



New England Fishery Management Council

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

MEETING SUMMARY

Groundfish Committee

Webinar

November 30, 2021

The Groundfish Committee (Committee) met on November 30, 2021, via webinar to discuss and make recommendations on: 1) Framework Adjustment 63/Specifications and Management Measures; 2) possible 2022 Council priorities for groundfish; and 3) other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Rick Bellavance (Chair), Libby Etrie (Vice Chair), Togue Brawn, Pete Christopher (Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO)), Mark Godfroy, Melanie Griffin, John Pappalardo, Mike Pierdinock, Paul Risi (Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC)), Dan Salerno, Geoff Smith, Wes Townsend (MAFMC), Alan Tracy, and Megan Ware (proxy for Patrick Kelihir); Dr. Jamie Courne and Robin Frede (New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) staff); Jackie Odell (Groundfish Advisory Panel (GAP) Vice Chair); Frank Blount (Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) Chair); and Mitch Macdonald (NOAA General Counsel (NOAA GC)). In addition, approximately 30 members of the public attended, including Dan Caless, Kyle Molton, Liz Sullivan, Spencer Talmage, Samantha Tolken (GARFO); Scott Steinback (Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC)); Eric Reid (NEMFC Chair); Scott Olszewski, Cheri Patterson (NEFMC members); and Deirdre Boelke, Chris Kellogg, Tom Nies, and Janice Plante (NEFMC staff).

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION: Discussions were aided by the following documents and presentations: (1) Meeting memorandum dated November 17, 2021; (2) Agenda; (3a) Framework Adjustment 63/Specifications and Management Measures – Draft alternatives version 1; (3b) FW63 - Draft affected environment version 1; (3c) FW63 - Draft impacts analysis version 1; (3d) 2021 Georges Bank cod and Gulf of Maine cod stock assessment reports and peer review, NEFSC, pre-publication draft; (3e) Memo from Groundfish PDT to Scientific and Statistical Committee re Candidate OFLs and ABCs for Georges Bank cod and Gulf of Maine cod for FY2022-FY2024; (3f) Memo from Groundfish PDT to Scientific and Statistical Committee re OFLs and ABCs for Georges Bank haddock and Gulf of Maine haddock for FY2022, revised version; (3g) Memo from Groundfish PDT to Scientific and Statistical Committee re Candidate OFL and ABC for white hake for FY2022; (3h) Memo from Groundfish PDT to Committee re Framework Adjustment 63 –Georges Bank cod recreational fishery management version 1; (3i) Presentation: Council staff; (4) Memo from Executive Director Nies to Executive Committee re 2022 Council Priorities - Executive Director Recommendations, Nov. 12, 2021; (5a) Groundfish Advisory Panel meeting summary, Sep. 22, 2021; (5b) Groundfish Committee meeting summary, Sep. 23, 2021; and (6) Correspondence.

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- Under 4.1.4 Alternative 4 - Changes to the Default Specifications Process for Framework Adjustment 63, the Committee recommends to the Council 4.1.4.3 Option 3: 5 months duration, 75% of the previous year's specifications, no holdback provision, and 2-year US/CA TACs as the preferred alternative.
- The Committee recommends that the Council remand the Georges Bank (GB) cod Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) back to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) for reconsideration of the ramp-down approach articulated by the minority at the SSC meeting.
- The Committee recommends the Council to include under Framework Adjustment 63 the temporary authority for the Regional Administrator (RA) to modify the Georges Bank cod recreational measures to stay within the Georges Bank cod recreational catch target for fishing years 2022 to 2024.
- The Committee recommends to the Council to include Option 2 and Option 3 approaches for the George Bank cod recreational catch target outlined in the Groundfish PDT memo.
- The Committee recommends to the Council to add additional alternatives for the Georges Bank cod recreational management measures (described below).
- The Committee recommends 4.1.2 Alternative 2 Revised Specifications as the preferred alternative.
- The Committee recommends to the Council adjustments to the list of possible 2022 Council priorities for groundfish (described below).

GROUNDFISH ADVISORY PANEL (GAP) REPORT, MS. ODELL

Ms. Odell provided an overview of the GAP's discussion and motions related to FW63 and 2022 priorities.

Questions and Comments on the Presentation:

A committee member asked a clarifying question about GAP motion #5 related to the percentage of recreational catches of Georges Bank (GB) cod. Ms. Odell explained that in the first bullet the GAP noted that during Amendment 16 development the GB cod recreational catches were not high enough to warrant a sub-annual catch limit (ACL), and in the second bullet pointed out that there has been an increase in recreational catches over time, with the percentage increase in part due to ACL increases but also due to increasing recreational catches under state and other sub-component categories. The committee member also asked whether under the discussion of 2022 Council priorities, the GAP discussed baseline requirements which have been discussed in the past. Ms. Odell answered that the GAP did not and said it was difficult to come up with the list of priorities given there is a lot of important work to be done in 2022.

RECREATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL (RAP) REPORT, MR. BLOUNT

Mr. Blount provided an overview of the RAP's discussion and motions related to FW63 and 2022 priorities.

Questions and Comments on the Presentation:

Staff explained that after the meeting Mr. Steinback ran the estimates and under the prioritized option for a closed season this results in a 63% reduction in catch and a 65% reduction under the second choice option. Mr. Steinback added that the estimates are not able to account for behavioral changes, since unlike for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod there is no model to project catch, and that these estimates are based on past catches and effort. Mr. Blount also noted that for FY2018 the minimum fish size was not correct in the estimates and so this should result in an additional reduction when corrected. Another committee member asked for examples of what is meant by behavioral changes with recreational measures. Mr. Blount provided an example the RAP discussed which was whether a reduction to a five fish bag limit for GB cod would change the public's perception as far as whether or not they would target cod, that even though the data shows most people only catch one or two cod this still might affect public perception, and that this is likely different depending on the region and season and whether there are alternative species to fish for.

A committee member asked if there was any more discussion about a slot limit as opposed to increasing the minimum fish size for recreational measure for GB cod, particularly since it was noted there aren't many fisheries in New England using slot limits. Mr. Blount explained the RAP discussed how the recreational fishery is managed by the number of fish caught but overall management is based on weight, and so while there aren't many larger fish caught, they weigh more and so account for a greater reduction. He added that slot limits were probably the most contentious issue discussed and that he isn't sure the RAP is wedded to it.

One committee member asked what the RAP thinks about the RA's authority to adjust GB cod recreational measures, particularly in light of the request for the remand of the recommendation to the SSC. Mr. Blount answered that the RAP likes the input process with the Council rather than allowing the RA to have all the authority. Another committee member asked about the motion recommending GB cod recreational measures and if there is an estimate of the percent reduction in catch. Ms. Odell asked a clarifying question to staff about the RA authority to adjust recreational measures, and staff explained in the past the Council recommended the catch target for three years and gave the RA temporary authority to adjust measures in two years, with the RA working in consultation with the Council and if time permitting the RAP and GAP. Staff said the RAP discussed this process and acknowledged that measures could potentially be liberalized if the data allowed.

AGENDA ITEM #1: FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 63/SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

PRESENTATION: FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 63 UPDATE, DR. COURNAINE

Staff provided an overview of progress on Framework Adjustment 63 (FW63) development, including an overview of the draft alternatives, brief overview of updates to the draft Affected Environment, and a summary of the PDT's memo on the GB cod recreational catch target and recreational measures. The goals of the Committee's discussion were to receive updates on development of FW63 measures, and make recommendations.

Questions and Comments on the Presentation:

One committee member asked for an explanation of the differences between the Eastern GB cod assessment and full GB assessment. Staff explained these are both empirical assessments but are two

different assessment types resulting in different advice, and noted that the Eastern GB assessment occurs before the full GB assessment. The committee member also asked a question for the agency about the GB cod recreational catch target and any pound for pound payback that would occur if there is an overage. Mr. Christopher said he would report back on this. Another committee member asked if there is a scientific uncertainty buffer on GB cod, and staff explained that there was no discussion from the SSC on this and that the overfishing limit (OFL) is unknown.

A committee member asked about the GAP motion to recommend remanding the GB cod recommendation to the SSC and what additional technical information the SSC could get to help with their recommendation. Staff first walked through the Council's guidance for recommending a remand and explained the Council will need to discuss these four factors for considering a remand and decide if one applies. Staff also said the Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) feels strongly it provided everything it typically would for an SSC meeting, and that the PDT will see if there is information that should have been examined by the SSC, noting that it is hard to know what they would bring without knowing what the Council found deficient at this time. Staff pointed out that the majority of SSC members did make a recommendation for GB cod. In response to a question, staff explained that for economic information the PDT provided the SSC with recent catch information as well as last year's Quota Change Model (QCM) results. Staff said it seemed like the SSC is interested in seeing impacts of different options for a decline in the GB cod ABC, and that while typically impacts analysis is done after the SSC's recommendation, in the future the PDT could provide impacts of a range of ABC recommendations if this is of interest. Staff added that the QCM is for sectors only, and so recreational and common pool fishery impacts would be more qualitative. A committee member asked if the SSC review of socioeconomic information that occurred earlier this year influenced what information to bring to the SSC. Staff explained that work to address the recommendations from the socioeconomic review is ongoing. Mr. Nies clarified that the SSC subpanel reviewed socioeconomic information in two framework actions and did not provide a report on what information they would like to see, and that rather the recommendations were about the information provided in Council documents to the agency with a focus on the Affected Environment section. Another committee member noted that the GAP and RAP motions discussed the 2020 catch information not being available to the SSC and that he didn't see anything about this in either the majority or minority report but wondered if the SSC also had concerns about this. Staff explained that the PDT provided Calendar Year (CY) 2020 data to the assessment and discussed this at the SSC meeting and that the Fishing Year (FY) 2020 catch data came out recently after the meeting.

A committee member asked if there is information on where GB cod recreational fishing occurs at a finer scale like statistical areas, and about state and other sub-component fisheries catches. Staff answered that the state and other sub-component catches are mostly from the recreational fishery, and explained that Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimates are not done at the statistical area level but possibly for-hire reporting could be looked at. The committee member said it seems like the fishery is broad based and not specific to one area. Another committee member recalled high landings in New York and New Jersey though this might be a product of the MRIP data process. In response to a question, staff explained that both the three-year and five-year average GB cod recreational catch are based on new MRIP data. A committee member asked what reduction in recreational catch the Committee should be trying to achieve. Staff explained that it's a 74% reduction for recreational fishery catches based on the U.S. ABC for GB cod decline from FY2021 to FY2022. In response to a question, staff explained that there is no recreational catch data for January and February because MRIP does not sample during those months, and those months are also not incorporated into the assessment

Motion #1: Ware/Etrie

Under 4.1.4 Alternative 4 - Changes to the Default Specifications Process for Framework Adjustment 63, the Groundfish Committee recommends to the Council 4.1.4.3 Option 3: 5 months duration, 75% of the previous year's specifications, no holdback provision, and 2-year US/CA TACs as the preferred alternative.

Discussion on the Motion: One Committee member said he is not sure about giving the agency extra time to work on specifications, as he is concerned about the process taking even longer and impacts on fisheries that are summer only, but said he does approve of 75% and 2-year US/CA TACs. Mr. Christopher said that for the agency more time is better, explaining that they have a process to follow and to do it right takes time. He pointed out that this year the Council will be considering a remand which will delay the process and thought the Committee should consider delays caused from start to finish including the Council process. Another committee member said she doesn't see this as giving the agency more time but rather as giving more flexibility and a buffer in case of delays, recognizing that they are limited in what could be done in this framework about the overall timeline and process for setting specifications. In response to a question about the 2-year US/CA TACs, staff explained that this would set a placeholder since these total allowable catches (TACs) are allocated annually, which would allow the fishery to operate since the fishery is often left with not having specifications for the US/CA stocks, and that this doesn't change the annual negotiation process.

Public Comment: Jackie Odell (Northeast Seafood Coalition, GAP Vice Chair) said she appreciates needing extra time for actions, but that the fishery wants to avoid operating under default specifications. She said there is a larger issue with the timeline for groundfish specifications actions in which there is not enough time for the public to participate in the process and respond to assessment surprises as was the case this year.

Motion #1 carried on a show of hands (10/1/2).

Motion #2: Etrie/Salerno (as friendly amended)

The Groundfish Committee recommends that the Council remand the Georges Bank cod Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) back to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) for reconsideration of the ramp-down approach articulated by the minority at the SSC meeting. Social and economic analysis of this approach should be provided along with National Standard 1 guidelines. The new information on FY2020 catch data was not available to SSC. The remand request should be written to avoid delay of Framework Adjustment 63 (e.g., the Council will accept the SSC's Overfishing Limit (OFL) and ABC final recommendations once made and without objection for fishing years 2022-2024).

Discussion on the Motion: Mr. Macdonald said he has concerns about the rationale provided by the GAP and the RAP, including the following: the #1 goal of Magnuson Stevens Act is to prevent overfishing, and he is not sure how the Council would demonstrate a phased decline in ABC would prevent overfishing; that there is scientific uncertainty with this stock; and that he is not sure what additional socioeconomic information the SSC could receive beyond concerns heard from industry about the decline in ABC. One committee member said the minority report references evidence by the industry of a fishing crisis expected from the low ABC and asked if this came from specific catch or landings information, and staff said this came from information provided during public comment as testimony. Another committee member asked if the intent is to have the PDT evaluate economic impacts for the sectors with the QCM

using a range of GB cod ABC recommendations, and the maker of the motion said she would recommend using the numbers included in the minority report as a guide. Mr. Nies said it would be helpful for the Council if this motion can be specific as to which of the remand criteria the Committee thinks wasn't met and that it is not enough to say all of the criteria as this will not be helpful for other Council members. He pointed out that both the majority and minority of the SSC felt the Plan B Smooth assessment is the best available science, but that the difference is the minority felt they did not have enough economic information. Mr. Nies added that the guidelines for using phased in ABCs are clear that care should be taken with considering this approach for stocks in poor condition, especially since there is no way of knowing whether or not overfishing is occurring.

In response to a question about what additional economic information could be brought back to the SSC, staff explained that in the past with requests for a remand or different incorporation of the Council' risk policy the PDT brought back different biological projection runs and QCM results, and that the motion should be as specific as possible about what information to bring. One committee member asked if the SSC is saying their recommendation is the maximum they can give and still end overfishing. Staff explained that the SSC recommendations must end overfishing, and that in the case of GB cod they don't have a way to demonstrate this, and so the SSC would have to either show how a new approach would end overfishing or potentially recommend an OFL. The committee member said that he sees no debate about the economic devastation of the low ABC but does not see how the SSC could justify a lower number biologically unless they were overly conservative with their first recommendation. Staff explained the PDT did walk through the uncertainties for the SSC, a major one being the missing 2020 surveys, and did provide some information on the 2020 spring survey.

In response to a question about timing implications, staff explained that if the Council doesn't take final action at the December meeting then FW63 will be delayed, and that the soonest the SSC could meet is January as the PDT will need time first to prepare additional analyses. Staff said that while it is helpful to include the Council accepting the recommendation without objection there are still other parts of the framework document that are dependent on the GB cod ABC and so delays would still be expected, and it's possible the Council would want to see the outcome before accepting given the poor stock status for GB cod. Staff said that if the Council accepts the recommendation now, they expect at least a one-month delay if everything goes smoothly, and there could be up to a three-month delay. A committee member asked what would happen on May 1st if FW63 was delayed. Staff explained that all stocks have specifications for next year except the US/CA management units which would be under default specifications. The committee member asked if it is possible that in the first few months of FY2021 that GB cod harvest could exceed the 2022 recommendation from the SSC since the FY2021 ABC is much higher and if that happened whether the entire fishery would be shut down, and said the Council needs to consider the risks. Mr. Christopher said the overage would come off the fishery allocation the following year, and said there is a risk this could occur unless the Council wrote in a safeguard. Two committee members said that sector managers manage to the lower number they know would coming with the new fishing year, which is also what they do with default specifications.

A committee member offered his perspectives on the recreational fishery, saying that the GB cod survey is not conducted on the Southern New England and so the survey results are inconsistent with catch observations, and that the GB cod biomass has spread out and cod are located in areas not found in the past, noting the Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association sent a letter to the Council in September that provides observations on cod.

Public Comment: Maggie Raymond (Associated Fisheries of Maine, GAP member) supported the motion, saying it would be helpful if the Committee and SSC had the National Standard 1 guidelines on phased in ABCs. She thinks the Committee should consider a phased in approach to mitigate economic

impacts to the industry. Ms. Odell asked if the Committee feels comfortable making the recommendation for this level of ABC cut, given the uncertainty with the Plan B Smooth assessment, upcoming research track assessment, missing 2020 surveys, surveys not occurring in the Southern New England area, 2020 catch information showing the industry is catching cod, and the National Standard 1 guidelines on phased in approach to setting ABCs. She thinks a remand would be a good opportunity to fully engage the SSC in a second round of discussion. George Lapointe (representing Blue Harvest Fisheries) supports the remand for the reasons others had given, and because of impacts of this ABC reduction on fisheries like that for GB haddock due to cod bycatch as well as recreational fishery impacts. He is supportive of looking at the National Standard 1 guidelines for phased in ABCs, and said it would help to understand the impacts of default specifications if there is a delay from the remand request.

Motion #2 carried on a show of hands (8/3/2).

Motion #3: Etrie/Griffin

To include under Framework Adjustment 63 the temporary authority for the Regional Administrator to modify the Georges Bank cod recreational measures to stay within the Georges Bank cod recreational catch target for fishing years 2022 to 2024. This provision will follow the Framework 57 process that included direct consultation with the Council.

Discussion on the Motion: Mr. Christopher clarified that if FW63 is delayed they wouldn't have the RA authority by May 1, 2022. The maker of the motion said she included FY2022 in case the Council did want to adjust anything later in the year. A committee member asked if the RAP and GAP should be included in the motion, and staff explained that the process laid out in FW57 specifies the RAP and GAP as part of the consultation process if time permits.

Motion #3 carried on a show of hands (10/0/3).

Motion #4: Pierdinock/Godfroy (as friendly amended)

The Groundfish Committee recommends the approach under Option 3 (Groundfish PDT memo)

Option 3 – For FY2022-FY2024, the 3-year (CY2018-CY2020) average percentage of recreational catches relative to US fisheries total catches (20.6%) applied to the proposed FY2022 US ABC, for example a 343 mt US ABC results in a GB cod recreational catch target of 71 mt.

Discussion on the Motion: The maker of the motion said the five-year average catch appears too high and reflects inconsistencies in the catch data. He thinks Option 3 (71mt) accounts for recreational catches as a percentage of total catches and seems just right, with the current catch target being too high and Option 2 (43mt) being too low. One committee member asked if the PDT had any discussion about 2020 COVID impacts and possibly inflating numbers. Staff explained the PDT did not make assumptions about COVID impacts in 2020, and that they used the data that came from MRIP and the Science Center. Another committee member pointed out that FY2018 catches were lower than average. A committee member had concerns about comments from the recreational fishery to achieve the catch target, because this is stock that should be handled conservatively, and noted there is no directed commercial fishery. Another committee member said the majority of recreational fishing activity is not targeting cod and that for vessels south of the 42 longitude they are mostly fishing for fluke, black sea bass, and other species, while

north of the 42 line cod is a focus. Staff said there is the possibility of setting an upper limit for the catch target. In response to a question, staff said the PDT had been thinking the catch target would be set for three years, but understands the issue if they consider a ramped ABC. Staff also said it would be helpful to add Option 2 to the document today to cover the full range of analysis, even if option 3 is preferred.

Motion #4a to amend: Etrie/Pierdinock

To include Option 2 and Option 3 approaches outlined in the Groundfish PDT memo

Option 2 – For FY2022-FY2024

The 3-year (CY2018-CY2020) average of recreational catch (163mt), reduced by the percent change between FY2021 US ABC to the proposed FY2022 US ABC (73.8%), for example results in a GB cod recreational catch target of 43 mt.

Option 3 – For FY2022-FY2024

The 3-year (CY2018-CY2020) average percentage of recreational catches relative to US fisheries total catches (20.6%) applied to the proposed FY2022 US ABC, for example a 343 mt US ABC results in a GB cod recreational catch target of 71 mt.

Motion #4a carried on a show of hands (11/0/2).

Motion #4a as the main motion:

To include Option 2 and Option 3 approaches outlined in the Groundfish PDT memo

Option 2 – For FY2022-FY2024

The 3-year (CY2018-CY2020) average of recreational catch (163mt), reduced by the percent change between FY2021 US ABC to the proposed FY2022 US ABC (73.8%), for example results in a GB cod recreational catch target of 43 mt.

Option 3 – For FY2022-FY2024

The 3-year (CY2018-CY2020) average percentage of recreational catches relative to US fisheries total catches (20.6%) applied to the proposed FY2022 US ABC, for example a 343 mt US ABC results in a GB cod recreational catch target of 71 mt.

Motion #4a as the main motion passed without objection.

Motion #5: Etrie/Pierdinock

To add an alternative for analysis Georges Bank cod recreational management measures as:

- Slot limit 22 in to 28 in fish size
- 5 fish bag limit
- To prioritize the closed season measure to achieve conservation goals, as:
 - First choice- May 1 to July 31 (Wave 3 and Partial Wave 4)
 - Second choice- July and August (Wave 4)

Discussion on the Motion: The maker of the motion said that in light of the request for a remand they don't necessarily want to recommend these as the measures going forward but think it would be helpful to have something to analyze in the document, and thought the RAP discussion was well informed. A committee member noted they heard from at least one fisherman on concerns about a closed season in July and August and so their preference is for the first closed season option, and that the basis for the slot limit is to preserve older spawning fish and is intended to balance conservation needs with allowing anglers to keep fishing for longer seasons. Mr. Christopher asked if this would be in place for all three years, as he is not sure the measures would be in place for May 1, 2022. The maker of the motion said she is thinking 2022 but would need to consider this further. Staff explained that recreational measures are typically in place until changed again either through temporary RA authority or Council action, and that if the Committee's intent is for one year they should specify this. One committee member said he is concerned about a slot limit and that he is interested in considering an additional option that would raise the minimum fish size.

Motion #5a to amend: Pierdinock/Smith

To add an alternative for analysis Georges Bank cod recreational management measures as:

- Slot limit 22 in to 28 in fish size
- 5 fish bag limit
- To prioritize the closed season measure to achieve conservation goals, as:
 - First choice- May 1 to July 31 (Wave 3 and Partial Wave 4)
 - Second choice- July and August (Wave 4)

To add an additional alternative

- 23 min fish size
- 5 fish bag limit
- Closed season March 1 to June 30 (Waves 2 and 3)

Discussion on the Motion: A committee member noted the difference in discard mortality assumptions between GB cod and GOM cod and asked if this could be looked into, and the Chair said at the RAP meeting it was mentioned this is something the cod research track assessment could look into. Mr. Steinback said he can look at the additional option for the Council meeting but at first glance it does not appear to provide as much of a reduction in catch as the first two closure options. He explained that the biggest difference between these options is with a closure for wave 4, as including July or August gives a reduction in catch closer to the conservation goals. In response to a question, staff explained that these options will be analyzed as a package of measures. A committee member asked if there is a way to look at changing the bag limit to get similar conservation benefits as a slot limit, and Mr. Steinback responded that with the bag limit there isn't much effect until it's reduced to one or two fish. He added that there is a little savings with a two fish limit but since most people already only catch two fish, they would really need to move to a one fish limit to make a difference. Mr. Blount explained the RAP is uncomfortable with moving from a ten fish bag limit even to five, because even though most people only catch two fish they need the higher limit for public perception, but that moving to a five fish limit would eliminate large event trips. A committee said he thought raising the minimum fish size to a 23" limit would allow higher discards and said that while he doesn't like slot limits he understands the purpose of protecting older spawning fish

Motion #5a to amend passed without objection.

Motion #5a as the main motion:

To add an alternative for analysis Georges Bank cod recreational management measures as:

- Slot limit 22 in to 28 in fish size
- 5 fish bag limit
- To prioritize the closed season measure to achieve conservation goals, as:
 - First choice- May 1 to July 31 (Wave 3 and Partial Wave 4)
 - Second choice- July and August (Wave 4)

To add an additional alternative

- 23 min fish size
- 5 fish bag limit
- Closed season March 1 to June 30 (Waves 2 and 3)

*Motion #5a as the main motion **passed** without objection.*

Motion #6: Etrie/Ware

GF Committee recommends 4.1.2 Alternative 2 Revised Specifications as the preferred alternative (excluding specifications for FY2022 to FY2024 for GB cod)
Annual specifications for FY2022 - FY2024 for GOM cod, FY2022- FY2023 for GB yellowtail flounder, and FY2022 for white hake. Specify total allowable catches (TACs) for the U.S./Canada Management Area for FY2022 for Eastern GB cod, Eastern GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder.

*Motion #6 **passed** without objection.*

Motion #7: Salerno/Etrie

The Groundfish Committee recommends to add for additional alternative for analysis for Georges Bank cod recreational measures

- 24"-28" slot size
- 1 fish bag limit
- seasonal closure - Wave 4 (July 1 - August 31)

Rationale: There needs to be an option with a significant reduction in recreational catch that avoids any directed fishing.

Discussion on the Motion: A committee member said it would be helpful to analyze this to round out the range of options but is not necessarily supporting this option now. Several Committee members thought these measures are extreme and go beyond the reduction needed, and the committee member said the Committee should recognize the cut for the commercial fishery is severe too. Mr. Blount said he doesn't have an issue analyzing this option but pointed out they already see a large reduction in catch with the slot limit and closed season in the other options.

*Motion #7 **failed** (3/8/2).*

AGENDA ITEM #2: POSSIBLE 2022 COUNCIL PRIORITIES FOR GROUND FISH

Staff provided an overview of the possible 2022 Council priorities for groundfish as well as the additional GAP and RAP motions on priorities. The goals of the Committee's discussion were to discuss and possibly recommend additional 2022 Council priorities.

Motion #8: Etric/Salerno

The Groundfish Committee puts forward the following list of priorities for 2022, in order of priority for 1-4, for consideration by the Council in December:

1. Set ABCs/ACLs for roughly half of groundfish stocks for FY2023-2025 and US/CA stocks for FY 2023, revise rebuilding plans for GOM cod and SNE/MA winter flounder; adopt additional measures to promote stock rebuilding
2. Develop metrics to be used in the review process that will evaluate the monitoring system, as per A23 (Multi-year Priority)
3. In consultation with SSC, Revise ABC Control Rules for Northeast Multispecies Stocks
4. Allocate GB Cod to the Recreational fishery and establish Accountability Measures; this would be a multi-year priority informed by the Cod Stock structure work.
5. Staff: Research Track Assessments: Haddock, American Plaice, Atlantic Cod
6. Staff: Groundfish management track assessments
7. Staff: TRAC/TMGC

Discussion on the Motion: Mr. Christopher said he is not sure how the cod stock structure work fits in for next year, and staff suggested there could perhaps be a white paper in FY2022 to inform next steps. One committee member said there is not agreement among Council members on how to address cod stock structure and that it would help to have more clarity on this next week. He also explained that the Executive Committee did not recommend cod stock structure work or GB cod recreational sub-ACL as 2022 priorities.

Motion #8 carried on a show of hands (6/3/4).

The Groundfish Committee meeting adjourned at approximately 4:50 p.m.