



New England Fishery Management Council

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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 3, 2021
TO: Groundfish Committee
FROM: Groundfish Plan Development Team
SUBJECT: **Framework Adjustment 63 – Some Discussion Questions to Consider**

The Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) met on Monday, August 2, 2021. Regarding the development of measures in Framework Adjustment 63, the PDT developed some discussion questions for the Groundfish Committee (Committee) to consider at their upcoming meeting on Friday, August 6, 2021.

Additional measures to promote stock rebuilding

Thirteen stocks are in formal rebuilding plans, including Georges Bank (GB) cod, Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod, GB yellowtail flounder, Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) yellowtail flounder, Cape Cape/GOM yellowtail flounder, witch flounder, GB winter flounder, SNE/MA winter flounder, white hake, Northern windowpane flounder, ocean pout, Atlantic halibut, and Atlantic wolffish. The most recent summaries of stock status and rebuilding plans are provided in the Affected Environment of Framework Adjustment 61¹. At the June 2021 Council meeting, the Regional Administrator indicated GOM cod and SNE/MA winter flounder are making inadequate rebuilding progress and a letter to the Council is in preparation.

The PDT requests guidance from the Committee on developing additional measures to promote stock rebuilding. Specifically,

1. Which stock(s) to focus on?
 - a. Individual stocks
 - b. Groupings of stocks (e.g., species, area-based, stock assessment type, other approach)
2. What types of management measures?
 - a. Fisheries – identify the fishery components to focus on
 - b. Time/Area – establish additional closures to protect spawning or habitat
 - c. Gear – develop restrictions or modification requirements
 - d. Landings – change minimum legal-sizes or develop slot limits
 - e. Catches – increase management uncertainty buffers on sub-ACLs
 - f. Other types?

¹ See pp. 55-59 of the Affected Environment in Framework Adjustment 61. Located at: https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/210614_Groundfish_FW61.pdf

Default specifications process

Default specification were implemented in Framework Adjustment 53 (FW53). An overview of default specifications in other Council managed FMPs was drafted during development of FW53². Background on the default specifications regulations and use was most recently summarized in a memo from the Executive Director to the Council³.

The PDT requests guidance from the Committee on developing alternatives to the current default specifications process. Specifically,

1. What should the PDT explore?
 - a. How long would the default specifications be in place? Should the duration be longer than 3 months? Is 4 months sufficient? Or should the duration be longer for example 6 months, 9 months, or 12 months?
 - b. Is the current percentage, 35%, of the previous year’s ACLs sufficient? Some fish are targeted seasonally for example. If not, what range should the PDT develop for example - 50%, 75%, or 100%?
 - c. Should all stocks have the same percentage applied or different percentages by groupings of stocks (e.g., stock area, stock status)?
 - d. Should the no holdback provision be maintained?
 - e. Other ideas?
2. The PDT also suggests and would like feedback on:
 - a. Establishing two-year TACs for cod and haddock in the US/CA area
 - b. Maintaining the provision on adjusting default specifications based on incoming recommendations
 - c. Preserving the current timeline for final action (typically December) for specifications, rather than extending well into the following year

Summary of the last year of specification by stock/management unit

2021	2022	2023
Eastern GB cod Eastern GB haddock	GB cod GOM cod GB haddock GOM haddock GB yellowtail flounder SNE/MA yellowtail flounder CC/GOM yellowtail flounder American plaice Witch flounder White hake Pollock	GB winter flounder GOM winter flounder SNE/MA winter flounder Redfish Northern windowpane flounder Southern windowpane flounder Ocean pout Atlantic halibut Atlantic wolffish

² Development of Rollover Provisions in the Groundfish Fishery White Paper, Groundfish Plan Development Team, September 4th, 2014. Available at:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/9b_140904_GF_PDT_Rollover_White_Paper.pdf

³ Memo from Nies to Council re Background Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Default Specifications, June 21, 2021. Available at: https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/0.a_210621-Memo-Nies-to-Council-re-Groundfish-Default-Specifications.pdf