



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116
Eric Reid, *Chair* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 28, 2022
TO: Groundfish Committee
FROM: Groundfish Plan Development Team
SUBJECT: **Atlantic Halibut**

The Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) met on November 28, 2022 and discussed Atlantic halibut and updates to its sub-component memo¹. The PDT received a personal communication on preliminary 2022 catch information for Atlantic halibut from Canadian fisheries managers at Fisheries and Oceans, Canada (DFO). For in-season 2022 through November 18, 2022, preliminary Canadian landings of halibut in 5Z are 84 mt and in 5Y are 9 mt.

One explanation DFO staff provided for the increase in Canadian landings in 2020 and 2021 relative to previous years is the total allowable catch (TAC) was higher in those two years. Since then, it has been reduced to a TAC similar to the level in 2019 (Table 1). There was a Management Strategy Evaluation for halibut in 2022 and DFO has a new harvest strategy for providing catch advice. Science documents are forthcoming and not presently publicly available. No management changes are presently anticipated in the coming year, 2023.

Table 1- Summary of recent Canadian TACs for halibut.

Calendar Year	Canadian TAC (mt) 3NOPs4VWX5Z halibut stock area
2019	4,789
2020	5,507
2021	5,545
2022	4,807

¹ https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/3C8_221121-GF-PDT-memo-to-CMTE-re-sub-component-analysis-re-FW65.pdf

PDT Recommendation:

Revised PDT recommendation for Canadian catch assumption:

Take the 2-year average of 2019 (54 mt) and in-season 2022 (93 mt) for a 2023-2025 Canadian catch estimate of 74 mt in each year (Table 2). This estimate should be evaluated annually. The total ABC of 149 mt would be reduced by 74 mt to account for Canadian catch, resulting in a US ABC of 75 mt. Updated sub-component analysis for consideration by the Groundfish Committee shown in Table 3 under a US ABC of 75 mt.

Table 2- Summary of recent Canadian catches (mt) of Atlantic halibut in the 2022 stock assessment, and preliminary 2022 as of Nov. 18, 2022, personal communication from DFO.

Atlantic Halibut - 2022 Assessment	
Calendar Year	CA landings (mt)
2016	34
2017	35
2018	46
2019	54
2020	156
2021	120
2022 (prelim)	93
2019-21 Avg	110
2019&2022 Avg	74

Table 3- Comparison for Atlantic halibut of the current sub-component values and the revised PDT's recommendation using the three-year (FY2019-FY2021) average and justification.

	Sub-Component – Percentage of ABC					
	State waters (%)			Other (%)		
Stock	FY22	Recommendation	Justification	FY22	Recommendation	Justification
Atlantic halibut	20% 20mt	20% 15mt	The FY2019-FY2021 average catch is 15.3mt. Maintain to cover the recent 3-year average. In addition, FW57 established precedent that the state-water subcomponent should not exceed 20%.	3.5% 3.5mt	1.5% 1.1mt	Decrease by 2% to cover the FY2019-FY2021 average catch of 1.1mt.