



New England Fishery Management Council

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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 26, 2015
TO: Groundfish Committee
FROM: Frank Blount, Groundfish Committee Chairman
SUBJECT: Groundfish Committee meeting on Thursday, September 3, 2015

There will be a Groundfish Committee meeting at the Hilton Garden Inn, Boston, MA on **Thursday, September 3, starting at 9:30 AM.**

Purpose. The purpose of the Committee meeting is to discuss: (1) development of Framework Adjustment 55 (FW55), an action to set specifications for all stocks in the Northeast Multispecies (groundfish) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for FY 2016 – FY 2018 including US/CA stocks for FY 2016, and addition of a sector, (2) final recommendations to the Council on preferred alternatives in Amendment 18 (A18), an action to address fleet diversity and accumulation limits, (3) development of an At-Sea Monitoring (ASM) framework adjustment, (4) concerns raised by the recreational fishery regarding Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod and haddock, (5) enforcement concerns regarding identification of the separator panel within the trawl net, and (6) other business as necessary.

Meeting Materials. Paper copies of the documents listed below will be provided at the meeting. A PDF of each document is posted to www.nefmc.org. Staff will provide copies of any additional meeting materials that are not included in this package. If you have any questions about the documents, please contact Jamie Cournane (jcournane@nefmc.org; 978-465-0492 ext. 103) or Rachel Feeney (rfeeney@nefmc.org; 978-465-0492 ext. 110).

1. Meeting memo (this document)
2. Agenda
3. 2015 Groundfish Stock Assessment Summaries - TRAC stocks:
 - a. TRAC. 2015. Stock Status Report for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder
 - b. TRAC. 2015. Stock Status Report for Eastern Georges Bank cod
 - c. TRAC. 2015. Stock Status Report for Eastern Georges Bank haddock
4. FW 55
 - a. Draft Action Plan for FW 55, August 28, 2015
 - b. PDT memo to SSC and CC the Groundfish Committee re GB yellowtail flounder ABCs, August 25, 2015
 - c. PDT memo to Groundfish Committee re FW 55, August 31, 2015
 - d. "Sustainable Harvest Sector II" new sector application, May 18, 2015

- e. FW 55 Presentation (*to be provided*)
- 5. A18
 - a. A18 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, June 30, 2015
 - b. A18 Public Oral Hearings Summary, August 21, 2015
 - c. A18 Public Written Comments, September 1, 2015
 - d. A18 Groundfish Committee Decision Document, August 26, 2015
 - e. A18 Presentation (*to be provided*)
- 6. ASM
 - a. PDT memo to Groundfish Committee re ASM, June 2, 2015
 - b. PDT memo to Groundfish Committee re ASM, August 27, 2015
 - c. ASM Presentation (*to be provided*)
- 7. Past Meeting Summaries
 - a. Groundfish Committee meeting summary, June 4, 2015
 - b. Groundfish Advisory Panel meeting motions, September 2, 2015 (*draft, to be provided*)
- 8. Enforcement Presentation, US Coast Guard (*to be provided*)
- 9. Correspondence

Framework Adjustment 55

Recent activity. The scope of FW 55 is to incorporate any status changes for groundfish stocks and set specifications for all groundfish stocks in order to meet regulatory requirements to prevent overfishing, ensure rebuilding, and help achieve optimum yield in the fishery. At its June meeting, the Council added reviewing a new sector application to be included in FW 55. The Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) met July 7-9, 2015 in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada to conduct assessments for Eastern Georges Bank (EGB) cod, EGB haddock, and Georges Bank (GB) yellowtail flounder. The final TRAC status reports (TSRs) from the meeting are included (Doc. 3a-3c).

The draft action plan for FW 55 (Doc. 4a) outlines the timeline for the action and expected PDT work schedule. PDT work on this action is underway and continues through to formal submission expected for early 2016 (Doc. 4b and 4c). The application for the new sector is included for review by the Committee (Doc. 4d).

Next Steps. Council staff will provide an overview of the development of the action including a summary of the 2015 US/CA stock assessments, and other issues (Doc. 4e). The Committee may want to discuss the list of alternatives for inclusion in FW 55, including whether to include alternative(s) to address ASM, enforcement concerns, and other issues.

To make the most of our meeting time on **September 3rd**, you are encouraged to prepare motions in advance and either bring them to the meeting or send them to Jamie Cournane (jcournane@nefmc.org).

Council. The Council is scheduled to receive an update on this action at its September 2015 meeting. In addition, the Council will also receive a report from the TMGC and recommend quotas for US/CA stocks for FY 2016.

Amendment 18

Recent activity. The Council selected preliminary preferred alternatives for this action at its April 2015 meeting (Doc. 5a). A public comment period was held July 7 – August 31, including six public hearings (Doc. 5b and 5c).

Next steps. On September 3, the Committee will receive a summary of input from the GAP Chair regarding the GAP meeting the day prior to the Committee meeting (Doc. 7b). After a Council staff overview of public comment period (Doc. 5e), and opportunities for questions and feedback, the Committee will discuss A18 and can make recommendations to the Council on final preferred alternatives. A decision document has been provided (Doc. 5d) to facilitate this discussion.

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The Council is scheduled to select final preferred alternatives for this action at its September 2015 meeting.

At-Sea Monitoring

Recent activity. At its June meeting, the Council explained that the scope of the ASM action is to make the groundfish monitoring program more efficient and cost effective while achieving the stated goals of the program in Amendment 16 (A16) and Framework Adjustment 48 (FW48).

The Council also passed the following PDT tasking motion:

To task the Groundfish PDT to investigate streamlining the ASM program for the purposes of improving efficiency to include the selection process, cost effectiveness and other issues and to develop alternatives for consideration in the ASM framework action as referenced in PDT memo, document #8, pg. 7-8. (14/0/1)

In the memo referenced in the Council motion, the PDT suggested ideas to address Council concerns about the groundfish monitoring program and the current ASM requirements for groundfish sectors (Doc. 6a). Ideas within the PDT memo ranged from ‘tuning’ the ASM program in place for sectors to ideas that may require revisiting the goals and objectives of the overall groundfish monitoring program. Since the Council meeting, the PDT continued to develop the draft alternatives for consideration in this action (Doc. 6b).

Next steps. On September 3rd, Council staff will provide a summary of PDT discussions and analysis (Doc. 6c). With this information in hand, the Committee will then discuss the development of the alternatives and next steps for the action. The Committee may consider adding an alternative to FW 55 to address the issue in time for FY 2016.

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The Council is scheduled to receive an update on the development of the ASM action at its September meeting.

Recreational Fishery

Recent activity. The Council has been receiving considerable correspondence from the recreational fishery on GOM cod and haddock measures for FY 2015 (Doc. 9).

Next Steps: The Committee will discuss concerns raised by the recreational fishery.

Enforcement

Recent activity. The haddock separator trawl is one of the approved gears for use in the windowpane flounder accountability measures (AM); these AMs when in place are gear restricted areas. The Northern windowpane flounder AM is in place for FY 2015.

The Coast Guard recently approached the Chair of the Enforcement Committee, Chair of the Groundfish Committee, and Council staff with enforcement concerns regarding the separator trawl. The Coast Guard raised concerns that the separator panel is difficult to identify since it is usually the same color as the net. The Coast Guard would prefer the separator panel to be a contrasting color (e.g., a green net with a red separator panel) to improve identification of the panel during inspections.

Since the Enforcement Committee does not have an upcoming meeting, the Groundfish Committee plans to discuss the issue.

Next Steps: The Coast Guard will provide an overview of the issue and possible solutions (Doc. 8). The Committee may consider adding an alternative to FW 55 to address the issue in time for FY 2016.

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