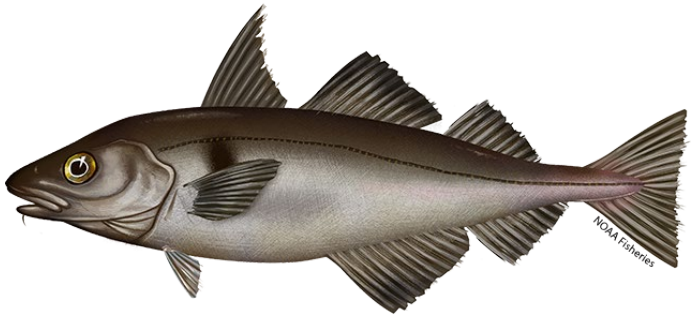
Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan

<u>DRAFT</u> Framework Adjustment 74

Including a Supplemental Information Report, Regulatory Impact Review, and
Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis



Framework Discussion Document

Committee Version

November 2026

Prepared by the
New England Fishery Management Council
In consultation with the
National Marine Fisheries Service and
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

New England
Fishery Management Council

NOAA

Document history

Initial Framework Meeting:	June 24, 2026
Final Framework Meeting:	XXX
Preliminary Submission:	XXX
Final Submission:	XXX

Cover image

NOAA Fisheries [https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/haddock]

FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 74

TO THE NORTHEAST MULTISPECIES FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Proposed Action: Propose specifications for groundfish stocks for fishing years 2027-2031.

Responsible Agencies:

New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill #2
Newburyport, MA 01950

National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20235

For Further Information:

Dr. Cate O'Keefe, Executive Director
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill #2
Newburyport, Massachusetts 01950
Phone: (978) 465-0492
Fax: (978) 465-3116

Abstract:

The New England Fishery Management Council, in consultation with NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, has prepared Framework Adjustment 74 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, which includes a draft Supplemental Information Report that presents the range of alternatives to achieve the goals and objectives of the action. The proposed action focuses on setting specifications for certain groundfish stocks. The document addresses the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, and other applicable laws.

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To be completed later as Council develops this action.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

3.1 BACKGROUND

To be completed.

3.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of FW74 is to set specifications for several groundfish stocks and management units, fishery program administrative measures, and commercial fishery measures. FW74 incorporates the results of new stock assessments. The need for this action is to prevent overfishing, ensure rebuilding, and help achieve optimum yield in the commercial and recreational groundfish fisheries consistent with the status of stocks and the requirements of MSA.

This framework includes alternatives that would:

- Set FY2027 total allowable catches (TACs) for U.S./Canada management units of Eastern GB cod, Eastern GB haddock and the GB yellowtail flounder stock,
- Set FY2027 specifications for GB cod, GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder,
- Set FY2027-FY2031 specifications for GOM haddock, American plaice, witch flounder, pollock, northern windowpane flounder, southern windowpane flounder, and Atlantic halibut,
- Streamline administration of the B DAS program and Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program,
- Simplify the criteria for reducing the size of the windowpane flounder accountability measures area.

4.0 DRAFT ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION

Questions/Comments for the Committee:

- This section presents draft alternatives for this action along with a rationale for each alternative.
- Text boxes like this one provide questions or comments for the Committee, and analyses and discussion from the PDT.
- Please select a preferred alternative for each action in this section to recommend to the Council.

4.1 ACTION 1 – REVISED SPECIFICATIONS

Questions for the Committee:

- Does the Committee support the PDT recommendations for sub-components and annual catch limits?
- Does the Committee support the PDT recommendations for the GB haddock sub-ACL for the mid-water trawl (MWT)/herring fishery?

PDT analysis for Committee consideration:

Sub-components review:

The Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) met on November 9, 2026, by webinar to discuss the sub-component review for Framework Adjustment (FW) 74. The PDT then worked via correspondence to complete the review.

Summary of OFLs and ABCs by Stock

Table 1 summarizes the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) 2026 recommendations for FY2027-FY2031 for seven groundfish stocks and the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee's (TMGC) recommendations for only FY2027 for the three transboundary groundfish stocks.

The SSC has traditionally recommended groundfish specifications at three-year intervals, but recent reductions in federal agency resources have highlighted a potential need for increased flexibility in management and regulatory processes. Thus, beginning in 2025, the SSC was asked to make recommendations for a five-year period, considering specifications for later years should future gaps in federal resources prevent the provision of updated data.

For the three transboundary stocks (GB cod, GB haddock, GB yellowtail flounder), specifications are set annually through the TMGC process.

Table 1- Summary of OFLs and ABCs for FY2027-FY2031 based on SSC and TMGC recommendations in 2026. Specifications for stocks in grey are unadjusted from specifications previously set.

	Fishing Year									
	2027		2028		2029		2030		2031	
Stock	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC
Eastern Gulf of Maine cod	39	30								
Western Gulf of Maine cod	769	586								
Georges Bank cod	400	400								
Southern New England cod	65	36								
Georges Bank haddock	5,277	5,277								
Gulf of Maine haddock	2,099	1,634	1,730	1,342	1,640	1,268	1,711	1,268	1,815	1,268
Georges Bank yellowtail flounder	57	57								
Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder	56	33	67	33	80	33	92	33		
Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine yellowtail flounder	2,638	1,736	3,086	1,736	3,505	1,736	3,860	1,736		
American plaice	4,219	3,298	3,880	3,020	4,053	3,020	4,311	3,020	4,533	3,020
Witch flounder	unknown	1,526	unknown	1,526	unknown	1,526	unknown	1,526	unknown	1,526
Georges Bank winter flounder	2,148	1,681	2,070	1,627	2,061	1,613	2,060	1,612		

	Fishing Year									
	2027		2028		2029		2030		2031	
Stock	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC
Gulf of Maine winter flounder	1,064	798	1,064	798	1,064	798	1,064	798		
Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder	1,009	532	1,055	556	1,101	556	1,148	556		
Redfish	7,203	5,427	6,999	5,273	6,723	5,065	6,513	4,907		
White hake	1,760	1,261	1,640	1,174	1,618	1,157	1,698	1,215		
Pollock	15,903	9,005	14,428	9,005	14,031	9,005	13,361	9,005	13,016	9,005
Northern windowpane flounder	unknown	202	unknown	202	unknown	202	unknown	202	unknown	202
Southern windowpane flounder	481	361	481	361	481	361	481	361	481	361
Ocean pout	125	87	125	87	125	87	125	87		
Atlantic halibut	unknown	125	unknown	125	unknown	125	unknown	125	unknown	125
Atlantic wolffish	124	93	124	93	124	93	124	93		

Canadian Catch Estimates

In addition to the US/CA stocks, three additional stock assessments include Canadian catches: Georges Bank (GB) winter flounder, white hake, and Atlantic halibut.

GB winter flounder and white hake were not updated this year. For Atlantic halibut, the interim approach developed by the PDT and recommended by the SSC sets the U.S. ABC as the total ABC and does not include Canadian catch.

PDT Recommendations for Sub-components: Annual Catch Limits

The PDT completed the sub-component review for stocks with revised specifications. All other stocks' sub-components would remain unchanged. The PDT confirmed its approach of using the three-year recent average of year-end catch for determining state and other sub-components, in the absence of other information. The final year-end catch report for FY2025 is not yet available. The PDT used preliminary FY2025 catch data from GARFO in the calculations along with final year-end catch data from FY2023 and FY2024. Generally, the PDT compared the current other fisheries or state waters sub-component percentage (and associated value) to the updated three-year average catch (FY2023-FY2025) to develop recommendations, with some exceptions which are summarized in Table 2 and in the sections that follow.

Pollock

FY2025 recreational catch is not yet available. Given this, the PDT used FY2022-FY2024 catch data for pollock. Pollock is the only stock with revised specifications with recreational catch that is affected by the delay in FY2025 data (since GOM haddock is allocated a fixed percentage for recreational sub-ACL).

Southern Windowpane Flounder

The PDT offers an alternative option for both the state waters and other sub-components for southern windowpane flounder, as using the recent three-year average catch would result in no amount allocated to the groundfish fishery after accounting for the scallop fishery sub-ACL (fixed 36% of the total ABC) and state and other sub-components. Both the state waters and other sub-components catch show increasing trends in recent years (FY2023-FY2025). The PDT offers an option that seeks to split the difference in increasing both the state waters sub-component and other sub-component percentage values, while providing an amount allocated to the groundfish fishery that covers their recent 3-year average catch (29 mt). In particular, the PDT recognizes that the proposed percentage value for the other sub-component would leave ~120 mt unaccounted for but discussed that this balance may be addressed by expected potential underage of the scallop fishery sub-ACL (Note: This is based on FY2026 projected bycatch estimates. The Scallop PDT is currently evaluating bycatch projections for FY2027). Ultimately, the PDT recognizes the continued challenge with determining sub-components and setting specifications for the southern windowpane flounder stock, which would be alleviated through the transition to Ecosystem Component Species designation in the future.

Atlantic Halibut

The PDT recommends a state waters sub-component percentage of 20%, following the approach that had been used previously by the Committee. Framework 57 (FW57) established a precedent that the state-waters sub-component should not exceed 20%. The recent 3-year average is less than 20% but the PDT recommends 20%. The PDT discussed that the state of Maine has made concerted efforts to reduce their catch, and setting at the recent 3-year average may be unnecessarily constraining.

Table 2 - Comparison by stock of the current sub-component values and the PDT's recommendation using the three-year (FY2023-FY2025) average or alternative approach and justification.

	Sub-Component – Percentage of ABC					
	State waters (%)			Other (%)		
Stock	**FY26**	**Recommendation**	**Justification**	**FY26**	**Recommendation**	**Justification**
GB cod	No state waters catch of this stock			8% 12mt	5% 7.3mt	Decrease to 5% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 4.6mt.
GB haddock	0% 0mt	0% 0mt	Average catch is so low (0.3mt) that sub-component can remain at 0mt.	0.5% 22mt	0.5% 15mt	Maintain at 0.5% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 12.0mt.
GOM haddock	1.5% 34mt	0.5% 5.4mt	Decrease to 0.5% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 3.4mt.	0% 0mt	0% 0mt	Average catch is so low (0.6mt) that sub-component can remain 0mt.
GB yellowtail flounder	No state waters catch of this stock			0% 0mt	0% 0mt	Maintain 0%, as there has been no catch of GB yellowtail flounder by other fisheries in recent years.
American plaice	0% 0mt	0.5% 17mt	Increase to 0.5% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 7.2mt.	0.5% 29mt	0.5% 17mt	Maintain at 0.5% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 16.8mt.
Witch flounder	0.5% 8mt	0.5% 7.6mt	Maintain at 0.5% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 8.1mt.	2.5% 38mt	5% 76mt	Increase to 5% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 67.5mt. Provides a buffer in case increasing trend continues.
Pollock	6% 670mt	8% 720mt	Increase to 8% to cover FY2022-FY2024 average catch of 703.6mt.	5.5% 614mt	5.5% 495mt	Maintain at 5.5% to cover FY2022-FY2024 average catch of 496.0mt.
Northern windowpane flounder	0% 0mt	4% 8.1mt	Increase to 4% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 8.6mt.	5% 7mt	13% 26mt	Increase to 13% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 26.6mt.

Table 2 - Comparison by stock of the current sub-component values and the PDT's recommendation using the three-year (FY2023-FY2025) average or alternative approach and justification.

	Sub-Component – Percentage of ABC					
	State waters (%)			Other (%)		
Stock	**FY26**	**Recommendation**	**Justification**	**FY26**	**Recommendation**	**Justification**
Southern windowpane flounder	3% 6.4mt	6% 22mt	Increase to 6%. Does not fully cover the FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 30.4mt but provides a balance with ensuring groundfish fishery allocation.	46% 98mt	50% 181mt	Increase to 50%. Does not cover the FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 300.5mt but provides a balance with ensuring groundfish fishery allocation.
Atlantic halibut	26% 9mt	20% 25mt	Decrease to 20%. The Committee previously established precedent for state waters not to exceed 20%. Recognizes the State of Maine's efforts to constrain catch. Average FY2023-FY2025 catch is 13.9mt.	4.5% 1.6mt	4% 5mt	Decrease to 4% to cover FY2023-FY2025 average catch of 4.7mt.

PDT analysis for Committee consideration:

Review of GB haddock MWT/herring fishery sub-ACL:

Overview

Per the current requirements in the Groundfish FMP, the PDT is to conduct a review of the GB haddock mid-water trawl (MWT)/herring fishery sub-ACL in years when a GB haddock stock assessment occurs and provide a recommendation for a sub-ACL percentage value from 1% to 2%. GB haddock had a management track assessment in June 2026.

In June 2026, the Groundfish Committee and Council considered PDT recommendations[1] and included in the scope of Framework 74: "set the sub ACL at a fixed percentage amount, and discontinue the review requirement."

The U.S. GB haddock acceptable biological catch (ABC) would decline 33% from fishing year (FY) 2026 to FY 2027 (4,425 mt to 2,973 mt; Table 3). The MWT Atlantic herring fishery sub-ACL for GB haddock is currently 2% of the U.S. ABC. A 7% management uncertainty buffer is applied to the sub-ABC to determine a sub-ACL. The GB haddock incidental catch cap is monitored based on the Northeast Multispecies fishing year (May 1-April 30)[2]. If the haddock incidental catch cap is caught, any vessel issued a herring permit and using MWT gear may not fish for, possess, or land more than 2,000 lb of Atlantic herring in the Herring Haddock Accountability Measure Area[3].

Table 3- Georges Bank haddock specifications (mt) for FY2027 compared to FY2026 (based on TMGC recommendations to be reviewed by the Council) for a range of sub-ACLs (1% to 2%) for the MWT Atlantic herring fishery.

Fishing Year	*OFL*	*ABC*	*U.S. ABC*	*MWT sub-ABC %*	*MWT Sub-ACL*
2026	8,177	8,177	4,425	2%	82
2027	5,277	5,277	2,973	2%	55
				1.5%	41
				1%	28

Background on the Review

In 2017, Framework 56 (FW56) established a sub-ACL review process where, following an assessment of the GB haddock stock[4], the Groundfish PDT conducts a review to recommend to the Council a sub-ACL

[1] See PDT memo: https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/4b_260603_GF-PDT-memo-to-CMTE-re-FW74-draft-scope.pdf

[2] GARFO in-season monitoring available at: https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/ro/fso/reports/HaddockBycatchReport/qm_haddock_catch_caps.html

[3] A map of the area is available at: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/sustainable-fisheries/catch-caps-atlantic-herring-fishery

[4] Per FW56: The review process would not take place following the assessment of only the Eastern Georges Bank (EGB) haddock stock.

for the MWT Atlantic herring fishery of up to 2% of the U.S. ABC. The review of the sub-ACL would include a range of 1% up to 2% of the U.S. ABC (Table 3). The review for GB haddock could consider fishery catch performance, utilization, status of the resource, recruitment, incoming year-class strength, and evaluation of the coefficient of variation (CV) of the GB haddock incidental catch estimates for the MWT Atlantic herring fishery, and other information. The Council would then review the work of the PDT and determine if a change in the sub-ACL (up or down) would be considered in the action in which specifications for GB haddock would be adopted.

The measure to adjust the sub-ACL from 1% to up to 2% was aimed to incentivize the MWT fleet to minimize the incidental catch of GB haddock to the extent practicable while providing the opportunity for the fleet to fully harvest its Atlantic herring sub-ACLs for Herring Management Areas 1B and 3[5]. The sub-ACL was increased over the years to reduce the potential for negative impacts on the Atlantic herring and Atlantic mackerel fisheries caused by reductions in fishing opportunities and to avoid potential market interruptions for the supply of Atlantic herring as bait for the American lobster fishery. Since the review process was established in 2017 through FW56, the sub-ACL increased from 1% to 1.5%, then in 2020, through FW59, increased to 2%.

Results of the Review

Recent fishery catch performance and utilization - includes information from the Herring PDT

Commercial groundfish fishery - Commercial (sectors and common pool) groundfish fishery catch for GB haddock has been decreasing since FY2020. Commercial groundfish fishery catch of GB haddock had been low relative to the groundfish fishery sub-ACL (below 10% utilization) until FY2023 following decreases in the ABC, and utilization increased further in FY2025 following dramatic decreases in the ABC (Table 4).

Table 4 - Summary of recent catches (mt) of Georges Bank haddock by the US commercial groundfish fishery, groundfish FY2019 - FY2025 and preliminary FY2025, and in-season FY2026.

Fishing Year	*Sub-ACL*	*Landings*	*Discards*	*Catch*	*% Caught*
2019	53,276	5,070.9	223.2	5,294.1	9.9%
2020	121,864	6,409.3	80.1	6,489.4	5.3%
2021	76,622	3,071.2	45.3	3,116.5	4.1%
2022	75,382	2,280.6	74.7	2,355.2	3.1%
2023	11,080	2,661.4	95.3	2,756.7	24.9%
2024	6,909	1,909.6	53.0	1,962.6	28.4%
Preliminary 2025	2,123.1	1,268.6	13.5	1,282.1	60.4%
In-season 2026	4,306.3	1,068.9	7.8	1,076.7	25.0%

Sources: Year-end multispecies catch reports, preliminary FY2025 catch report, and FY2026 in-season monitoring as of November 3, 2026, GARFO.

[5] See map of Herring Management Areas at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/sustainable-fisheries/atlantic-herring-regulated-and-closed-areas

MWT Atlantic herring fishery - The estimate of GB haddock catch in the MWT Atlantic herring fishery has been relatively low from FYs 2019 - 2025 with less than 1% of the sub-ACL utilized from 2019 through 2022, 10% in FY 2023, 2% in FY 2024 and no catch in FY 2025 based on preliminary data (Table 5). Observer coverage used to estimate catch rates has been variable. Low catches of GB haddock have occurred in parallel with decreasing quotas and catch of Atlantic herring. Atlantic herring catches from Herring Management Area 3 decreased from around 33,000 mt in 2015 to 14,000 mt in 2017 to under 10,000 mt in 2018 and to around 5,000 mt in 2023. Catch in Area 3 continued to decline in 2024 and 2025, with around 4,200 mt in 2024 and roughly 1,100 mt in 2025 (NOAA in-season quota monitoring reports). Therefore, it is not surprising that GB haddock catches in this fishery have also declined. The haddock bycatch rate is lower in recent years relative to the past, and observer coverage has been less than 20% since 2017 except for 2021 (41%) and 2025 (50%). 2015 was the last year the accountability measure (AM) was triggered. The Council's proposed Atlantic herring total ACL, including Area 1B and Area 3 (Georges Bank) sub-ACLs, for 2027-2031 is 6,926 mt, which is higher than the 2025 ACL but a 24% reduction from 2026.

Table 5 - Summary of recent catches (mt) of Georges Bank haddock by the midwater trawl Atlantic herring fishery, groundfish FY2019-FY2024, and preliminary FY2025.

Fishing Year	*Sub-ACL*	*Landings*	*Discards*	*Catch*	*% Caught*	*CV on Catch*	*Observer Coverage % Trips*
2019	811	0.15	0.00	0.15	0.02%	114%	7%
2020	2,447	10.0	0	10.0	0.41%	3%	5%
2021	1,539	0.2	0.01	0.21	0.01%	17%	42%
2022	1,514	0.1	0.0009	0.16	0.01%	0%	8%
2023	221	22.5	0	22.5	10.19%	95%	13%
2024	131	2.5	0	2.5	1.91%	0%	12%
Preliminary 2025	41	0.0	0	0.0	0.00%	0%	50%

Sources: *Year-end multispecies catch reports, preliminary FY2025 catch reporting as of October 5, 2026, GARFO.*
Note: Values include both Eastern and Western GB haddock estimates, combined; *initial quota monitoring estimates as of October 5, 2026.
Observer coverage indicates the percent coverage of midwater trawl trips that occurred in the GB haddock catch cap area.

PDT Recommendations

The PDT recommends that the Council maintain the 2% of the U.S. ABC for GB haddock to the MWT Atlantic herring fishery for these reasons:

- The GB haddock stock is rebuilt, not overfished and no overfishing is occurring. The reported scale of the population, and of the reference points as of the 2026 Management Track Assessment, are consistent with the last assessment in 2024.
- While utilization by the commercial groundfish fishery has increased in recent years with the decline in ABC, given the small range of sub-ACL values (28 mt to 55 mt) for the MWT Atlantic herring fishery, reducing the sub-ACL to 1% and shifting ~27 mt quota to the groundfish fishery

would likely provide limited benefit to the groundfish fishery, and could increase the potential for MWT Atlantic herring fishery AM to be triggered.
- In-season AMs would have negative impact on the MWT Atlantic herring fishery and maintaining the sub-ACL at 2% would allow more operational flexibility under low quotas in both fisheries.

The PDT recommends discontinuing the MWT Atlantic herring sub-ACL review in Framework 74 for these reasons:

- The GB haddock MWT Atlantic herring sub-ACL hasn't been exceeded since 2015, and catches are well below the sub-ACLs in recent years (Table 5)
- It is unlikely for MWT Atlantic herring fishery effort to increase in the near future on Georges Bank under low ACLs for Atlantic herring.
- The Council can still choose to modify the proportion of the ABC that is allocated to the MWT Atlantic herring fishery, if conditions change. This only removes the requirement to conduct a formal review every time the GB haddock stock is assessed.

In addition, the PDT discussed that the Council may wish to consider in a future action if the sub-ACL continues to be needed. This also applies to the GOM haddock sub-ACL for the MWT/herring fishery, given catches are also very low (Table 6). The PDT is aware that the Council may include consideration for removing the haddock catch caps and AMs through an upcoming herring action (Amendment 12) and offers support for this approach.

Table 6. Summary of recent catches (mt) of Gulf of Maine haddock by the midwater trawl Atlantic herring fishery, groundfish FY2019-FY2024, and preliminary FY2025.

Fishing Year	*Sub-ACL*	*Landings*	*Discards*	*Catch*	*% Caught*	*CV on Catch*	*Observer Coverage % Trips*
2019	116	0.06	0	0.06	0.05%	41%	21%
2020	183	0.1	0	0.1	0.05%	0%	8%
2021	156	0.0	0	0.0	0.0%	N/A	0%
2022	107	0.5	0	0.5	0.47%	0%	100%
2023	23	0.4	0	0.4	1.74%	N/A	0%
2024	22	0.0	0	0.0	0.00%	0%	38%
Preliminary 2025	32	0.1	0	0.1	0.41%	42%	50%

Sources: Year-end multispecies catch reports, preliminary FY2025 catch reporting as of October 5, 2026, GARFO.

4.1.1 Alternative 1 - No Action

Under Alternative 1/No Action, there would be no changes to the specifications for FY2027-FY2030 (Table 7). Default specifications for GB cod, GB haddock, GB yellowtail flounder, northern windowpane flounder, and southern windowpane flounder would be in effect from May 1, 2027 to October 31, 2027, and would equal 75% of the FY2026 catch limits, after which no specifications would be in place for these five stocks. All other stocks have FY2027 specifications as set by previous frameworks, but

specifications for GOM haddock, American plaice, and pollock would not reflect the results of the updated 2026 management track stock assessments/data updates. There would not be new FY2027 quotas specified for the transboundary Georges Bank stocks (i.e., GB cod, GB haddock, GB yellowtail flounder), which are managed through the US/CA Resource Sharing Understanding (as provided in Table 9 and Table 10), and therefore updated Canadian quotas would not be accounted for under No Action. These quotas are specified annually.

Rationale: The No Action alternative uses OFLs/ABCs/ACLs adopted in FW66, FW72, and A25 for most stocks. However, several groundfish stocks do not have specifications set for FY2027 and would therefore be subject to default specifications.

Table 7 – Alternative 1/No Action - Northeast Multispecies OFLs, ABC, ACLs, and other ACL sub-components for FY2027-FY2031 (metric tons, live weight), adjusted for final sector 2026 rosters and based on Framework Adjustment 72 and Amendment 25. Stocks in gray do not have specifications for FY2027. Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton or tenth. Underlined stocks are subject to adjustments in 2027 based on US/CA quotas, 2025 CA quotas were used to adjust in the interim. U.S. ABC is reduced to account for Canadian catches (*).

Stock	FY	OFL	US ABC	State-Waters Sub-Component	Other sub-component	Scallops	Groundfish Sub-ACL	Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL	Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL	MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL	Total ACL
EGOM Cod	2027	39	30	0.2	0.3		28	28.0		27.0	1.0		29
WGOM Cod	2027	769	586	30	6.4		519	369.3	150	355.8	13.5		555
GB Cod	2027	Default specifications (75% of FY2026 catch limits) would be in place through October 31, 2027											
SNE Cod	2027	65	36	6.1	3.2		25	6.7	18	6.5	0.23		34
GB Haddock	2026	Default specifications (75% of FY2026 catch limits) would be in place through October 31, 2027											
GOM Haddock	2027	4,700	3,631	36			3,356	2,211.3	1,145	2,153.4	57.9	34	3,426
GB Yellowtail Flounder	2027	Default specifications (75% of FY2026 catch limits) would be in place through October 31, 2027											
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	2027	56	33	0.2	0.7	2.7	28	28.0		20.0	8.0		32
	2028	67	33	0.2	0.7	2.7	28	28.0		20.0	8.0		32
	2029	80	33	0.2	0.7	2.7	28	28.0		20.0	8.0		32
	2030	92	33	0.2	0.7	2.7	28	28.0		20.0	8.0		32
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	2027	2,638	1,736	17	35		1,600	1,599.8		1,514.3	85.4		1,652
	2028	3,086	1,736	17	35		1,600	1,599.8		1,514.3	85.4		1,652

Stock	FY	OFL	US ABC	State-Waters Sub-Component	Other sub-component	Scallops	Groundfish Sub-ACL	Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL	Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL	MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL	Total ACL
	2029	3,505	1,736	17	35		1,600	1,599.8		1,514.3	85.4		1,652
	2030	3,860	1,736	17	35		1,600	1,599.8		1,514.3	85.4		1,652
American Plaice	2027	7,368	5,791		29		5,474	5,474.0		5,304.3	169.6		5,503
Witch Flounder	2027		1,526	7.6	38		1,406	1,406.2		1,352.4	53.8		1,452
GB Winter Flounder*	2027	2,148	1,609		40		1,522	1,521.8		1,446.0	75.8		1,562
	2028	2,070	1,555		39		1,471	1,470.6		1,397.4	73.2		1,510
	2029	2,061	1,541		39		1,457	1,457.4		1,384.8	72.6		1,496
	2030	2,060	1,540		39		1,456	1,456.5		1,384.0	72.5		1,495
GOM Winter Flounder	2027	1,064	798	96	8		660	659.6		559.8	99.8		763
	2028	1,064	798	96	8		660	659.6		559.8	99.8		763
	2029	1,064	798	96	8		660	659.6		559.8	99.8		763
	2030	1,064	798	96	8		660	659.6		559.8	99.8		763
SNE/MA Winter Flounder	2027	1,009	532	27	85		399	399.2		339.1	60.1		511
	2028	1,055	556	28	89		417	417.3		354.4	62.9		534
	2029	1,101	556	28	89		417	417.3		354.4	62.9		534
	2030	1,148	556	28	89		417	417.3		354.4	62.9		534
Redfish	2027	7,203	5,427	27			5,130	5,129.9		5,059.5	70.4		5,157
	2028	6,999	5,273	26			4,984	4,984.3		4,915.9	68.4		5,011
	2029	6,723	5,065	25			4,788	4,787.7		4,722.0	65.7		4,813

Stock	FY	OFL	US ABC	State-Waters Sub-Component	Other sub-component	Scallops	Groundfish Sub-ACL	Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL	Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL	MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL	Total ACL
	2030	6,513	4,907	25			4,638	4,638.3		4,574.7	63.6		4,663
White Hake*	2027	1,760	1,230		6		1,163	1,162.6		1,148.3	14.3		1,169
	2028	1,640	1,143		6		1,081	1,080.4		1,067.1	13.3		1,086
	2029	1,618	1,126		6		1,064	1,064.3		1,051.2	13.1		1,070
	2030	1,698	1,184		6		1,119	1,119.2		1,105.4	13.8		1,125
Pollock	2027	13,383	10,252	615	564		8,619	8,619.3		8,524.9	94.4		9,798
Northern Windowpane Flounder	2027	Default specifications (75% of FY2026 catch limits) would be in place through October 31, 2027											
Southern Windowpane Flounder	2027	Default specifications (75% of FY2026 catch limits) would be in place through October 31, 2027											
Ocean Pout	2027	125	87	0.9	30		52	51.8			51.8		83
	2028	125	87	0.9	30		52	51.8			51.8		83
	2029	125	87	0.9	30		52	51.8			51.8		83
	2030	125	87	0.9	30		52	51.8			51.8		83
Atlantic Halibut*	2027		35	9.1	1.6		23	23.1			23.1		34
Atlantic Wolffish	2027	124	93				87	86.5			86.5		87
	2028	124	93				87	86.5			86.5		87
	2029	124	93				87	86.5			86.5		87
	2030	124	93				87	86.5			86.5		87

4.1.2 Alternative 2 – Revised Specifications

Under Alternative 2, the annual specifications for FY2027 for GB cod, GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder, and FY2027-FY2031 for GOM haddock, American plaice, witch flounder, pollock, northern windowpane flounder, southern windowpane flounder, and Atlantic halibut would be as specified in Table 10.

Alternative 2 includes adjustments to the state waters and other sub-component values for several groundfish stocks including: GB cod, GB haddock, GOM haddock, American plaice, witch flounder, pollock, northern windowpane flounder, southern windowpane flounder, and Atlantic halibut. [Note that these reflect the PDT's draft sub-component recommendations and are subject to change pending any updates to sub-components from the Committee.]

This action also reaffirms specifications previously set for other stocks without changes.

U.S./Canada Total Allowable Catches

This alternative would specify TACs for the U.S./Canada Management Area for FY2027 for Eastern GB cod, Eastern GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder as listed in Table 8. If NMFS determines that the FY2026 catch of GB cod, haddock, or yellowtail flounder from the U.S./Canada Management Area exceeded the respective 2026 TACs, the U.S./Canada Resource Sharing Understanding and regulations require that the 2027 TAC for each be reduced by the amount of the overage. Any overage reduction would be applied to the components of the fishery that caused the overage of the U.S. TAC in 2026. To minimize any disruption to the fishing industry, NMFS would attempt to make any necessary TAC adjustments in the first quarter of the fishing year.

A comparison of the proposed FY2027 and FY2026 U.S. TACs is shown in Table 9. Changes to the U.S. TACs reflect changes to the percentage shares, stock status, and the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee's (TMGC) recommendations. The TMGC has typically negotiated the U.S./Canada allocations annually based on the historic proportions of fishery utilization and resource distribution in the Eastern Georges Bank Management Area.

In 2025, science advice used by the TMGC to develop the joint annual harvest recommendations for cod and haddock for 2027, was provided through the new approach first implemented in 2024 called the Integration of Science Advice for Transboundary Stocks (ISATS) process. ISATS supports the decision-making process for the management of cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder in the Eastern Georges Bank Management Area. This process includes a Technical Science Coordination (TSC) meeting of stock assessment leads where the outcomes from U.S. and Canadian domestic assessments are compiled into a joint document to provide scientific advice for the shared transboundary stocks. Domestic assessments from both countries are considered equally as the basis for informing catch advice. For Georges Bank yellowtail flounder, only the U.S. conducts an assessment.

Table 8 – Proposed FY2027 U.S./Canada TACs (mt).

	Eastern GB Cod	Eastern GB Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared TAC	353	3,200	57
U.S. TAC	99	896	26
Canada TAC	254	2,304	31

Table 9 – Comparison of the Proposed FY2027 U.S. TACs and the FY2026 U.S. TACs (mt).

Stock	U.S. TAC		Percent Change
	FY2026	FY2027	
Eastern GB cod	151	99	-34%
Eastern GB haddock	998	896	-10%
GB yellowtail flounder	31	26	-16%

Table 10 – Alternative 2 Revised Northeast Multispecies OFLs, ABC, ACLs for FY2027-FY2031(metric tons, live weight), based on final 2026 sector rosters. Stocks in gray would not have changes in specifications through this action. Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton or tenth. Underlined stocks are subject to adjustments in 2027 based on US/CA quotas, 2026 CA quotas were used to adjust in the interim. Includes adjustments for Canadian catches (*), and state waters component and other sub-components. [To be updated following Committee input on sub-components analysis.]

Stock	FY	OFL	US ABC	State-Waters Sub-Component	Other sub-component	Scallops	Groundfish Sub-ACL	Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL	Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL	MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL	Total ACL
EGOM Cod	2027	39	30	0.2	0.3		28	28.0		27.0	1.0		29
	2028												
	2029												
	2030												
	2031												
WGOM Cod	2027	769	586	30	6.4		519	369.3	150	355.8	13.5		555
	2028												
	2029												
	2030												
	2031												
GB Cod	2027	400	146		7.3		132	131.8		127.2	4.6		139
	2028												
	2029												
	2030												
	2031												

Stock	FY	OFL	US ABC	State-Waters Sub-Component	Other sub-component	Scallops	Groundfish Sub-ACL	Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL	Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL	MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL	Total ACL
SNE Cod	2027	65	36	6.1	3.2		25	6.7	18	6.5	0.23		34
	2028												
	2029												
	2030												
	2031												
GB Haddock	2027	5,277	2,973		14.9		2,754	2,753.7		2,656.3	97.4	55	2,824
	2028												
	2029												
	2030												
	2031												
GOM Haddock	2027	2,099	1,634	5			1,521	1,005.4	515	979.6	25.8	15	1,541
	2028	1,730	1,342	4			1,249	825.7	423	804.5	21.2	12	1,266
	2029	1,640	1,268	4			1,180	780.3	400	760.2	20.1	12	1,196
	2030	1,711	1,268	4			1,180	780.3	400	760.2	20.1	12	1,196
	2031	1,815	1,268	4			1,180	780.3	400	760.2	20.1	12	1,196
GB Yellowtail Flounder	2027	57	26			4.0	21	20.7		19.1	1.6	0.5	25
	2028												
	2029												
	2030												

Stock	FY	OFL	US ABC	State-Waters Sub-Component	Other sub-component	Scallops	Groundfish Sub-ACL	Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL	Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL	MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL	Total ACL
	2031												
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	2027	56	33	0.2	0.7	2.7	28	28.0		20.0	8.0		32
	2028	67	33	0.2	0.7	2.7	28	28.0		20.0	8.0		32
	2029	80	33	0.2	0.7	2.7	28	28.0		20.0	8.0		32
	2030	92	33	0.2	0.7	2.7	28	28.0		20.0	8.0		32
	2031												
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	2027	2,638	1,736	17	35		1,600	1,599.8		1,514.3	85.4		1,652
	2028	3,086	1,736	17	35		1,600	1,599.8		1,514.3	85.4		1,652
	2029	3,505	1,736	17	35		1,600	1,599.8		1,514.3	85.4		1,652
	2030	3,860	1,736	17	35		1,600	1,599.8		1,514.3	85.4		1,652
	2031												
American Plaice	2027	4,219	3,298	17	17		3,102	3,101.7		2,998.2	103.5		3,135
	2028	3,880	3,020	15	15		2,840	2,840.3		2,745.5	94.8		2,871
	2029	4,053	3,020	15	15		2,840	2,840.3		2,745.5	94.8		2,871
	2030	4,311	3,020	15	15		2,840	2,840.3		2,745.5	94.8		2,871
	2031	4,533	3,020	15	15		2,840	2,840.3		2,745.5	94.8		2,871
Witch Flounder	2027		1,526	7.6	76		1,370	1,370.0		1,319.4	50.6		1,454
	2028		1,526	7.6	76		1,370	1,370.0		1,319.4	50.6		1,454
	2029		1,526	7.6	76		1,370	1,370.0		1,319.4	50.6		1,454

Stock	FY	OFL	US ABC	State-Waters Sub-Component	Other sub-component	Scallops	Groundfish Sub-ACL	Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL	Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL	MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL	Total ACL
	2030		1,526	7.6	76		1,370	1,370.0		1,319.4	50.6		1,454
	2031		1,526	7.6	76		1,370	1,370.0		1,319.4	50.6		1,454
GB Winter Flounder*	2027	2,148	1,609		40		1,522	1,521.8		1,446.0	75.8		1,562
	2028	2,070	1,555		39		1,471	1,470.6		1,397.4	73.2		1,510
	2029	2,061	1,541		39		1,457	1,457.4		1,384.8	72.6		1,496
	2030	2,060	1,540		39		1,456	1,456.5		1,384.0	72.5		1,495
	2031												
GOM Winter Flounder	2027	1,064	798	96	8		660	659.6		559.8	99.8		763
	2028	1,064	798	96	8		660	659.6		559.8	99.8		763
	2029	1,064	798	96	8		660	659.6		559.8	99.8		763
	2030	1,064	798	96	8		660	659.6		559.8	99.8		763
	2031												
SNE/MA Winter Flounder	2027	1,009	532	27	85		399	399.2		339.1	60.1		511
	2028	1,055	556	28	89		417	417.3		354.4	62.9		534
	2029	1,101	556	28	89		417	417.3		354.4	62.9		534
	2030	1,148	556	28	89		417	417.3		354.4	62.9		534
	2031												
Redfish	2027	7,203	5,427	27			5,130	5,129.9		5,059.5	70.4		5,157
	2028	6,999	5,273	26			4,984	4,984.3		4,915.9	68.4		5,011

Stock	FY	OFL	US ABC	State-Waters Sub-Component	Other sub-component	Scallops	Groundfish Sub-ACL	Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL	Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL	MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL	Total ACL
	2029	6,723	5,065	25			4,788	4,787.7		4,722.0	65.7		4,813
	2030	6,513	4,907	25			4,638	4,638.3		4,574.7	63.6		4,663
	2031												
White Hake*	2027	1,760	1,230		6		1,163	1,162.6		1,148.3	14.3		1,169
	2028	1,640	1,143		6		1,081	1,080.4		1,067.1	13.3		1,086
	2029	1,618	1,126		6		1,064	1,064.3		1,051.2	13.1		1,070
	2030	1,698	1,184		6		1,119	1,119.2		1,105.4	13.8		1,125
	2031												
Pollock	2027	15,903	9,005	540	495		7,571	7,571.0		7,483.2	87.8		8,607
	2028	14,428	9,005	540	495		7,571	7,571.0		7,483.2	87.8		8,607
	2029	14,031	9,005	540	495		7,571	7,571.0		7,483.2	87.8		8,607
	2030	13,361	9,005	540	495		7,571	7,571.0		7,483.2	87.8		8,607
	2031	13,016	9,005	540	495		7,571	7,571.0		7,483.2	87.8		8,607
Northern Windowpane Flounder	2027		202	8.1	26.3	39.5	117	116.5			116.5		190
	2028		202	8.1	26.3	39.5	117	116.5			116.5		190
	2029		202	8.1	26.3	39.5	117	116.5			116.5		190
	2030		202	8.1	26.3	39.5	117	116.5			116.5		190
	2031		202	8.1	26.3	39.5	117	116.5			116.5		190
Southern Windowpane Flounder	2027	481	361	21.7	181	120.9	27	26.9			26.9		350

Stock	FY	OFL	US ABC	State-Waters Sub-Component	Other sub-component	Scallops	Groundfish Sub-ACL	Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL	Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL	Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL	MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL	Total ACL
	2028	481	361	21.7	181	120.9	27	26.9			26.9		350
	2029	481	361	21.7	181	120.9	27	26.9			26.9		350
	2030	481	361	21.7	181	120.9	27	26.9			26.9		350
	2031	481	361	21.7	181	120.9	27	26.9			26.9		350
Ocean Pout	2027	125	87	0.9	30		52	51.8			51.8		83
	2028	125	87	0.9	30		52	51.8			51.8		83
	2029	125	87	0.9	30		52	51.8			51.8		83
	2030	125	87	0.9	30		52	51.8			51.8		83
	2031												
Atlantic Halibut	2027		125	25.0	5.0		90	90.3			90.3		120
	2028		125	25.0	5.0		90	90.3			90.3		120
	2029		125	25.0	5.0		90	90.3			90.3		120
	2030		125	25.0	5.0		90	90.3			90.3		120
	2031		125	25.0	5.0		90	90.3			90.3		120
Atlantic Wolffish	2027	124	93				87	86.5			86.5		87
	2028	124	93				87	86.5			86.5		87
	2029	124	93				87	86.5			86.5		87
	2030	124	93				87	86.5			86.5		87
	2031												

Rationale: This measure would adopt new specifications for only FY2027 for the three transboundary stocks: GB cod, GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder. Specifications would also be adopted for 5 years (FY2027-2031) for GOM haddock, American plaice, witch flounder, pollock, northern windowpane flounder, southern windowpane flounder, and Atlantic halibut, consistent with the most recent stock assessment information.

4.1.3 Alternative 3 – Midwater Trawl Atlantic Herring Fishery sub-ACL for Georges Bank Haddock

4.1.3.1 Option 1 – No Action

Option 1/No Action would maintain the current require for the PDT to review the GB haddock sub-ACL in the mid-water trawl (MWT)/Atlantic herring fishery. Following an assessment of the entire GB haddock stock, the Groundfish PDT conducts a review to recommend to the Council a sub-ACL for the MWT Atlantic herring fishery of up to 2% of the U.S. ABC. The review of the sub-ACL includes a range of 1% up to 2% of the U.S. ABC. The review for GB haddock can consider but is not limited to: fishery catch performance, utilization, status of the resource, recruitment, incoming year-class strength, and evaluation of the coefficient of variation (CV) of the GB haddock incidental catch estimates for the Atlantic herring midwater trawl fishery. The Council would review the work of the PDT and determine if a change in the sub-ACL (up or down) would be considered in the action in which specifications for GB haddock would be adopted following an assessment of the entire GB haddock stock. The review process would not take place following the assessment of only the Eastern Georges Bank haddock stock.

4.1.3.2 Option 2 – Set the Sub-ACL at a Fixed Percentage and Discontinue the Review

Under Option 2, the GB haddock sub-ACL in the MWT/Atlantic herring fishery would be set at a fixed percentage value of 2 percent of the GB haddock U.S. ABC (see Table 10). The explicit review of the GB haddock sub-ACL in the MWT/Atlantic herring fishery would be discontinued. However, the Groundfish PDT would continue to monitor catches and make recommendations to the Council consistent with how other fisheries (e.g., scallops, small-mesh) with groundfish catches are evaluated.

Rationale: The PDT would continue to monitor catches and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

4.2 ACTION 2 – FISHERY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Questions/Considerations for the Committee:

- In June 2026, the PDT recommended for inclusion in FW74 two administrative items to address regulatory clean-up and/or streamlining of two programs in the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan (FMP).
- These items were identified and included within the recommendations the Council prepared for Executive Order 14276 "Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness."
- For both items, the PDT recognizes broader regulatory clean-up action would be desirable as the Council considers the utility of these programs.
- In the short term, these administrative changes provide a temporary way to reduce the annual workload, address recent challenges faced with implementation of these programs, and better align with how these programs have been operating.

4.2.1 Alternative 1 - B DAS Program

4.2.1.1 Option 1 – No Action

Option 1/No Action would maintain the current administration of the B DAS program, which requires an annual determination by the Regional Administrator (RA) to close for the upcoming fishing year.

4.2.1.2 Option 2 – Streamline Administration of the B DAS Program

Option 2 would modify the administration of the B DAS program such that it begins the fishing year closed, unless the RA determines that sufficient quota is allocated to the Incidental Catch TACs to allow the program to operate in a given fishing year.

Rationale: This program has been closed annually for almost a decade due to very low quotas allocated to the Incidental Catch TAC. However, the RA is required to make this determination annually. Changing the default status for the program to be closed would ensure that the program remains closed when necessary and would streamline administration by not requiring annual rulemaking to implement. If quotas were to increase to a level that makes the B DAS program viable, the RA would make a determination to open the B DAS program for that fishing year.

4.2.2 Alternative 2 - Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program

4.2.2.1 Option 1 – No Action

Option 1/No Action would maintain the current administration of the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program (SAP), which requires an annual determination each year for whether the SAP is "Open to Target Yellowtail Flounder," or not. The determination is based on whether there is sufficient GB yellowtail flounder quota to support 150 trips into the SAP with a 15,000 lb trip limit for yellowtail flounder. The RA makes this determination annually.

4.2.2.2 Option 2 – Streamline Administration of the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program

Option 2 would modify the administration of the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP so that the SAP is automatically open per the conditions of the "Open to Target Haddock" mode each year, unless the RA makes the determination that there is sufficient GB yellowtail flounder quota to support opening the SAP to "Target Yellowtail Flounder". The quota and trip limit requirements to make this determination would remain the same.

Rationale: For at least a decade the determination has been made not to open the SAP to "Target Yellowtail Flounder", which put the SAP into the "open to target haddock" status. This determination has been made consistently because available GB yellowtail flounder quota has been far below levels necessary to open the SAP to "Target Yellowtail Flounder". This requires annual determination and rulemaking to implement, but it is unlikely, given the status of GB yellowtail flounder, that sufficient quota will be available in the future to open the SAP to "Target Yellowtail Flounder". Changing the default status would reflect how the program has been operating in recent years and would streamline administration by not requiring annual rulemaking to implement.

4.3 Action 3 – Commercial Fishery Measures

Questions/Considerations for the Committee:

- In April 2026, the Council received numerous public comments across the fishing industry sharing concerns about the anticipated negative economic impacts of the Large AM area for southern windowpane flounder and increased fishery interactions seen in FY2024 and FY2025.
- Both public comment and the Council acknowledged the stock status of southern windowpane flounder as not overfished and not in a rebuilding plan.
- The Council opted to include in the scope of FW74 a narrowly focused measure to simplify the criteria in the existing provision of the AMs that is used to determine the size of the AM area implemented as a way to address the concerns raised.
- This measure serves as a bridge between current and future planned priority work, including consideration for Ecosystem Component Species designation (both windowpane flounder stocks are potential candidates for consideration and southern windowpane flounder is a pilot case study stock for the Council's project to develop a screening process for Ecosystem Component Species designation potential) under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) initiatives, and review and potential revision to reactive accountability measures across FMPs under Executive Order 14276 priorities.
- Does the Committee support the PDT's recommendations?

PDT recommendations:

The PDT reviewed the regulations and recommends including this simplification of the AM criteria for northern windowpane flounder as well. While the criteria would not presently apply to northern windowpane flounder, as the stock is not rebuilt, nor have the AMs been triggered for the groundfish fishery in recent years, simplifying the AM criteria for both windowpane flounder stocks will ensure consistency and minimize regulatory confusion.

4.3.1 Alternative 1 – Windowpane Flounder Accountability Measures Criteria for Reducing the Size of the AM Area

4.3.1.1 Option 1 – No Action

Option 1/No Action would maintain the criteria in the existing provision within the Windowpane Flounder Accountability Measures (AMs) for reducing the size of the AM area implemented (i.e., for determining a reduction from the Large AM Area to the Small AM Area). For northern windowpane flounder, this provision applies to the groundfish fishery. For southern windowpane flounder, this provision applies to the groundfish fishery and large-mesh non-groundfish trawl fisheries. Under Option 1/No Action, the criteria for reducing the size of the AM area to be implemented are: 1) the stock is rebuilt, and 2) the biomass criterion (defined as the 3-year centered average of the 3 most recent surveys multiplied by 75%F_{MSY} of the most recent assessment) is greater than the fishing year catch. If the ACL is exceeded by more than 20 percent, NMFS considers whether the above criteria are met. If NMFS determines that these criteria are met, only the Small AM Area would be implemented. If the criteria are not met, the Large AM Area would be implemented.

4.3.1.2 Option 2 – Simplify the Criteria for Reducing the Size of the AM Area

Option 2 would simplify the criteria for reducing the size of the AM area by removing the "biomass criterion," so that if the ACL is exceeded by 20 percent, but the stock is rebuilt, only the Small AM Area is implemented. For northern windowpane flounder, the provision to reduce the size of the AM area applies to the groundfish fishery. For southern windowpane flounder, this provision applies to the groundfish fishery and large-mesh non-groundfish trawl fisheries. All other provisions of the windowpane flounder AMs would remain unchanged. This option would not change the timing of AM implementation, requirement for the total ACL (and relevant sub-ACL) to be exceeded to implement the AM, the selective gear required for trawl gear, the areas identified for the Large and Small Areas, the overage percentages associated with the different sized AM areas or the current management uncertainty buffer of 5%, or the provision for determining duration of the AM implementation.

Rationale: Simplifying the criteria allows for a more efficient way to reduce the size of the necessary AM to account for overages. This option would minimize the economic impacts of the AM for a rebuilt stock while still mitigating any potential biological consequences of an overage.