



## New England Fishery Management Council

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### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 25, 2019  
**TO:** Groundfish Committee  
**FROM:** Groundfish Plan Development Team  
**SUBJECT:** **Updates to Draft Amendment 23/Groundfish Monitoring Alternatives and Progress on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

The Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) met on September 30, 2019 and October 21, 2019, via webinar. The PDT discussed: 1) updates to the draft alternatives for Amendment 23 (A23)/Groundfish Monitoring; and 2) progress on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

#### *Overview*

This memorandum summarizes updates to the draft A23 alternatives from the PDT, following the September Council meeting. The revisions are summarized below by section in the draft alternatives document. The updated draft alternatives are provided as a separate document. The PDT is also working through additional revisions to the alternatives, focusing on structural/organizational issues and identifying any alternatives that might need further clarification. Some of these revisions are included in the updated alternatives. The PDT also made updates to Section 3.0 of the DEIS: Background/Purpose, which is provided with the draft alternatives. In particular, the PDT provided clarifications to the Goals and Objectives of the action. This memo also summarizes progress on the DEIS, including additional analysis provided as a follow-up from the initial draft impacts analysis for certain alternatives.

The Committee does not need to make any motions related to the updates described above; they are general clarification level revisions to help get the document ready for public comment. As the PDT continues to review the alternatives there may be a need to clarify any outstanding issues with the Committee at the November 25 meeting.

#### *Updates to the Draft Amendment 23 Alternatives*

##### *Section 4.2.1 Dockside Monitoring*

- Option 3: Dockside Monitoring as an Optional Program for Sectors - moved to Considered and Rejected

*Council rationale:* Since sectors already have the ability to develop and implement a dockside monitoring program as part of their operations plans, this alternative does not add anything new to the groundfish monitoring program.

#### *Section 4.5 Management Uncertainty Buffers*

- Option 2: Revised Management Uncertainty Buffers for Allocated Groundfish Stocks - moved to Considered and Rejected

*Council rationale:* There are concerns that increases in the management uncertainty buffer on a stock-by-stock basis are unlikely to be desirable substitutes for increases in monitoring coverage, and could have unintended consequences as further constraining ACLs by increasing buffers is unlikely to reduce levels of unreported catch or address bias and may actually lead to increased levels of unreported catch. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the amendment of improving accuracy of catch data.

#### *Follow-up from September Council meeting*

Additionally, at the September Council meeting, the following motion and amended motion occurred:

*To add a sub-Option to Section 4.2.2.1.2 for coverage levels based on trips of the vessel (e.g., if the coverage level is 25% of trips taken by the vessel, then the vessel takes four trips, it would get covered once). These would be vessel specific coverage rates.*

*To remand this motion back to the Groundfish Committee for further analysis.*  
(Carried 10/3/1)

The PDT briefly discussed this motion as a consideration for an alternative. The PDT was made aware of a letter sent from the Council to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center requesting information on observer deployment data at the vessel level for groundfish trips (provided as a separate document) as a follow-up from the June Council meeting when this discussion first occurred. This information is a first step in considering vessel specific coverage levels, to better understand concerns about differences in coverage rates between vessels. The Council is still awaiting a response to the letter. The PDT had a brief discussion on some of the considerations regarding vessel specific coverage levels, including potential changes to stratification and implications for discard estimates, and potential operational impacts on the feedback and coordination that occurs between the Pre-Trip Notification System (PTNS), sector managers, and vessels. The PDT will continue this discussion depending on the Committee's direction.

#### *Progress on the DEIS*

The PDT discussed progress on the DEIS, including updated analysis provided as a follow-up from the initial draft impacts analysis presented in September. Specifically, additional analysis is provided for the dockside monitoring sub-options for lower coverage for small, remote ports and small, low volume vessels (Dockside Monitoring Sub-Option 4 of the draft alternatives). As a follow-up to analysis provided as part of the draft impacts analysis presented in September, the

PDT explored additional analysis of annual groundfish landings by time period, as opposed to individual year, and by stock. A summary of this analysis is provided as an Attachment.

The PDT will continue impacts analysis for the dockside monitoring sub-options for lower coverage for small ports and small vessels, and will use a time period to determine which ports and vessels qualify for the lower coverage, rather than calculating this for each individual year.

#### *Decoupling NEFOP and ASM*

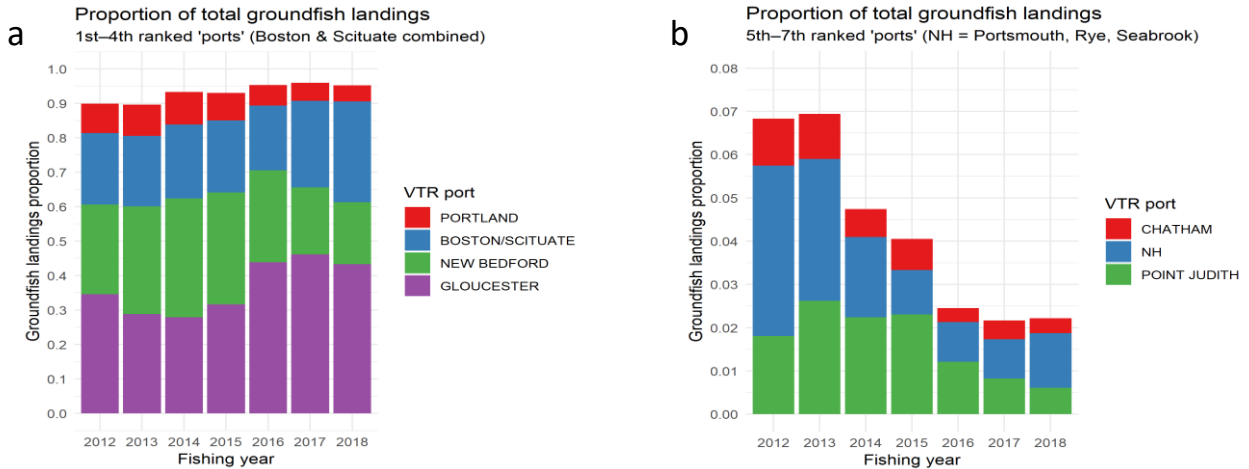
In discussing the impacts analysis for the alternatives for monitoring coverage level options, the PDT discussed whether these should continue to be total monitoring coverage levels, or should be considered at-sea monitoring program (ASM) coverage levels that are separate from Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) coverage. As currently written in the alternatives, these are total monitoring coverage levels (NEFOP coverage would be combined with ASM coverage to fulfill minimum total coverage levels). The PDT had some discussion of the consideration of separating the NEFOP and ASM programs, including pros and cons, but needs more time to continue this discussion at a future PDT meeting.

## **Summary of Follow-up Draft PDT Analysis of Dockside Monitoring Sub-Options for Lower Coverage**

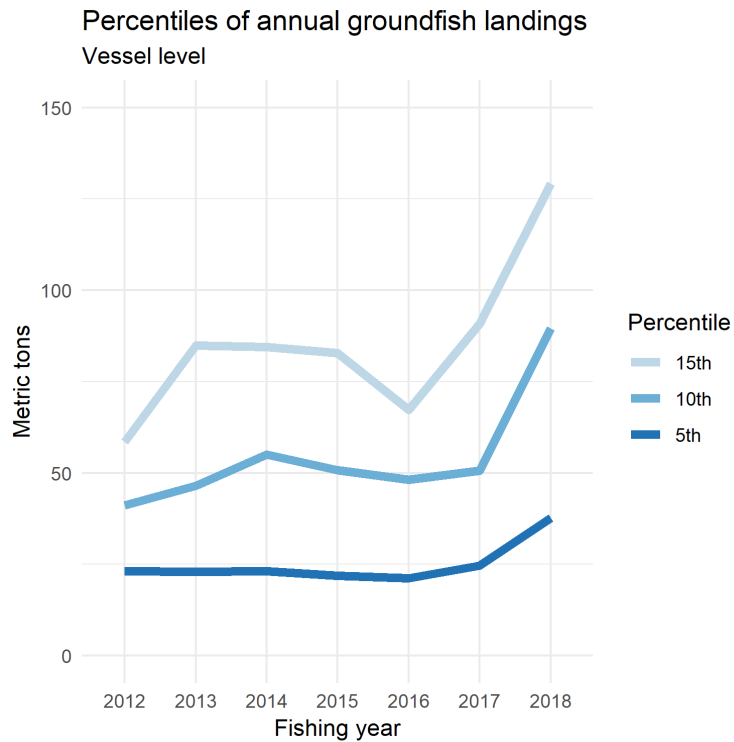
As a part of the development of the Dockside Monitoring (DSM) sub-options for lower coverage for small, remote ports and small, low volume vessels (Sub-Option 4), the PDT developed the criteria to determine which ports would be considered “small and remote” and which vessels would be considered “low volume”.

For Sub-Option 4A, the PDT did an analysis of the total annual groundfish landings by port. Ports with total annual groundfish landings volumes in the 5th percentile of total annual landings volume were determined to be small and remote and would receive lower “spot check” coverage. This means that ports which collectively land approximately 5 to 10 percent of total groundfish pounds each year would be exempted from 100 percent coverage and would receive 20 percent coverage instead, as a spot check. Ports that land 90-95 percent of groundfish for 2012-2018 would receive 100 percent coverage. The ports that cover ~95 percent of landings are those in the top five – New Bedford, Gloucester, Boston, Scituate, and Portland (Figure 1a). Dealers in these ports, or vessels landing in these ports, would receive 100 percent coverage. All other ports would be considered “small and/or remote” as characterized by lower landings volumes, and dealers in these ports, or vessels landing in these ports, would receive the lower coverage levels of 20 percent. The 5th through 7th ranked ports by proportion of total annual groundfish landings are also shown for comparison (Figure 1b).

For Sub-Option 4B, the PDT did an analysis of total annual groundfish landings by vessel. Vessels with total annual groundfish landings in the 5th percentile of total annual landings were determined to be low volume and would receive lower “spot check” coverage. This means that vessels which land approximately 5 to 10 percent of total groundfish pounds each year would be exempted from 100 percent coverage and receive 20 percent coverage instead, as a spot check. Vessels that land 90-95 percent of groundfish for 2012-2018 would receive 100 percent coverage. The vessels that cover ~95 percent of landings are those that landed 55,000lbs or more annually on average from 2012-2018 (*Figure 2*). Vessels landings 55,000lbs or more annually, or dealers receiving offloads from vessels with annual landings volumes of 55,000lbs or more, would receive 100 percent coverage. Vessels with annual landings volumes of less than 55,000lbs, or dealers receiving offloads from vessels with annual landings volumes of less than 55,000lbs, would receive the lower coverage rate of 20 percent.



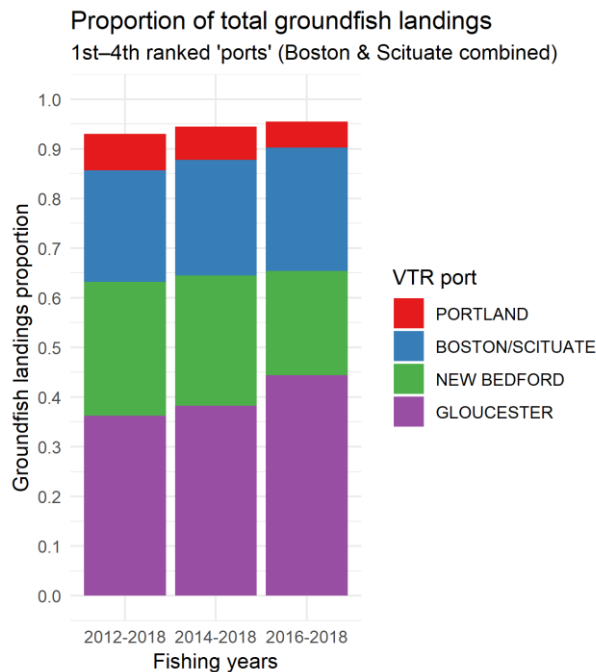
**Figure 1 - (a) Proportion of groundfish landings for the top 4 port areas 2010-2018 (b) Proportion of total groundfish landings for the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> ranked port areas 2010 to 2018.**



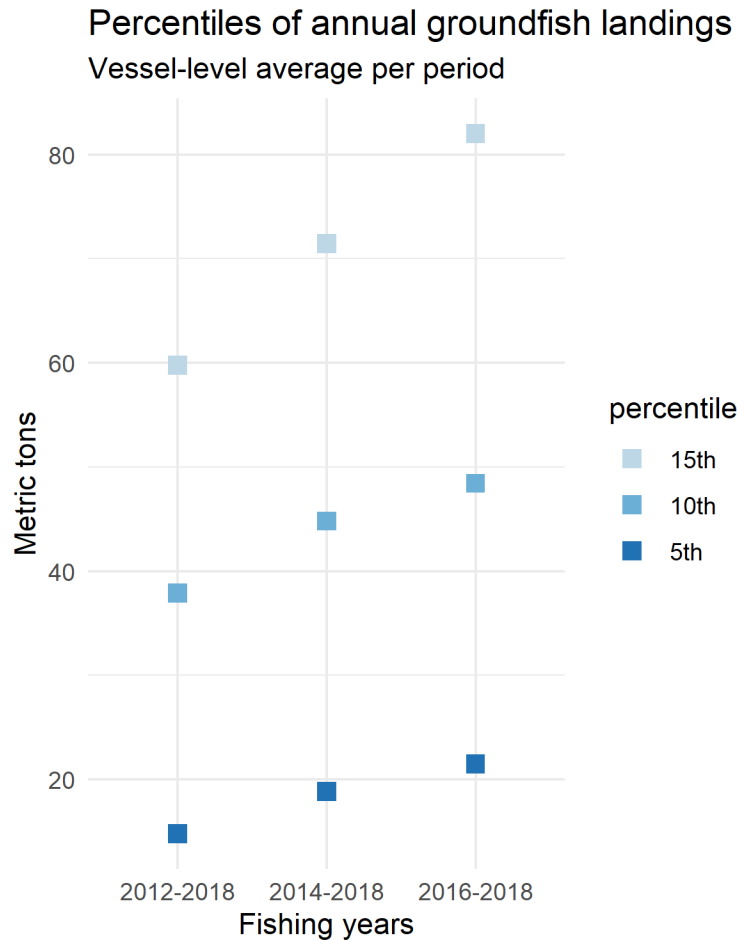
**Figure 2 - Annual vessel-level landing volumes in the bottom 15<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> percentiles between 2012 and 2018**

### *Annual groundfish landings by time period*

As a follow-up to this initial analysis, the PDT did an analysis of the total annual groundfish landings by port and by vessel across a qualifying time period, as opposed to each year (Figure 3 and Figure 4). This may make implementation of this option more straightforward, as it may be easier to determine which ports and vessels qualify for lower DSM coverage on a continuing basis rather than having to recalculate each year. The PDT examined landings across several time periods: 2012-2018, 2014-2018, and 2016-2018. The PDT would need to consider which time period to use as the qualifying period. In general, the proportion of total annual groundfish landings by port for the ports identified as “major ports” is as similar across the different time periods as for each individual year (~90-91%). This proportion is slightly higher in the more recent time period compared to earlier years. Similarly, the annual vessel landings threshold that accounts for ~5% of total annual groundfish landings is as similar for the different time periods as for each individual year. However, this threshold is slightly higher in recent years, and so using the most recent time period (2016-2018) would result in a slightly higher annual vessel landings threshold for the lower coverage option.



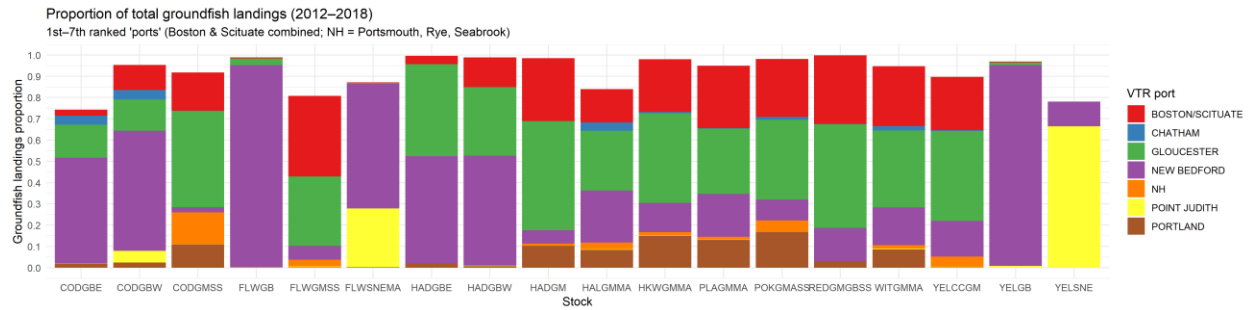
**Figure 3 - Proportion of total groundfish landings for the top 4 fishing areas/ports by fishing period.**



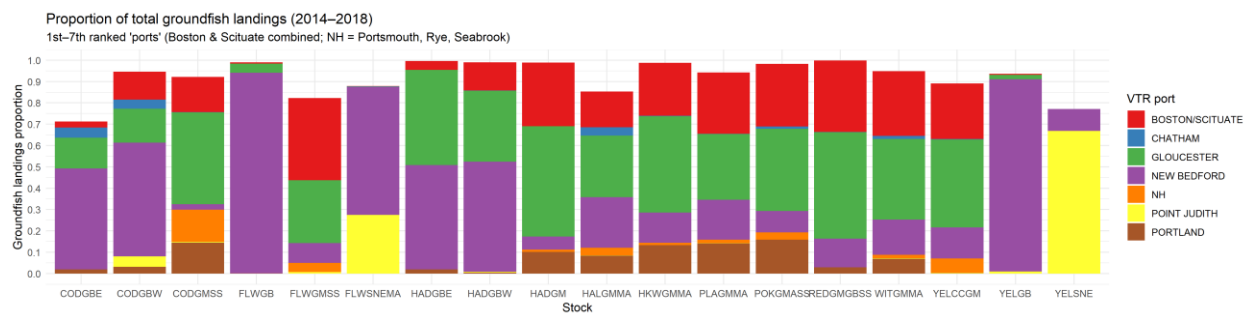
**Figure 4 - Total groundfish landings for the 5th, 10th, and 15th percentile vessels by fishing period.**

#### *Annual groundfish landings by stock*

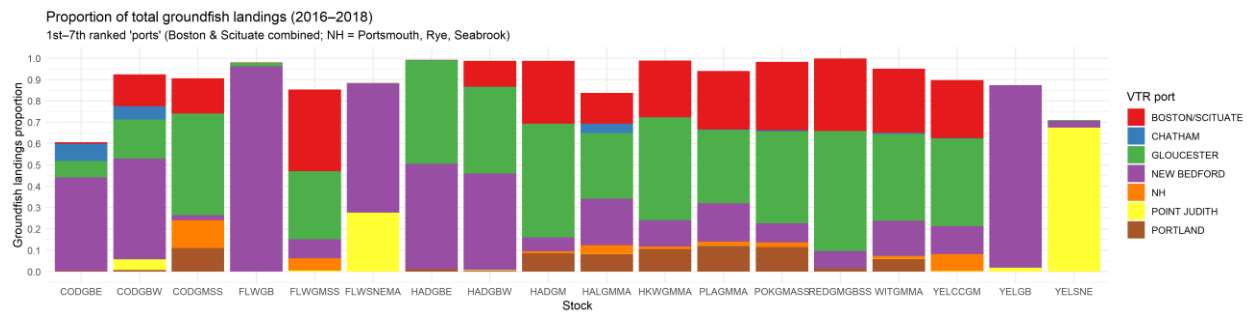
As a follow-up to initial analysis for these DSM sub-options, the PDT did an analysis of the total annual groundfish landings by port for each stock (Figure 5 - Figure 7) and by vessel for each stock (Figure 8 - Figure 10). This analysis was also done for three different time periods: 2012-2018, 2014-2018, and 2016-2018. This analysis shows that at the stock level, smaller ports and lower landings thresholds per vessel are necessary to cover >90% of landings. In particular, the southern-most ports like Point Judith, unsurprisingly, account for a greater proportion of landings of the southern stocks, such as SNE/MA yellowtail flounder. The vessel-level plots show that landings proportions vary substantially from stock to stock.



**Figure 5 - Proportion of total stock landings by port area over the 2012-2018 period. Proportions do not sum to one since not all port areas are represented.**

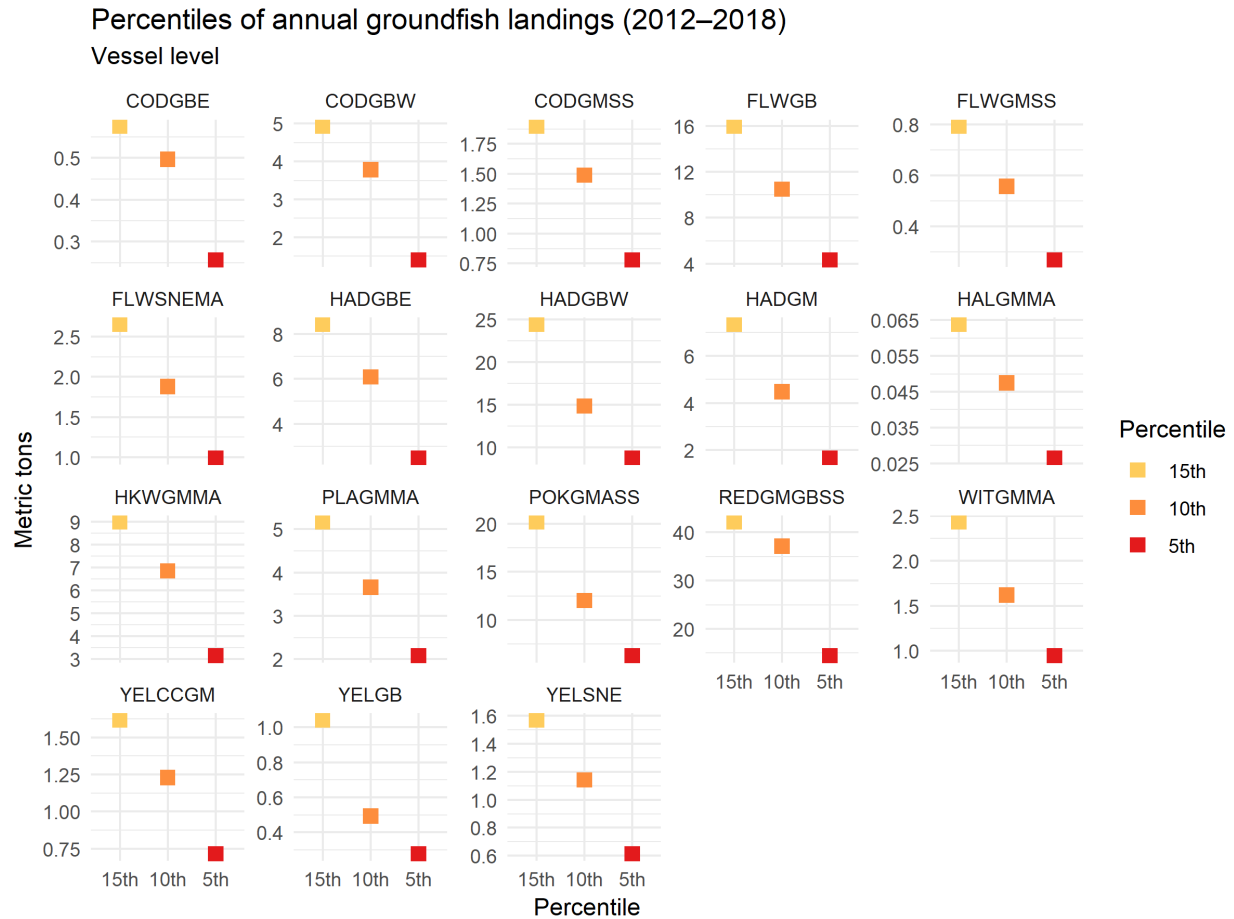


**Figure 6 - Proportion of total stock landings by port area over the 2014-2018 period. Proportions do not sum to one since not all port areas are represented.**

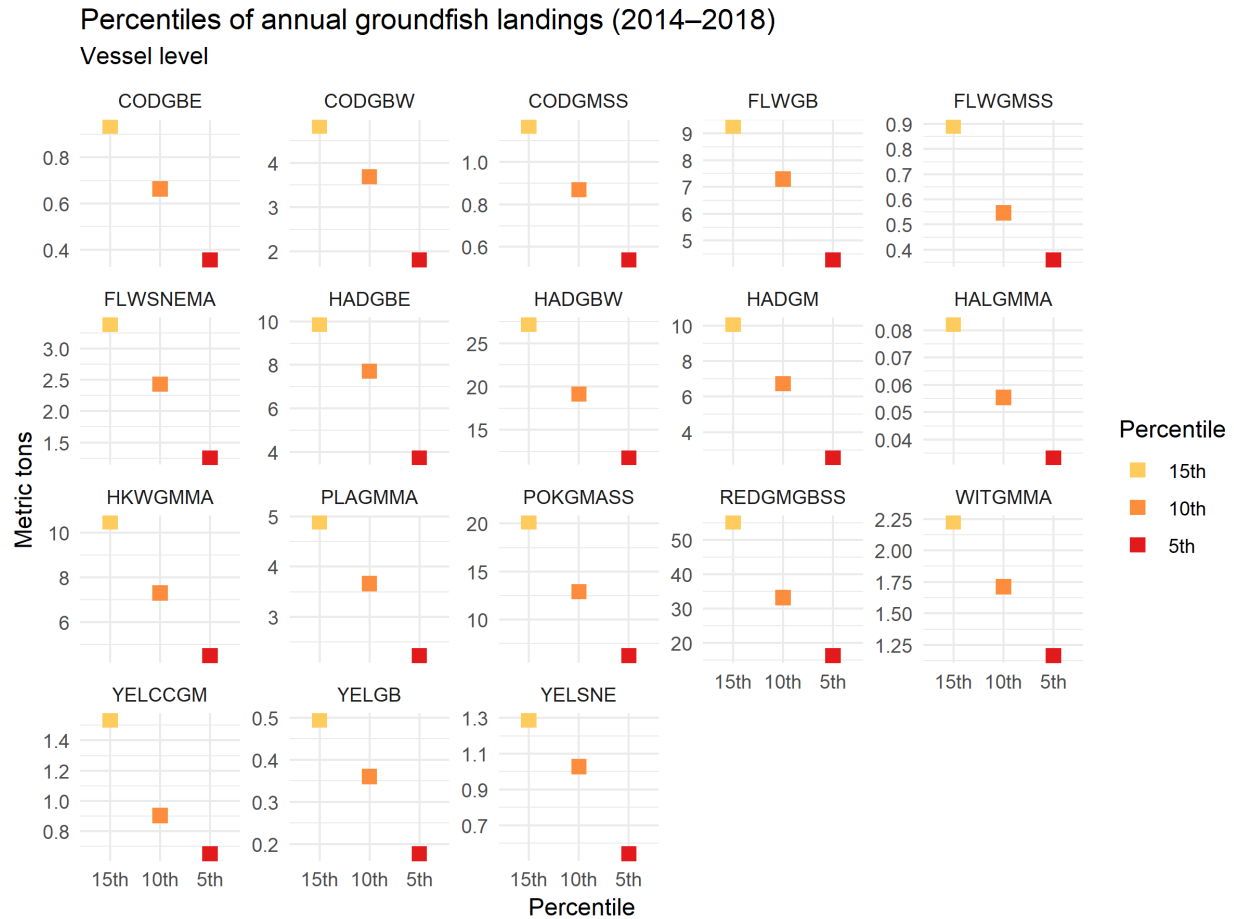


**Figure 7 - Proportion of total stock landings by port area over the 2016-2018 period. Proportions do not sum to one since not all port areas are represented.**

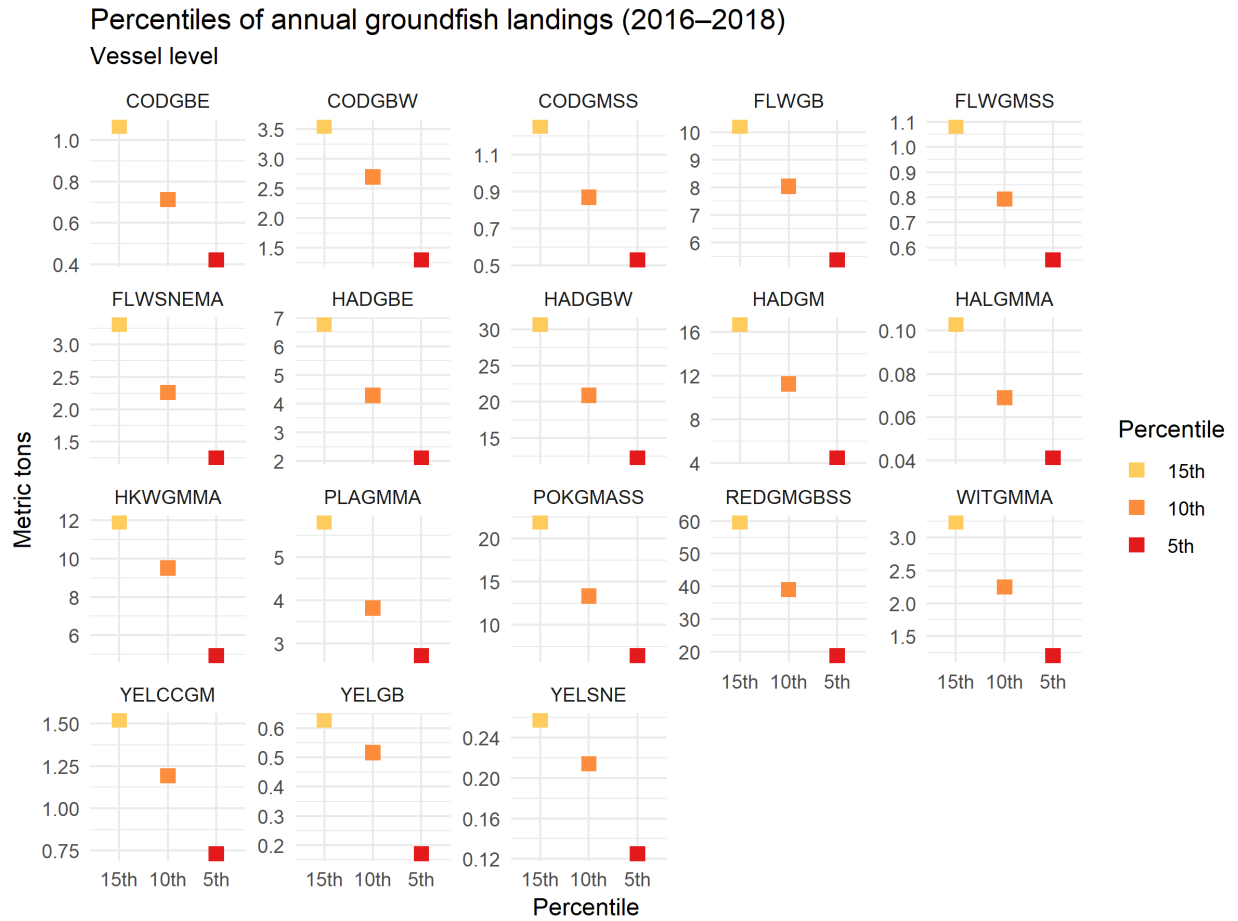




**Figure 8 - Landings proportions of each allocated stock for the lowest 5th, 10th, and 15th percentiles of vessels over the 2012-2018 period.**



**Figure 9 - Landings proportions of each allocated stock for the lowest 5th, 10th, and 15th percentiles of vessels over the 2014-2018 period.**



**Figure 10 - Landings proportions of each allocated stock for the lowest 5th, 10th, and 15th percentiles of vessels over the 2016-2018 period.**