

#4d



New England Fishery Management Council

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Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 27, 2026
TO: Council
FROM: Council Staff
SUBJECT: **Recreational measures options for Western Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock for fishing year 2026**

Issue: Based on Fishing Year (FY) 2025 Wave 5 MRIP data that became available after the Recreational Advisory Panel and Groundfish Committee meetings, the Committee's recommended measures do not meet the criteria of remaining below both the cod and the haddock sub-ACLs. The Council will need to develop a different set of measures to recommend to the Regional Administrator of the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO).

FY2025 Wave 5 MRIP data were delayed due to the federal government shutdown in October-November 2025, and measures were run in the recreational decision support tool (DST) using FY2024 data for Wave 5 as a proxy. NEFSC staff had planned to re-run models of the RAP's and Committee's recommended measures with the updated Wave 5 data, once available, to confirm mortality estimates are in line with previous estimates and measures still meet the criteria (remaining below both cod and haddock sub-ACLs with at least a 50% probability) prior to the Council meeting (if possible).

Preliminary FY2025 Wave 5 MRIP data were made available after the RAP and Committee meetings. The updated data shows a substantial difference from FY2024, with a large increase in angler trips (roughly 2x as many in 2025 as 2024) and cod catch. The result is an increase of cod mortality of 3.65x and a haddock mortality decrease of roughly half (0.45x) for Wave 5 estimates.

NEFSC staff used these multipliers to adjust the mortality estimates for the model runs previously made in the DST¹. These modifiers are separate from the additional cod mortality that must also be added to modeled cod mortality for a May open season². Updated mortality

¹ The online DST is still available to run options but continues to use 2024 Wave 4 data and the mortality estimates it produces must be adjusted to account for 2025 Wave 5 data and are only available on the DST model summary page.

² See sensitivity analysis presented by NEFSC:

https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/4c_Jan-2026_WGOM_cod_haddock_-rec-model-predictions_NEFSC.pdf

estimates that incorporate the adjusted Wave 5 mortality estimates are included on the DST model summary page³.

With this adjustment for FY2025 Wave 5 data, the Committee’s recommended measures do not meet the criteria of remaining below both the cod and haddock sub-ACLs. Given the substantially higher cod mortality, significant reductions in the cod measures will be necessary, including reducing the cod open season and likely removing the May cod opening.

Council Staff recommendations for possible FY2026 recreational measures

Staff worked with the Groundfish Committee Chair to bring forward options for possible measures for the Council to discuss and consider at the January 2026 Council meeting during the Groundfish Committee Report. These options meet the criteria of having 50% of model runs remaining below both cod and haddock sub-ACLs.

Table 1: Options that meet criteria of remaining below both cod and haddock sub-ACLs with at least a 50% probability.

Option	Policy Identifier	Mode	Cod Season(s)	Cod Bag Limit	Cod Minimum Size (in)	Haddock Season(s)	Haddock Bag Limit	Haddock Minimum Size (in)
Option 1	WRTIII5	For-hire	9/1 – 10/31	1	23	5/1 – 2/28; 4/1 - 4/30	15	17
		Private angler	closed	0	23	5/1 – 2/28; 4/1 - 4/30	15	17
Option 2	KLB8	For-hire	10/1 – 10/31	1	23	5/1 – 2/28; 4/1 - 4/30	15	17
		Private angler	10/1 – 10/31	1	23	5/1 – 2/28; 4/1 - 4/30	15	17

³ https://kimberly-bastille.github.io/groundfishRDM/Model_Summary

Table 2: Percentage of model runs below the sub-ACLs for cod and haddock.

Option	Policy Identifier	Percent of Model Runs Below sub-ACL	
		Cod	Haddock
Option 1	WRTIII5	61%	100%
Option 2	KLB8	55%	100%

Both options include the status quo measures the Council proposed for FY2025 for GOM haddock, but remove the status quo proposed May open season for cod. Option 1 maintains the current fall open season for cod for the for-hire mode while closing cod year-round to private anglers. Option 2 reduces the cod open season to the month of October for both for-hire and private anglers.

Private anglers account for the majority of effort and catch, contributing 84% of cod/haddock angler trips and >99% of cod mortality in FY 2025 (through Wave 5)⁴.

⁴ Private mode: 104,662 lbs; PSE 32
For-hire mode: 861 lbs; PSE 16.9
Adding Wave 6 from 2024 results in the same percentage split.