



New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 19, 2021
TO: Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)
FROM: Tom Nies, Executive Director
SUBJECT: **Terms of Reference – Specify overfishing levels and develop acceptable biological catch recommendations for Georges Bank cod and Gulf of Maine cod for fishing years 2022 to 2024 and Georges Bank haddock, Gulf of Maine haddock, and white hake for fishing year 2022**

Groundfish OFLs and ABCs

Terms of Reference

Considering the Council's Risk Policy Statement, provide an OFL and an ABC recommendation that will prevent overfishing and meet the management objective to rebuild the stock(s), and that are consistent with the Council's ABC control rule for groundfish stocks for:

- Fishing years 2022 to 2024 for Georges Bank (GB) cod and Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod, and fishing year 2022 for white hake, and
- Consider adjusting the OFL and ABC recommendations for fishing year 2022 for GB haddock and GOM haddock.

(See list of documents for the assessment summary and Groundfish Plan Development (PDT) report under Information below).

Background

GB cod and GOM cod were recently assessed by at the Management Track peer review in September 2021. GB haddock, GOM haddock, and white hake were most recently assessed in 2019, also under a Management Track assessment. The rebuilding plan for white hake was recently revised by the Council and implemented by GARFO.

The Council was notified by GARFO in August 2021 that GOM cod is not making adequate rebuilding progress. Research Track assessments for haddock and cod stock are presently underway. Revised cod stock structure is an ongoing science and management topic.

ABC recommendations are to be based on the fishing mortality strategies approved by the Council in Amendments 13 and 16 and related management actions. Status determination criteria should be used that are specified in Amendment 16 or subsequent actions. The general control rule for groundfish stocks that has been adopted is:

"These ABC control rules will be used in the absence of better information that may allow a more explicit determination of scientific uncertainty for a stock or stocks. If such information is available - that is, if scientific uncertainty can be characterized in a more accurate fashion -- it can be used by the SSC to determine ABCs, these ABC control rules can be modified in a future Council action (an amendment, framework, or specification package):

- a. ABC should be determined as the catch associated with 75% of FMSY.*
- b. If fishing at 75% of FMSY does not achieve the mandated rebuilding requirements for overfished stocks, ABC should be determined as the catch associated with the fishing mortality that meets rebuilding requirements (Frebuild).*
- c. For stocks that cannot rebuild to BMSY in the specified rebuilding period, even with no fishing, the ABC should be based on incidental bycatch, including a reduction in bycatch rate (i.e., the proportion of the stock caught as bycatch).*
- d. Interim ABCs should be determined for stocks with unknown status according to case-by-case recommendations from the SSC."*

Information

1. The Council's Risk Policy Road Map (2016), that includes the Risk Policy Statement and Implementation Plan, see pp. 4-5 and 10-12
2. 2021 Management Track Assessment Reports and Background, available at: https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi/sasi_report_options.php
3. 2021 GB cod and GOM cod Management Track Peer Review Report, September 2021
4. 2019 Groundfish Operational Assessments Report, Pre-Publication, January 2020 version (NEFSC)
5. SSC to Nies re Groundfish OFLs and ABCs FY2020-FY2022, as amended January 22, 2020
6. SSC to Nies re Groundfish OFLs and ABCs FY2020-FY2022 for four stocks, January 22, 2020
7. Presentation: Overview of the 2021 Management Track Assessment of GB cod (NEFSC staff)
8. Presentation: Overview of the 2021 Management Track Assessment of GOM cod (NEFSC staff)
9. Presentation: Groundfish Plan Development Team Report (NEFMC staff)
10. Memo from Groundfish PDT to SSC re GB cod and GOM cod specifications for FY2022-FY2024
11. Memo from Groundfish PDT to SSC re GB haddock and GOM haddock specifications for FY2022
12. Memo from Groundfish PDT to SSC re white hake specifications for FY2022
13. State of the Ecosystem and Current Conditions. NOAA/NEFSC. Available at : <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/ecosystems/state-ecosystem-reports-northeast-us-shelf>