



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

April 6, 2026

Daniel Salerno, Chairman
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, Massachusetts 01950

Dear Dan:

I am pleased to inform you that today I approved Amendment 25 (Revised) to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce.

As you know, Amendment 25 (Revised) to the FMP revises the stock definitions for Atlantic cod managed in the FMP and includes measures in the FMP necessary to manage four stocks of Atlantic cod in U.S. waters. Under the Amendment, the four Atlantic cod stock units in the FMP are:

1. A new stock unit of Eastern Gulf of Maine (EGOM) cod;
2. A new stock unit of Western Gulf of Maine (WGOM) cod;
3. A revised stock unit of Georges Bank (GB) cod; and
4. A new stock unit of Southern New England (SNE) cod.

Amendment 25 (Revised) also includes the following management measures necessary to manage these four stocks of Atlantic cod in U.S. waters:

- Definitions for the stock areas for each of the four cod stocks;
- Status Determination Criteria for the four cod stocks;
- Specifications for the four cod stocks for fishing year 2026;
- An apportionment method for setting the WGOM cod commercial sub-annual catch limits (ACL);
- Management uncertainty buffers for the four cod stocks;
- Recreational sub-ACLs for WGOM and SNE cod;
- Common pool trimester total allowable catch (TAC) distributions, TAC closure areas, and baseline common pool trip limits for the four cod stocks;
- A regulatory process for the Regional Administrator to set recreational measures for GB and EGOM cod for fishing year 2026; and
- Recreational measures for EGOM, WGOM, GB, and SNE cod.



We published a Notice of Availability (NOA) for Amendment 25 (Revised) in the *Federal Register* on January 13, 2026 (91 FR 1257), with a comment period that ended on March 16, 2026. In response to the NOA, we received 261 public comments submitted by the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MADMF); Oceana; The Nature Conservancy (TNC); Gloucester Fishing Community Preservation Fund (GCFPF) and the Northeast Seafood Coalition (NSC); Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association (MCFA); Conservation Law Foundation (CLF); Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Ocean Defense Initiative (ODI), and CLF; Sustainable Harvest Sector (SHS); one company associated with the fishing industry; and 252 members of the public, including both commercial and recreational fishermen.

Comments broadly supported the approval and quick implementation of Amendment 25 (Revised). We did not receive any comments urging the disapproval of the Amendment or opposing Amendment 25 (Revised) overall. We received comments about delays in the Agency review of the original Amendment 25 and the timing of our rulemaking. The vast majority of comments focused on approving the amendment and implementing regulations by the beginning of the 2026 fishing year. Commenters also focused on the timing of the next phase of the Council’s development of cod management measures and the need for deliberate and careful consideration before implementing any new allocation measures. Some comments expressed concern about a small portion of the measures that will be implemented under Amendment 25 (Revised) but did not oppose the amendment overall.

We published a proposed rule that included implementing regulations for the management measures in Amendment 25 (Revised) on March 18, 2026 (91 FR 12993). The comment period on the proposed rule ends on April 17, 2026. A final rule implementing Amendment 25 (Revised) management measures will be published after the proposed rule comment period and after May 1, 2026. While the Amendment 25 (Revised) final rule is pending, we intend to implement default allocations for two stocks of cod (Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank). These allocations will equal 75 percent of the cod allocations included in the fishing year 2025 emergency action (May 2, 2025; 90 FR 18804) and extension (October 3, 2025; 90 FR 47989).

We appreciate the efforts of the Council and staff on this action, as well as ongoing efforts to improve the overall Northeast multispecies fishery. Please contact me or Heather Nelson in our Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9334 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator

cc: Dr. Cate O’Keefe, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council