



## New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

### MEMORANDUM v.2

**DATE:** November 26, 2021  
**TO:** Groundfish Committee  
**FROM:** Groundfish Plan Development Team  
**SUBJECT:** **Framework Adjustment 63 – Georges Bank cod recreational fishery management**

The Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) discussed the George Bank (GB) recreational fishery catch target and recreational management measures on Nov. 1 and Nov. 10, 2021, by webinar.

*Version 2 (this version) was updated from Version 1 to include Attachment #3 – an analysis of possible measures.*

## SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT RECREATIONAL FISHERY GEORGES BANK CATCH TARGET AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

### RECREATIONAL FISHERY GEORGES BANK COD CATCH TARGET

#### Alternative 1 – No Action

Under No Action, the current recreational fishery GB cod catch target would remain at 138 mt through FY2022. The catch target does not account for the revised MRIP data in the 2019 or 2021 stock assessments of GB cod. As the catch target is not a sub-ACL, the catch target is apportioned into the state waters and other sub-components for FY2022.

**Rationale:** The development of a recreational fishery GB cod catch target in Framework 57 used information from the 2017 stock assessment. The catch target formed the basis for the development of the current GB cod recreational fishery management measures, which have been in place since fishing year 2019. Maintaining the catch target of 138 mt through FY2022 allows a portion of the total ACL to be set aside for recreational catch, while maximizing the quota available to the commercial fishery. If the recreational fishery catch exceeds the amount set aside and contributes to an overage of the ACL, the commercial groundfish fishery would be responsible for paying back the overage, based on evaluating a 3-year average of recreational catch.

Table 1 summarizes recent catches of GB cod by the US commercial groundfish fishery and in-season FY2021 catches.

**Table 1- Summary of recent catches (mt) of Georges Bank cod by the US commercial groundfish fishery, FY2015-FY2020, and in-season FY2021. Sources: FY2015 – FY2020 final year-end multispecies catch reports, GARFO, FY2021 in-season catch report, GARFO, November 4, 2021.**

		<i><u>Commercial Groundfish Fishery- Georges Bank Cod</u></i>				
Fishing Year		Sub-ACL	Landings	Discards	Catch	Percentage of sub-ACL
	2015	1,787	1,608.5	28.3	1,636.8	92%
	2016	608	571.9	24.6	596.6	98%
	2017	531	432.8	13.1	446	84%
	2018	1,519	833.2	4.7	837.9	62%
	2019	1,568	524.5	7.9	532.4	34%
	2020	1,072.7	417.4	7.8	425.3	39.6%
	<i>In-season 2021</i>	1,093.1	199.6	4.6	204.2	18.7%

## RECREATIONAL FISHERY GEORGES BANK COD MANAGEMENT MEASURES

### Alternative 1 – No Action

No Action would maintain the existing management measures currently in place for GB cod for the recreational fishery.

*Minimum Fish Size-* The minimum size for Georges Bank cod is 21 inches (53.34 cm.), total length for the recreational fishery (private, party, and charter).

*Possession Limit-* Party, charter, and private vessels in the recreational fishery are permitted to land 10 legal sized GB cod per angler, per day.

*Management Measures-* Changes to existing management measures would require a Council action. Currently, the recreational fishery does not have an allocation for GB cod. Amendment 16 outlined the process for determining when and how an allocation of certain regulated groundfish stocks be made to the recreational component of the fishery. The process would require Council action and that certain standards be met (e.g., the fishery components are fully utilizing their ACL, and the recreational harvest, after accounting for state waters catches outside the management plans, is five percent or greater of the removals).

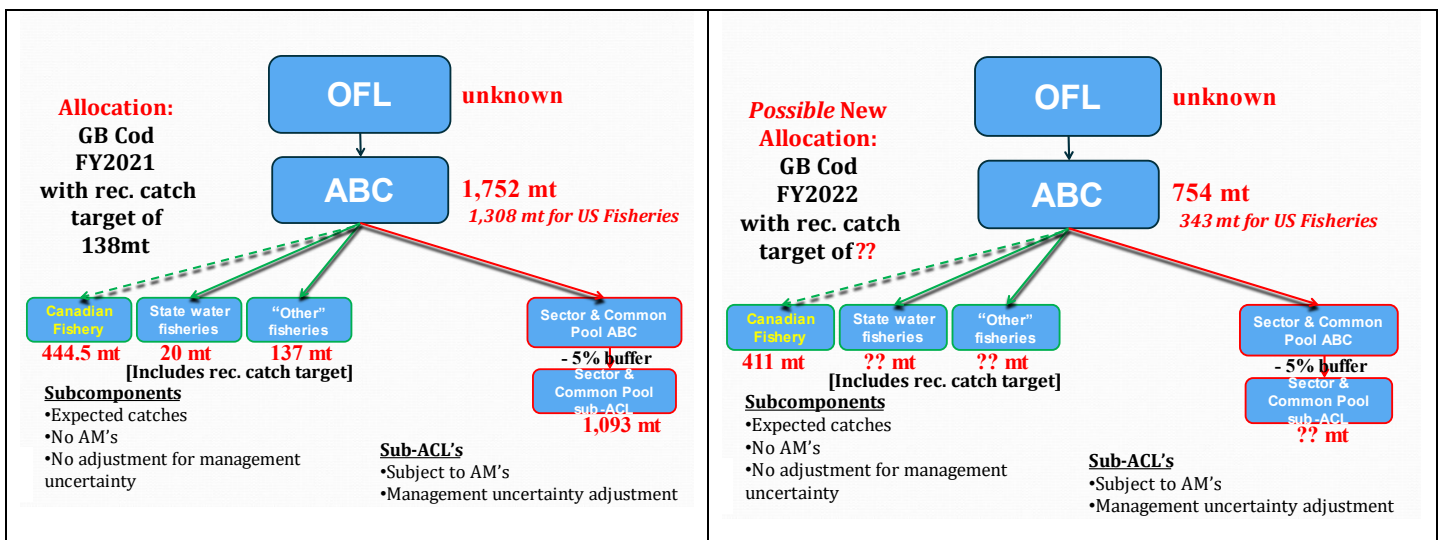
***Rationale:*** This approach would maintain the current GB cod recreational measures and continue to allow the Council to adjust these measures through management actions as needed.

## Summary of changes in federal recreational management measures for GB cod:

- Prior to Framework Adjustment 57,
  - 10 fish bag limit for private anglers
  - No bag limit for-hire (party/charter)
  - 22” minimum fish size
- May 1, 2018 - Framework 57
  - Set 138 mt GB cod recreational fishery catch target for FY2018-FY2020, and
  - Granted the Regional Administrator the authority to adjust measures following consultation with the Council for FY2018 and FY2019
- May 1, 2018 - FY2018 Recreational Groundfish Rule
  - 10 fish limit for private angler and for-hire (party/charter), and
  - 23” minimum fish size
- July 9, 2019 - FY2019 Recreational Groundfish Rule
  - 10 fish limit for private angler and for-hire (party/charter),
  - 21" minimum size
- July 30, 2020 - Framework Adjustment 59
  - Extended the 138 mt GB cod recreational fishery catch target for FY2020-FY2022 and made no changes to the management measures from FY2019

## ANALYSIS TO DEVELOP A RECREATIONAL FISHERY GEORGES BANK COD CATCH TARGET

Presently, the Georges Bank catch target is factored into the state waters and other fishery sub-components for GB cod during specifications setting. The catch target is not an allocation to the recreational fishery.



The data to evaluate a possible revised catch target comes from the recent 2021 stock assessment for GB cod and does not rely on information in year-end fishery catch reports. This is in part because the stock assessment includes the new Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data for the entire time series. The PDT examined data from calendar years 2016 to 2020

to develop approaches for the catch target. Recreational catch for calendar years 2016-2019 came directly from the MRIP data used in the 2021 stock assessment for GB cod. Recreational catch for calendar year 2020 was calculated by the PDT and used in the assessment as a catch estimate. This included recent 3-year (2018-2020) and 5-year (2016-2020) averages of recreational catches and the percentage relative to all US fisheries catches. The calculations are summarized in Attachment #1.

Ultimately, the PDT recommends the Groundfish Committee consider 2 options in addition to No Action. The 2 new options (of the 4 options examined) are both based on the 3-year recent average recreational catches. Briefly, the PDT supports using 3-year rather than 5-year average catch approach because of concerns with 2017 data uncertainty and recent improvements in the MRIP data in more recent years including more representative sample sizes than in the past.

The PDT developed one approach based on the expected decline in the US ABC from FY2021 to FY2022 and another based on the recent percentage of catches in the fishery.

**Decline in US ABC from FY2021 to FY2022:**

Total ABC = 754 mt

Canadian TAC = 411 mt

US ABC 2022= 343mt

US ABC 2021 = 1,308 mt

73.8% decline

**PDT-Developed Options for GB Cod Recreational Catch Target**

- *Option 1/No Action* – 138 mt for FY2022
- *Option 2* – 43 mt for FY2022-FY2024  
The 3-year (CY2018-CY2020) average of recreational catch (163mt), reduced by the percent change between FY2021 US ABC to the proposed FY2022 US ABC (73.8%) results in a GB cod recreational catch target of 43 mt.
- *Option 3* – 71 mt for FY2022-FY2024  
The 3-year (CY2018-CY2020) average percentage of recreational catches relative to US fisheries total catches (20.6%) applied to the proposed FY2022 US ABC (343mt) results in a GB cod recreational catch target of 71 mt.

Attachment #2 summarizes the GB cod specifications under Option 1/No Action and Option 2 and Option 3 developed by the PDT.

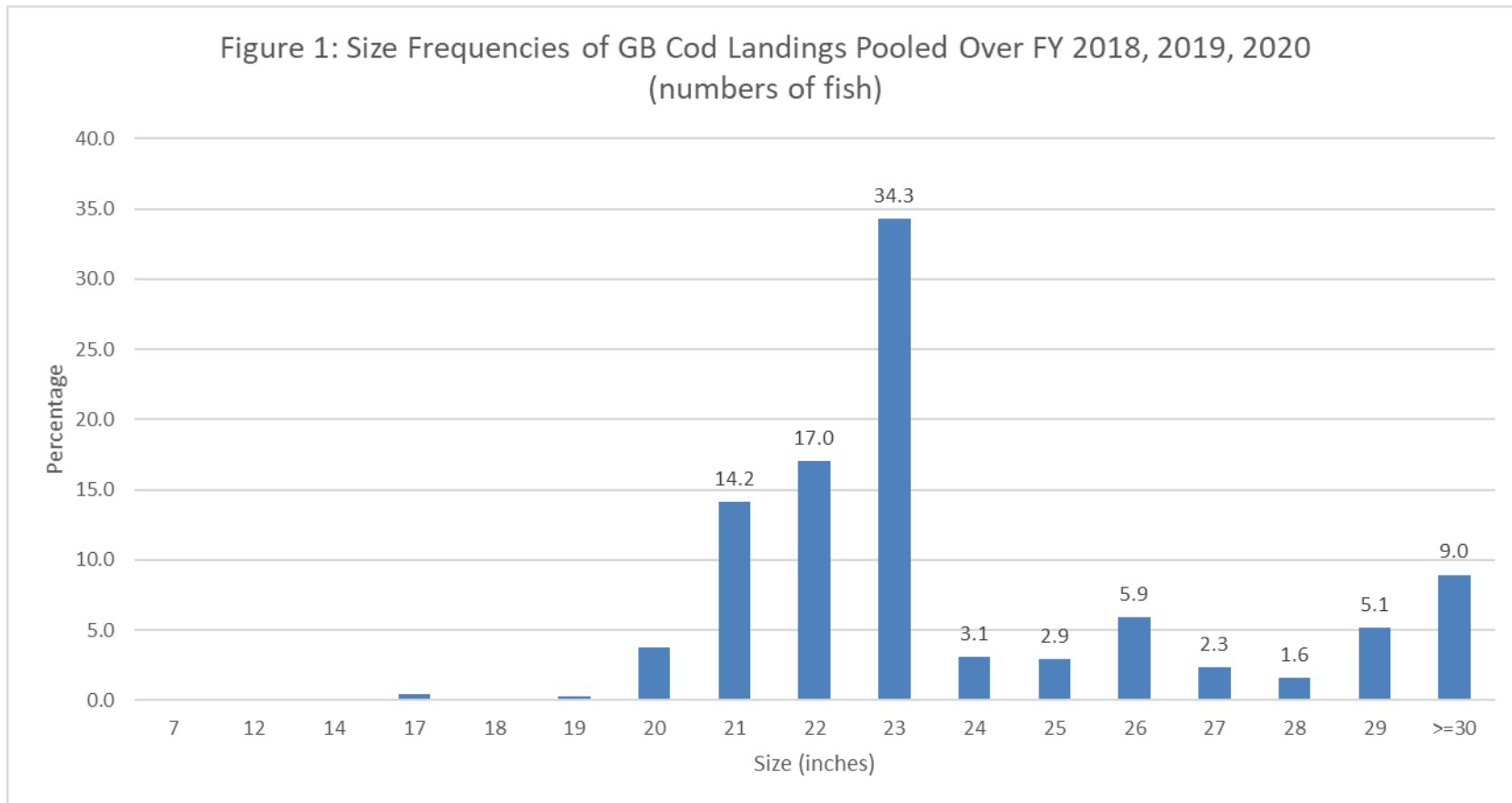
**ANALYSIS TO DEVELOP RECREATIONAL FISHERY MEASURES FOR GEORGES BANK COD**

Attachment #3 includes an analysis of possible GB cod recreational measures using pooled data from fishing years 2018 through 2020.



Year	com. land	com. disc	rec. land	rec. disc	Ca. land	Ca. disc	total	Recreational Catches	US Total Catches	Percentage Rec Catch to US Total Catches	Percentage Rec Catch to Total Catches	3-Year Recent Average (2017-2019)	5-Year Recent Average (2015-2019)	3-Year Recent Average (2018-2020)	5-Year Recent Average (2016-2020)	3-Year Recent Average (2018-2020) * percent decline	5-Year Recent Average (2016-2020) * percent decline	3-Year Recent Average Percentage (2018-2020)	5-Year Recent Average Percentage (2016-2020)
2015	1300	31	486	21	472	20	2330	507	1838	27.6%	21.8%								
2016	1109	33	1075	10	428	12	2667	1085	2227	48.7%	40.7%								
2017	464	20	785	8	474	14	1765	793	1277	62.1%	44.9%								
2018	574	13	66	2	510	7	1183	68	655	10.4%	5.7%								
2019	682	8	251	6	388	8	1344	257	947	27.1%	19.1%	373	542						
2020	497.6	14.2	148.7	15.67	362	15	1053	164	676	24.3%	16%			163	473	43	124	20.6%	34.5%
																		71	118

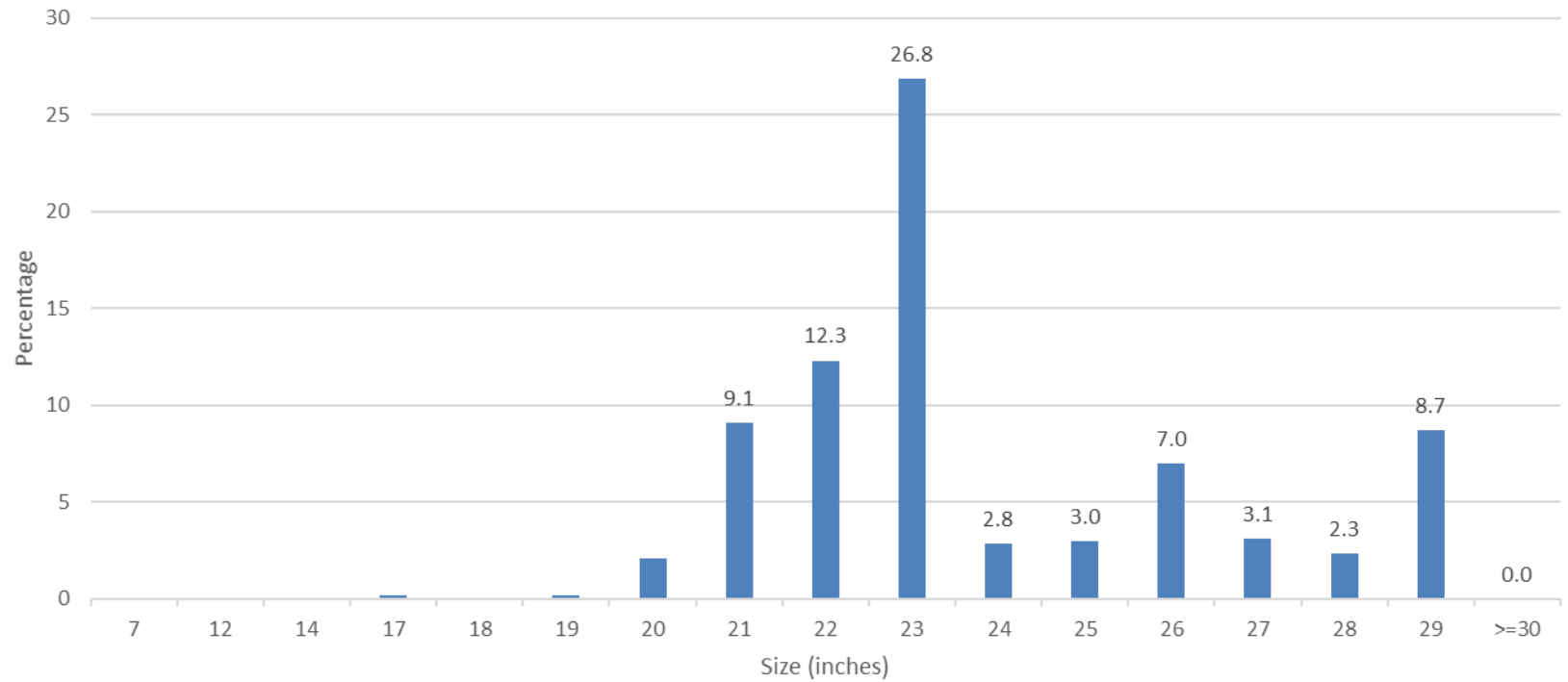
<b>Stock</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>OFL</b>	<b>US ABC</b>	<b>State-Waters Sub-Component</b>	<b>Other sub-component</b>	<b>Scallops</b>	<b>Groundfish Sub-ACL</b>	<b>Comm. Ground-fish Sub-ACL</b>	<b>Rec Ground-fish Sub-ACL</b>	<b>Preliminary Sectors Sub-ACL</b>	<b>Preliminary Non-sector Groundfish Sub-ACL</b>	<b>MWT or Small mesh Sub-ACL</b>	<b>Total ACL</b>
GB Cod	2022		343	20	137		177	177		169		8	334
Option 1: 138mt	2023		343	20	137		177	177		169		8	334
	2024		343	20	137		177	177		169		8	334
GB cod	2022		343	10	52		267	267		255		12	329
Option 2: 43mt	2023		343	10	52		267	267		255		12	329
	2024		343	10	52		267	267		255		12	329
GB cod	2022		343	15	75		240	240		230		11	330
Option 3:71mt	2023		343	15	75		240	240		230		11	330
	2024		343	15	75		240	240		230		11	330



Minimum size limit increase from 21" to:	Estimated reduction in landings (numbers of fish)	Estimated reduction in overall mortality - accounts for 30% release mortality (numbers of fish)
22"	14%	10%
23"	31%	22%
24"	66%	46%
25"	69%	48%
26"	72%	50%

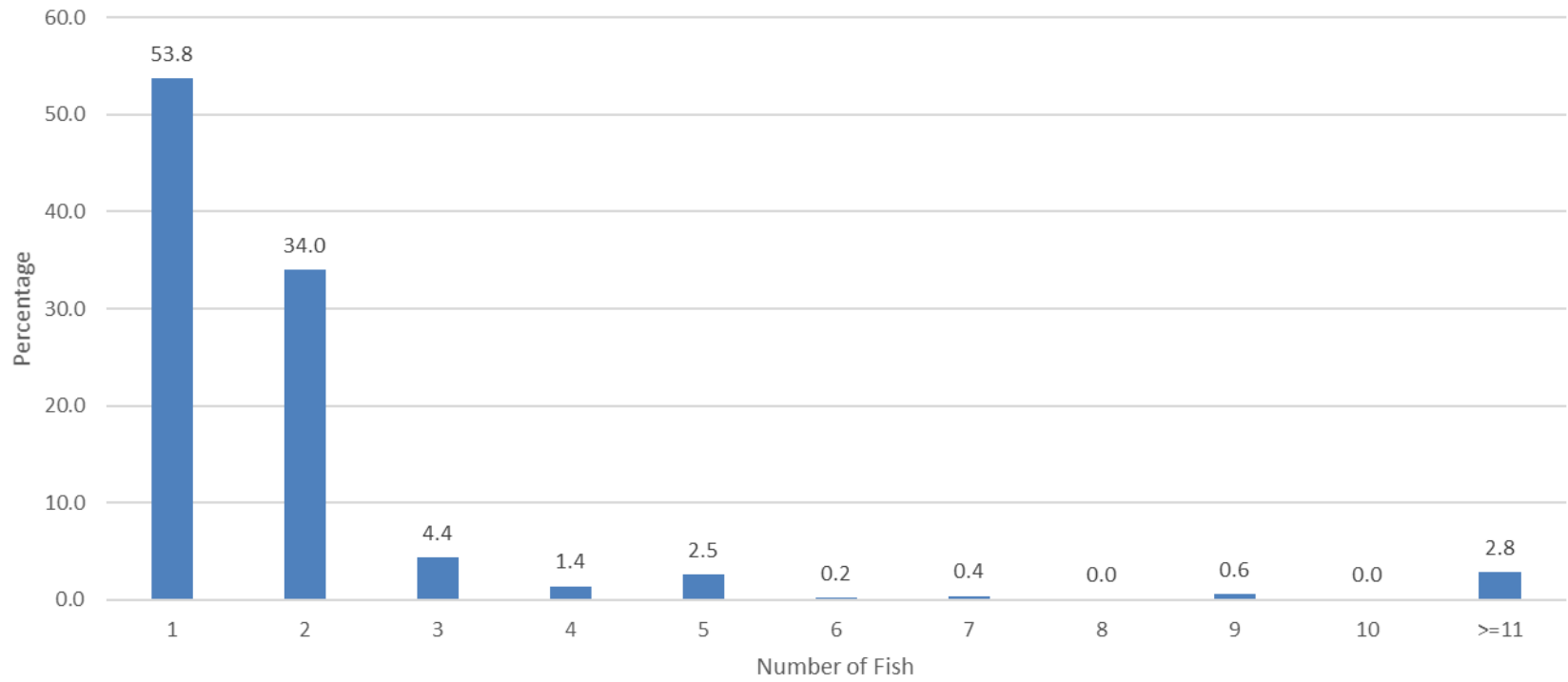


Figure 2: Size Frequencies of GB Cod Landings Pooled Over FY 2018, 2019, 2020 (mt)



Minimum size limit increase from 21" to:	Estimated reduction in landings (mt)	Estimated reduction in overall mortality - accounts for 30% release mortality (mt)
22"	9%	6%
23"	21%	15%
24"	48%	34%
25"	51%	36%
26"	54%	38%
Slot limit of:		
21" to 25"	44%	31%
24" to 28"	79%	56%

Figure 3: Angler Trip Frequencies by Number of GB Cod Landed Per Trip, Pooled Over FY 2018, 2019, 2020 (numbers of fish)



Possession limit of:	Estimated reduction in landings (numbers of fish)
9	8%
8	9%
7	11%
6	13%
5	15%
4	18%
3	22%
2	28%
1	51%

Table 1. Proportion of GB Cod Mortality (in terms of weight (mt)) by Wave, Pooled Over FY 2018, 2019, 2020

Wave	Landing Proportion	Release Mortality Proportion	Total Mortality Proportion
2	0.19	0.004	0.17
3	0.16	0.07	0.15
4	0.38	0.41	0.39
5	0.17	0.16	0.17
6	0.10	0.36	0.12