

# **Northeast Multispecies Groundfish Framework Adjustment 63 Groundfish Plan Development Team Report**

**Recreational Advisory Panel, Groundfish Advisory Panel,  
and Groundfish Committee**

**September 22-23, 2021**



New England  
Fishery Management Council

# Council Milestones

- **June** – *initiated the action*
- **September** – receive and approve TMGC's TAC recommendations for U.S./Canada stocks, update on draft alternatives development
- **December** – receive specifications alternatives and take final action on specifications and other measures
- **May** – Implementation by **May 1, 2022**, NMFS

# Scope

## **2022-2024 Specifications/Management Measures, to include:**

- Set 2022 total allowable catches for US/Canada management units of Eastern Georges Bank (GB) cod and Eastern GB haddock, and 2022-2023 specifications for the GB yellowtail flounder stock,
- Set 2022-2024 specifications for GB cod and Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod, and possibly adjust 2022 specifications for GB haddock and GOM haddock,
- Adjust 2022 specifications for white hake based on the rebuilding plan,
- Adopt additional measures to promote stock rebuilding, and
- Develop alternatives to the current default system.

# 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

## 1. Updates to annual catch limits

- Specifications for six groundfish stocks (GB cod, GOM cod, GB haddock, GOM haddock, GB yellowtail flounder, and white hake)
- Total allowable catches for transboundary stocks
- Sub-annual catch limits for Atlantic Sea scallop, small-mesh multispecies, and herring fisheries
- Review and possibly adjust sub-components (other fisheries and state)
- Changes to default specification process

## 2. Commercial and Recreational Management

- Additional measures to promote stock rebuilding

# Draft Alternatives Outline

## 4.0 DRAFT ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION

### 4.1 Action 1 – Revised Specifications

Alternative 1 – No Action

Alternative 2 – Revised Specifications

Alternative 3 – Changes to the Default Specifications Process

### 4.2 Action 2 – Commercial and Recreational Management – Gulf of Maine Cod

Alternative 1 – No Action

Alternative 2 – Additional Measures to Promote Gulf of Maine Cod Stock Rebuilding

### 4.3 Action 3 – Commercial and Recreational Management – Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder

Alternative 1 – No Action

Alternative 2 – Additional Measures to Promote Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder stock rebuilding

# TMGC/SC Recommendations for FY2022

**Eastern GB cod** – 571 mt with 160 mt for U.S. and 411 mt for Canada

**Eastern GB haddock**- 14,100 mt with 6,627 mt for U.S. and 7,473 mt for Canada

**GB yellowtail flounder** – 200 mt with 122 mt for U.S. and 78 mt for Canada

# Draft FY2022 to FY2023 Specifications Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder

Total ABC	Canadian TAC	US ABC	Scallops ACL	Groundfish ACL	Small-Mesh ACL	Total ACL
200*	78	122	19	97	2	118

*\*Preliminary, subject to change, and for information purposes only. The Council will review recommendations from the SSC and TMGC/SC at their meeting on September 29, 2021.*



# Committee Motion from 8/6/21

The Groundfish Committee tasks the Groundfish Plan Development Team to develop an analysis to support developing alternatives to the current default specifications process that:

- a. Explore a duration of 3, 4, 5, or 6 months.
- b. Explore a percentage of ACLs of 50%, 75%, or 100%.
- c. Analyze maintaining the no holdback provision.
- d. Establish two-year TACs for cod and haddock in the US/CA area. [Carried 14/0/2]

# GF PDT Meeting Highlights 9/9/21 – FW63

## Default Specifications Process

PDT looked at:

- ACL utilization by quarter by stock for FY2018-FY2021
- Commercial groundfish fishing effort by quarter for FY2018-FY2021
  - Total effort
  - By Broad Stock Area
  - Eastern Georges Bank
  - Redfish sector exemption
- Estimated quarterly ACE lease prices for FY2015-FY2019

FY2018 = no default specs; FY2019 = default specs for Eastern GB cod; FY2020 = default specs for Eastern GB cod and Eastern GB haddock; FY20201 = default specs for Eastern GB cod, Eastern GB haddock, GOM winter flounder SNE/MA winter flounder, redfish, ocean pout, and wolffish

# GF PDT Meeting Highlights 9/9/21 – FW63

## Default Specifications Process

- Since FY2018, five stocks have exceeded 75% ACL utilization over the entire fishing year at least once – GOM cod, witch flounder, white hake, halibut, and southern windowpane flounder.
  - Some of these stocks exceeded 75% utilization only once or twice since FY2018.
  - GOM cod consistently exceeds 75%, and white hake to a lesser extent.
- An additional five stocks exceeded 50% ACL utilization at least once – GB cod, American plaice, GB winter flounder, redfish, and northern windowpane flounder.
  - All of these stocks exceeded 50% utilization only once or twice since FY2018.

# GF PDT Meeting Highlights 9/9/21 – FW63

## Default Specifications Process

Explore a duration of 3, 4, 5, or 6 month:

- PDT discussed concerns about continued delays in submission of the framework and in rulemaking with a default specifications extension beyond the current timeline
- Extending the default specifications duration would not address potential disruptions to the fishery from expiring quotas
- PDT recommends consideration of a longer default specifications duration such as 12 months at less than 100%

Explore a percentage of ACLs of 50%, 75%, or 100%:

- PDT recommends a percentage greater than 35% but less than 100% - more precautionary given variation in stock statuses in the multispecies complex
- PDT recommends 75% - balances providing enough ACL for fishery to operate with protection for stocks and incentives to maintain framework timelines
- The provision requiring that the default specifications be adjusted so they do not exceed the incoming year ABC recommendations would be maintained

# GF PDT Meeting Highlights 9/9/21 – FW63

## Default Specifications Process

Analyze maintaining the no holdback provision:

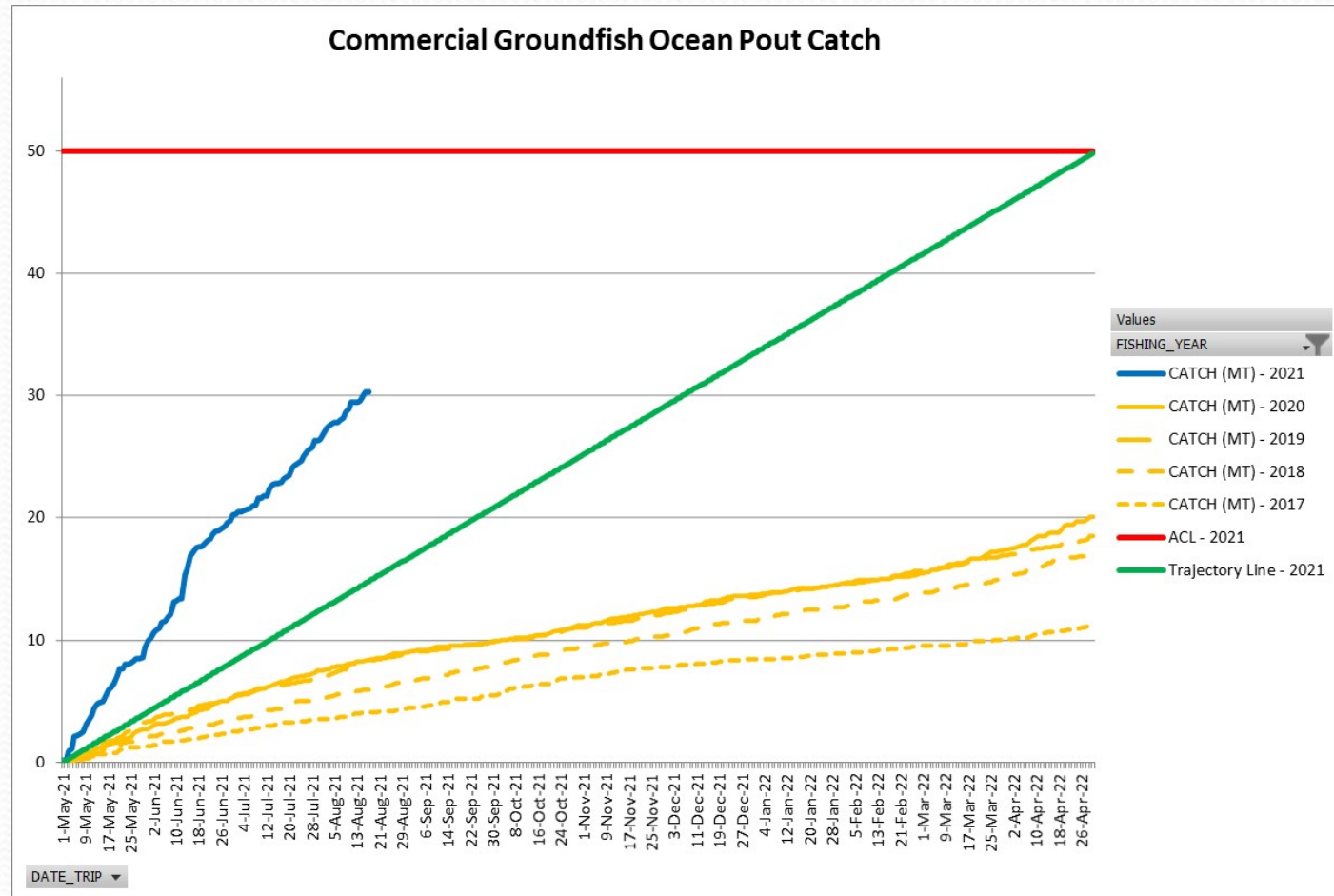
- PDT does not have concerns with maintaining no holdback provision so long as default specifications percentage is less than 100%

Establish two-year TACs for cod and haddock in the US/CA area:

- Would eliminate disruptions to the fishery from the quotas for these two US/CA stocks going to zero when default specifications expire, and from these two stocks consistently requiring default specifications
- Would treat Eastern GB cod and Eastern GB haddock the same as GB yellowtail flounder - the Council anticipates annual assessments but sets a second year TAC as a placeholder
- Under such a system, the PDT expects the TACs for Eastern GB cod and Eastern GB haddock for Year 2 would be set the same as Year 1, with the expectation that the TACs will be revised with the annual US/CA assessment and management process. Should these two stocks not have updated specifications, in Year 3 default specifications would be in place.

# GF PDT Meeting Highlights 9/9/21 – FW63

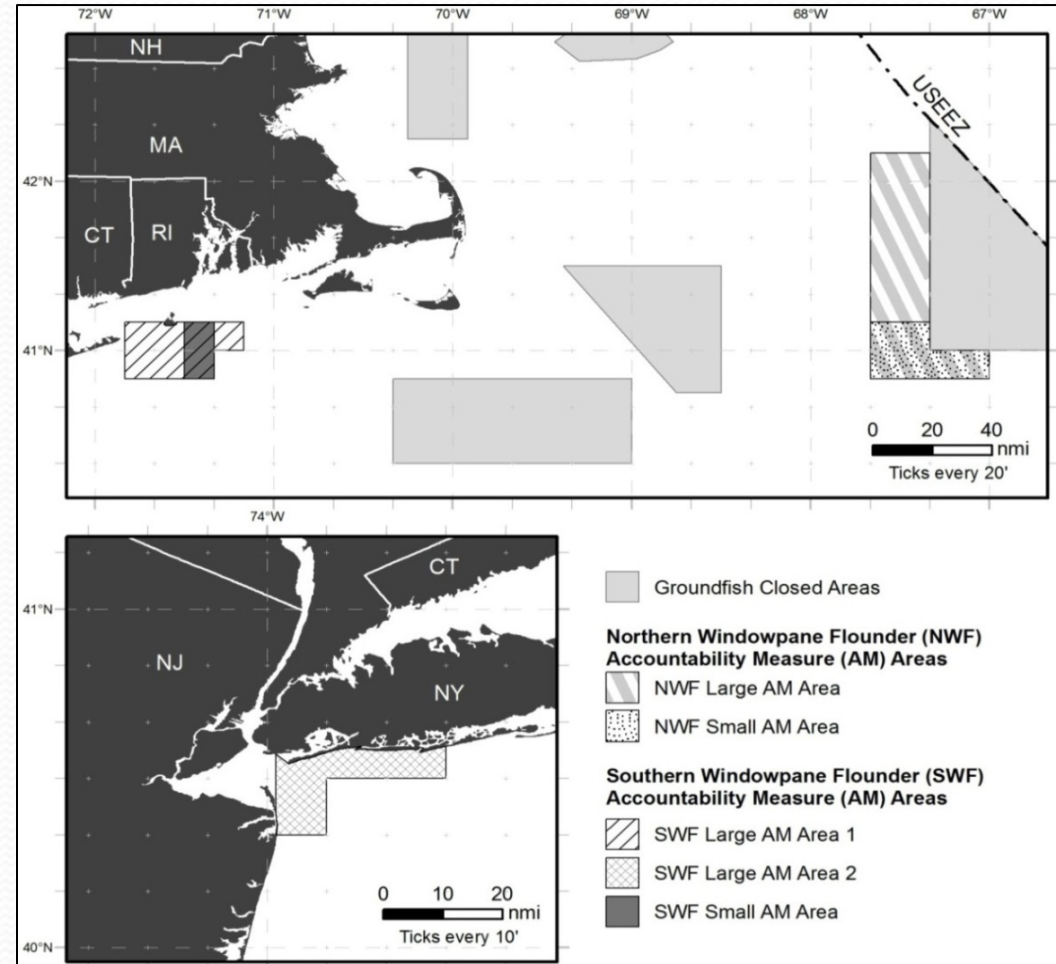
Of note – high ocean pout catches for FY2021



# GF PDT Meeting Highlights 9/9/21 – FW63

## Ocean Pout AMs –

- If total catch > ACL by any amount greater than the management uncertainty buffer up to 20% = small AM area implemented
- If overall ACL is exceeded by more than 20% = large AM areas implemented
- Gear-restricted AMs – requires haddock separator, ruhle trawl, or rope separator trawl



# For Today

- Discuss and make recommendations to the Committee/Council (*as appropriate*) on draft measures for the default specifications process for the PDT to develop, as appropriate.
  - a. Duration
  - b. Percentage
  - c. No holdback provision
  - d. Two-year TACs for cod and haddock in the US/CA area