

CORRESPONDENCE



New England Fishery Management Council

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John F. Quinn, J.D., Ph.D., Chairman | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

June 29, 2021

Mr. Michael Pentony
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Mike,

Today, my staff electronically sent the final submission of the Small-Mesh Multispecies Fishing Year 2021-2023 Specifications to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, including the Environmental Assessment, to your staff in the Sustainable Fisheries Division at the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office.

The measures proposed in the 2021-2023 Specifications incorporate updated stock assessment information for two stocks each of silver and red hake. Actions 2 and 3 also reset the northern red hake TAL trigger to 90% and increase the whiting possession limits for vessels using less than 3-inch mesh trawls. The latter two actions are intended to reduce regulatory discards and increase utilization without risking overfishing. The Council developed the specifications for the OFLs and ABCs based on the recommendations of its Scientific and Statistical Committee and analyses by its Whiting Plan Development Team.

After receiving comments from your office on May 26, my staff worked closely with GARFO staff to work through the issues and revise the preliminary draft document. In most cases, the issues were addressed by revising the document accordingly but in a few cases, only clarification was needed. In the latter case, NEFMC staff added a reply to the informal comments in a separate file that you provided. These clarifications are added as a “reply” to the comment in that informal file that we are also transmitting to your staff.

If you have any further issues or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director