

Amendment 23: Commercial Groundfish Monitoring Action

**New England Fishery Management Council
Amendment 23 Public Hearing
Webinar**



Ground Rules

- We will run through the entire presentation first, and then take questions from the audience.
- Focus comments on the Council's proposal.
- Please direct these comments to the Chair rather than individuals.
- We will allow for one round of comments – one per person. If time permits and only after everyone that wants to comment has a chance, we may allow for a second round of comments.
- Please be respectful.
- We ask that no New England Council member provide public comments at this time. Of course, listening is fine.
- We are not accepting written comments through the chat or question features of this webinar. This is only for anyone having a problem with access to the webinar.
- When we call on you, please be sure to unmute yourself.

Purpose of this public hearing

- The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is conducting public hearings to solicit comments on the alternatives under consideration in Draft Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan (FMP).
- More specifically, the Council is asking for feedback on which alternatives should be selected and why.

- The Council is hosting public hearings on Amendment 23. Hearings are still being scheduled, and the schedule is subject to change with the COVID-19 crisis.
- Amendment 23 is a large document that has been developed over several years.
- A summary, or public hearing document has been prepared to synthesize all the alternatives and potential impacts.
- All related materials can be found on the Council webpage at:
<https://www.nefmc.org/library/amendment-23>

Date and Time	Public Hearing Location
Wednesday, April 15 4:00-6:00 p.m.	Webinar Hearing
Tuesday, May 12 4:00-6:00 p.m.	Webinar Hearing
Thursday, May 21 4:00-6:00 p.m.	Webinar Hearing
TBD	Narragansett, RI
TBD	New Bedford, MA
TBD	Gloucester, MA
TBD	Portsmouth, NH
TBD	Portland, ME

Background – Groundfish sector program

- Sector system expanded in 2010 (Amendment 16).
- Sector measures give increased flexibility – ex. no trip limits and no limits on Days At Sea
- The number of active vessels has declined (299 vessels to 179 in 2018). Fleet is still diverse in terms of vessel size and participation levels.
- Accurate estimates of catch (landings and discards) are critical – especially for quota management programs.
- When sectors were adopted the intent was to implement an industry funded monitoring program.
- To date, federal funds have reimbursed most monitoring costs.



Image: [blogspot.com](#)

Some issues with the commercial groundfish monitoring program

- Unreported / misreported catches;
 - Observed trips are not representative of unobserved trips;
 - Incentives to illegally discard are greater for certain stocks, and;
 - Lack of an independent verification of landings can and has led to catch reporting conspiracy/collusion between a dealer and a vessel.
-
- *These risks exist in all fisheries, but potential is higher under sector program with individual ACE and constraining stocks.*



Image: NOAA Fisheries

Goal of Amendment 23

Improve catch accounting

Intent - maximize the value of collected data and minimize the costs.

This action does not propose any changes to the federally-funded monitoring program (Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP)).



Image: NOAA Fisheries

A23: Commercial Groundfish Monitoring Program

AT – SEA
(Sectors only)

ASM standard (target coverage level)

ASM Tools

If 100% coverage target, eliminate MU buffer?

Should certain vessels be removed from groundfish monitoring requirements (ASM and/or DSM)?
If yes, formal review process?

DOCKSIDE
(Sectors and Common Pool)

Mandatory DSM
Yes or No?

DSM Funding

Options for lower DSM coverage

Options for fish hold inspection

Handful of Administrative Measures

At-Sea Monitoring (Sectors only)

Target coverage levels are combined NEFOP and ASM.

1. ASM Standard (target coverage level) (Sec. 4.1.1)

No Action
(30% CV)

Percentage of trips
(25%, 50%, 75%, 100%)

Percentage of catch
(25%, 50%, 75%, 100%)

2. Additional ASM Tools (Sec. 4.1.2)

EM instead of
ASM

EM: Audit Model

EM: Max Retention

3. Eliminate Management Uncertainty Buffer, if 100% standard selected (Sec. 4.5)

No Action
(maintain buffers)

Eliminate buffers

Dockside Monitoring (Sectors and common pool)

4. Dockside Monitoring Program DSM (Sec. 4.2.1)

No Action
(No DSM)

Mandatory DSM

5. DSM Funding (Sec. 4.2.2.1)

Dealer pays

Vessel pays

6. Lower DSM coverage levels (20%) (Sec. 4.2.2.3)

Low volume
ports

Low volume
vessels

7. Fish hold inspections (Sec. 4.2.2.4)

Inspection by
human monitor

Inspection
approved by
camera

No Inspection-
captain affidavit

Overall (Sectors and/or common pool)

8. Vessels removed from groundfish monitoring requirements (Sec. 4.6)

No Action
(current
exemptions
from ASM
coverage
remain)

West of 72 30
W (Remove
from ASM or
DSM)

West of 71 30
W (Remove
from ASM or
DSM)

Review
process for
vessels
removed from
monitoring
requirements

9. Administrative measures

Timing of
coverage level
(Sec. 4.1.3)

Review process
for coverage level
(Sec. 4.1.4)

Framework items
(Sec. 4.1.5)

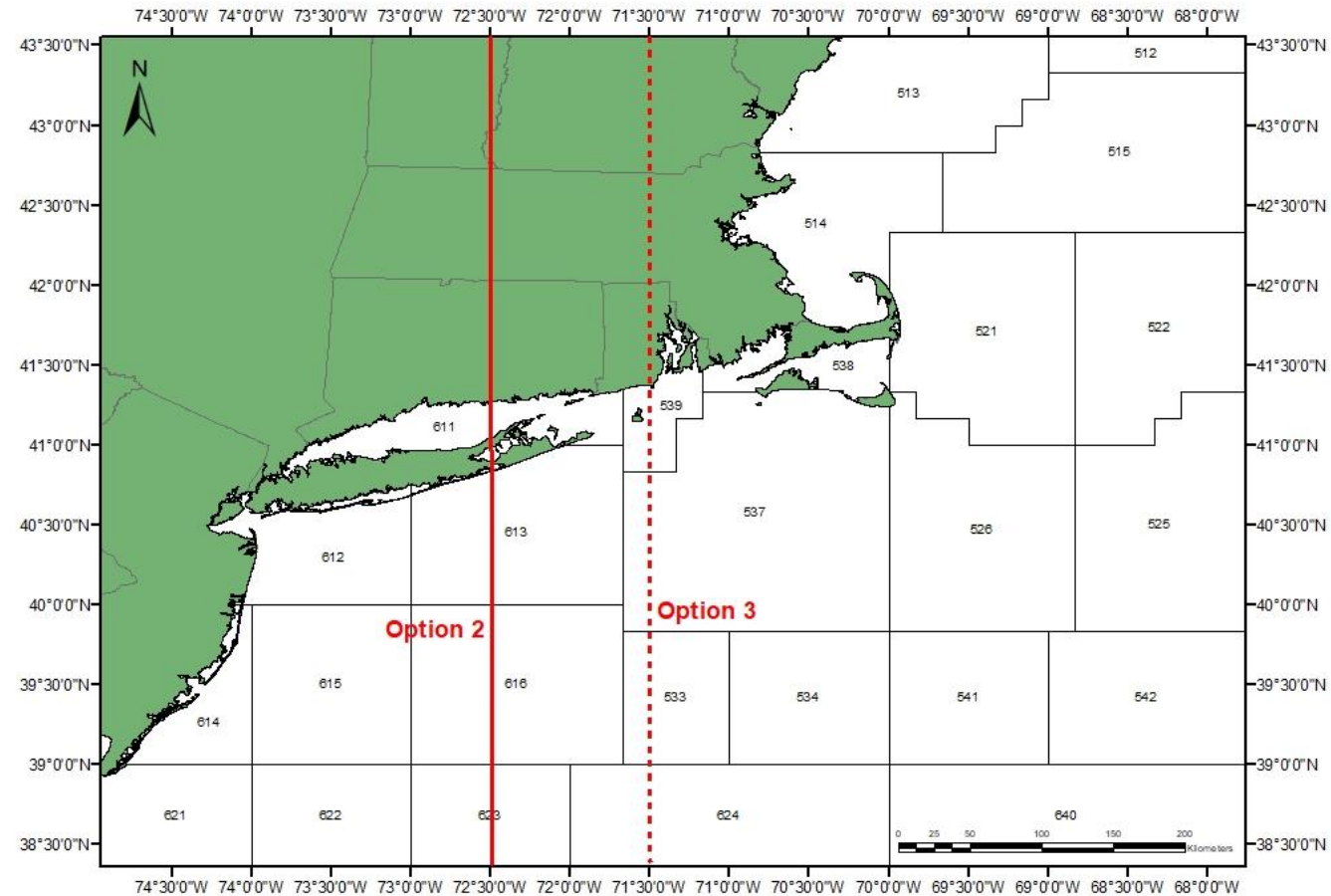
Sector reporting
(Sec. 4.3)

Funding /
operational
provisions
(Sec. 4.4)

DSM program
administration
(Sec 4.2.2.2)

NEFMC Preferred Alternatives (Jan 2020)

Removal of groundfish monitoring requirements



72° 30'

71° 30'(Preferred)

A23 Potential Benefits and Costs of Improved Monitoring *(100% coverage and addition of Electronic Monitoring as a potential tool)*

Benefits & Costs of Increased Monitoring

Potential benefits:

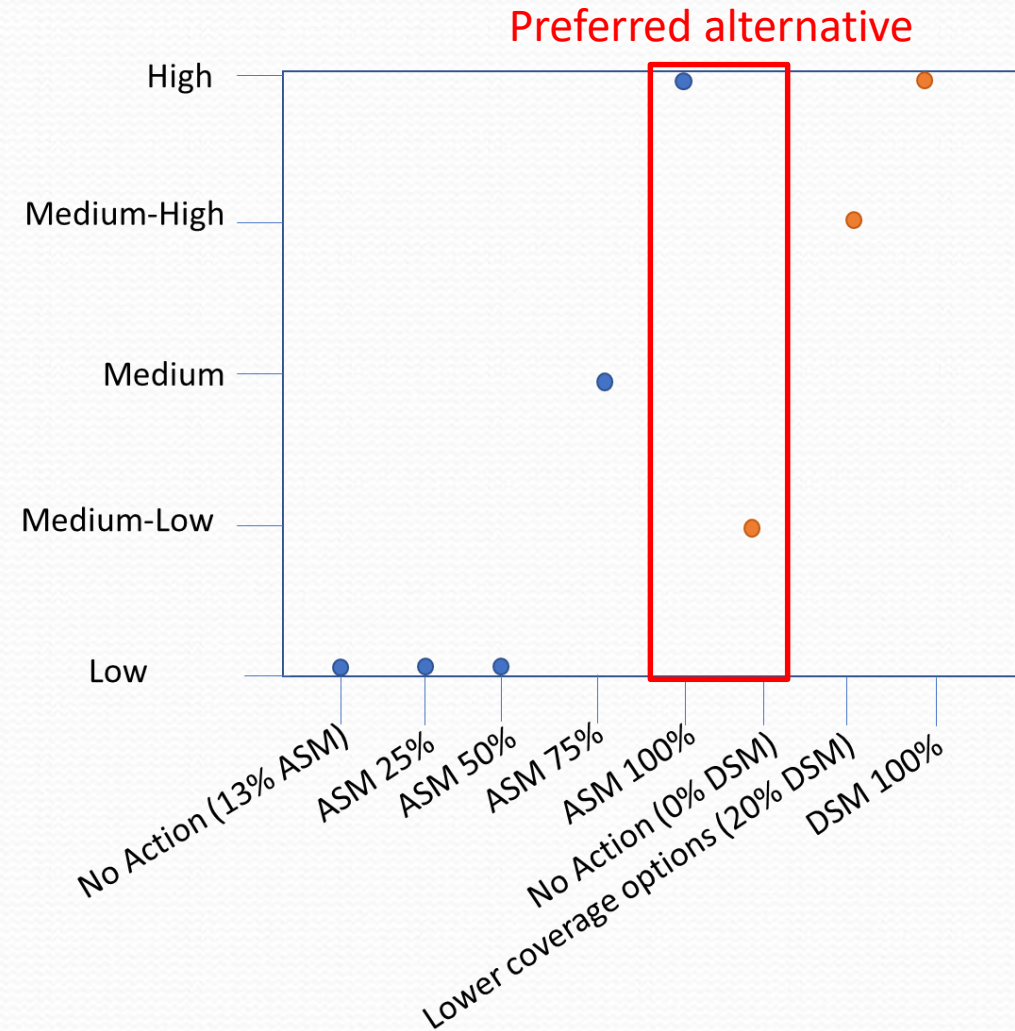
- Short Term: Lower fishing mortality from improved catch accounting
- Long term: Improved information for stock assessments
- Increased long run fishery revenue
- Improved ACE lease market performance
- Level playing field
- Improved trust

But also:

- Comprehensive monitoring is expensive
- Less than 100% coverage may prevent some benefits
- Even 100% coverage does not ensure illegal behavior will not occur.

Compliance and Enforceability Scores

Risk of non-compliance may still be high at low to moderate levels of ASM coverage.



Benefits & Costs of Electronic Monitoring (EM)

Potential benefits:

- Lower costs compared to human observers for most vessels
- Fewer logistics for vessels (coordinating with observers and NMFS)
- Improved safety
- More data

Costs:

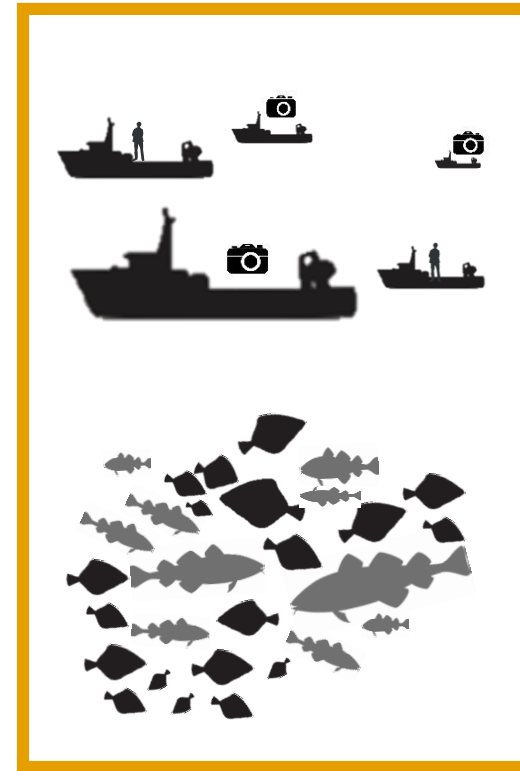
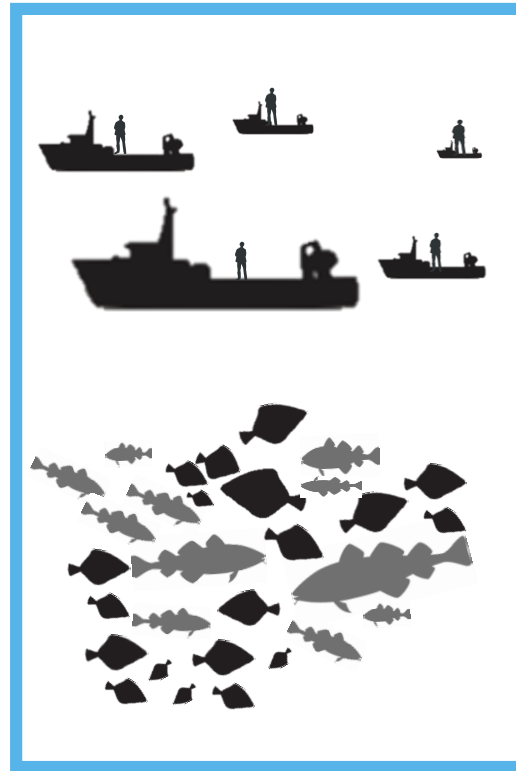
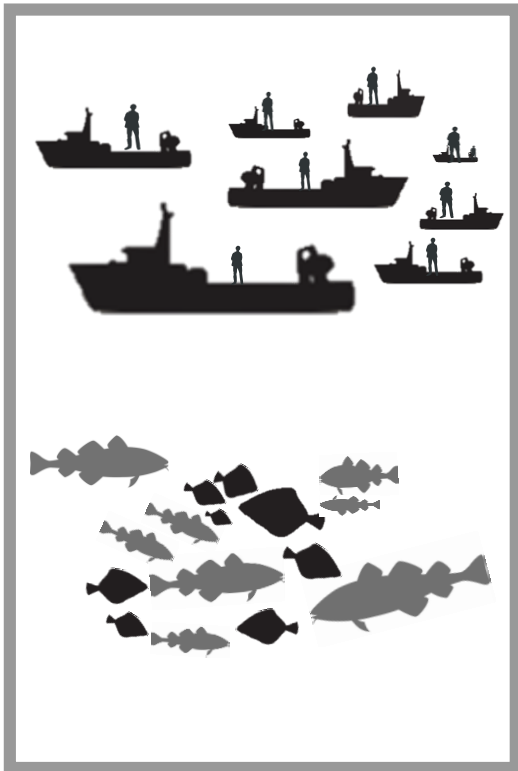
- Time and money to install and maintain equipment
- Learning curve for crew, new tasks

A23 Impacts Overview

With a focus on economic impacts

How were economic impacts analyzed?

Static ↑ 👤 Dynamic ↑ 👤 ↓ 🚢 Blended ↑ 👤 📷 ↓ 🚢



= Observers



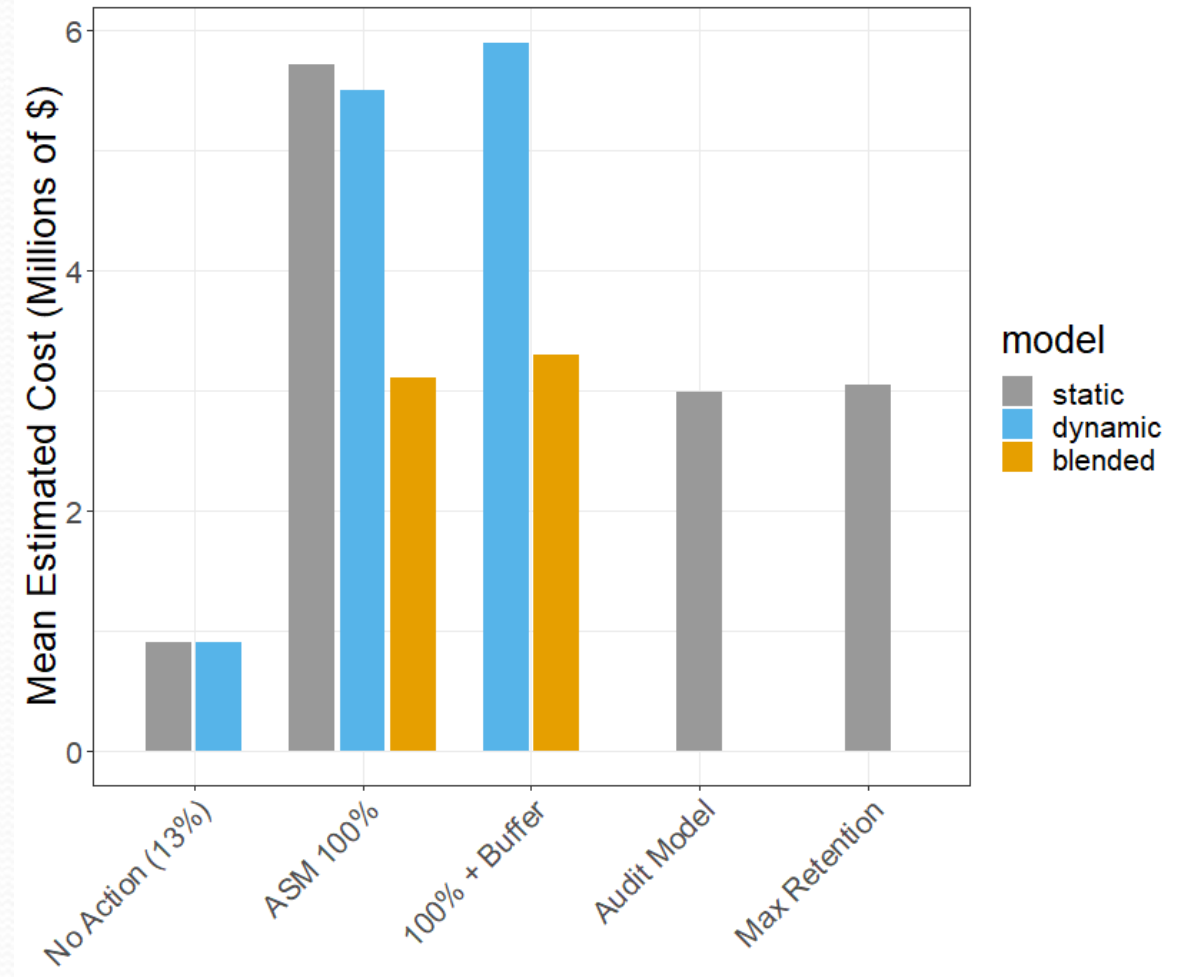
= Effort



= EM

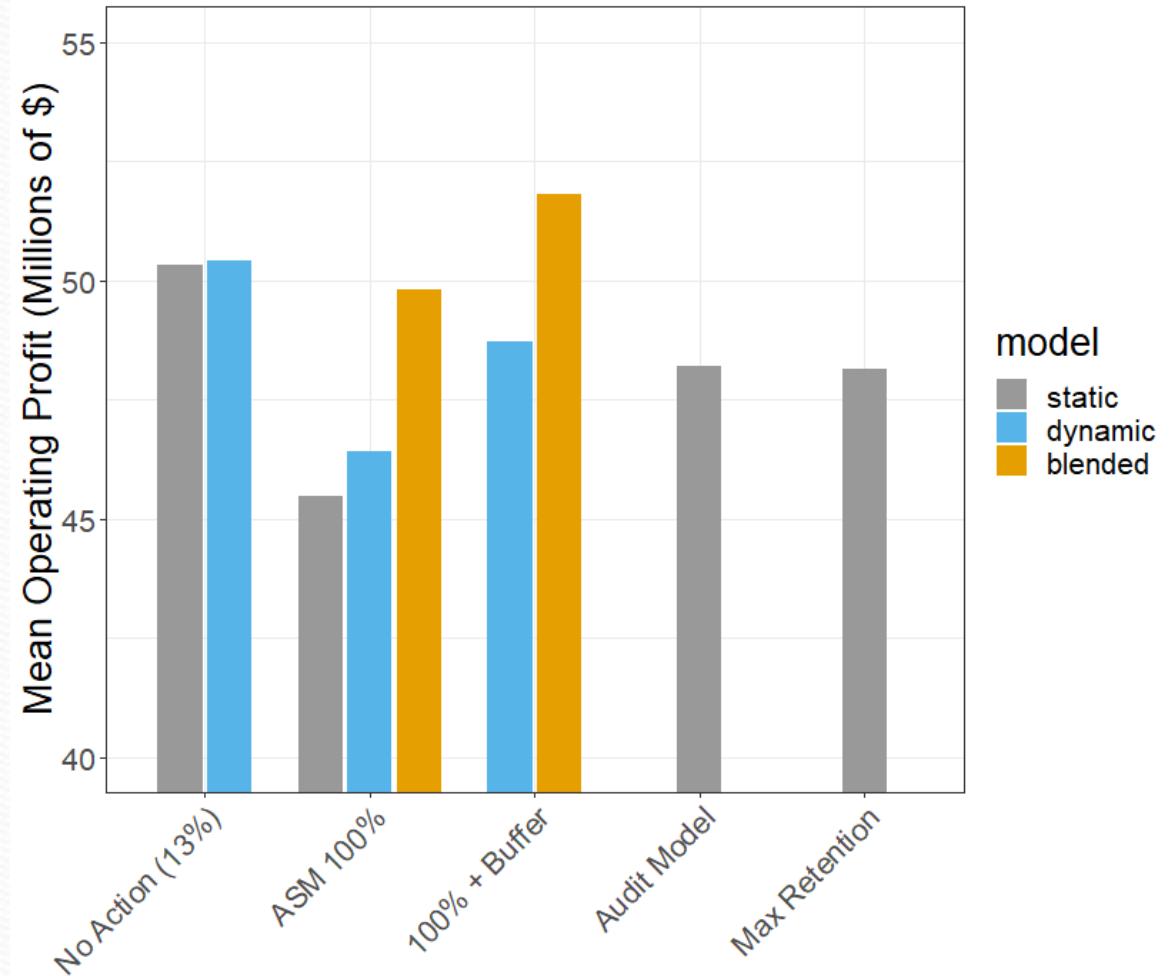
Fleetwide Impacts- Costs

- Static:
 - No Action: **\$0.9 mil**
 - 100% ASM: **\$5.7 mil**
 - Full EM: **\$3 mil**
- Dynamic:
 - Effort shifts to efficient operations reducing cost (**\$5.5 mil**)
- Blended:
 - When vessels choose between EM and ASM (**\$3.2 mil**)
- Exempting effort west of 71.5 west longitude reduces costs by \$250K



Fleetwide Impacts- Operating Profits

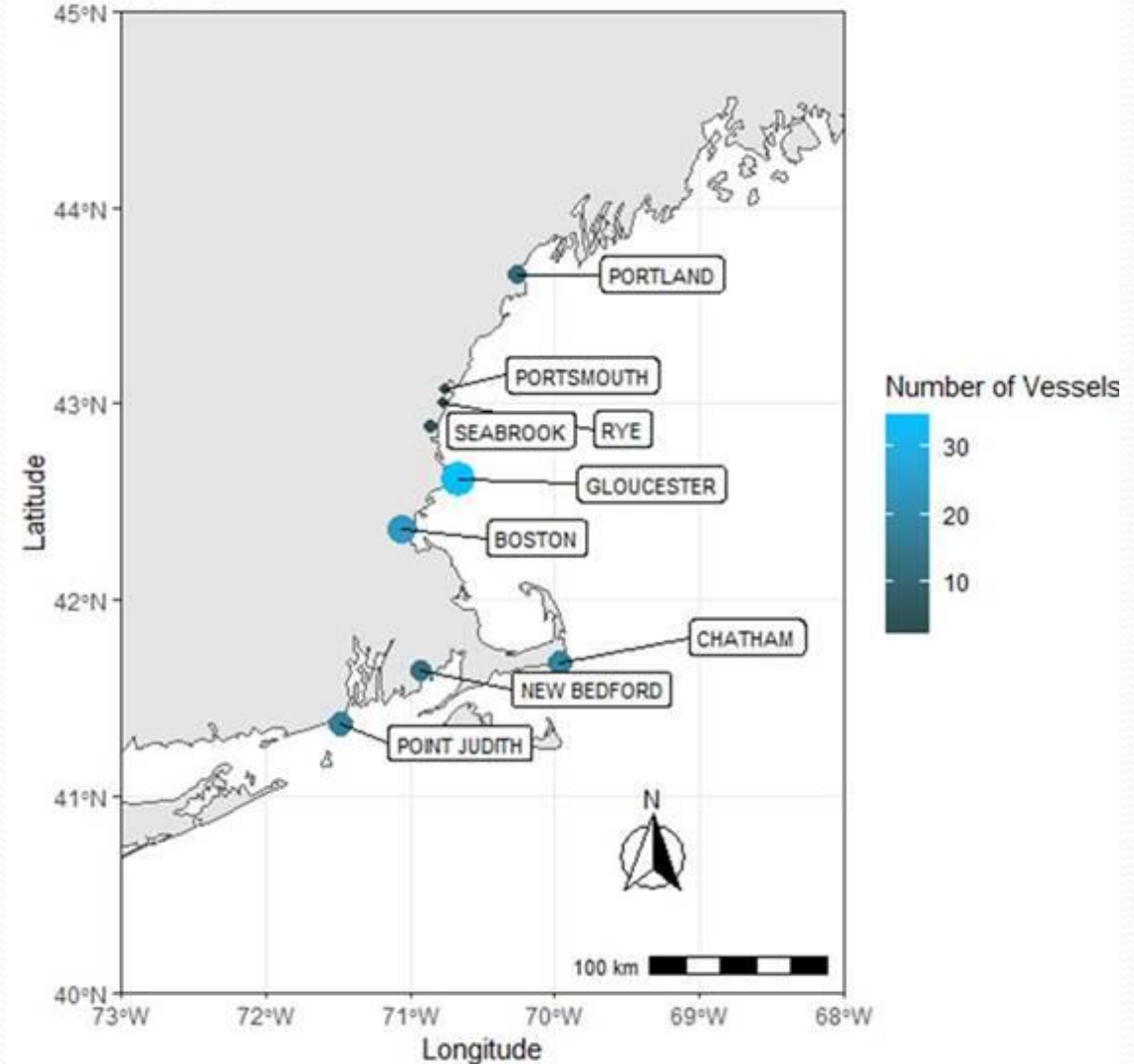
- Static:
 - No Action: **\$50 mil**
 - 100% ASM: **\$45 mil**
 - Full EM: **\$48 mil**
- Dynamic:
 - Increases operating profits (**\$46 mil**)
- Blended:
 - 100% ASM: **\$49.8 mil**
 - Buffer removal increases operating profits (**\$52 mil**)



Who is impacted (and where)?

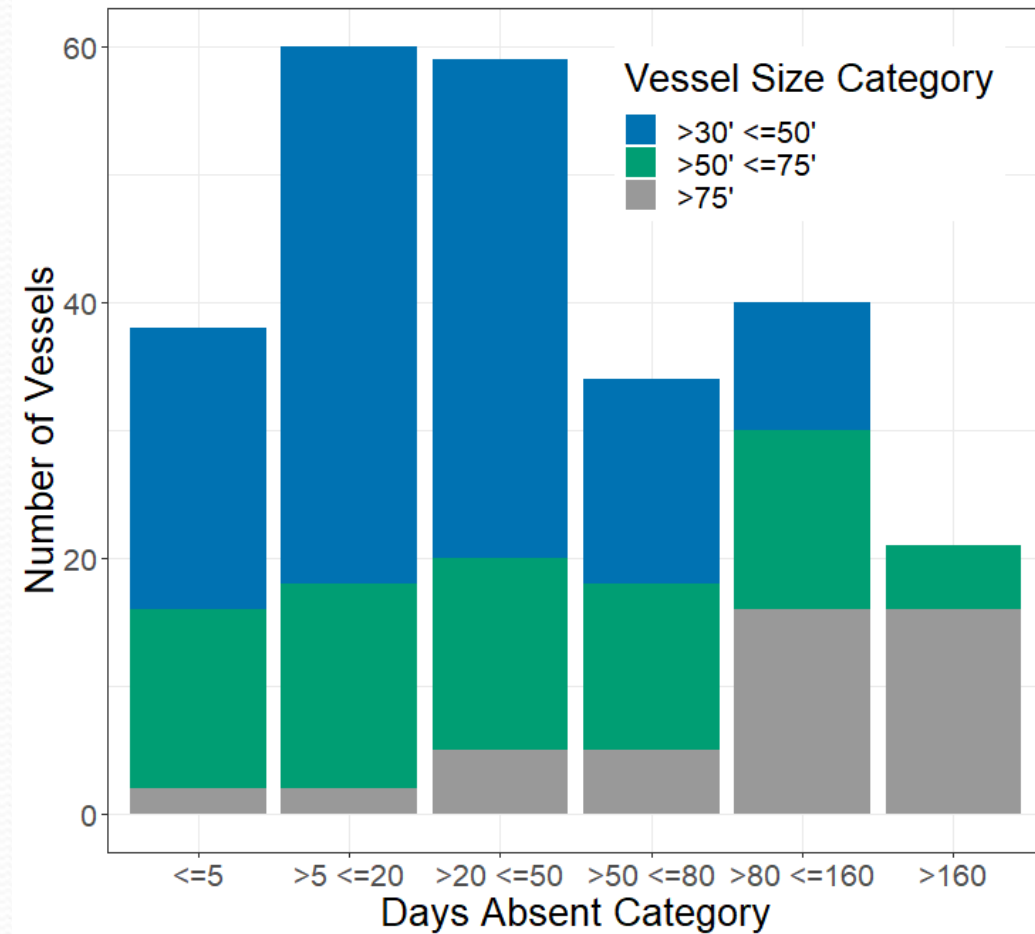
- 70% of active sector vessels were homeported in 9 ports in FY 2018
- Gloucester has largest concentration of active vessels (34) and revenue from groundfish trips (\$16 million)
- Geographical span of fishery is large: Maine to North Carolina

2018 Number of Sector Vessels by Major Homeport
(9 ports)



Vessel Profiles (2016-2018)

- Engagement in the fishery:
 - Low (<20 DA): 39%
 - Moderate (21-80 DA): 37%
 - High engagement (>81 DA): 24%
- More engaged vessels tend to be larger & more reliant on GF trip revenue
- More than half of vessels used trawl gear (60%)
 - 23% used gillnet
 - 9% used handgear



How might costs vary across vessels?



Vessel 1: Least engaged (<5 DA)

Average annual GF trip revenue: \$8,000



Vessel 2: Spends 21-50 DA

Average annual GF trip revenue: \$131,000



Vessel 3: Highly engaged (>160 DA)

Average annual GF trip revenue: \$1.4 million

How might costs vary across vessels?



Vessel 1: Least engaged (<5 DA)

Average annual GF trip revenue: \$8,000

NO ACTION ASM: \$275

STATIC 100% ASM: \$1,765

BLENDED ASM or EM: \$3,705



Vessel 2: Spends 21-50 DA

Average annual GF trip revenue: \$131,000

NO ACTION ASM: \$3,725

STATIC 100% ASM: \$24,065

BLENDED 100% ASM or EM: \$14,880



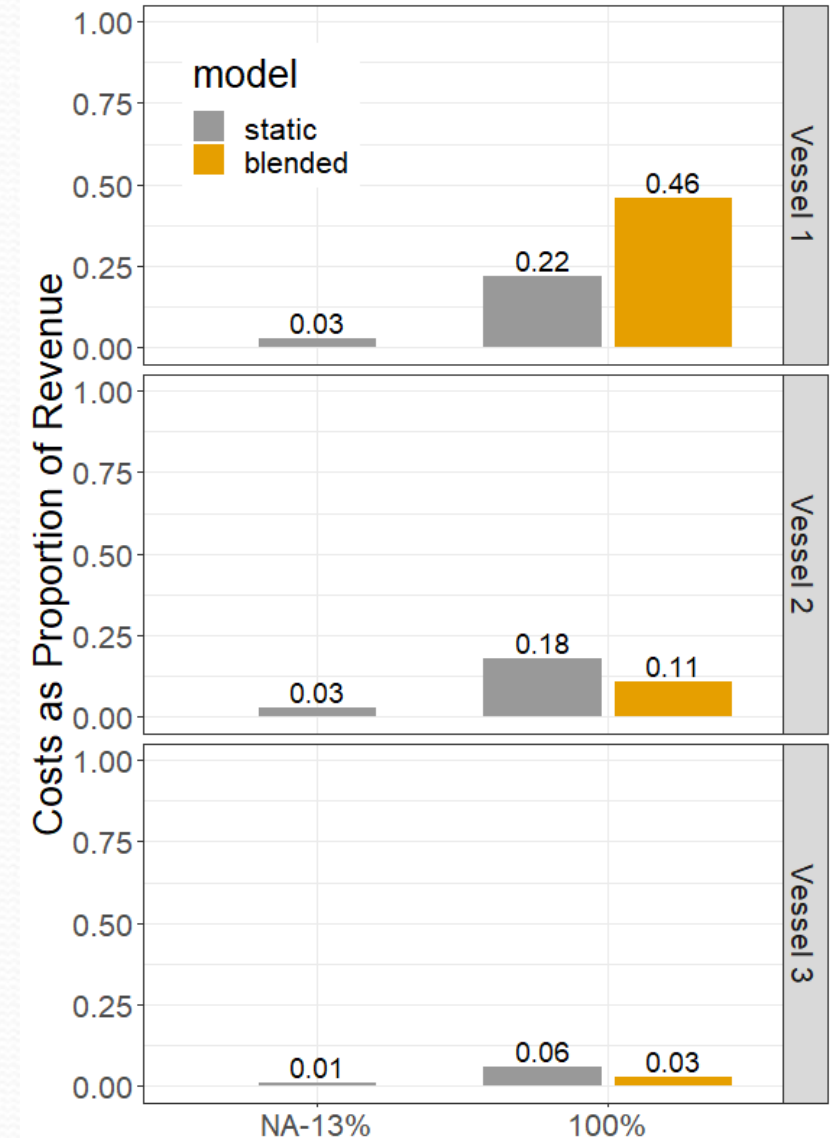
Vessel 3: Highly engaged (>160 DA)

Average annual GF trip revenue: \$1.4 million

NO ACTION ASM: \$13,095

STATIC 100% ASM: \$82,945

BLENDED 100% ASM or EM: \$38,355



Conclusion

Economic Impacts:

- **Fleetwide:**

- Possible cost savings using EM
- Effort shifts estimated by the dynamic model may reduce aggregate impacts
- Removing buffers may increase operating profits

- **Individual:**

- Static economic impacts show wide range of impacts for fishery participants
- EM cost savings may be substantial particularly for larger, engaged vessels
- Equipment subsidies may reduce economic impacts especially on less-engaged operations
- Benefit-cost trade-offs are important considerations

Conclusion

Biological Impacts:

- Short term - improved catch accounting may lower fishing mortality
- Long term - improved data may improve stock assessments

Essential Fish Habitat Impacts:

- Possible shifts in effort or reduced fishing effort, decreasing impacts to habitat

Protected Resource Impacts:

- More monitoring provides additional information on interactions with fishing gear, which may reduce uncertainty in protected species bycatch estimates

What's next?

Council Final Action postponed (originally June 2020).

- Public comment period ends **June 30, 2020** (102 days)
- Executive Committee will review the COVID-19 situation and discuss next steps
- Staff then compiles and summarizes all comments
- Groundfish PDT, AP and Committee meetings to review all comments and make final recommendations **(TBD)**
- **Council Final Action (TBD)**
- Staff works with NMFS to finalize EIS **(TBD)**
- Proposed and final rules publish **(TBD)**
- **Potential implementation in May 2021 ??**

How to submit a public comment

- Today at this meeting
- In writing:
 - Fax: (978) 465-3116;
 - Email: comments@nefmc.org
 - Mail: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill #2
Newburyport, MA 01950
- Please note on your correspondence; “Draft Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP.”
- Closing Date: Tuesday, June 30, 2020

Questions?

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To comment today

When providing comments, please first state:

- Your name
- Brief description of your organization/occupation and region you represent
 - Ex. Commercial groundfish fisherman from New Bedford

To indicate you wish to comment, please use the “Raise Hand” feature and you will be called on in order.

Reminder: you **must** register for the webinar to provide comments today.
Instructions can be found on the meeting notice and on the Council’s website.

What should my comments address?

- Do you support the Council's preferred alternatives?
- If not, what adjustments to the commercial groundfish monitoring program would you recommend?
- What at-sea monitoring coverage level do you think is appropriate to provide accurate catch information for the sector fishery?
- Should sectors have the choice to use electronic monitoring options in place of human at-sea monitors?
- Should there be a dockside monitoring requirement for the commercial groundfish fishery?
- Should there be instances where vessels fishing under certain conditions are removed from monitoring requirements?