

# **DECISION DOCUMENT**

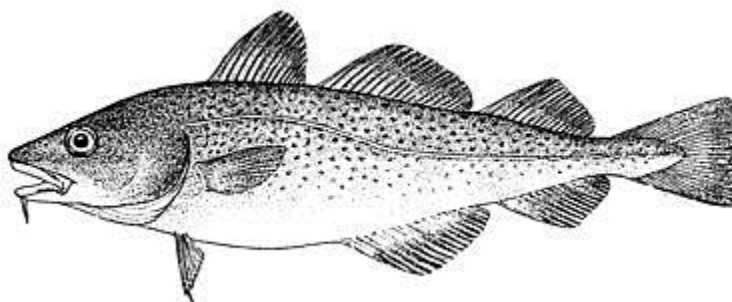
**for**

**Framework Adjustment 55**

**to the**

**Northeast Multispecies**

**Fishery Management Plan (FMP)**



**Council Meeting  
December 1-3, 2015**

The following decision tables in this document appear in the same order as the sections in the Draft Framework 55 Alternatives document, dated November 20, 2015 and Draft FW 55 Environmental Impacts Analysis, November 25, 2015 (Version 1); November 30, 2015 (Version 2); December 1, 2015 (Version 3); and Economic Impacts Supplement, December 1, 2015 - page numbers are provided for reference.

**Section 4.1.1 – Revised Status Determination Criteria**  
(p. 13)

**Groundfish Committee Motions:**

N/A

Alternatives/Options Under Consideration	Description Two Alternatives
<b>Option 1</b>	No Action
<b>Option 2</b>	Revised Status Determination Criteria
<b>Decisions/Questions to Consider</b>	
Option 2 would update the status determination criteria for Georges Bank Cod and Atlantic Halibut to reflect the best available scientific information.	
<b>Groundfish Committee Recommendations</b>	
The Committee did not make a recommendation to select a specific option.	
<b>Groundfish AP Comments/Recommendations</b>	
N/A	
<b>Recreational Advisory Panel Comments/Recommendations</b>	
N/A	
<b>Other Important Considerations/DEIS References</b>	
<p>The peer review concluded that the GB cod and Atlantic halibut models were not acceptable as a scientific basis for catch advice, and that stock status and catch advice should be based an alternative approach. Because a stock assessment model framework is lacking for GB cod and Atlantic halibut, no historical estimates of biomass, fishing mortality rate, or recruitment can be calculated for these stocks. Status determination relative to reference points is not possible because reference points cannot be defined. Overfishing status is considered unknown. In addition, the peer review concluded for both stocks that evidence suggests that these stocks should still be considered overfished.</p> <p>Biological impacts: p. 1 (Version 2 impacts, Biological Impacts)            Habitat impacts: p. 1 (Version 2 impacts, Essential Fish Habitat Impacts)            Endangered and other protected species impacts: p. 1 (Version 1 impacts, Protected Resources)            Economic impacts: p. 3 (Version 1 impacts, Economic Impacts)            Social impacts: p. 2 (Version 1 impacts, Social Impacts)</p>	

## Section 4.1.2 – Annual Catch Limits (p. 19)

### Groundfish Committee Motions:

The Groundfish Committee recommends to the Council a preliminary ABC for witch flounder of 394 mt (with associated ACL and sub-ACLs) described in Table 10, Option 2 (Revised ACLs in Draft FW55 Alternatives, November 10, 2015). The Committee further recommends that the Council requests that the SSC reconsider the ABC taking into consideration the incidental, non-target catch of witch flounder under the current prevailing operating conditions of the fishery. 11/0/0

The Groundfish Committee expressed continued and growing concerns (i.e., volatility in highs and lows, lack of stability) in the latest round of groundfish stock assessments.

- 1) The Groundfish Committee recommends that the current assessment process be modified to enhance the AP's role in the assessment process.
- 2) The Groundfish Committee strongly emphasizes the need for improved assessments rather than more assessments, which is being followed under the Operational Assessment ("turning of the crank") process. 8/1/2

Move that the Groundfish Committee recommend that the Council accept the OFLs and ABCs for FY 2016- FY 2018 recommended by the SSC for all groundfish stocks. 10/0/1

The Groundfish Committee recommends that the witch flounder other sub-component be 15% (59 mt) and state waters would be 3% (12 mt), this would result in no change to these percentages in this action. 7/2/2

Alternatives/Options Under Consideration	Description Two Alternatives
<b>Option 1</b>	No Action option
<b>Option 2</b>	Revised annual catch limit specifications
<b>Additional Decisions/Questions to Consider</b>	
<b>Groundfish Committee Recommendations</b>	
The Committee did not make a recommendation on a specific option.	
<b>Groundfish AP Recommendation</b>	
The GAP votes to express no confidence (i.e., volatility in highs and lows, lack of stability) in the latest round of groundfish stock assessments. 7/0/1	
The GAP requests that the Groundfish Committee recommend that the current assessment process be modified to enhance the GAP's role in the assessment process. 8/0/0	
The GAP strongly emphasizes the need for improved assessments rather than more assessments, which is being followed under the Operational Assessment ("turning of the crank") process. 8/0/0	
The GAP recommends to the Groundfish Committee that the Council delay final decision on the witch flounder ABC until the SSC can take input from the industry on the impacts of the ABC that is currently recommended. 8/0/0	
The GAP recommends that the Groundfish Committee develop Scallop fishery sub-ACLs (and associated AMs to be developed by the Scallop Committee) for Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder and Northern Windowpane for inclusion in FW 55. 8/0/0	
<b>Recreational Advisory Panel Comments/Recommendations</b>	
The RAP recommends to the Groundfish Committee that the GOM winter flounder FY 2016- FY 2018 ABCs remain at the quota specified for FY 2015 which is 510 mt. 11/0/0	
The RAP recommends that the Groundfish Committee select the revised GOM cod and GOM haddock ACLs for FY 2016-FY 2018 (Option 2/Section 4.1.2.2 Revised Annual Catch Limit Specifications in Section 4.1.2 Annual Catch Limits). 10/0/1	
<b>Other Important Considerations</b>	
Biological impacts: p. 3 (Version 2 impacts, Biological Impacts) Habitat impacts: p. 1 (Version 2 impacts, Essential Fish Habitat Impacts) . Endangered and other protected species impacts: p. 1 (Version 1 impacts, Protected Resources) Economic impacts: p. 3 (Version 1 impacts, Economic Impacts) and supplement economic impacts Social impacts: p. 3 (Version 1 impacts, Social Impacts)	

**Section 4.1.2 (cont.)– Scallop Fishery Sub-ACL for SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder  
(p. 25)**

**Groundfish Committee Motions:**

In Section 4.1.2 (Annual Catch Limits) under 4.1.2.2 (Option 2: Revised Annual Catch Limit Specifications – Scallop Fishery sub-ACL for SNE/MA yellowtail flounder), the Groundfish Committee recommends to the Council that the SNE/MA yellowtail flounder sub-ACL for the Scallop fishery be set at 90% of the scallop fishery’s estimated catch (as estimated by the Scallop PDT). 8/0/3

<b>Alternatives/Options Under Consideration</b>	<b>Description Two Alternatives</b>
<b>Option 1</b>	No Action option
<b>Option 2</b>	Specify a scallop fishery sub-ACL for SNE/MA yellowtail flounder
<b>Additional Decisions/Questions to Consider</b>	
This alternative depends on which option the Council selects in Scallop FW27 for specifications.	
<b>Groundfish Committee Recommendations</b>	
See above motion.	
<b>Groundfish AP Recommendation</b>	
In Section 4.1.2 (Annual Catch Limits) under 4.1.2.2 (Option 2: Revised Annual Catch Limit Specifications – Scallop Fishery sub-ACL for SNE/MA yellowtail flounder), the GAP recommends to the Groundfish Committee that the SNE/MA yellowtail flounder sub-ACL for the Scallop fishery be set at 90% or less of the scallop fishery’s estimated catch. 7/0/1	
<b>Recreational Advisory Panel Comments/Recommendations</b>	
N/A	
<b>Other Important Considerations</b>	
Biological impacts: p. 12 (Version 2 impacts, Biological Impacts) Habitat impacts: p. 2 (Version 2 impacts, Essential Fish Habitat Impacts) . Endangered and other protected species impacts: p. 1 (Version 1 impacts, Protected Resources) Economic impacts: p. 4 (Version 1 impacts, Economic Impacts) Social impacts: p. 4 (Version 1 impacts, Social Impacts).	

**Section 4.2.1– Implementation of an additional sector  
(p. 30)**

**Groundfish Committee Motions:**

The Groundfish Committee recommends to the Council Option 2 in each of these sections: 4.2.1 (Implementation of an Additional Sector), 4.2.3 (Modification to the definition of a haddock separator trawl), and 4.3.2 (Management Measures for US/CA TACs) be selected as preferred. 11/0/0

Alternatives/Options Under Consideration	Description *Two Alternatives
<b>Option 1</b>	No Action option
<b>Option 2</b>	Implement a New Sector for FY 2016
<b>Additional Decisions/Questions to Consider</b>	
<b>Groundfish Committee Recommendations</b>	
See above motion.	
<b>Groundfish AP Recommendation</b>	
The GAP supports Option 2 in each of these sections: 4.2.1 (Implementation of an Additional Sector), 4.2.2 (Sector Approval Process), 4.2.3 (Modification to the definition of a haddock separator trawl), and 4.3.2 (Management Measures for US/CA TACs). 8/0/0	
<b>Recreational Advisory Panel Comments/Recommendations</b>	
N/A	
<b>Other Important Considerations</b>	
Biological impacts: p. 13 (Version 2 impacts, Biological Impacts) Habitat impacts: p. 3 (Version 2 impacts, Essential Fish Habitat Impacts) Endangered and other protected species impacts: p. 6 (Version 1 impacts, Protected Resources) Economic impacts: p. 9 (Version 1 impacts, Economic Impacts) Social impacts: p. 5 (Version 1 impacts, Social Impacts)	

**Section 4.2.2 – Sector Approval Process  
(p. 30)**

**Groundfish Committee Motions:**

N/A

Alternatives/Options Under Consideration	Description *Two Alternatives
<b>Option 1</b>	No Action option
<b>Option 2</b>	Revised process for approving new Northeast groundfish sectors
<b>Additional Decisions/Questions to Consider</b>	
<b>Groundfish Committee Recommendations</b>	
The Committee is deferring its judgement on section 4.2.2 (Sector Approval Process) until the Council meeting. It is hoped at that time that General Council can clarify if the alternative drafted would not be appropriate for a framework adjustment action.	
<b>Groundfish AP Recommendation</b>	
The GAP supports Option 2 in each of these sections: 4.2.1 (Implementation of an Additional Sector), 4.2.2 (Sector Approval Process), 4.2.3 (Modification to the definition of a haddock separator trawl), and 4.3.2 (Management Measures for US/CA TACs). 8/0/0	
<b>Recreational Advisory Panel Comments/Recommendations</b>	
N/A	
<b>Other Important Considerations</b>	
Biological impacts: p. 13 (Version 2 impacts, Biological Impacts) Habitat impacts: p. 3 (Version 2 impacts, Essential Fish Habitat Impacts) Endangered and other protected species impacts: p. 6 (Version 1 impacts, Protected Resources) Economic impacts: p. 10 (Version 1 impacts, Economic Impacts) Social impacts: p. 6 (Version 1 impacts, Social Impacts)	

**Section 4.2.3 – Modification to the Definition of the Haddock Separator Trawl  
(p. 31)**

**Groundfish Committee Motions:**

The Groundfish Committee recommends to the Council Option 2 in each of these sections: 4.2.1 (Implementation of an Additional Sector), 4.2.3 (Modification to the definition of a haddock separator trawl), and 4.3.2 (Management Measures for US/CA TACs) be selected as preferred. 11/0/0

<b>Alternatives/Options Under Consideration</b>	<b>Description *Two Alternatives</b>
<b>Option 1</b>	No Action option
<b>Option 2</b>	Revised definition of the haddock separator trawl
<b>Additional Decisions/Questions to Consider</b>	
<b>Groundfish Committee Recommendations</b>	
See above motion.	
<b>Groundfish AP Recommendation</b>	
The GAP supports Option 2 in each of these sections: 4.2.1 (Implementation of an Additional Sector), 4.2.2 (Sector Approval Process), 4.2.3 (Modification to the definition of a haddock separator trawl), and 4.3.2 (Management Measures for US/CA TACs). 8/0/0	
<b>Recreational Advisory Panel Comments/Recommendations</b>	
N/A	
<b>Other Important Considerations</b>	
Biological impacts: p. 14 (Version 2 impacts, Biological Impacts) Habitat impacts: p. 3 (Version 2 impacts, Essential Fish Habitat Impacts) Endangered and other protected species impacts: p. 6 (Version 1 impacts, Protected Resources) Economic impacts: p. 3 (Version 1 impacts, Economic Impacts) Social impacts: p. 7 (Version 1 impacts, Social Impacts)	



## Section 4.3.1 – Groundfish Monitoring Program

(p. 33)

### Groundfish Committee Motions:

The GF Committee requests the Council request that the Agency and also have the PDT develop an additional option 4.3.1.4 for the “total observer coverage rate” starting in FY 2016 utilizing a 3 year and 5 year multi-year approach as indicated in Appendix IV of the PDT memo dated November 16, 2015. The stock that has the highest realized CV as averaged across the last 3 or 5 fishing years (*in which a completed data set is available and the realized CV has been calculated in accordance with the protocols currently used by the Agency - calculating realized CV at the stock basis*) will serve as the basis for the upcoming fishing year total observer coverage rate. 8/1/0

GF committee recommends to the Council for inclusion in FW 55, exempt ELM 10”+ Sector Trips (GF catch counts against Sector ACE) and allow trips to fish 6.5”+ mesh to target dogfish within the footprint of the existing Dogfish exempted fishery. (Require retention of GF, universal to all sectors). 9/0/0

The Groundfish Committee recommends to the Council that FW 55 clarify that the primary goal of ASM is to verify area fished, catch, and discards by species, by gear type and in such a manner that would reduce the cost of monitoring. Other goals/objectives identified under FW 48, such as additional data for stock assessment purposes, are secondary benefits achieved through catch verification. 8/1/0

Alternatives/Options Under Consideration	Description <b>*Five Alternatives (multiple options can be selected)</b>
<b>Option 1</b>	No Action option
<b>Option 2</b>	Clarification of Groundfish Monitoring Goals and Objectives
<b>Option 3</b>	Clarification of methods use to set sector ASM coverage rates <u>Sub-Option 3A:</u> Monitoring 80% of discarded pounds at CV30 <u>Sub-Option 3B:</u> Multi-year approach to setting sector ASM coverage  <i>Both Sub-Options can be selected</i>
<b>Option 4</b>	Remove ASM coverage requirements for a sub-set of sector gillnet trips <u>Sub-Option 4A:</u> Remove ASM coverage requirements for sector trips fishing extra-large (ELM) gillnet gear <u>Sub-Option 4B:</u> Remove ASM coverage requirements for sector gillnet trips fishing exclusively within the footprint of existing dogfish exempted fisheries  <i>Both Sub-Options can be selected</i>
<b>Option 5</b>	Fishery Performance Criteria for Meeting CV Standard
<b>Decisions/Questions to Consider</b>	
If Option 5 is selected, thresholds for discards (5% - 10%) and landings (50% - 75%) will need to be selected.	
<b>Groundfish Committee Recommendations</b>	
The Committee did not make a recommendation to select a specific option.	
<b>Groundfish AP Comments/Recommendations</b>	
To modify Option 2 in section 4.3.1 so that vessels on a sector trip would be exempt from ASM coverage when using a) 10 in mesh or greater and b) for when fishing in the dogfish exemption area (Nantucket Lightship only) on the same trip. 7/0/1	
The GAP requests that the Committee recommend development of an ASM alternative that would set a fixed total (NEFOP+ASM) coverage rate (in a range of %) at a level lower than 20%. 7/1/0	
<b>Recreational Advisory Panel Comments/Recommendations</b>	
N/A	
<b>Other Important Considerations/DEIS References</b>	
Biological impacts: p. 1 (Version 3 impacts, Biological Impacts) Habitat impacts: p. 4 (Version 2 impacts, Essential Fish Habitat Impacts) Endangered and other protected species impacts: p. 7 (Version 1 impacts, Protected Resources) Economic impacts: p. 11 (Version 1 impacts, Economic Impacts); p. 1 (Version 2 impacts, Economic Impacts); and supplemental economic impacts Social impacts: p. 8 (Version 1 impacts, Social Impacts)	

## Section 4.3.2 – Management Measures for U.S./Canada TACs

(p. 40)

### Groundfish Committee Motions:

The Groundfish Committee recommends to the Council Option 2 in each of these sections: 4.2.1 (Implementation of an Additional Sector), 4.2.3 (Modification to the definition of a haddock separator trawl), and 4.3.2 (Management Measures for US/CA TACs) be selected as preferred. 11/0/0

Alternatives/Options Under Consideration	Description Two Alternatives
<b>Option 1</b>	No Action
<b>Option 2</b>	Distribution of U.S. TACs for Eastern/Western Georges Bank Cod
<b>Decisions/Questions to Consider</b>	
<b>Groundfish Committee Recommendations</b>	
See motion above.	
<b>Groundfish AP Comments/Recommendations</b>	
The GAP supports Option 2 in each of these sections: 4.2.1 (Implementation of an Additional Sector), 4.2.2 (Sector Approval Process), 4.2.3 (Modification to the definition of a haddock separator trawl), and 4.3.2 (Management Measures for US/CA TACs). 8/0/0	
<b>Recreational Advisory Panel Comments/Recommendations</b>	
N/A	
<b>Other Important Considerations/DEIS References</b>	
Biological impacts: p. 15 (Version 2 impacts, Biological Impacts) Habitat impacts: p. 5 (Version 2 impacts, Essential Fish Habitat Impacts) Endangered and other protected species impacts: p. 11 (Version 1 impacts, Protected Resources) Economic impacts: p. 14 (Version 1 impacts, Economic Impacts) Social impacts: p. 11 (Version 1 impacts, Social Impacts)	

**Section 4.3.3 – Modification to the Gulf of Maine Cod Protection Measures  
(p. 41)**

**Groundfish Committee Motions:**

The Groundfish Committee recommends to the Council Option 2 (Change in authority to modify GOM recreational possession limits) in Section 4.3.3 (Modification to the GOM cod protection measures) be selected as preferred and update the document so the section title reads as “modify GOM recreational possession limits. 11/0/0

Alternatives/Options Under Consideration	Description *Two Alternatives
<b>Option 1</b>	No Action
<b>Option 2</b>	Modify GOM cod recreational possession limits
<b>Decisions/Questions to Consider</b>	
<b>Groundfish Committee Recommendations</b>	
See above motion.	
<b>Groundfish AP Comments/Recommendations</b>	
N/A	
<b>Recreational Advisory Panel Comments/Recommendations</b>	
The RAP recommends to the Groundfish Committee Option 2 (Change in authority to modify GOM recreational possession limits) in Section 4.3.3 (Modification to the GOM cod protection measures). 10/0/1	
<b>Other Important Considerations/DEIS References</b>	
Biological impacts: p. 16 (Version 2 impacts, Biological Impacts) Habitat impacts: p. 5 (Version 2 impacts, Essential Fish Habitat Impacts) Endangered and other protected species impacts: p. 12 (Version 1 impacts, Protected Resources) Economic impacts: p. 14 (Version 1 impacts, Economic Impacts). Social impacts: p. 12 (Version 1 impacts, Social Impacts)	