on the public's preferred regional breakdown. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR15-16

Motions

Tabled Motions from February 2015

Move to move forward with exploration of two regions, northern and southern, for tautog management.

Move to substitute to develop an addendum with 3 regions, northern, southern, and DelMarVa, with management measures in each region to end overfishing and rebuild overfished regions to target biomass levels.

Motion made by Dr. Pierce and seconded by Mr. Simpson. Motions withdrawn without objection.

Main Motion

Move to initiate an amendment to respond to the 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment for three stock areas MA-RI, CT-NJ, and DE-NC.

Motion made by Mr. Simpson and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to include additional stock area boundaries MA-CT, NY-NJ, DE-NC.

Motion made by Mr. Fote and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carries (7 in favor, 3 opposed).

Main Motion as Amended

Move to initiate an amendment to respond to the 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment for both sets of three stock areas the first being MA-RI, CT-NJ, and DE-NC, the second being MA-CT, NY-NJ, DE-NC.

Motion carries (9 in favor, 1 opposed).

Move to establish a joint subcommittee of the Tautog Management Board and the Law Enforcement Committee to study problems of unauthorized harvest and sale of tautog, especially the well-publicized live-fish market in local and interstate commerce that likely is contributing to current levels of overfishing. The joint committee is to: (1) determine the feasibility of ASMFC mandating a fish-tagging program for each state that would minimize the unlawful commerce of tautog and provide traceability of all fish in commerce back to the state of origin and harvester, and (2) if feasible, then offer details of such a program to accomplish the two aforementioned objectives.

Motion made by Dr. Pierce and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion carries without objection.

From: John Bullard - NOAA Federal [<mailto:john.bullard@noaa.gov>]
Sent: Friday, May 15, 2015 3:49 PM
To: johnfishon@comcast.net
Cc: Terry Stockwell
Subject: Re: 2015 fishing regulations GOM

Dear John,

Thank you for taking the time to write to Terry Stockwell and I. We have discussed your email and hear your frustration and concern for the future of the recreational fishing industry in New England. But we can't ignore the science, which shows the Gulf of Maine cod spawning stock is in grave condition. The recent interim measures were necessary to immediately protect the remaining small concentrations of cod to increase the stock's chance for recovery and potential for long term viability. This recovery is needed to support recreational and commercial fisheries, and a healthy marine ecosystem. The interim measures were implemented to allow the New England Fishery Management Council to develop a long-term plan to address Gulf of Maine cod.

On April 24, 2015, we approved Framework 53 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, which the Council developed to set catch recreational and commercial catch limits and implement related measures for the 2015 fishing year, which began on May 1. Framework 53 removes the Seasonal Interim Closure Areas and allows recreational vessels into the Gulf of Maine rolling closure areas, but continues to prohibit possession of Gulf of Maine cod by recreational vessels and charter or party boats. Using our authority to adjust recreational measures, we also announced a reduction in the minimum size for haddock caught recreationally in the Gulf of Maine, from 21 inches to 17 inches. These actions are necessary to ensure that the recreational catch of haddock and recreational bycatch of cod will not exceed the annual catch limits for the recreational fishery. The intent of reducing the haddock minimum size is to reduce discards of cod and haddock by allowing recreational anglers to retain smaller haddock, which will result in anglers achieving their bag limit more quickly. Additionally, our analysis predicted that increasing the bag limit to 4 haddock was unlikely (<50% probability) to keep haddock catch, or cod bycatch, from exceeding their respective quotas.

Recreational fisheries contribute significantly to cod and haddock mortality and so were also included in the interim action and the new measures for 2015. In 2013, recreational fishermen were responsible for 45 percent of the cod catch, and 57 percent of the haddock catch, in the Gulf of Maine. While each recreational fisherman may take only a few fish, there are over 340,000 registered recreational anglers in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. That doesn't count all the other recreational folks who don't need a permit. The recreational fishery exceeded its cod quota in 2013 and is projected to have done so in 2014. Additionally, recreational catch of haddock exceeded the quota in 2012 and 2013, and is projected to have done so in 2014.

Mortality of discarded cod and haddock is also important, and is considered in our science and management programs, because not all discarded fish survive. This includes recreational discards. A recently conducted study provides preliminary Gulf of Maine cod recreational discard mortality estimates of approximately 15 percent, rather than the 30 percent assumed in the most recent stock assessment. The study design accounted for longer term mortality under natural conditions with fishing practices (season, depths, gear types, fisher experience, handling methods, etc.) representative of the Gulf of Maine recreational fishery. The actual discard mortality will be related to the actual mixture of fishing tackle used and other factors. Normally, we adopt discard mortality estimates as part of our stock assessment process. However, as part of our effort to find the best management solution for the recreational fishery we reviewed this new study before it was published in a peer-reviewed journal or considered through our stock assessment process. Despite the uncertainties associated with the study, the 15-percent estimate of this work has a stronger scientific justification than the 30-percent rate. Therefore, when developing measures for fishing year 2015 we used a discard mortality rate of 15 percent.

cc/jp - 5/19/15

The most recent haddock assessment assumes 50 percent of haddock discarded by the recreational fishery do not survive. There aren't any recent studies on haddock discard mortality, which is why the Council funded two new projects this year to investigate that issue.

We are making concerted efforts to inform recreational fishermen about the regulations, the fishery in general, and safe fish handling practices by attending recreational fishing shows and club meetings throughout New England. We hope this will help to further reduce discard mortality while new research in this area is being conducted. Specifically, the Council funded two new projects this year to investigate recreational discard mortality of haddock. We hope these studies will improve our understanding and management.

Thank you again for writing and I hope you will continue to engage in our fishery management process as we move forward. We are accepting public comments on the 2015 recreational groundfish measures through June 1. Please visit our website by [clicking here](#) to view the *Federal Register* notice announcing the 2015 measures. This notice provides more detailed background on our decision, and explains how you can provide comments. Based upon public input, we will make a decision whether or not changes should be made to the interim rule.

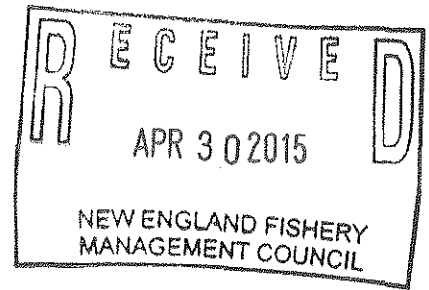
Regards,

John

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 29, 2015



Ms. Eileen Sobeck
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Administrator Sobeck:

As Senators representing Northeast states with coastal economies reliant on healthy groundfish fisheries and with residents whose livelihoods depend on a viable and reasonably regulated fishing industry, we write to direct NOAA to interpret the law as intended by Congress with regard to at-sea monitoring (ASM) funding for groundfishermen in 2015.

The fiscal year 2015 Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Appropriations spending bill, which became law with the passage of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act in December 2015, included language on ASM from the Senate report accompanying the bill. This language is intended to ensure the successful transition to catch shares in fisheries that have catch share programs approved by the Secretary of Commerce. Similar report language has been incorporated into the CJS spending bill for the past few fiscal years, and we have been pleased that it has historically achieved its aim of covering the costs of at-sea monitoring for Northeast groundfish fisheries. This has been particularly important for Northeast fisheries as our region makes the difficult transition to a catch share management program.

However, based on feedback that we have received from our constituents, we are concerned that NOAA has chosen an interpretation of this FY15 report language that is inconsistent with congressional intent, and consequently, that very high ASM costs will soon unreasonably burden already struggling members of the fishing industry in the Northeast.

In April 2014, the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Councils approved a Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) amendment that establishes standards of precision for bycatch estimation for all Northeast Region fisheries. Under the proposed SBRM amendment, NOAA contends in a recent letter to members of the industry that it would be required to expand coverage to a wider range of fleets. Further, the amendment would also require observer funds from specific budget lines to be prioritized to meet the requirements of the SBRM over additional observer needs. NOAA indicates that, as a result of these funding requirements, it does not expect to have sufficient funds to fully support observer requirements for the 2015 fishing year and anticipates that sectors will be forced to assume responsibility for ASM costs before the end of the calendar year.

In the wake of the 2012 Northeast Fishery Disaster, fishing communities in our states continue to experience tremendous financial strain. Suddenly declining stock assessments have led to drastic cuts in fishing quotas and fishermen's revenues. This unexpected crisis has left many of our

jc/jp - 4/30/15

fishermen, particularly those with the smallest boats, with little room to pay additional per-trip fees for ASM. To remain in the fishery, many fishermen are being forced to draw on personal income or extended credit, shift costs to crew, shrink crew size, or postpone vessel maintenance. In this unstable economic environment, we simply cannot expect fishermen to endure additional fixed costs of \$650 to \$800 per trip with an observer aboard and maintain a safe and sustainable enterprise.

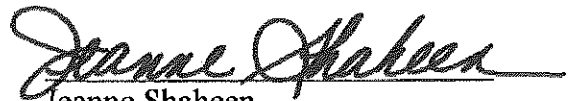
In order to ensure that the intent of the report language is being honored, we direct NOAA to prioritize the ASM requirements over the requirements of the SBRM amendment. A copy of the report language, which is very clear in its direction to NOAA, is enclosed for your review.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We appreciate your continuing efforts to work creatively and cooperatively with Congress to avert the collapse of our fisheries and secure their healthy and stable future.

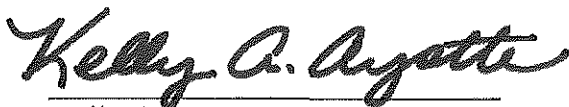
Sincerely,



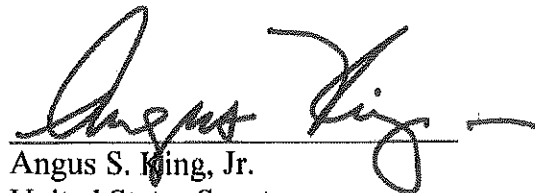
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



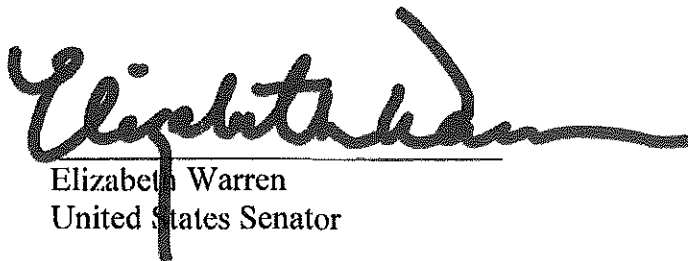
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

NOAA Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

For Information Contact:
Sustainable Fisheries Division
(978) 281-9315

<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/>

Date Issued: 4/23/2015

APR 30 2015

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

NORTHEAST MULTISPECIES (GROUNDFISH) FISHING YEAR 2015 REGULATIONS

Effective Date: May 1, 2015

We have approved Framework Adjustment 53 to the groundfish plan and are announcing fishing year 2015 management measures for the groundfish fishery. These changes begin on May 1, 2015. To see which regulations apply to you, this Bulletin is divided into five sections:

Framework 53: Measures For All Vessels – page 1
Windowpane Flounder Accountability Measure – page 5
Sector Measures – page 6
Common Pool Measures – page 6
Recreational Fishery Measures – page 9.
Reminder on Transiting Provisions – see attached bulletin

Framework Adjustment 53

Below is a brief summary of the approved Framework 53 measures that become effective on May 1, 2015. More detailed information can be found in the Framework 53 final rule at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies/>. The measures approved include:

Fishing Year 2015 Catch Limits The fishing year 2015 catch limits for most groundfish stocks are the same as in 2014, but there are large reductions in catch limits for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod (-75%), Georges Bank (GB) winter flounder (-44%), and GOM winter flounder (-53%). The US/Canada quotas are detailed in Table 1. *Fishing year 2015 catch limits are shown in Table 2 on page 4.* Because there may be changes to sector rosters through April 30, 2015, it is possible that the sector and common pool allocations included in this Bulletin may change. After we finalize fishing year 2014 catch information, we will subtract any sector sub-ACL or common pool overages from the respective fishing year 2015 sector or common pool catch limits and make any necessary adjustments to the catch limits in a future management action as close to May 1 as possible.

GOM Cod Protection Measures Framework 53 modifies the existing GOM rolling closures for the commercial groundfish fishery to help protect GOM cod. This action adds closures in the winter while opening other areas in the spring to provide increased fishing opportunities on healthy groundfish stocks like haddock. Recreational vessels may fish in these closure areas. *These changes are shown in Figure 1 on page 3.*

Table 1. Fishing Year 2015 U.S./Canada Quotas (mt, live weight) and Percent of Quota Allocated to Each Country

Quota	Eastern GB Cod	Eastern GB Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared Quota	650	37,000	354
U.S. Quota	124 (19%)	17,760 (48%)	248 (70%)
Canada Quota	526 (81%)	19,240 (52%)	106 (30%)

Recreational Vessels Prohibited from Keeping GOM Cod Framework 53 prohibits possession of GOM cod by the recreational fishery to help reduce the incentive to target the stock. Additional measures to reduce GOM cod catch by recreational vessels are described on page 9.

Sector Carryover This action finalizes a change to the sector carryover provision. Sectors may carryover up to 10% of their allocation, or an amount that would not exceed the allowable biological catch (ABC) for the next fishing year, whichever is less.

Daily Reporting Requirements Commercial vessels that declare their intent to fish inside and outside of the GOM broad stock area on the same trip are required to complete and submit a Multispecies Catch Report daily via Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). Please be aware that the instructions on the Multispecies Catch Report may not reflect this new requirement until the summer of 2015. Despite the instructions on the form, commercial vessels that declare their intent to fish inside and outside of the Gulf of Maine broad stock area on the same trip must complete and submit a Multispecies Catch Report on a daily basis beginning on May 1, 2015.

The daily VMS reporting requirement is being implemented to prevent vessels from catching cod in the GOM broad stock area and claiming it was caught in another broad stock area. Misreporting is a high priority for the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, and they will be monitoring reporting requirements closely during the 2015 fishing year. Penalties for misreporting can be significant, particularly for members of a sector, who may be penalized when another sector member misreports catch. Sector managers are reminded to discuss the importance of complying with all reporting requirements with sector members.

Other Measures This action also implements a number of administrative measures, including a mechanism for setting default catch limits, in the event a future management action is delayed.

Figure 1

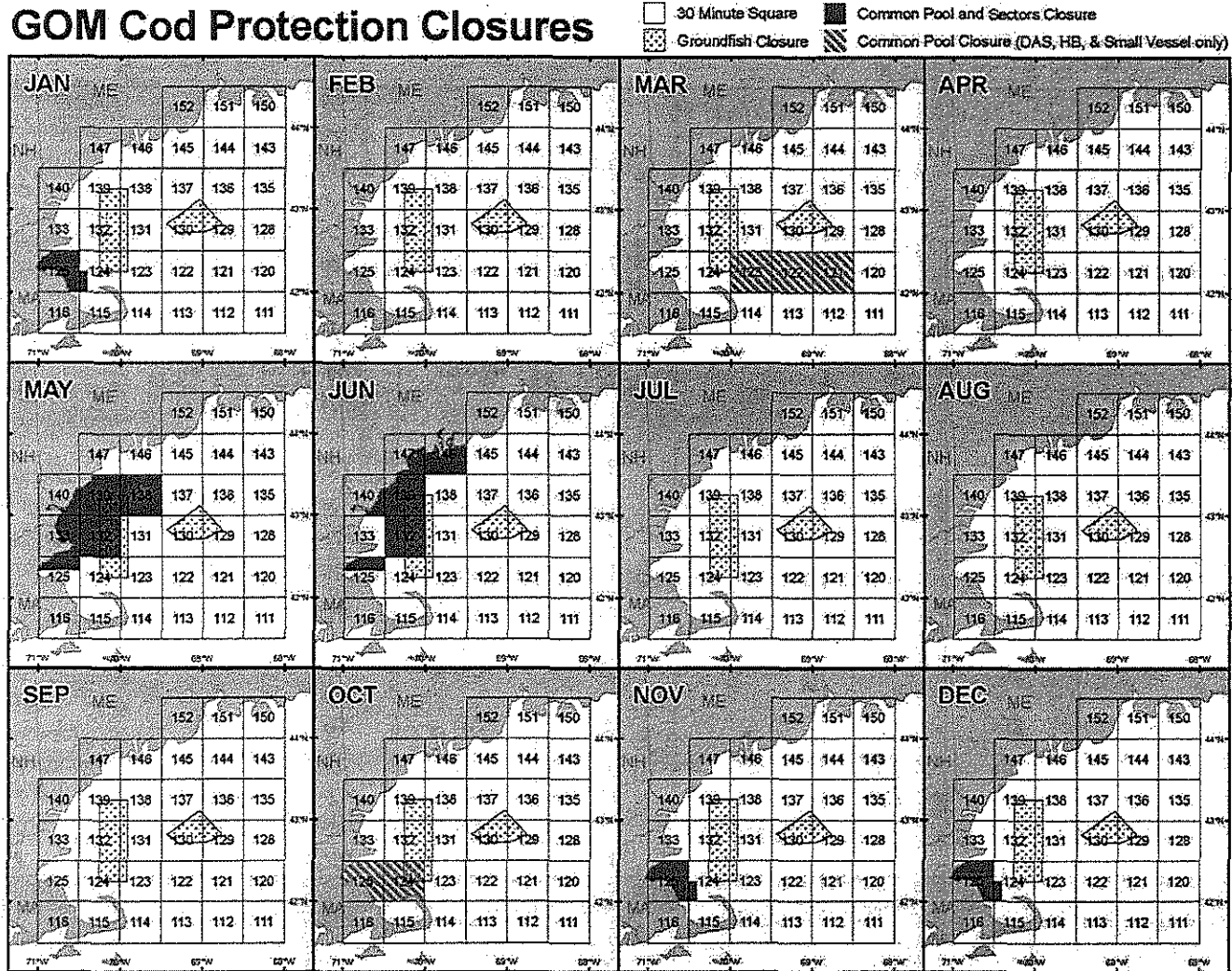


Table 2. Fishing Year 2015 Catch Limits (mt, live weight)

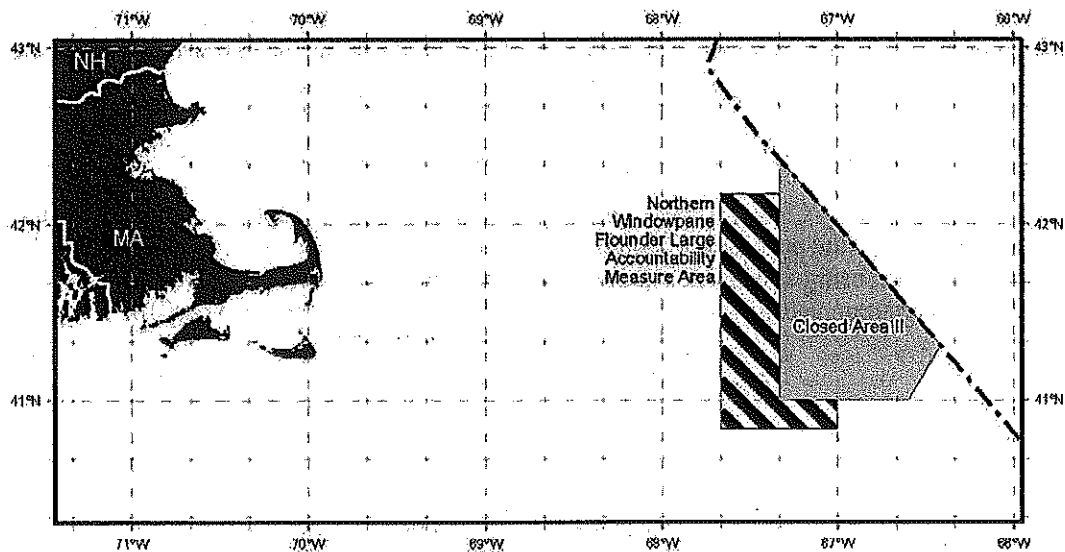
Stock	Total ACL	Total Groundfish Fishery	Preliminary Sector	Preliminary Common Pool	Recreational Fishery	Midwater Trawl Fishery	Scallop Fishery	Small-Mesh Fisheries	State Waters sub-component	Other sub-component
GB Cod	1,886	1,787	1,753	34					20	79
GOM Cod	366	328	202	5	121				26	13
GB Haddock	23,204	21,759	21,603	156		227			244	975
GOM Haddock	1,375	1,329	949	9	372	14			11	21
GB Yellowtail Flounder	240	195	192	3			38	5	na	2
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	666	557	457	102			66		14	28
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	524	458	442	16					38	27
American Plaice	1,470	1,408	1,381	27					31	31
Witch Flounder	751	610	598	12					23	117
GB Winter Flounder	1,952	1,891	1,876	15					na	60
GOM Winter Flounder	489	392	375	18					87	10
SNE/MA Winter Flounder	1,607	1,306	1,149	157					117	184
Redfish	11,393	11,034	10,974	60					120	239
White Hake	4,484	4,343	4,311	32					47	94
Pollock	15,878	13,720	13,628	92					996	1,162
N. Windowpane Flounder	144	98	na	98					2	44
S. Windowpane Flounder	527	102	na	102			183		55	186
Ocean Pout	220	195	na	195					2	24
Atlantic Halibut	97	64	na	64					30	3
Atlantic Wolffish	65	62	na	62					1	3

Accountability Measures Due to Windowpane Flounder Overage

For fishing year 2015, commercial groundfish vessels fishing on a groundfish trip with trawl gear are required to use selective trawl gear when fishing in the large northern windowpane flounder accountability measure (AM) area (see Figure 2 for a map of this restricted gear area). Approved selective trawl gears include the: 1) Haddock separator trawl; 2) Ruhle trawl; 3) mini-Ruhle trawl; or 4) rope separator trawl. Coordinates for this area are included below. There are no restrictions on longline or gillnet gear in this area.

This AM is being implemented due to a recent overage of the total catch limit for northern windowpane flounder. More information on windowpane flounder AMs can be found here: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/regs/infodocs/windowpaneaminfosheet.pdf>.

Figure 2. FY 2015 Northern Windowpane Flounder Gear Restricted Area



N. Windowpane Flounder Large AM Area		
Point	N. Latitude	W. Longitude
1	42°10'	67°40'
2	42°10'	67°20'
3	41°00'	67°20'
4	41°00'	67°00'
5	40°50'	67°00'
6	40°50'	67°40'
1	42°10'	67°40'

Sector Measures

We have approved 17 sectors to operate in fishing years 2015 and 2016 (May 1, 2015, through April 30, 2017):

- Georges Bank Cod Fixed Gear Sector
- Maine Coast Community Sector
- Northeast Coastal Communities Sector
- Northeast Fishery Sectors I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, and XIII
- Sustainable Harvest Sectors 1 and 3

All approved sectors receive “universal” exemptions from trip limits for allocated stocks, the GB Seasonal Closure Area, and the requirement to use groundfish DAS to land groundfish. All sector vessels may use a 6-inch mesh codend on haddock separator trawls, rope trawls, and Ruhle trawls when fishing on GB. Sector vessels are also exempt from portions of the GOM Cod Protection Areas (see months March and October in **Figure 1** on page 3). Sector vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS in the Southern New England Broad Stock Area with extra-large mesh gillnets are exempt from the at-sea monitoring coverage rate. Along with these universal exemptions, we approved 19 additional exemptions for fishing years 2015 and 2016. Additional information on the approved sector exemptions can be found in the sector operations plan final rule at <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies/>.

Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program

No trips are allocated to the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program (SAP) for fishing year 2015 for the purposes of targeting yellowtail flounder. Vessels may still fish in this area to catch haddock when using a haddock separator trawl, a Ruhle trawl, or hook gear. Vessels may not fish in this access program using flounder nets. The SAP will close on January 31, 2016.

Eastern U.S./Canada Area

Starting on May 1, 2015, sector vessels fishing with trawl gear may access the Eastern U.S./Canada Area.

Common Pool Measures and Trip Limits

Tables 3-6 show the trip limits that will apply to common pool vessels beginning on May 1, 2015. We may increase or decrease these limits during the fishing year to ensure that the common pool catch limits are fully caught, but not exceeded. We will announce any necessary changes in a future management action.

Any landings prior to midnight on April 30, 2015, are subject to the fishing year 2014 landing limits. All landings after 0001 hours on May 1, 2015, are restricted to the fishing year 2015 limits announced in this Bulletin.

Common Pool Trimester Total Allowable Catches

The common pool catch limit for each stock is divided into trimester total allowable catches (TACs): Trimester 1 (May 1-August 31); Trimester 2 (September 1-December 31); and Trimester 3 (January 1-April 30). *Fishing Year 2015 trimester TACs are listed in Table 3 on page 7.*

Area closures

Once we project that 90 percent of a trimester TAC for a stock is caught, we will close the respective Trimester TAC Area to common pool vessels fishing with gears capable of catching the respective stock. The area will remain closed until the end of that trimester, and will re-open at the start of the next trimester. The areas that will close for each stock, and the gears that the closure will apply to, are listed below in **Table 4**.

During the fishing year, we will post weekly quota monitoring reports here:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/MultiMonReports.htm>.

Table 3. FY 2015 Trimester TACs (mt)

Stock	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3
GB Cod	8.6	12.7	13.1
GOM Cod	1.3	1.7	1.8
GB Haddock	42.0	51.3	62.2
GOM Haddock	2.56	2.47	4.46
GB Yellowtail Flounder	0.6	0.9	1.6
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	21.4	37.7	42.8
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	5.5	5.5	4.7
American Plaice	6.6	9.9	11.0
Witch Flounder	3.4	3.8	5.2
GB Winter Flounder	1.2	3.5	10.1
GOM Winter Flounder	6.5	6.6	4.4
Redfish	14.9	18.5	26.2
White Hake	12.0	9.8	9.8
Pollock	25.7	32.1	33.9

* SNE Winter Flounder is not managed under a trimester quota

Table 4. Common Pool Trimester TAC Area Closures

Stock	Statistical Area	Gear
GOM cod	513, 514	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
GB cod	521, 522, 525, 561	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
GOM haddock	513, 514, 515	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
GB haddock	521, 522, 525, 561, 562	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
CC/GOM yellowtail flounder	514, 521	Trawl, gillnet
GB yellowtail flounder	522, 525, 561, 562	Trawl, gillnet
SNE/MA yellowtail flounder	537, 539, 538, 613	Trawl, gillnet
GOM winter flounder	514	Trawl, gillnet
GB winter flounder	522, 525, 561, 562	Trawl
Witch flounder	512, 513, 514, 515, 521, 522, 525	Trawl
American plaice	512, 513, 514, 515, 521, 522, 525	Trawl
Pollock	513, 514, 515, 521, 522	Gillnet, trawl, longline/hook
Redfish	513, 514, 515, 521, 522	Trawl
White hake	513, 514, 515, 521, 522	Gillnet, trawl

Table 5. Initial Fishing Year 2015 Common Pool Possession and Trip Limits

Stock	Possession and Trip Limits
GB Cod (outside Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	2,000 lb/DAS, up to 20,000 lb/trip
GB Cod (inside Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	100 lb/DAS, up to 500 lb/trip
GOM Cod	50 lb/DAS, up to 200 lb/trip
GB Haddock	25,000 lb/trip
GOM Haddock	50 lb/DAS, up to 200 lb/trip
GB Yellowtail Flounder	100 lb/trip
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	2,000 lb/DAS, up to 6,000 lb/trip
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	1,500 lb/DAS up to 3,000 lb/trip
American plaice	Unlimited
Witch Flounder	1,000 lb/trip
GB Winter Flounder	1,000 lb/trip
GOM Winter Flounder	1,000 lb/trip
SNE/MA Winter Flounder	3,000 lb/DAS, up to 6,000 lb/trip
Redfish	Unlimited
White hake	1,500 lb/trip
Pollock	10,000 lb/trip
Atlantic Halibut	1 fish/trip
Windowpane Flounder	Possession Prohibited
Ocean Pout	Possession Prohibited
Atlantic Wolffish	Possession Prohibited

Table 6. Fishing Year 2015 Trip Limits for Handgear and Small Vessel Category Permits

Permit	Initial FY 2015 GOM Cod Possession/Trip Limit	Initial FY 2015 GB Cod Possession/Trip Limit
Handgear A	50 lb per trip	300 lb per trip
Handgear B	25 lb per trip	75 lb per trip
Small Vessel Category	300 lb of cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder combined; Maximum of 50 lb of GOM cod and 50 lb per trip of GOM haddock within the 300-lb combined possession limit	

Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program

Starting on August 1, 2015, common pool vessels can fish in the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program (SAP) to target haddock using a haddock separator trawl, a Ruhle trawl, or hook gear. Vessels may not fish in this SAP using flounder nets. The SAP will close on January 31, 2016.

Eastern U.S./Canada Area

Starting on May 1, 2015, common pool vessels using trawl gear may fish in the Eastern U.S./Canada Area. Common pool vessels must use a haddock separator trawl, a Ruhle trawl, or a flounder trawl in this area.

GOM Cod Trip Limit Exemption VMS Form for DAS Vessels

We have removed the VMS form that allows common pool vessels to retain the higher possession limit of GB cod and transit through the GOM where the possession limit is lower. Instead, if you would like to land a higher possession limit of cod, you must declare BSA's outside of the GOM, fish only in those BSAs, and then transit through the GOM back to port without fishing.

For vessels that would like the higher possession limit of cod, but do not have a VMS unit, you must still get an LOA that allows you to fish on GB and transit through the GOM with a higher possession limit of cod.

Recreational Fishery Measures

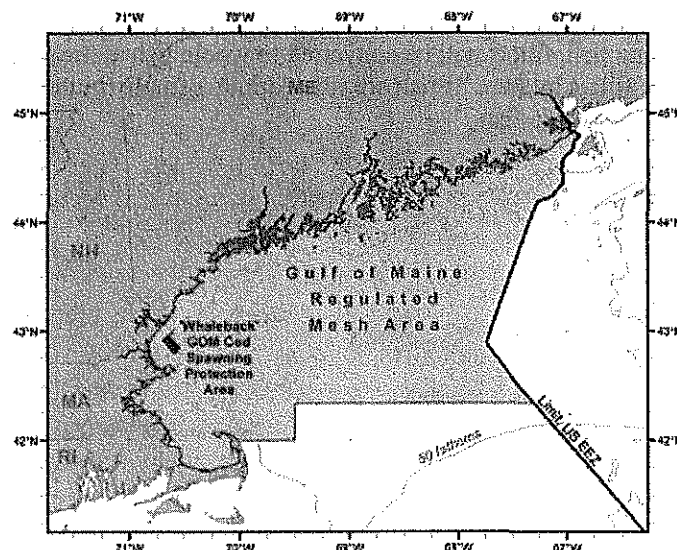
We are implementing the following recreational measures for cod and haddock in the Gulf of Maine (GOM), including minimum fish sizes, per angler daily possession (bag) limits, and closed seasons when retention is prohibited. The measures are applicable for the GOM regulated mesh area and for the 2015 fishing year (May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2016). If measures are changed at a later date, an additional Bulletin will be issued and widely distributed. Additional information on the fishing year 2015 recreational measures can be found at:

<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies/>. Recreational measures for cod and haddock outside the GOM Regulated Mesh Area remain unchanged.

Table 7. Fishing Year 2015 Recreational Fishing Measures for GOM cod and haddock

Species	Daily Bag Limit (fish per angler)	Minimum Fish Size (in Inches)	Retention Prohibited (closure periods)
Cod	Zero Retention	N/A	May 1, 2015, - April 30, 2016
Haddock	3	17	September 1 – October 31, 2015 and March 1 – April 30, 2016

Figure 3. GOM Regulated Mesh Area



GOM Cod Protection Measures Framework 53 modifies the existing GOM rolling closures for the commercial groundfish fishery to help protect GOM cod. This action adds closures in the winter while removing other areas in the spring to provide increased fishing opportunities on healthy groundfish stocks like haddock. Recreational vessels may fish in these closure areas. Federally-permitted charter/party vessels must have a letter of authorization to fish in these areas.

Cod

- When in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area, people aboard recreational fishing vessels may not fish for or possess any cod.
- Unlawfully possessing a single GOM cod in the recreational fishery will subject violators to a \$750 fine. More information on fines and penalties is available here. <http://www.gc.noaa.gov/enforce-office3.html>
 - Exception: Recreational vessels with cod caught outside the GOM Regulated Mesh Area may transit this area, provided all bait and hooks are removed from fishing rods and any cod on board has been gutted and stored.

Haddock

- When in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area, each person on a recreational fishing vessel may possess up to 3 haddock per day.
 - Exception: Recreational vessels in possession of haddock caught outside the GOM Regulated Mesh Area may transit this area, provided all bait and hooks are removed from fishing rods and any haddock on board has been gutted and stored.
- Haddock must be stored so as to be readily available for inspection.
- Haddock on recreational fishing vessels with more than one person aboard may be pooled in one or more containers. Compliance with the possession limit will be determined by dividing the number of fish on board by the number of people on board.
- For purposes of counting fish, fillets will be converted to whole fish at the place of landing by dividing the number of fillets by two. If fish are filleted into a single (butterfly) fillet, such fillet shall be deemed to be from one whole fish.



Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

NOAA Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

For Information Contact:
Sustainable Fisheries Division
(978) 281 – 9145

www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/
Date Issued: 4/23/2015

NORTHEAST MULTISPECES (GROUND FISH)

TRANSITING REGULATIONS

Reminder

This reminder clarifies that a vessel may not enter or be in a closed area, even if its gear is stowed, in order to wait for the area to open for purposes of fishing. The groundfish regulations allow a vessel to transit a closed area with its gear stowed provided it does not engage in fishing activities in the area. Transiting means traveling from a point outside the closed area to another open area, or to port, or from port to an area outside the closed area. Transiting does not include a vessel being in the closed area waiting for the area to open, even if its gear is stowed, because such activity is considered to be fishing.

Example

A vessel docked in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on May 31, 2015, wants to begin a fishing trip and fish in Ipswich Bay (inside block 133) after it opens on June 1, 2015. (See Gulf of Maine Cod Protection Closure maps on reverse.)

That vessel must either:

1. Wait until 12:00 am on June 1, 2015, to depart the dock and fish in Ipswich Bay; or
2. Depart the dock on May 31, 2015, steam from port to an open area outside of the May Cod Protection Closure, where it may fish, and then reenter block 133 after 12:00 am on June 1.

A vessel may not depart the dock in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on May 31, 2015, steam to Ipswich Bay, wait until 12:00 am June 1, 2015, and begin fishing in the newly opened area.

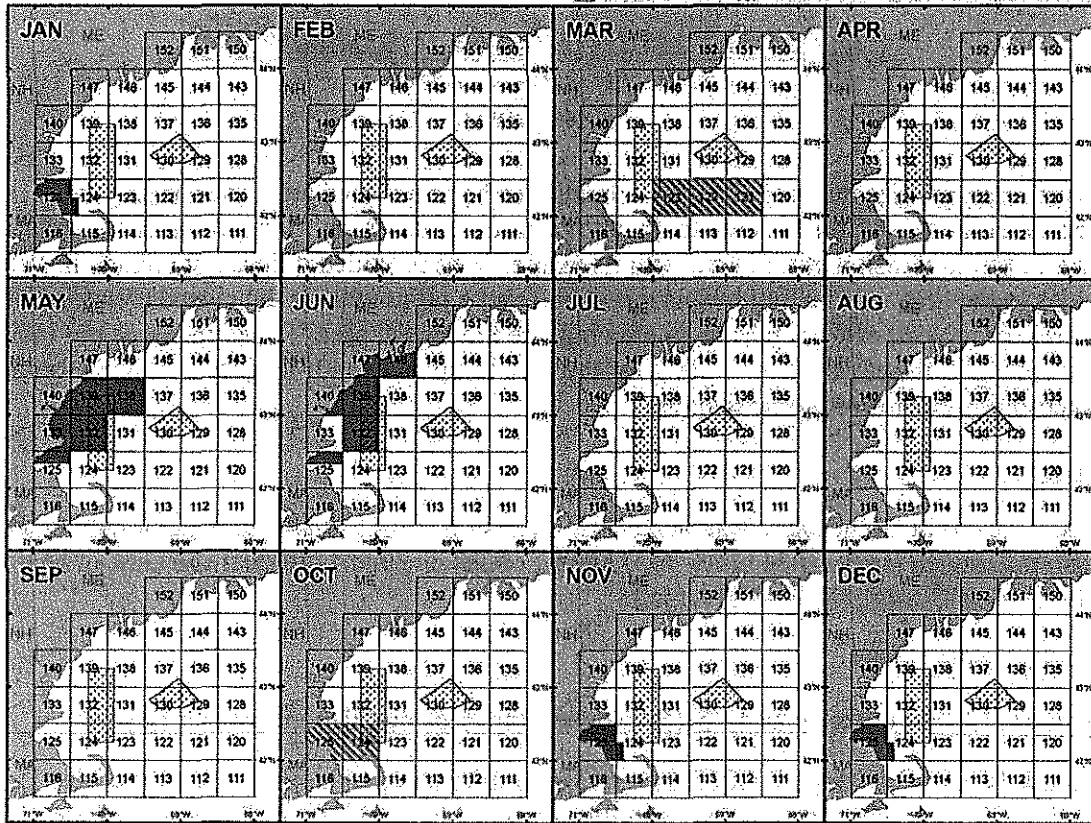
Frequently Asked Questions

Why were the transiting provisions created?	The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) first developed transiting provisions for closed areas to increase safety and decrease fuel costs in Framework Adjustment 9 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. We implemented those measures in 1995. Subsequent Council frameworks also included transiting provisions based on the original transiting provision implemented as part of Framework 9.
Why can't a vessel enter a closed area and wait for it to reopen?	The transiting provision was created by the Council specifically to address concerns about the safety and economic efficiency of requiring vessels to steam around a closed area to fish in open areas. A vessel waiting in the closed area for the area to open, even if its gear is stowed, is considered to be fishing. Allowing this practice would undermine the enforceability of the closure.

For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Greater Atlantic Region.

GOM Cod Protection Closures

30 Minute Square
 Common Pool and Sectors Closure
 Groundfish Closure
 Common Pool Closure (DAS, HB, & Small Vessel only)

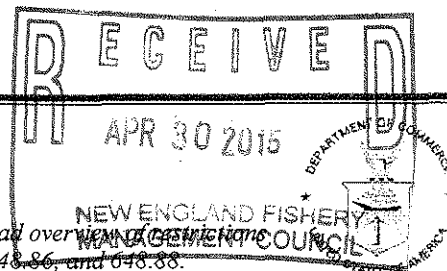




FY 2015 Groundfish Landing/Possession Limits Common Pool Fishery

These landing/possession limits are subject to change during the fishing year. This summary provides a broad overview of the regulations 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, 2015



Species	Minimum Size	Stock Area ¹	A DAS	Handgear A	Handgear B	Regular B DAS Program	
						Separator or Rulle Trawl ²	Non-Trawl Gear
Cod	19"	GOM	50 lb/DAS, up to 200 lb/trip	50 lb/trip	25 lb/trip	50 lb/DAS, up to 200 lb/trip	
		OFF GB, IN GB, and SNE	2,000 lb/DAS, up to 20,000 lb/trip (outside of the Eastern U.S./Canada Area) ²	300 lb/trip	75 lb/trip	100 lb/DAS, up to 1,000 lb/trip	
			100 lb/DAS up to 500 lb/trip (E. U.S./Canada Area)				
			1,000 lb/trip Closed Area I Hook Gear Haddock SAP - or- Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP (for targeting haddock)				
Haddock	16"	GOM	50 lb/DAS, up to 200 lb/trip				
		OFF GB, IN GB, and SNE	25,000 lb/trip				
Pollock	19"	All Areas	10,000 lb/trip			100 lb/DAS, up to 1,000 lb/trip	
Redfish	7"	All Areas	Unlimited				
White hake	none	All Areas	1,500 lb/trip			100 lb/DAS, up to 500 lb/trip	
Atlantic halibut	41"	All Areas	1 fish/trip				
Yellowtail flounder	12"	GOM, IN GB	1,500 lb/DAS, up to 3,000 lb/trip			25 lb/DAS to 250 lb/trip	
		SNE	2,000 lb/DAS, up to 6,000 lb/trip				
		OFF GB	100 lb/trip				
American plaice (dabs)	12"	All Areas	Unlimited			100 lb/DAS, up to 1,000 lb/trip	
Witch flounder (gray sole)	13"	All Areas	1,000 lb/trip			100 lb/DAS, up to 250 lb/trip	
Winter flounder	12"	OFF GB	1,000 lb/trip			500 lb/trip of all flatfish combined. However, may not exceed A-DAS limit for any stock	
		IN GB, SNE	3,000 lb/DAS, up to 6,000 lb/trip				
		GOM	1,000 lb/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

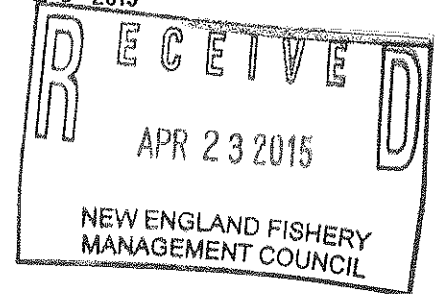
³ Gear performance trip limits of 500 lb all flatfish combined, 500 lb whole monkfish (unless restricted by the monkfish FMP), 500 lb whole skate, and zero lobsters also apply

Jed JP 4/30/15



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

APR 23 2015



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 53 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). We have also finalized recreational management measures for the 2015 fishing year. The final rules implementing the approved measures become effective on May 1, 2015, and will be published in the *Federal Register* soon. A brief explanation of the key issues is provided below. A more detailed discussion of these issues, and all of the approved measures, can be found in the final rules for these actions.

Framework 53 Measures

Gulf of Maine (GOM) Cod Catch Limits

For GOM cod, we approved an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 386 mt with the expectation that the catch limits implemented in Framework 53 will be reviewed following the September 2015 assessment for the stock. The next groundfish management action is intended to set 2016-2018 catch limits based on this assessment, which would replace the 2016-2017 catch limits adopted in Framework 53. We considered the GOM cod catch limits carefully based on the 2014 assessment, the SSC's recommendation, and all of the available catch projections. Recognizing the uncertainties in catch projections, we determined that the risk of erring in setting the catch limit is largely mitigated given the pending 2015 assessment and the likely need to reset catch limits for 2016-18. Therefore, our approval of the GOM cod catch limit is, effectively, approval only for the first year of the remaining rebuilding time period. Further, although the available catch projections indicate that GOM cod could still rebuild by 2024 under an ABC of 386 mt, we caution that this could require lower catch limits for GOM cod in the future than may otherwise be possible if stricter reductions were taken now.

GOM Cod Protection Closures

We approved the Council's re-configuration of the GOM area closures. However, given concerns for GOM cod, and the potential of the April opening to negatively affect other groundfish stocks, we strongly encourage the Council to reconsider some or all of the April closures. The closed area recommendations for the winter and April were presented as a package in an effort to balance conservation and economic objectives. As a result, we determined that these recommendations could not be approved or disapproved independent of each other without undermining the Council's intent. However, if the removal of April closures was recommended



in isolation, we likely would have disapproved this measure. Additionally, the gear exemptions provided for the protection closures may be inconsistent with other measures taken by the Council to protect spawning aggregations and behavior. The Council should consider modifying the gear restrictions in the GOM cod protection closures to be consistent with other spawning measures and increase the effectiveness of these closures.

Daily Catch Reporting

We are concerned that such a low catch limit for GOM cod may create an economic incentive to misreport catch, which could reduce the accuracy of catch apportionment. To help ensure correct catch apportionment and compliance with the GOM cod catch limit, we are changing the frequency that commercial groundfish vessels must submit catch reports to us through the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). Sector and common pool vessels that declare their intent to fish in the GOM and any other broad stock area on the same trip must now submit daily VMS catch reports for the duration of the trip, instead of the trip-level reporting previously required.

We highlighted our concerns in the proposed rule for misreporting, and noted that we intended to discuss the issue further with the Council. In response to those concerns, the Council commented that, in Amendment 16 to the FMP, it adopted a daily VMS catch report requirement for multiple broad stock area trips, and also gave us the authority to modify the frequency of catch reports, as necessary. Upon implementation of Amendment 16, we determined that only trip-level catch reports were required for multiple broad stock area trips. However, given the current situation, we determined that daily catch reports are now required if fishing in the GOM and other broad stock areas will occur on the same trip. Therefore, consistent with the Council-approved provisions of Amendment 16, we are implementing this requirement without further discussion with the Council in light of public comments received on this issue and the potential negative impacts that any misreporting may cause.

Northern Windowpane Flounder Accountability Measure (AM)

In the proposed rule for Framework 53, we noted that catch estimates of northern windowpane flounder for the commercial groundfish fishery were approaching the overall annual catch limit (ACL) for the stock. After the proposed rule, we updated catch estimates for the commercial groundfish fishery, as well as the scallop fishery. Based on data reported through April 14, 2015, catch estimates exceed the overall ACL by 66 percent and the overfishing limit (OFL) by 18 percent (Table 1).

Table 1. Fishing Year 2015 Catch Estimates for Northern Windowpane Flounder

OFL	Total ACL	Catch			Percent of Total ACL Caught
		Total	Groundfish Fishery	Scallop Fishery	
202	144	239	156	83	166%

Because the overage is more than 20 percent of the ACL, we are implementing the large AM area on Georges Bank, as required. This AM requires all common pool and sector vessels to use

selective trawl gear in the AM area. Longline or gillnet vessels are not affected by this AM. Northern windowpane flounder is not allocated to the scallop fishery, and, as a result, the AM does not affect scallop vessels. The AM will remain in place for the entire 2015 fishing year.

The total ACL for northern windowpane flounder was exceeded in 2012, 2013, and now again in 2014. When the current AMs were first adopted in the FMP, they were only triggered for the start of Year 3 (2 years following an overage) due to data availability. As a result, an AM was not triggered until 2014 as a result of the 2012 overage. Since then, the Council has modified the timing of AMs to allow for implementation of an AM in the year immediately following an overage based on reliable data. Although the subsequent overages could be partly due to the delay in implementing the 2014 AM, a substantial overage still occurred in 2014 with the AM in place.

There are a number of possible factors that may have contributed to the subsequent overages of the northern windowpane ACL. During the development of Framework 52 last year, some information indicated that northern windowpane flounder stock status may have improved since the last time the stock was assessed in 2012. As a result, recent quota overages may also be an indication of increasing stock biomass. Regardless, however, the suite of management measures for this stock must be designed with sufficient confidence to prevent overages of the ACL, and to correct or mitigate any overages that occur. We support the Council's ongoing initiative to review northern windowpane flounder management measures, and, as part of the initiative, the Council should consider whether any adjustments to the AMs for this stock are necessary.

Recreational Management Measures

As recommended by the Council in Framework 53, we are prohibiting possession of GOM cod by the recreational fishery, in order to allow the fishery access to the GOM area closures and mitigate economic impacts. In addition to this measure, under separate authority, we are implementing new restrictions for GOM haddock to help ensure that the recreational fishery does not exceed its allocations. At its January 29, 2015, meeting, the Council recommended that we increase the GOM haddock possession limit from three fish to four fish, reduce the minimum size of GOM haddock from 21 inches to 17 inches, and maintain the current seasonal possession restrictions. The Council also recommended that we continue outreach to the recreational fishery to address non-compliance and implement new gear restrictions to reduce discard mortality.

Table 2 summarizes the final recreational management measures that we are implementing for the 2015 fishing year. We are implementing the Council's recommendations for the GOM haddock minimize size and seasonal restrictions. However, analysis indicated that increasing the GOM haddock possession limit to four fish was unlikely to keep either GOM haddock catch, or the resulting GOM cod bycatch, from exceeding the recreational catch limits for the 2015 fishing year. As a result, we determined that maintaining the current three-fish possession limit was necessary. We are also not implementing the gear restrictions recommended by the Council because of a lack of available conclusive scientific evidence that the restrictions would have positive conservation benefits in the GOM recreational groundfish fishery. However, we do support voluntary use of this gear by the recreational fishery. We will continue outreach efforts

to participants in the recreational fishery, and expect that this will result in increased compliance with the recreational measures in 2015.

Table 2. Fishing Year 2015 Recreational Management Measures

Stock	Per Day Possession Limit (fish per angler)	Minimum Fish Size	Possession Prohibited
GOM Cod	0	na	May 1, 2015 - April 30, 2016
GOM Haddock	3	17 inches (43.2 cm)	September 1 –October 31, 2015 and March 1 – April 30, 2016

The model used to analyze recreational measures indicates that the final 2015 recreational measures would constrain GOM haddock catch below the catch limit, but that catch of cod may still exceed the recreational catch limit. However, because the model is likely overestimating fishing effort and cod catch, we determined that it is unlikely the recreational fishery will exceed its GOM cod allocation in 2015. The model has a limited ability to predict the effect of the GOM cod zero possession restriction on angler fishing effort because there is no historic information on this scenario. While there is no way to quantify a reduction in effort beyond the model prediction, we expect that realized recreational effort will be at least 10 percent less than the model has predicted given the zero-possession requirement for GOM cod.

In analyzing recreational management measures for 2015, we have adopted a new lower estimate of recreational GOM cod discard mortality than what was used in the most recent stock assessment. After reviewing a recently conducted study of recreational GOM cod discard mortality, Northeast Fisheries Science Center staff determined that the 15-percent estimate derived from this study has a stronger scientific justification than the 30-percent rate used in the most recent assessment. There is some scientific concern with the use of a discard mortality estimate for in-season catch monitoring that is different than the estimate used to set catch targets. Consistency between catch targets and catch monitoring is necessary to effectively manage fishing mortality targets. The 2015 assessment update for GOM cod will use data through only 2014. A future stock assessment that would use catch data from fishing year 2015 would be expected to consider the recent discard mortality study as part of its terms of reference, and if warranted, any changes to the discard mortality estimate would be applied throughout the entire assessment time series. Following a future assessment that re-considers the discard mortality rate, we would ensure the estimate used for inseason monitoring was consistent with the assessment results. However, we determined that the recently conducted study provides a stronger scientific justification for estimating the recreational discard mortality of GOM at this time.

Conclusion

We think it is important to now begin preparing for the next groundfish management action that will set catch limits for the 2016-2018 fishing years. The Council will begin development of this

action soon, and we will work with you to plan how the assessment updates will be incorporated for this action. As part of this planning process, the Council should consider how best to address other adjustments to the groundfish management measures that may arise this year, including our suggested changes to the GOM area closures. If you have questions about our approval of Framework 53, 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

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 150105004-5355-01]

RIN 0648-BE75

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions;

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Groundfish Fishery;

Framework Adjustment 53

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

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This final rule approves and implements Framework Adjustment 53 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. This rule sets fishing years 2015-2017 catch limits for several groundfish stocks, modifies management measures for Gulf of Maine cod, and adopts other measures to improve the management of the groundfish fishery. 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 prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks, achieve optimum yield, and ensure that management measures are based on the best scientific information available.

DATES: The suspension of 50 CFR 648.2 definition for “Gillnet gear capable of catching multispecies,” § 648.14 paragraphs (k)(6)(i)(E), (k)(7)(i)(A) and (B), (k)(12)(v)(E) and (F), (k)(12)(v)(K) and (L), (k)(13)(i)(D)(I) through (4), (k)(13)(ii)(B)

through (D), (k)(13)(ii)(K) through (M), (k)(14)(viii), and (k)(16)(iii)(A) through (C), and (k)(16)(iii)(D) and (F), § 648.80 paragraphs (a)(3)(vi), (a)(3)(viii), (a)(4)(iii), (a)(4)(ix), and (g)(6)(i) and (ii), § 648.81 paragraphs (d)(1) through (4), (e)(1) and (2), (f)(1) and (2), and (g)(1)(i), (o)(1)(iii), (iv) and (viii) through (x) and (o)(2)(iv), § 648.82 paragraphs (b)(5) through (8), § 648.85 paragraphs (b)(6)(iv)(D) and (K), § 648.86 paragraphs (b)(1) through (7), § 648.87 paragraphs (b)(1)(v)(A), (b)(1)(ix), (b)(1)(x), (c)(2)(i), (c)(2)(ii)(A) and (B), (c)(2)(ii)(E), and (c)(2)(iii), § 648.88 paragraphs (a)(1) and (3), § 648.89 paragraphs (b)(3), (c)(1) and (2), (c)(8), and (e)(1) through (4), is lifted, and the amendments in this final rule are effective on May 1, 2015. Comments on the burden-hour estimates or other aspects of the collection-of-information requirements contained in this final rule must be received by *[insert date 60 days after date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER]*.

ADDRESSES: Written comments regarding the burden-hour estimates or other aspects of the collection-of-information requirements contained in this final rule may be submitted by either of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit all electronic public comments via e-mail to OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov.
- *Mail:* Submit written comments to John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope, "Comments on Groundfish Daily Catch Reporting."

Copies of Framework Adjustment 53, including the Environmental Assessment, the Regulatory Impact Review, and the final Regulatory Flexibility Act analysis prepared

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 150305221-5221-01]

RIN 0648-BE82

**Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions;
Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Groundfish Fishery; Fishing
Year 2015; Recreational Management Measures**

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

ACTION: Interim final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This action implements a reduction to the minimum size for Gulf of
Maine haddock taken in the recreational fishery. This action is necessary to ensure that
the recreational catch of haddock and recreational bycatch of cod will not exceed the
annual catch limits for the recreational fishery in fishing year 2015. The intended effect
of this action is to reduce discards of cod and haddock by allowing recreational anglers to
retain smaller haddock, which will result in anglers achieving their bag limit more
quickly.

DATES: Effective May 1, 2015. Comments must be received by *[insert date 30 days
after date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER]*.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-
NMFS-2015-0046, by either of the following methods:

Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal.

1. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2015-0046
2. Click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and
3. Enter or attach your comments.

- OR -

Mail: Submit written comments to: John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope, "Comments on the fishing year 2015 Haddock Recreational Measures."

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

Copies of a supplemental environmental assessment (EA) to Framework Adjustment 53 prepared by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) and Northeast Fisheries Science Center and the Framework 53 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 Great Republic

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 140821699-5361-02]

RIN 0648-XD461

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Multispecies Fishery; 2015 and 2016 Sector Operations Plans and 2015 Contracts and Allocation of Northeast Multispecies Annual Catch Entitlements

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

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: We have partially approved sector operations plans and contracts for fishing years 2015 and 2016, granting regulatory exemptions for fishing years 2015 and 2016, and providing Northeast multispecies annual catch entitlements to approved sectors for fishing year 2015. Approval of sector operations plans is necessary to allocate annual catch entitlements to the sectors and for the sectors to operate. The Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan allows limited access permit holders to form sectors, and requires sectors to submit their operations plans and contracts to us, NMFS, for approval or disapproval. Approved sectors are exempt from certain effort control regulations and receive allocations of Northeast multispecies based on its members' fishing history.

DATES: Sector operations plans and regulatory exemptions are effective May 1, 2015, through April 30, 2017. Northeast multispecies annual catch entitlements for sectors are effective May 1, 2015, through April 30, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Copies of each sector's final operations plan and contract, and the environmental assessment (EA), are available from the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office: John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. These documents are also accessible via the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Liz Sullivan, Fishery Management Specialist, phone (978) 282-8493, fax (978) 281-9135. To review **Federal Register** documents referenced in this rule, you can visit:

<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

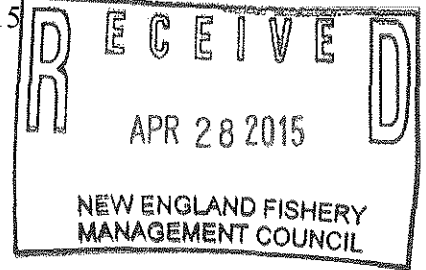
Amendment 13 to the Northeast (NE) Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) (69 FR 22906, April 27, 2004) established a process for forming sectors within the NE multispecies (groundfish) fishery, and Amendment 16 to the FMP (74 FR 18262, April 9, 2010), followed by Framework Adjustment 45 to the FMP (76 FR 23042, April 25, 2011) and Framework 48 to the FMP (78 FR 26118; May 3, 2013), expanded and revised sector management.

The FMP defines a sector as “[a] group of persons (three or more persons, none of whom have an ownership interest in the other two persons in the sector) holding limited access vessel permits who have voluntarily entered into a contract and agree to certain fishing restrictions for a specified period of time, and which has been granted a TAC(s) [*sic*] in order to achieve



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

April 27, 2015



Douglas Grout
Chief, Marine Division
NH Fish and Game Department
225 Main Street
Durham, NH 03824

Dear Doug:

I would like to provide you with an updated "Bin 3" disaster allocation proposal. My intent is to outline the analyses my staff have used to generate the proposed reprogrammed state-by-state distribution of funds that would occur involving the remaining Bin 3 money. I believe the approach addresses the many needs expressed in our March 13, 2015, meeting with you and the informal buyout working group. Moreover, it seems consistent with what many of you have discussed in concept in the one-on-one conversations I've had with you subsequent to that March meeting.

You will recall from the March meeting that I spoke strongly in favor of a Bin 2 type approach. I continue to do so because it permits states to tailor disaster-funded programs in a way that makes the most sense for each state and its residents that have been most affected by the fisheries disaster. You will also recall that we heard very strongly from the industry partners on the buyback working group that direct aid to active fishery participants should remain a top priority. For this reason, they supported a "Bin 1" approach to reprogramming the remaining Bin 3 aid money. In light of this, my staff and I have crafted a hybrid approach that updates information used in the initial disaster aid distribution discussions and calculations, creating a compromise position.

We started by updating fishing year 2013 information. You may recall that our initial discussions and Bin 1 and 2 evaluations had made use of projected fishing year 2013 data. Because the projections were conducted around this time last year, the projections were very accurate because most of the fishing year had already transpired. We also conducted a similar projection of fishing year 2014 catch and economic value to better understand the magnitude of ongoing revenue declines. With these data, we looked at several different options on how to reprogram the Bin 3 money. These included rolling all the funds into either Bin 1 or 2 and making use of actual fishing year 2013 and projected 2014 revenue losses relative to average revenue from several different year ranges. Recall our initial Bin 1 approach used average revenue from 2007-2011 as the 'baseline' for use in comparing the percent total decline in revenue compared to projected 2013 revenues.

Ultimately, I believe the following to be a compelling approach for the remaining Bin 3 funds (\$10,090,000--the amount remaining after the 17 out of region Bin 1 eligible payments totaling \$552,500 were made in the fall). Here is our proposal:



cbk ~ 4/28/15

1. Reserve \$200,000 for the continued development of an industry funded buyback program. I propose to provide this amount to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with the expectation that they will, in turn, partner with industry to continue the work needed to develop a viable buyback program. The prior experience of developing a buyback proposal is a key component of my thoughts on providing these funds to Massachusetts. This leaves \$9,890,000 to be reprogrammed further.
2. Take half of the remaining funds (i.e., \$4,945,000) and use the original Bin 1 approach to allocate to each state. To be clear, the expectation is not that an additional direct aid payment would be required. This is merely a way to craft a redistribution allocation using methods previously agreed upon for direct aid approaches. We heard clearly that industry members support direct aid to active permit holders. Many of you also supported this. More on this later in this letter.
3. The remaining funds, \$4,945,000, would then be allocated using an updated Bin 2 type approach. We used projected 2014 landings and revenue and compared that to the 5-year average revenue from fishing years 2008-2012. We believe using projected 2014 data is appropriate as it captures the ongoing impacts, in particular those that have arisen as a result of recent measures to protect Gulf of Maine cod. In addition, we elected to use a slightly more recent 5-year period as the baseline. Fishing year 2013 was excluded because it is more similar to the fishing year 2014 projections. If included in the baseline, it potentially masks the level of impact that occurred beginning in 2013 and continuing into the projected 2014 data.

The combined state-by-state allocation resulting from these approaches is as follows:

Share Based Bin 1 (Original Direct Aid Approach)					Share Based on FY2008 - FY2012 Average Decline					
State	Original Count of Eligibilities , 5,000 lb Threshold*	Percent of Total Eligibility Count	State Share of \$4.9M Based on Original	2008 - 2012 Five Year Avg.	Projected 2014**	2014 Decline from Five Year Average	Percent of Total Decline	State Share of \$4.9M Based on Losses	Preliminary State Share of \$9.89M	FINAL State Share of \$9.89M
			A					B		A + B
CT	3	0.9%	\$43,000	\$120,277	\$37,305	\$82,972	0.4%	\$19,977	\$62,977	\$62,977
MA	201	58.3%	\$2,881,000	\$58,520,965	\$42,544,055	\$15,976,910	77.8%	\$3,846,761	\$6,727,761	\$6,927,761
ME	52	15.1%	\$745,333	\$14,451,880	\$13,909,762	\$1,142,118	5.6%	\$274,988	\$1,020,321	\$1,020,321
NH	28	8.1%	\$401,333	\$4,801,619	\$2,130,946	\$2,670,673	13.0%	\$643,018	\$1,044,351	\$1,044,351
NY	18	5.2%	\$258,000	\$1,173,211	\$878,608	\$294,603	1.4%	\$70,932	\$328,932	\$328,932
RI	43	12.5%	\$616,333	\$3,224,890	\$2,853,896	\$370,994	1.8%	\$89,324	\$705,658	\$705,658
Total	345	100.0%	\$4,945,000	\$82,292,841	\$61,754,571	\$20,538,270	100.0%	\$4,945,000	\$9,890,000	\$10,090,000

*Count of eligibilities as of April 30, 2014; includes private permit banks

Source: NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Office

**Fourth quarter of FY14 projected. The projection assumes similar 4th quarter fishing behavior to past years.

Groundfish revenue by limited access groundfish vessels on all trips

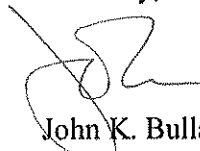
Includes estimates of missing revenue values

These data are the best available to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Data sources for this report include: (1) Vessels via VMS; (2) Vessels via vessel logbook reports; (3) Dealers via Dealer Electronic reporting. Differences with previous reports are due to corrections made to the database.

We believe this is a strong compromise that provides states a meaningful sum of disaster funds to provide further assistance to their communities and tailor additional programs to prevent a similar fishery failure in the future. I'd like to reiterate that we believe programs that consider active permit holders should be a top priority for some of the reprogrammed Bin 3 funds. There are clearly strong positions within the fishing industry supporting such an approach. I feel that this compromise approach provides states ample opportunity to address needs within their respective states in a way that is most meaningful based on the conversations you have had or will have with your fishing industry.

I am hopeful that you will find this approach suitable. If there is a need to discuss further, we can convene a call. Clearly, we will need to discuss the grants process and timing that will be necessary to award reprogrammed funds. If we want to ensure the Bin 3 funds are obligated this year, many of the grant processing deadlines will be coming up quickly in May and June. Should we fail to make those dates, it would be after the start of the new Federal fiscal year before the grant funds could be awarded. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you about this approach.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JB", written over a horizontal line.

John K. Bullard
Regional Administrator

Cc: Tom Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council (via e-mail)
Buyback Working Group Members (via e-mail)



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*

April 27, 2015

Mr. Michael J. Pierdinock
176 Sandy Beach Road
Plymouth, MA 02360

Dear Mike:

The New England Fishery Management Council's Executive Committee approved your application to serve a term as a Recreational advisor to the Groundfish Committee, filling a vacancy through 2016. A well-qualified group of advisors with various experiences and areas of expertise will be a great asset to the Council as they develop Fishery Management Plans.

Advisors will meet jointly with the committee when specifically invited, or as a group when charged to do so by the committee chairman. As an advisor, the Council relies on you to participate in the decision-making process and assist in the development of plans, which achieve conservation, are fair and equitable, and cause the least economic hardship.

You will find enclosed the Council's policies on Advisory Panels and Travel Authorization and Reimbursement. Please review them carefully as they concern appointments, termination, operations, etc. as well as information on travel to the advisory panel meetings. It is the Council's policy that you will be replaced if you are absent from two consecutive meetings without giving adequate notification or reason to the Executive Director. For our advisory panel process to be successful, your attendance at every scheduled meeting is essential.

On behalf of the Council, as well as the Groundfish Committee, I would like to thank you for your interest and willingness to serve in this capacity. Please feel free to contact Jamie Cournane or myself if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director

Enclosures (2)



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*

April 27, 2015

Ms. Bonnie Brady
PO Box 1036
Montauk, NY 11954

Dear Bonnie:

The New England Fishery Management Council's Executive Committee approved your application to serve a term as a Groundfish Committee advisor, filling a vacancy through 2016. A well-qualified group of advisors with various experiences and areas of expertise will be a great asset to the Council as they develop Fishery Management Plans.

Advisors will meet jointly with the committee when specifically invited, or as a group when charged to do so by the committee chairman. As an advisor, the Council relies on you to participate in the decision-making process and assist in the development of plans, which achieve conservation, are fair and equitable, and cause the least economic hardship.

You will find enclosed the Council's policies on Advisory Panels and Travel Authorization and Reimbursement. Please review them carefully as they concern appointments, termination, operations, etc. as well as information on travel to the advisory panel meetings. It is the Council's policy that you will be replaced if you are absent from two consecutive meetings without giving adequate notification or reason to the Executive Director. For our advisory panel process to be successful, your attendance at every scheduled meeting is essential.

On behalf of the Council, as well as the Groundfish Committee, I would like to thank you for your interest and willingness to serve in this capacity. Please feel free to contact Jamie Cournane or myself if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director

Enclosures (2)

April 22, 2015

New England Fisheries Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

RECEIVED

APR 22 2015

AT THE NEW ENGLAND FISHERY
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING

Dear Council Members;

As active commercial fishermen in Eastern Maine, we write you to share our deep concern about ongoing conversations at the Council, especially those about excluding lobster traps and other low impact gears from habitat closed areas in the Eastern Maine region. The Council's addition of habitat protection Option 5, including a complete restriction on all gears capable of catching groundfish, is absolutely unacceptable to us and our region.

It is not just Option 5. In the last months there have been ongoing discussions at the Council regarding impacts of lobster gear on groundfish populations. These discussions are at best a misguided overreach, and at worst, are directed attacks on highly sustainable fisheries operating in Eastern Maine. Either case is simply unacceptable. The Council has little, if any, reliable evidence to justify this focus on lobster gear. This approach is a distraction that could also impact purse seine, hand gear, tub trawl and other hook gear, along with other highly selective gears that are prime options for small-scale community fishermen like us.

Our communities are fishing towns, plain and simple. Amendment 13 identified our region as the most fisheries dependent on the East Coast. The collapse of groundfish in the 1990s led to the complete loss of groundfish permits here, and we've also lost our traditional small-scale herring fishery. The last significant federal opportunity we have left is lobster, and we are already almost entirely dependent on that and a few state water fisheries.

We are fishermen who fish close to home. The potential threat to the only major fishery still supporting us and our communities is immeasurable. Although we are hopeful that groundfish and other resources will recover in Eastern Maine, we cannot support closures until the issue of lobster gear is resolved with certainty. If groundfish recovery comes at the expense of our lobster fishery, and we cannot access the fish when they return, any sacrifices we make will only be another loss to our region.

We are monitoring the actions of the Council closely and look forward to seeing an end to the misguided and punitive efforts to exclude lobster gear and other low impact gears from any closed areas in the waters off of Maine.

Sincerely,

Robbie Gray
F/V Kathy Kass II
Deer Isle, ME

Jason Barter
F/V Islander II
Isle Au Haut, ME

Galen Plummer
F/V Fundy Wanderer
Corea Harbor, ME

rf

Lewis Dorr
F/V Family Tradition
Milbridge, ME

Blake Alley
F/V F'n A
Steuben, ME

Matt Shepard
F/V Sea Devil III
Stonington, ME

Chris Bates
F/V Franny Ellen
Brooksville, ME

David C Hiltz Jr.
F/V Sure Thing
Deer Isle, ME

Zach Lunt
F/V Joann's Angels
Frenchboro, ME

Leigh Farnsworth
F/V Whiskey Girl
Corea Harbor, ME

Ben Crocker Jr.
F/V Clean Sweep
Rogue Bluffs, ME

Jesse Moody
F/V Candies Toy
Jonesboro, ME

Troy Lewis
F/V Flo-Rida
Southwest Harbor, ME

Nick Lewis

Southwest Harbor, ME

Bobby Ingalls
F/V Vindicated
Buck's Harbor, ME

Josiah Rhys
F/V Predator
Deer Isle, ME

Brett Coleman
F/V Back in Black
Stonington, ME

Richard Smith
F/V Bad Behavior
Beals, ME

Michael Franz
F/V No Treble
Beals, ME

Ira Miller
F/V Julie Ann
Tenants Harbor

Caleb Lord
F/V Irresistable
Lubec, ME

James Smith
F/V Starting Over
Beals, ME

Franklin Smith
F/V Miss Carol
Beals, ME

Eugene Smith
F/V Retired Daze
Beals, ME

Ethan Whitaker
F/V Carpe Diem
Corea, ME

Mary Todd
F/V Aiden & Sadie
Chebeague Island, ME

Galen Turner
F/V Joshua B
Swan's Island, ME

Andy Mays
F/V Lost Airmen
Southwest Harbor, ME

Bruce Young
F/V Catman
Bar Harbor, ME

Bryant Ciomei
F/V Yippi-Ki-Yay
Stonington, ME

Taza Watt
F/V Turn The P.A.J.E.
Vinalhaven, ME

Stanley Sargent
F/V Gale Warnings II
Milbridge, ME

Todd Pinkham
F/V Overkill
Steuben, ME

Joe Locurto
F/V Joseph & Peter
Steuben, ME

Randy Norton
F/V Brittany Michelle
Steuben, ME

James Mcmillan
F/V Redsky
Lamoine, ME

Patrick Faulkingham
F/V Gramps Bird
Winter Harbor, ME

Logan Alley
F/V Joy Francis
Jonesport, ME

Joe Allen
F/V Keyfloater
Rockland, ME

Richard Hildings
F/V Dirty Scuppah
Vinalhaven, ME

Charles Smith
F/V Sandy Rose
Jonesport, ME

Sam Hyler
F/V Alison Ann
Islesford, ME

Mike Baudanza
F/V Red Hot
Owls Head, ME

Donald Nickles
F/V Blue By U
Owls Head, ME

Greg Perkins
F/V Jenny G II
Stockton Harbor, ME

Brandon Beal
F/V Kelsey & Nathan
Milbridge, ME

Christopher Beal
F/V Old Salt
Beals, ME

Arlin Alley
F/V Shell Shock
Jonesport, ME

Josh Polk
F/V Relentless
Machiasport, ME

Joseph McDonald
F/V Anothah Knotch
Jonesport, ME

Ryan Larrabee
F/V Resolute
Stonington, ME

Dixon Smith
F/V Size Matters
Beals, ME

John Collora Sr.
F/V Maggie C
Jonesport, ME

David Lemoine
F/V Praise The Lord II
Swan's Island, ME

Ben Crocker Sr.
F/V Finest Kind
Bucks Harbor, ME

Richard C. Nelson
F/V Pescadero
Friendship, ME

Leonard E. Young III
F/V Silver Spoon
Bar Harbor, ME

Genevieve K. McDonald
F/V Hello Darlin' II
Stonington, ME

William Faulkingham
F/V "51"
Winter Harbor, ME

Jason Joyce
F/V Andanamara
Swans Island, ME

Tad Miller
F/V Mallery Sky
Matinicus, ME

John J. Tripp
F/V Spindrift
Spruce Head, Maine

James Tripp
F/V Sea Wife
Spruce Head, Maine

Michael Tripp
F/V Sea Hawk
South Thomaston, Maine

John F. Tripp
F/V Shearwater
Criehaven, Maine

John Williams
F/V Khristy Michelle
Stonington, ME

Mike Shepard
F/V Joyful Noise
Stonington, ME

John Stotz
F/V Dakini
Round Pond, ME

David Lord
F/V Sea-Duced
Lubec, ME

Josh Kelley
F/V Overtimer
Beals, ME

Charles Smith
F/V Sandy Rose
Jonesport, ME

Ben Murphy
F/V Murphy's Law
Southwest Harbor, ME

Ryan Bridges
F/V Corea Choice
Corea, Maine

Stephen J. Geel
F/V Hakuna Matata
Jonesport, ME

Robert Curtis
F/V Fate
Rockland, ME

Jarod Bray
F/V Karma
Matinicus, ME

Mike Murphy
F/V Murphy's Law
Machiasport, ME

Terry Savage
F/V Finest Kind
Northeast Harbor, ME

Steve Hutchinson
F/V Hannah Sue
Deer Isle, ME

Raynard Alley
F/V Utha Half
Beals, ME

Craig Sprowl
F/V Linda Lee
Southport, ME

Steve Small
F/V Hard Luck
Vinalhaven, ME

Dwight Chandler Jr.
F/V Khloei & Khinlei
Jonesport, ME

Mitchell White
F/V Tamie Lynn
Beals, ME

Willie Coombs
F/V Narda Jean
Prospect Harbor, ME

Jeffery Alley
F/V Nawthin To It
Jonesport, ME

Craig Garland
F/V Miss My Money
Portland, ME

Nick Wood
F/V Laureta & Aubrey
Machiasport, ME

Jason Mills
F/V Mama's Monkey
Jonesport, ME

Buddy Mills
F/V Mouse Trap
Jonesport, ME

Kyle Joy
F/V Kali Marie
Corea, ME

Brian Alley
F/V Rageous II
Jonesport, ME

Travis Alley
F/V Another Notch
Beals, ME

Brandee Beal
F/V Backup Pain
Beals Island, ME

Darren Graham
F/V Seaduction
Addison, ME

Andrew Hall
F/V Hurricane
Cutler, ME

Devin Schoppee
F/V Endeavor
Harrington, ME

Noah Ramsdell
F/V Chasin Tail
Harrington, ME

Jeff Jones
F/V Topchop
Criehaven, ME

Joshua Goston
F/V Double D
Milbridge, ME

Hartley Goston
F/V Darien Sue
Milbridge, ME

Kegin Schoppee
F/V Three of the Buoys
Harrington, ME

Lawrence Baillargeon
F/V Hunter
Beals, ME

Patrick Haillisey
F/V Mandy Jean
Cutler, ME

Jaxon Marston
F/V Devocean
Harrington, ME

William Sargent
F/V Red Rocket
Milbridge, ME

Kyle Chandler
Offshore 34
Beals, ME

Richard Davis
F/V Daddy's Helpers
Swan's Island, ME

Stephen Gatcomb
F/V Hammer Down
Machiasport, ME

Jeremy Holmes
F/V Jenny II
Winter Harbor, ME

Heather Thompson
F/V Redneck Girls
Harrington, ME

Michael Sargent
F/V Tina Marie
Milbridge, ME

Spencer Thompson
F/V Spencer Nathan
Harrington, ME

Joshua V. Miller
F/V Dorcas Anne
Tenants Harbor, ME

Whitney Sargent
F/V Small Craft Advisory
Milbridge, ME

Erick Harjula
F/V Redeemed
Spruce Head, ME

Jacob Kirby
F/V EZ GO-N
Jonesport, ME

Cyrus Sleeper
F/V Centerfold
South Thomaston, ME

Vertland Bagley
F/V Ayla Marie
Milbridge, ME

Nate Alley
F/V Money Shot
Beals, ME

Oscar Beal
F/V Papa's Pride
Jonesport, ME

Brandon Norton
F/V Slow Roll
Beals, ME

RECEIVED

To the New England Fisheries Management Council,

APR 21 2015

Loss of fleet diversity affects us because we are socially and ecologically minded students who care where our food comes from, including our seafood. We see consolidation as a problem because we are all too familiar with the negative ecological and social impacts consolidation of our land-based food system has caused; we refuse to repeat the same pattern on the ocean and in our fisheries. The University of Vermont, thanks to resounding student voice, is committed to shifting its buying toward real food- food that is ecologically sound, and fair for all. Your decisions matter to us.

Amendment 18 deals with these urgent problems and must be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Based on our knowledge and research, it's clear that a range of actions can be implemented to address the problems fishermen have identified. We recommend that the Council prioritize the following potential solutions in order to achieve their goals:

- limit the amount of quota any one entity can control,
- ensure the scale of fishing pressure matches the scale of the ecosystem, especially around key inshore areas,
- create absolute transparency around quota control so the public can see how a public resource is being used

Students of the University of Vermont support community based fishing, co-management, local control, and transparency as a way to create a healthier ocean and more just seafood system. We request that the New England Fisheries Management Council make policy decisions towards this end. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Joe Diamante

James McGary

Blaise Stinner

amphur

amphur

amphur

Scott Green

amphur

Jack Duncan

amphur

Kristen Faletra

amphur

amphur

amphur

Bridgette McInea

amphur

amphur

amphur

amphur

amphur

amphur

amphur

rf-4/24/15

Olevis Perera
Mason Christen

Alexander Gacabau
Mantana Zano
John Soderlin
Isabel Molina

Jane Stender
Mariah Novak
Mall

John Paul
Nica Pousa

Wye
Robert Brundage
Alexandre Damm

Jennifer Rooke
Emma Franco
Rebecca Elrick
All Singley
Jenna Langner
Pete

of

Olive Perera
Steph Polidoro
Mike Perera
Laura Hurdle
Yahaira Escobedo
Enfalter
Fionn Langley

Christina Savelle
Tj
Sofia Perera

Nehay Zivie

Emm L. Perera
Cecilia Perera
Clare Pacelli
M. Perera
Jayvin Card

Cassandra Clout

Dana Cammerick

Elie Galt

Brigitte Gagné

Col Thoz

Caroline Kepler

Olivia Mc L

Molly L

Kira Kelley

Noah Bender

Helena Murray

Gery Bernstein

Wendy Morgan

Ryan Starks

Max Freely

Casey Moya

Jillian Whalen

Alexis Gynn

James H. Page

Heaven H

Savannah Charif

Will Silva

Sam N

Yvonne

Anthony

Jimmy Oliver

Austin Ritter

Ben

Taylor Harmon

Kellum Walter

Will Rubin

Mike Pake

Bonnie

Rocky

Bradley Papp

Oliver Scotch

Shirley

Grace Weepner

~~James~~

Josh Bird

Sam Allen

Alyssa Johnson

~~John~~

M. J.

Ch. K.

Emily ~~Johnson~~

James Brown

As. Frost

~~John~~

Sage Ryan

B. M.

Jess Braddish

Amich W. Leand

Kamil Barrow

Alexandria Nista

~~A Nina Nalantic~~

Maureen Gault-Horag

John Zup

~~John~~

Kevin

Nicole Kim

Boyd

Matt Rhin

~~John~~

Lucy Lin

Jessica Arnesen

~~John~~

Cassandra Marino

Lee Ann

Colin F. Smith

Chris Miller

Employees

Mike Decker

Neil Co

Robert Chordery

Sherie Goutier

From: Marc Lamothe <marcolamothe.keeper@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 21, 2015 1:00 PM
To: info info
Subject: Stellwagen and other closure discussions

Please let your data rich expert biologists make these decisions. This public comment piece to your decision making is confusing and ineffective. Should economically desperate commercial fishermen really be involved in this decision making process. Cod and striped bass are on the brink of collapse.....I know this because I work as a charter captain. Close down what needs to be closed to save these fisheries.

State by state decision making on migratory species such as striped bass is foolish and unfair. Three mile limit or not, we all share these fish. Please find a way to take a lead in the management of striped bass.

Please publish regs. in a timely manner. What can I fish for and where? That's what I want to know. I trust your experts to lead us. Your process for decision making is too slow and not always based on scientific data. Trust the people you have hired to do their work.

Capt. Marc "Marco" Lamothe
4 Jordan St.
Saco, Maine 04072

del. info 4/24/15

Sherie Goutier

From: Julie Miller <jamiller54@roadrunner.com>
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2015 11:54 PM
To: comments
Cc: Brett Tolley
Subject: Amendment 18

Chairman Terry Stockwell:

There have been many problems associated since the catch share policies began in 2010. Over the last five years the development of Amendment 18 has been taking shape, part of the discussion of this amendment has revolved around issues regarding fleet diversity. There have been a host of suggestions on ways that we can take steps to forward that idea. Some of those include caps on quota somewhere in the range of 2-5%, inshore area protection, trip limits, gear restrictions, community quota and many others. Thus far the council has chosen to acknowledge any of these thoughts in any meaningful way. I say this to every council member when issues such as these arise it is your duty to address the concerns of all of the people, so please think about how your legacy as a decision making body will be viewed over time. With proper action you can show that all segments of the industry are being heard.

Sincerely, Ira Miller

F/V Mallary Sky

F/V Julie Ann

3,

Sherie Goutier

From: Stacia Clinton <sclinton@hcwh.org>
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2015 10:29 PM
To: comments
Subject: Comments on New England Catch Share Policy
Attachments: HCWH A18 letter.pdf

Dear Chairman Terry Stockwell and Executive Director Tom Nies,

Please take a moment to read the attached comments in response to the proposed A18 addressing New England catch share policy. This statement reflects the concerns of my organization, a global non-profit with a network of thousands hospitals and health care facilities. I hope you will consider these comments in your deliberations.

Best,
Stacia

--

Stacia Clinton, RD. LDN.
Regional Director / National Leadership Team
Healthy Food in Health Care Program
Health Care Without Harm
www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org
sclinton@hcwh.org
(978) 660-2537

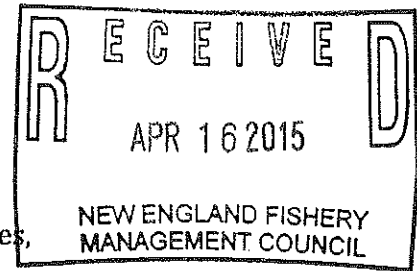
Farm to Institution New England - Leadership Team
www.farmtoinstitution.org

Hunger and Environmental Nutrition (HEN) Dietetic Practice Group - Past-Chair2012-2013
www.hendpg.org

scClinton - 4/24/15

April 16, 2015

Dear Chairman Terry Stockwell and Executive Director Tom Nies,



I am writing in opposition of the current New England's Catch Share policy in the groundfish fishery as proposed, which continues to support consolidating the access to fish into the hands of a few large companies or entities. This policy is undermining our efforts to negotiate manageable pricing that supports a larger dollar to those from our historic fishing communities.

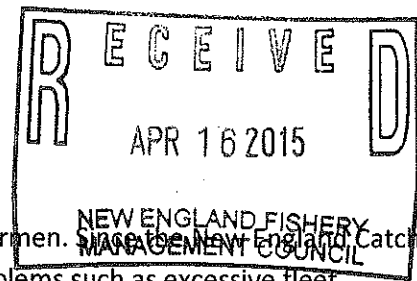
I am the Director of Infrastructure for Boston Medical Center. We serve and we serve 1,500,000 meals per year and have a food budget of \$2,500,000. As a health care facility serving patients, employees, and the broader community, it is important for my institution to have access to wild-caught fish from New England waters because we recognize that this is the best way to protect our marine resources and support the resilience of our local fishing communities. Imports of similar species are not a substitute.

Seafood is an important source of lean protein for our facility, and over the past few years we have actively shifted our purchasing policies to prefer seasonally available, underutilized wild species from community-based boats in New England, especially the small and medium scale fishing operations. Local seafood aggregators have made this possible and we support the strengthening of this infrastructure so that we may continue to support a diverse market. During this time, we have seen an increase in consumption of seafood at our facilities and we have received great feedback about the choices we have made - we don't want to lose this momentum.

Fleet consolidation and concentration of the rights to fish will undermine these efforts we've undertaken to support local fishing communities. The A18 policy will be a failure if it does not include safeguards for community-based fishermen to access fishing rights and protections for inshore fish stocks, which currently it does not. We recommend that the Council immediately prioritize solutions that support local economies, a diverse and regional market and a healthier ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Leo LaRosa
Director of Infrastructure
Boston Medical Center



To the New England Fisheries Management Council,

The New England Fisheries Management Council has failed the fishermen. Since the New England Catch Share policy began in 2010, fishermen and allies have identified problems such as excessive fleet consolidation, inappropriate scale of fishing on inshore areas, lack of access for the next generation of fishermen, and lack of transparency. Over the past five years the Council prioritized the Amendment 18 in order to solve these problems. Fishermen and allies worked together to offer various solutions to the Council and yet still, the Council has failed to address these problems.

As it stands, all of the options in Amendment 18 allow those who control the most fish quota to keep it. Those who have fished at scale-inappropriate levels get to continue. And lack of transparency surrounding quota cost and trading is still unacceptable. Community fishermen have followed the public process and yet you have ignored them. Before the Catch Share policy was adopted in rapid fashion, the Council and Catch Share proponents promised that they would work to fix any problems that might arise. Now we are left wondering if that was a way to quiet those concerned about Catch Shares because if it was a sincere offer then we are here to tell you that you have failed at fulfilling your promise.

The following protections are essential if you were sincere about wanting to fix Catch Shares:

- Inshore area protections to allow the local stocks to recover. Protections might include trip limits, fishing one broad stock area, and more.
- Fleet diversity protections for fishermen who fish on these stocks.
- Mechanisms for inter-generational trading of fisheries access, affordable community quota, baseline leasing criteria for leasing, and more.
- Establish a cap on quota control somewhere between 2-5%.

The Council's lack of attention to these issues is a major problem because family fishermen support local economies, a healthy ocean, and access to locally caught seafood. I urge you to adopt policies that protect fleet diversity, level the playing field for family fishermen, and ensure that the rights and access to fish and the public's ocean are NOT privatized and concentrated into the hands of a few players.

Loss of fleet diversity affects me because I care where my food comes from and I have family that worked in the fishing industry. I see consolidation as a problem because I know what consolidation has done to our land-based food system and we should do everything possible to avoid repeating the same pattern on the ocean and in our fisheries. I am involved with my organization shifting its buying toward real food / good, clean, fair for all. Your decisions matter to us.

Warmest Regards,

Eileen O'Donoghue

Director Food & Nutrition Services

NEBH

Dear Chairman Terry Stockwell and Executive Director Tom Nies,

I am writing in opposition of the current New England's Catch Share policy in the groundfish fishery as proposed, which continues to support consolidating the access to fish into the hands of a few large companies or entities. This policy is undermining our efforts to negotiate manageable pricing that supports a larger dollar to those from our historic fishing communities.

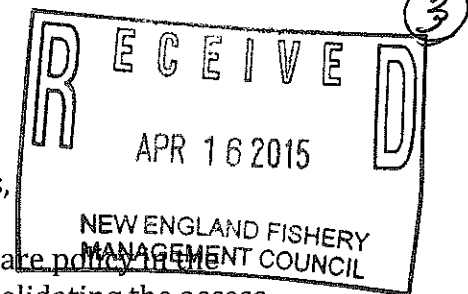
I am the Community Outreach Coordinator for New Milford Hospital in New Milford CT. We serve an average of 187 meals per day and have a food budget of \$1,260,000. As a health care facility serving patients, employees, and the broader community, it is important for my institution to have access to wild-caught fish from New England waters because we recognize that this is the best way to protect our marine resources and support the resilience of our local fishing communities. Imports of similar species are not a substitute.

Seafood is an important source of lean protein for our facility, and over the past few years we have actively shifted our purchasing policies to prefer seasonally available, underutilized wild species from community-based boats in New England, especially the small and medium scale fishing operations. Local seafood aggregators have made this possible and we support the strengthening of this infrastructure so that we may continue to support a diverse market. During this time, we have seen an increase in consumption of seafood at our facilities and we have received great feedback about the choices we have made - we don't want to lose this momentum.

Fleet consolidation and concentration of the rights to fish will undermine these efforts we've undertaken to support local fishing communities. The A18 policy will be a failure if it does not include safeguards for community-based fishermen to access fishing rights and protections for inshore fish stocks, which currently it does not. We recommend that the Council immediately prioritize solutions that support local economies, a diverse and regional market and a healthier ecosystem.

Sincerely,

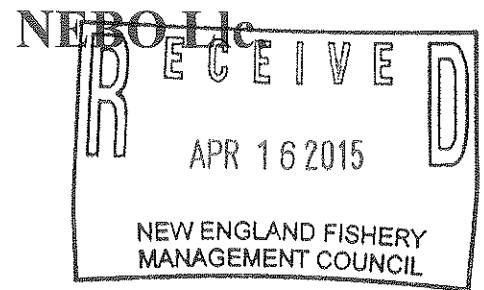
Susan Twombly
Community Outreach Coordinator
New Milford Hospital (CT)



Mulberry Street

981 Main Street, Manchester Connecticut 06040

860-645-TOGO



Dear Sirs,

As a small independent restaurant owner, finding high quality ingredients has always been a challenge. The advent of the sustainability movement, reviving the supply chain to look more like the one our grandparents remember, has been a boon to the enthusiasm, creativity and drawing power for businesses like Mulberry Street. We rely on the hard work of small independent fishermen, farmers and manufacturers to bring balance to the shopping cart the world now requires.

Hundreds of years ago...the fishermen of New England became one of the first global enterprises... selling salt cod worldwide. Our whaling industry lit the world before gas and oil appeared.

Many people are unaware of the link between the money made from these industries and how it funded the American revolution. The changes in the New England economy...the development of the textile and manufacturing hubs, the advent of the industrial revolution happened as a direct result of the money lent from people who fished for a living.

To state it very simply...We are the United States of America because of the work and backbones of the people who go to sea every morning and catch fish.

As the economic pendulum swings away from individuals toward an economy where the benefits and profits seem to end up in the pockets of the large corporations...we need a supply chain that ensures the benefits are fairly distributed...and that the availability of that supply chain reaches all members of society...rich and poor.

It is fair to expect that a balance between the large mega processors...who can feed the world, and small independent fishermen...is needed. However, it is critical that the shift does not go so far as to eliminate the people who make up the backbone of our economy...the small business person....in this case the local independent fishermen and women.

New England seafood is linked to history...it is about economics, tourism and our way of life.

As we move forward...please keep in mind the impact any changes will have on the people, the water and our country.

Sincerely yours,

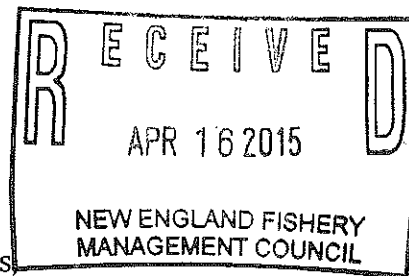
Bob Sulick

Owner: Mulberry Street

"Meet Me at the Mulb!"



Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well



April 16, 2015

Dear Chairman Terry Stockwell and Executive Director Tom Nies

I am writing in opposition of the current New England's Catch Share policy in the groundfish fishery as proposed, which continues to support consolidating the access to fish into the hands of a few large companies or entities. This policy is undermining our efforts to negotiate manageable pricing that supports a larger dollar to those from our historic fishing communities.

I am the Culinary Program Coordinator for Boston Children's Hospital. We serve 2,000,000 meals per year and have a food budget of \$5+ Million. As a health care facility serving patients, employees, and the broader community, it is important for my institution to have access to wild-caught fish from New England waters because we recognize that this is the best way to protect our marine resources and support the resilience of our local fishing communities. Imports of similar species are not a substitute.

Seafood is an important source of lean protein for our facility, and over the past few years we have actively shifted our purchasing policies to prefer seasonally available, underutilized wild species from community-based boats in New England, especially the small and medium scale fishing operations. Local seafood aggregators have made this possible and we support the strengthening of this infrastructure so that we may continue to support a diverse market. During this time, we have seen an increase in consumption of seafood at our facilities and we have received great feedback about the choices we have made - we don't want to lose this momentum.

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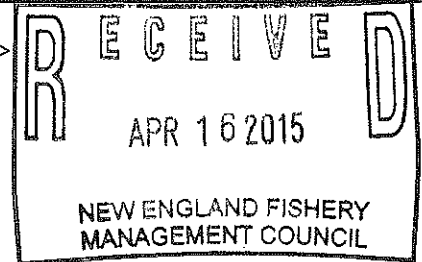
Sincerely,

Paul V. O'Connor

Paul V. O'Connor
Culinary Program Coordinator
Boston Children's Hospital

Joan O'Leary

From: Ron Borjeson <ron.whofishesmatters@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2015 11:46 AM
To: comments
Subject: Groundfish policy failure



Dear Terry Stockwell and Tom Nies,

I'm a second generation commercial fisherman and I've fished for 42 years. During the late 90's and 2000's, together with my fellow fishermen, we took drastic conservation measures to bring back the fish. The rapid shift to Catch Share policy in 2010 then allowed a pressure of fishing on our inshore fishing areas that reversed all of our conservation efforts. Now we're left with nothing to catch.

Over the past five years we brought these problems to the Council and the Council promised to fix them with Amendment 18. Additional problems we highlighted were excessive consolidation, issues with the allocation and quota market, and lack of transparency.

We brought solutions to the Council such as flexible trip limits that avoid discards and we were ignored. Now as it stands, the options within Amendment 18 do little to fix any of these problems.

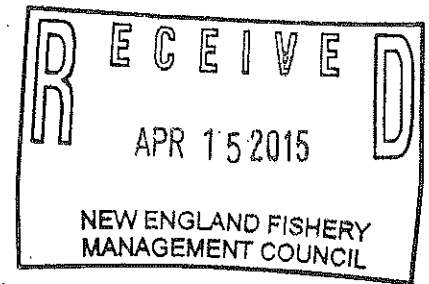
If Amendment 18 doesn't not dramatically change course our New England Catch Share policy will be a complete failure.

sincerely,

Ron Borjeson
F/V Angenette

4/15/15

Dear Chairman Terry Stockwell and Executive Director Tom Nies,



I am writing in opposition of the current New England's Catch Share policy in the groundfish fishery as proposed, which continues to support consolidating the access to fish into the hands of a few large companies or entities. This policy is undermining our efforts to negotiate manageable pricing that supports a larger dollar to those from our historic fishing communities.

I am the Food Service Director for MaineGeneral Medical Center. We serve 1950 meals per day and have a food budget of \$ 1,900,000.00. As a health care facility serving patients, employees, and the broader community, it is important for my institution to have access to wild-caught fish from New England waters because we recognize that this is the best way to protect our marine resources and support the resilience of our local fishing communities. Imports of similar species are not a substitute.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Olin", written over the printed name.

Conrad R. Olin

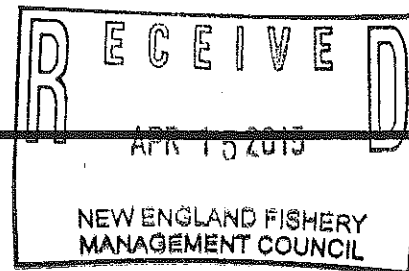
Food Service Director

MaineGeneral Medical Center

(207) 626-1104

rf - 4/16/15

Joan O'Leary



From: Tony Gross <144tony@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2015 6:09 AM
To: Marc Stettner
Cc: comments; Tom Nies; Terry Stockwell; Doug Grout; Chris Kellogg; David Pierce; John Bullard; Kelly Denit; Joan O'Leary; Pat Fiorelli; Jamie M. Cournane; Aj; dee@landergren.net; Doug Amorello; Edward Snell; Hilary; paul hoffman; timothy rider; Tracy937@verizon.net
Subject: Re: NEHFA comments for April Council Meeting A18 Groundfish Discussions

Mark,

Thank you for your continued hard work to in addressing the handgear issues for us. The handgear method of catching fish is the most sustainable and environmentally sound of all the fishing gear types.

Tony Gross

On Apr 15, 2015, at 10:46 PM, Marc <ijigcod@mindspring.com> wrote:

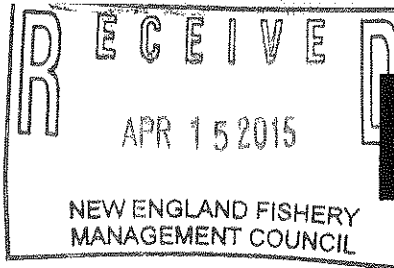
> <NEHFA to NEFMC A18 4_15_15001.pdf>

91 FAIRVIEW AVE
PORSTMOUTH NH 03801

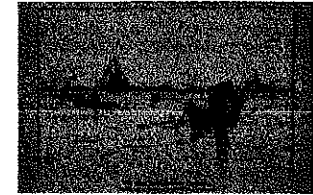
April 15, 2015

New England Fishery Management Council

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



**NORTHEAST HOOK
FISHERMAN'S ASSOCIATION**



Dear Chairman Terry Stockwell & Executive Director Tom Nies:

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 some species of groundfish. 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 urging the NEFMC to save the handgear fishery from becoming nonexistent. A18 is critical to securing the fishery for the future as well as fulfilling the desire for fleet diversity. No action alternatives do not protect this fishery.

Please heavily weigh the preferred options for our fishery that we list below. These preferred options are coming from the active fishermen in the fishery. The active fishermen know the best path forward to securing this fishery. If nothing is done eventually all the handgear quota will be absorbed by fishermen not using handgear and this very old and historic fishery will be lost forever. Again this is about the future of the handgear fishery and not the quantity of fish currently allocated today. We trust that fishery managers will do the right thing and restore the groundfish we catch and in doing so this fishery will flourish. This is a critical moment in history and we are desperately in need to our own historically based quota that we can fish sustainable on with controls specific to our fishery. For way to long we have been subject to regulations better aligned with other fishing methods that do not fit our fishery. **Preferred Options Requested:**

Section 4.2.1 – Establish a Fishery for Handgear A Permits

Alternative 2

Discards: Option B – Assume discards to be de minimis and not account for them under the sub-ACL.

In-season AMs: Option A – Close the HA fishery for a stock when 100% of sub-ACL is reached.

Reactive AMs: Option B - Triggered if HA sub-ACL and total ACL are exceeded.

Carryover Provisions: PDT recommended carryover provision to be consistent to that which the Council recommended for sectors in Framework 53

Section 4.2.2 – Removal of the March 1-20 HA Closure

Alternative 2 Removal of the March 1-20 HA closure.

Section 4.2.3 – Removal of Standard Fish Tote Requirement

Alternative 2 Removal of the standard fish tote requirement.

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

Sc/jp ~ 4/16/15

Section 4.2.4 – Sector Exemption from VMS Requirements

Alternative 2 Sector exemption (annual) from Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements.

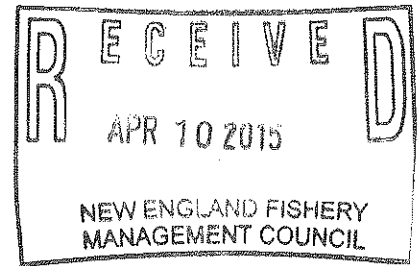
The NEFMC and the NMFS should be committed to doing what is necessary to maintain this fishery as they have done for other substance or small scale fisheries around the country. A18, with the correct options, will secure this fishery for future generations. Please keep this fishery a valid one in New England and not just a paper fishery with no active fishermen.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Stettner", with a stylized, flowing script.

Marc Stettner

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



Mr. Terry Stockwell, Chair
New England Fishery Management Council

Dear Terry:

I write in support of the Groundfish Committee recommendations for preferred alternatives for Amendment 18 – in short, no action.

As you know, I am an owner-operator of a small boat, and I have fished commercially for groundfish for 30 years. While advocates of amendment 18 may have had good intentions, amendment 18 contains nothing that would improve the chances that I will continue to have a viable business. The Council would have been better off focusing on more important issues, or even better off doing nothing at all.

I hope the Council will quickly move on to addressing the real needs of the groundfish industry, like stable ACLs and deal with the at sea monitoring cost that will eventually cripple what is left of the industry.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michael A. Russo".

Michael A. Russo
F/V Gulf Venture
Cape Cod

From: David Wallace

Sent: Friday, April 03, 2015 4:25 PM

To: Terry Stockwell; Tom Nies; Michelle S. Bachman; David Preble; Lou Chiarella; David Stevenson; Rick Robins; Jeff Kaelin

Subject: Cultivator and Georges Shoals Large Areas that Have

All,

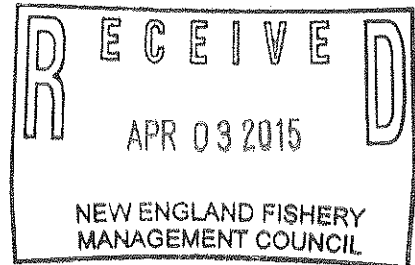
At this time we still do not have the plotter data back for clam trips on Georges. The chart attached was marked up by the captain a few weeks ago and Michelle has a copy that she showed at the PDT at their March meeting. I have colored in pink the large areas the captain has fished but not the very small areas. The green is what we said we would not fish.

Sorry that the chart is not as clear as I would like, but the chart is a poor quality photo copy and that is what I have been working with in my office.

I hope that this give everyone the same understanding that they came to on Nantucket Shoals, clams are found in many cases at the base of outcroppings in sandy bottom, they are not necessarily found in large flat sand beds.

Dave,

-
David H. Wallace
Wallace & Associates
1142 Hudson Road
Cambridge, MD 21623 3234
P 410 376 3200



mb 4/8/15

