

Groundfish Committee Report

NEFMC Meeting

June 29, 2022



New England
Fishery Management Council

Groundfish Outlook by Quarter in 2022

Updated June 13, 2022, NEFMC Staff

Council Priority	Jan – Mar	Apr - Jun	July - Sept	Oct - Dec
Amendment 23	Submit correction (Jan.)	GARFO approval letter (Apr.)	GARFO implementation	
	Develop A23 review metrics			
Framework Adjustment 63	Preliminary & Final Submissions		GARFO implementation	
Recreational Measures	Develop recommendations to GARFO: GOM cod & haddock recreational measures		GARFO implementation	
Framework Adjustment 65		Initiate action, develop specifications & measures	Develop specifications & measures, conduct analysis	Take final action
Atlantic Cod Management	Receive report from 2021 Workshops - NEFMC/NEFSC/UNH-NH SeaGrant (Feb.)	Add priority, discuss approach	Draft white paper on allocating GB cod to the recreational fishery	
2022-2026 Research Priorities		Make additions / revisions to research priorities		
Stock Assessments	Research Track (RT) – GOM haddock (Jan.), GB/EGB haddock (Mar.)	Management Track (MT) – SNE/MA winter flounder (Jun.)	TRAC– EGB cod, EGB haddock, GB yellowtail flounder (Jul.) RT – American Plaice (Jul.) MT – 13 stocks (Sept.)	

Draft Framework Adjustment 65



New England
Fishery Management Council

Framework Adjustment 65

Goal:

Receive an update and consider recommendations from the Committee to add Georges Bank cod under the stocks with additional measures to promote rebuilding.

Scope

Fishing year (FY) 2023- FY2025 Specifications/Management Measures, to:

- Revise status determination criteria, as appropriate,
- Revise rebuilding plans for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) winter flounder,
- Set FY2023-FY2024 total allowable catches for US/Canada management units of Eastern Georges Bank (GB) cod and Eastern GB haddock, and the GB yellowtail flounder stock,
- Set FY2023-FY2024 specifications for GB cod, including a catch target for the recreational fishery
- Set FY2023-FY2025 specifications for GB haddock, GOM haddock, CC/GOM yellowtail flounder, SNE/MA yellowtail flounder, GB winter flounder, GOM winter flounder, SNE/MA winter flounder, American plaice, witch flounder, pollock, white hake, Atlantic halibut, ocean pout, and Atlantic wolffish,
- Adopt additional measures to promote stock rebuilding for GOM cod and SNE/MA winter flounder,
- Revise acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rules, in consultation with the SSC.

Objectives

To meet regulatory requirements to prevent overfishing, ensure rebuilding, and help achieve optimum yield in the commercial and recreational groundfish fishery.

Range of Alternatives

Range of Alternatives:

1. Revisions to status determination criteria
2. Revisions to formal rebuilding plans for GOM cod and SNE/MA winter flounder
3. Updates to annual catch limits
 - Specifications for sixteen groundfish stocks (GB cod, GB haddock, GOM haddock, GB yellowtail flounder, CC/GOM yellowtail flounder, SNE/MA yellowtail flounder, GB winter flounder, GOM winter flounder, SNE/MA winter flounder, American plaice, witch flounder, pollock, white hake, Atlantic halibut, ocean pout, and Atlantic wolffish)
 - Total allowable catches for transboundary stocks (EGB cod, EGB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder)
 - Recreational fishery catch target for GB cod
 - Sub-annual catch limits for Atlantic Sea scallop, small-mesh multispecies, and herring fisheries
 - Review and possibly adjust sub-components (other fisheries and state)
4. Revisions to ABC control rules
5. Additional commercial and recreational management measures to promote stock rebuilding for GOM cod
6. Additional commercial and recreational management measures to promote stock rebuilding SNE/MA winter flounder

Timeline

2022	
JAN 25-27	Peer review - Gulf of Maine haddock Research Track assessment
FEB 24	Assessment Oversight Panel meets (SNE/MA winter flounder)
MAR 16	Groundfish Committee meets
MAR 28-31	Peer review - Georges Bank /Eastern Georges Bank Research Track assessment
APR 12-14	Council initiates framework
APR 20	TRAC Intercessional
MAY 23-24	Assessment Oversight Panel meets (13 groundfish stocks)
JUN 1	Recreational Advisory Panel meets
JUN 2	Groundfish Advisory Panel meets
JUN 14	Groundfish Committee meets
JUN 27-30	Peer review - SNE/MA winter flounder Management Track assessment
JUN 28-30	Council receives update on development of draft alternatives

JUL 12-14	TRAC assesses US/CA management units of EGB cod and EGB haddock, and the GB yellowtail flounder stock
JUL 18-22	Peer review – American plaice Research Track assessment
AUG 3	Assessment Oversight Panel meets (American plaice)
AUG/SEP TBD	SSC recommends OFLs/ABCs for GB yellowtail flounder, GB cod, and SNE/MA winter flounder, discusses rebuilding plans for GOM cod and SNE/MA winter flounder, discusses possible ABC control rule revisions
SEP 12-14	TMGC/SC meets to recommend TACs for US/CA management units/stock
SEP 19-23	Peer review - 13 groundfish stocks Management Track Assessments
SEP 27-29	Council receives TMGC recommendations and reviews progress on developing draft alternatives
OCT/NOV TBD	SSC recommends OFLs/ABCs for 13 groundfish stocks
DEC 6-8	Council receives draft alternatives and takes final action
2023	
JAN	Preliminary submission of framework document to NMFS
FEB	Final submission of framework document to NMFS
MAY	Target implementation

Groundfish PDT- Meeting Summary 3/9/22

Rebuilding Plans for GOM Cod and SNE/MA Winter Flounder:

- GOM cod:
 - Work to begin in the spring
 - Given that stock structure might change, perhaps consider another set of protections - more of a focus on spawning protections rather than a focus on the percent of F_{MSY} alone
- SNE/MA winter flounder:
 - Work to begin after spring peer review of the management track assessment
 - The rebuilding plan and management measures changes should focus on improving the probability of spawning and recruitment success.

Groundfish Committee - Meeting 6/14/22

Task the Plan Development Team with analyzing F-rebuild options for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod which consider 50%/60%/70% rebuilding probabilities associated with a 10-year rebuilding timeline. Also determine if fishing at 75% of $F(MSY)$ is projected to rebuild the GOM cod stock in 10 years.

Groundfish PDT- Meeting Summary 3/9/22

Annual Catch Limits:

- The majority of stock assessments will be done in the fall management track, but SNE/MA winter flounder, GB cod and GB yellowtail flounder will be available sooner.
- Update the risk policy matrix for all stocks with the most recent assessment results and an additional update with the assessments done later this year
- Sub-component reviews - skipped in FW63 but appropriate to include in this FW since most stocks are included
- Review of the GB haddock sub-ACL for the herring fishery
- Examination of management uncertainty buffers as part of the specifications process – specifically for sectors post-implementation of A23

Groundfish Plan Development Team

ABC Control Rules:

- A sub-group of PDT and SSC members plans to start with the current control rule and look at a range of options with input from the PDT and the Groundfish Committee.
- The sub-group will present a summary white paper in August to the full PDT.
- The PDT will provide updates to the Groundfish Committee and Scientific and Statistical Committee .

Current ABC Control Rules

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.

Groundfish Plan Development Team Sub-Group

Sub-Group Members:

Jamie Cournane, Liz Sullivan, Paul Nitschke, John Wiedenmann, Richard Merrick, Hiro Uchida

Purpose and Objectives:

Identify a range of potential ABC control rules for the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) fishery management plan for the Committee's consideration.

Timeline:

The following table summarizes the timeline for completing the work.

Milestone	Approximate Completion Data	Additional Notes
Table summarizing ABC control rule use to date	June	#2
Discuss questions and summarize discussion	June - July	#1, #3, #4
Present to full PDT	August	#5

Work Plan

1. Consider these questions:
 - a. Should a suite of general control rules apply to all stocks, or should different rules be considered for stocks with various life histories?
 - b. Should the control rule describe the response when a stock is overfished, or should rebuilding plans be determined on a case-by-case basis when that determination is made?
 - c. Could a tiered approach be used that varies the rule based on the level of stock assessment uncertainty, i.e., retrospective patterns, uncertainty in fishery independent or dependent data, uncertainty caused by environmental trends or predation, uncertainty in estimating fishing mortality or spawning stock biomass?
 - d. Which control rules could better account for environmental trends and ecosystems considerations?
 - e. Which control rules address the multispecies nature of this plan?
 - f. How will new single species' ABC control rules work with the Council's eFEP?
 - g. How do different control rules effect economic and social benefits, (e.g. more stability, a higher level of benefits, but more variability in revenues, a higher level of benefits under optimistic/ pessimistic scenarios for productivity, natural mortality, recruitment, etc.)?
 - h. Could the control rule include details on application such as when an ABC is held constant, what deviations from the control rule are allowed, etc.?
 - i. How /could the control rules incorporate the Council's risk policy?
 - j. Are there other issues a control rule for multispecies should consider?
2. Update the PDT's table of how the SSC applied the ABC control rule in previous years.
3. Consider the control rule polices summarized in the GMRI report to the Council and from other sources, as appropriate.
4. Summarize any additional considerations.
 - a. How to transition from existing ABC control rules to the new control rules?
5. Report back to the full PDT.

Groundfish PDT- Meeting Summary 3/9/22

ABC Control Rules:

- A sub-group of PDT and SSC members will start with the current control rule and look at a range of options with input from the PDT and the Committee.
 - Consider the control rule policies summarized in the GMRI report
- The subgroup will present a summary white paper in July/August to the full PDT.

ABC Control Rules – Council Staff

Key question: What type of approach(es) would the Committee like to consider in FW65?

Approach #1 – Refine the existing Control Rules – The current control rules would remain and clear decision rules on their application would be developed. For example, when/how to apply a constant ABC based on projections from analytical assessments and the results of empirical approaches.

Approach #2 – Modify the existing Control Rules – One or more control rules would be modified or dropped. For example, removing “option c” and refining “option d” and specifying how to use a fixed F_{rebuild} under “option b”.

Approach #3 – Replace the existing Control Rules – Completely new control rules would be developed. For example, one alternative could be tiered control rules that consider the stock and its assessment. Furthermore, should the public participate in a MSE process like what was done for Atlantic herring? If so, this would be a much longer and more involved process beyond the timing for FW65.

Groundfish Committee - Meeting 6/14/22

Move that the Committee recommends to the Plan Development Team that work related to the ABC control rule in Framework 65 begin with Council staff approach #1 (*refine the existing control rules, including developing guidance on when to use a constant ABC*). The Committee continues to recognize the value of Council staff approaches #2 (*modify the existing control rules*) and #3 (*replace the existing control rules*); however, additional time and conversations with the SSC and Advisory Panels is warranted under these approaches and their more extensive nature may be best addressed under an additional priority in 2023.

Groundfish PDT- Meeting Summary 3/9/22

Additional Measures to Promote Stock Rebuilding for GOM Cod and SNE/MA Winter Flounder:

- The PDT asks the Groundfish Committee - Should the focus in this section be on spawning protections or ways to promote spawning? Or some other aspect of rebuilding these stocks?
- As an initial step, the PDT could summarize spawning based on recent reports, publications, and potentially a new PDT analysis to identify times/areas.

Groundfish Committee - Meeting 3/16/22

Committee Consensus Statement:

Task the Groundfish Plan Development Team with conducting a preliminary analysis of other federal fisheries catches of Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder and present this at the April 2022 Council meeting.

Recent Total Catches and Specifications

SNE/MA Winter Flounder Utilization

Fishing Year	Total ACL (mt)	Total Catch (mt)	Percent of Total ACL Caught (%)
2016	749	597.2	79.7
2017	749	550.5	73.5
2018	700	398.0	56.9
2019	700	295.4	42.2
2020	699	233.4	33.4

FYs 2021-2023

OFL	ABC	ACL
1,438	456	441



Groundfish PDT Report 4/1/22

SNE/MA Winter Flounder Other Fisheries Catches

SNE/MA winter flounder other sub-component catch (mt). Total catch and groundfish fishery catch shown for comparison.

	Catch (mt)						
Fishing Year	Total	Groundfish Fishery	SCALLOP ¹	FLUKE	SCUP	SQUID	SQUID/WHITING
2010	370.1	47.4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2011	298.7	93.9	60.3	16.4	8.3	19.5	6.8
2012	315.9	106.0	68.9	15.0	10.7	17.3	6.6
2013	1025.9	788.6	78.2	10.8	9.7	14.5	11.2
2014	703.2	545.8	33.3	6.4	5.7	6.6	3.2
2015	886.7	688.0	65.9	7.6	6.5	3.1	2.2
2016	597.2	453.3	40.4	3.6	3.7	19.6	8.5
2017	550.5	409.3	48.6	5.5	5.6	35.2	2.9
2018	398.0	250.7	52.5	3.8	3.5	47.9	3.2
2019	295.4	143.8	39.0	5.4	3.4	66.4	4.8
2020	233.4	103.2	34.6	6.3	3.3	57.2	4.8

FY2021 YTD
Groundfish
Commercial
(Sector +
Common Pool)
Catches
80.2 mt
April 5, 2022,
GARFO



¹Based on scallop fishing year; all other columns are based on groundfish fishing year

Groundfish PDT Report 4/1/22

SNE/MA Winter Flounder Other Fisheries Catches

SNE/MA winter flounder other sub-components percentage of total catch (%). Groundfish fishery shown for comparison. Years in which catches exceeded 5% of total catch indicated by yellow cells.

For the category described as “other non-specified”, catches will be monitored and if the catch rises above five percent accountability measures will be developed to prevent the overall ACL from being exceeded. A16

	Percentage of Total Catch (%)					
Fishing Year	Groundfish Fishery	SCALLOP ¹	FLUKE	SCUP	SQUID	SQUID/WHITING
2010	12.8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2011	31.4	20.2	5.5	2.8	6.5	2.3
2012	33.5	21.8	4.7	3.4	5.5	2.1
2013	76.9	7.6	1.1	0.9	1.4	1.1
2014	77.6	4.7	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.5
2015	77.6	7.4	0.9	0.7	0.3	0.2
2016	75.9	6.8	0.6	0.6	3.3	1.4
2017	74.3	8.8	1.0	1.0	6.4	0.5
2018	63.0	13.2	0.9	0.9	12.0	0.8
2019	48.7	13.2	1.8	1.1	22.5	1.6
2020	44.2	14.8	2.7	1.4	24.5	2.1

¹Based on scallop fishing year; all other columns are based on groundfish fishing year

Groundfish PDT Report 4/1/22

SNE/MA Winter Flounder Other Fisheries Catches

- The increased percentage of SNE/MA winter flounder catches in non-groundfish fisheries in recent years is most likely explained by the dramatic decline in groundfish fishery catch (landings in particular) since this stock was allocated to the fishery in 2013.
- Catches from the scallop fishery sub-component have exceeded 5% of total catches in all but one year from FY2011-2020, though catches have declined slightly in recent years.
- Catches from the squid fishery sub-component have exceeded 5% of total catches in recent years from FY2017-2020, and catches have also increased over this time period.
- This preliminary analysis raised several questions by the PDT, mainly on squid fishery catches, that could be explored in future analyses depending on the Committee's direction.

Groundfish Advisory Panel – 6/2/22

SNE/MA Winter Flounder

That the Groundfish Advisory Panel requests the Groundfish Committee task the Groundfish Plan Development Team with a full re-evaluation of how groundfish catch is assigned by fishery in other fisheries, focusing on Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder. That re-evaluation should look at all aspects of VTR assignments, observer data, and extrapolation methods. 7/0/0

The GAP recommends that the Committee develop an alternative that would establish a sub-ACL and accountability measures including increased monitoring for the squid fishery. 6/1/0

Groundfish Advisory Panel – 6/2/22

GOM Cod

The Groundfish Advisory Panel recommends that the Groundfish Committee task the Plan Development Team to analyze the effectiveness of the management uncertainty buffer for the recreational fishery with respect to the objective of rebuilding Gulf of Maine cod. 6/0/0

The Groundfish Advisory Panel recommends that the Groundfish Committee requests the Plan Development Team provide an analysis of the conservation benefits derived from restricting all components of the fishery, those that receive a sub-ACL of Gulf of Maine cod, in the time and area closures associated with the Groundfish closed areas in the Gulf of Maine. 4/0/1

Groundfish Committee - Meeting 6/14/22

The Groundfish Committee tasks the Plan Development Team to further investigate the bycatch of Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) winter flounder in the “squid” fishery between fishing years 2017 to 2020. Specifically, to determine:

- What component of the “squid” fishery is the bycatch occurring (ie. Illex, Loligo or other small mesh fisheries with a significant catch of squid)
- The extent or magnitude of small mesh otter trawl trips that have observed high levels of SNE/MA winter flounder bycatch compared to total effort
- Examination of outliers in the trip discard data
- The temporal and spatial distribution of this bycatch in the “squid” fishery

Groundfish Committee - Meeting 6/14/22

GOM Cod

The Groundfish Committee tasks the Plan Development Team to analyze the effectiveness of the management uncertainty buffer for the Gulf of Maine cod recreational fishery including consideration of how the uncertainty buffer could impact carryover determinations for sectors.

SNE/MA Winter Flounder

The Groundfish Committee tasks the Plan Development Team to work with Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission staff to summarize any information available on documented spawning locations for Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder and existing management measures within those areas.

Framework Adjustment 65

Goal:

Receive an update and consider recommendations from the Committee to add Georges Bank cod under the stocks with additional measures to promote rebuilding.

Amendment 23 Review Metrics



New England
Fishery Management Council

A23 Review Metrics

Goal:

Receive an update on development of the metrics.

PDT Progress Report – A23 Review Metrics

Purpose: evaluate the efficacy of sector monitoring coverage rates, including establishing metrics and indicators of how well the monitoring program improved accuracy while maximizing value and minimizing costs

Possible timeline:

2022	PDT develops possible review metrics and indicators for the Committee/Council to consider
2023	SSC input on possible metrics and indicators, complete preliminary analysis, Committee/Council determines metrics
2024	Review occurs (after two full years of data, assuming May 2022 implementation)

PDT Progress Report – A23 Review Metrics

Initial discussion questions for PDT:

- The review is to be done following the first two full fishing years once A23 is implemented. The PDT should determine a “before A23” range of years for comparison. What years should those be?
- Start to brainstorm an initial list of metrics and indicators. These may be different for the proposed higher coverage up to 100% vs. a lower coverage rate (i.e., the proposed default minimum coverage of 40%).
- Consider issues raised in the A23 proposed rule regarding measures that affect coverage rates (e.g., exclusions from monitoring coverage). How do these factor into development of the review metrics?

PDT Discussion Notes 5/26/22

- Discussed whether the review should be conducted for FY2022-2023, since A23 is not yet implemented
 - FY2022 coverage target is 99% so still allows for review of comprehensive coverage target (purpose of the review)
- Discussed which years to use for pre-A23 comparison
 - FY2016 should be the earliest
 - Still include FY2020 despite COVID impacts/low observer coverage
- Brainstormed initial ideas for possible metrics and indicators (to be refined over the course of this work)

PDT Discussion Notes 5/26/22

- Broad categories of possible metrics and indicators:
 - Realized coverage compared to target coverage – explore factors/reasons, comparison between monitoring tools (ASM, EM), exclusions
 - Monitoring bias (re-run PDT monitoring analyses, species composition correlations)
 - Fishery performance (catch, effort, quota leasing prices, fishing costs)
 - Observer program administration/social indicators (PTNS compliance, refusals, safety issues)

Groundfish Advisory Panel 6/2/22

- Broad categories of possible metrics and indicators:
 - Observer program administration/reasons for realized coverage
 - Monitoring costs (cost/benefit analysis, costs relative to discards)
 - Impacts on stock assessments

Draft Discussion Document Outline

Overview

1. Background

Important Reference Documents

Glossary of Terms

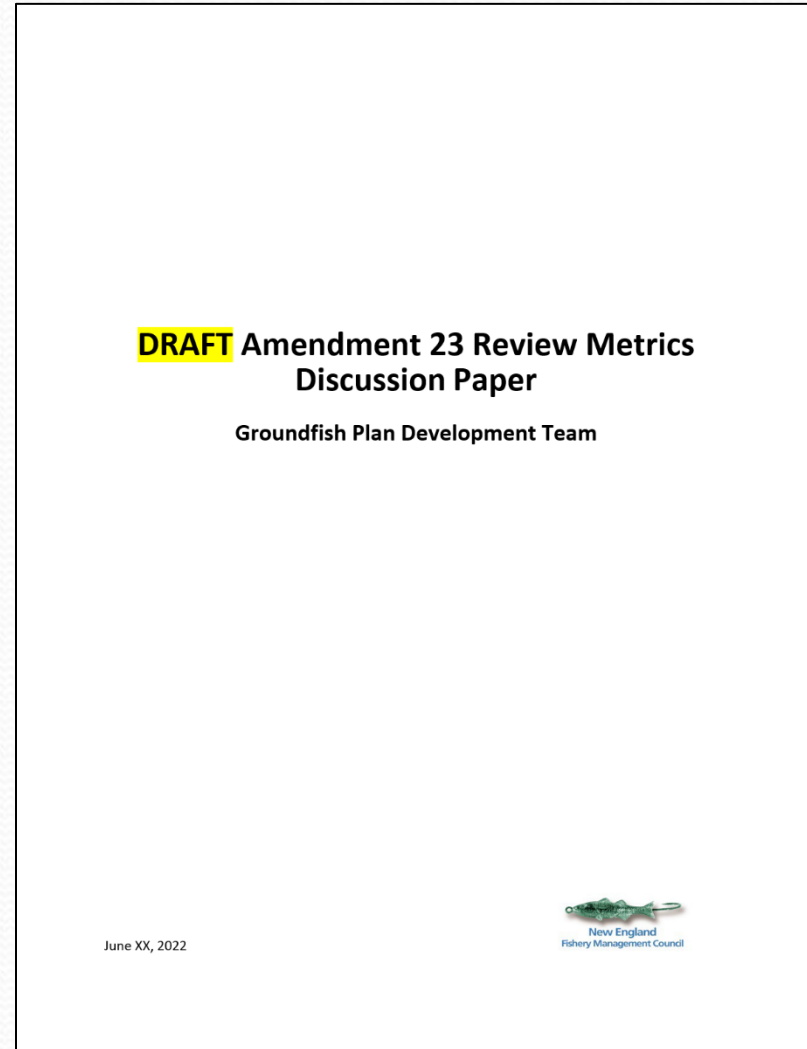
Goals and Objectives of Amendment 23

Goals and Objectives of Groundfish
Monitoring Program

2. Objectives of the Review

3. Summary of Groundfish Fishery Conditions

4. Possible Review Metrics and Indicators



A23 Review Metrics

Goal:

Receive an update on development of the metrics.

Atlantic Cod Management



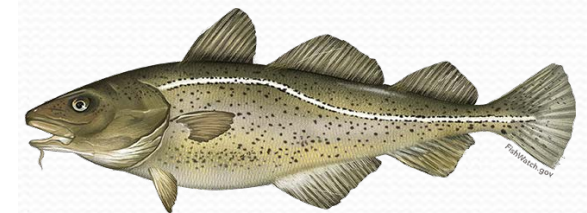
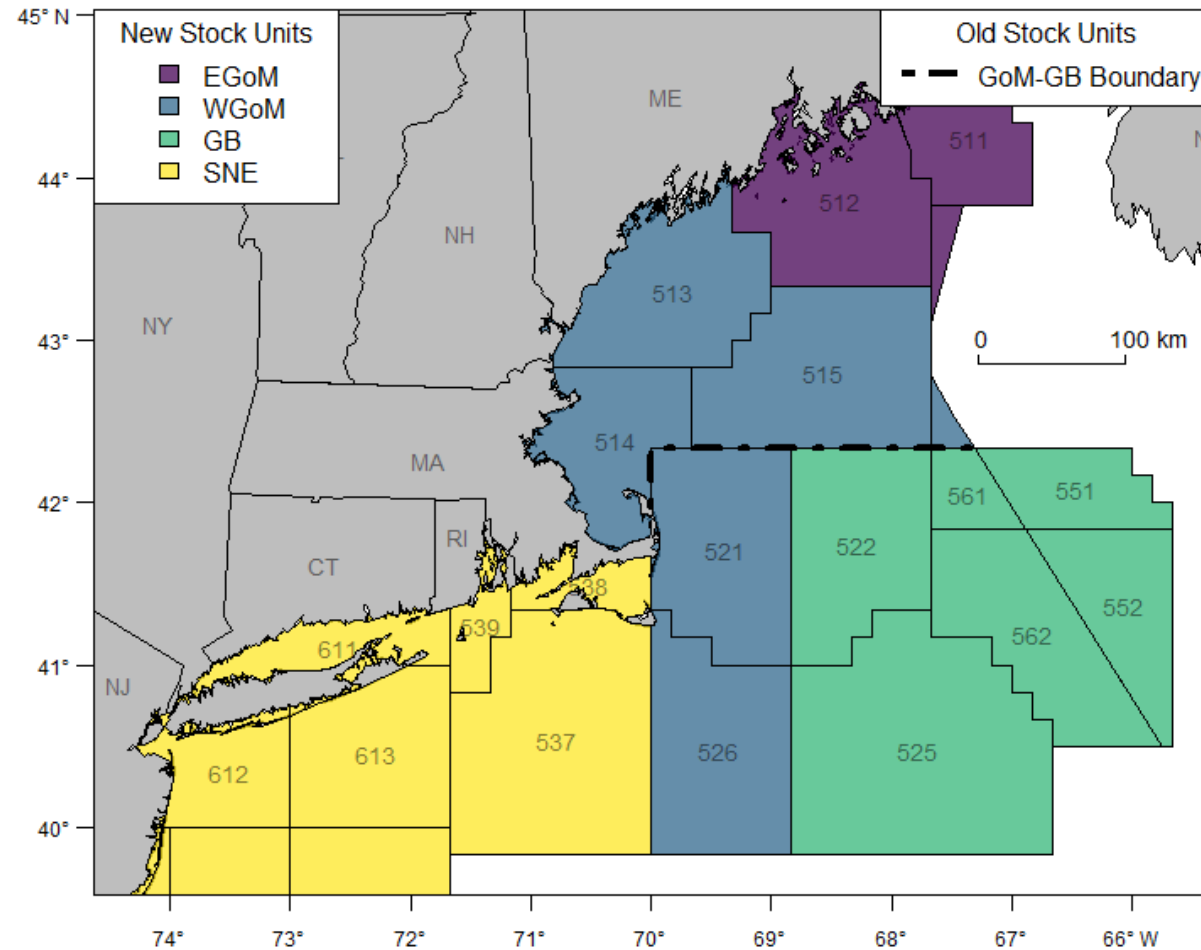
New England
Fishery Management Council

Atlantic Cod Management

Goal:

Receive a progress report with focus on the white paper on Georges Bank cod allocation to the recreational fishery

Atlantic Cod Management



Groundfish Advisory Panel – 6/2/22

Atlantic Cod Management

The Groundfish Advisory Panel seeks explanation from the Groundfish Committee as to why reallocation or reclassification of existing allocation should be considered in the management response to the new cod stock structure information. 5/0/0

Groundfish Advisory Panel – 6/2/22

Allocation of GB Cod to Recreational Fishery

The Groundfish Advisory Panel recommends to the Groundfish Committee that the White Paper on potential approaches to allocate “Georges Bank cod” to the recreational fishery consider the following:

1. A future allocation should not reward high catches from one sector of the fishery that were unconstrained by the ABC / ACL while other components were constrained.
2. Using a formula that consists of a straight proportional catch during the years when one component of the fishery was unconstrained while others were constrained should be flagged. Instead, different weighting should be considered for fair and equitable treatment.
3. A future allocation should consider years before and after a catch target was approved.
4. A future allocation should consider whether the catch target was directly linked to reduction in the ABC.
5. A future allocation should not reward years when a target catch was exceeded.
6. Management uncertainty buffer for recreational sub-ACL would be evaluated with the fact that the recreational fishery is not monitored.
7. The recreational sub-ACL for GB cod should be after sub-components (i.e., the opposite of how it works for GOM cod).

5/0/1

Groundfish Committee - Meeting 6/14/22

The Committee recommends to the Plan Development Team that the White Paper on potential approaches to allocate “Georges Bank cod” to the recreational fishery consider the following:

- a) Management measures that each sector (rec vs. comm) was subject to during time periods considered, including whether the recreational fishery was subject to a catch target, if that catch target was linked to a change in the ABC, and if the catch target was based on old vs. new MRIP data
- b) Whether to consider catch data from years prior to the recreational catch target being established (FY2018)
- c) Identification of years in which an overage of the rec catch target or the commercial sub-ACL occurred and a methodology to ensure overages do not inflate a sub-ACL
- d) If a management uncertainty buffer is appropriate for the recreational fishery and, if yes, the potential magnitude of the buffer
- e) The influence of deducting sub-components after the recreational and commercial sub-ACLs
- f) Using weight vs. numbers of fish in the allocation
- g) If and how state waters catch factors into the allocation
- h) Exploration of what recreational catch is compared to and its impacts (i.e. commercial catch, the ACL, something else?)

Atlantic Cod Management

Goal:

Receive a progress report with focus on the white paper on Georges Bank cod allocation to the recreational fishery