

National Marine Fisheries Service
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov

Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Actions

Prepared for the January 28-29, 2026
Meeting of the
New England Fishery Management Council

January 23, 2026

New England Council Actions

Small-Mesh Multispecies

None at this time.

Groundfish

Notice of Availability for Amendment 25 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP

On January 13, 2026, NMFS published a notice of availability in the *Federal Register* (91 FR 1257) for Amendment 25 to the Northeast multispecies FMP. If approved, Amendment 25 would revise the stocks of Atlantic cod managed in the FMP and include measures in the FMP necessary to manage four stocks of Atlantic cod in U.S. waters. The Council has deemed this action necessary to incorporate the best scientific information available from the most recent Research Track Assessment of Atlantic Cod and establish associated management measures under the FMP. This notice is open for public comment through March 16, 2026. For additional information please contact Heather Nelson at (978) 281-9334 or email at heather.nelson@noaa.gov.

Framework Adjustment 69 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery

On December 8, 2025, NMFS published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (50 FR 56836) to solicit comments on Framework Adjustment 69 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. This action would set catch limits for several multispecies stocks, modify the accountability measure implementation catch threshold for the scallop fishery for several flatfish stocks, and remove certain reporting requirements for sectors. Allocations for two stocks of Atlantic cod were established in an emergency rule that went into effect on May 1, and the Framework 69 proposed rule does not propose any changes to the cod allocations. Framework 69 would also approve sector provisions and catch allocations for 2025 and 2026 fishing years, set recreational measures for cod and haddock, update common pool possession limits, and clarify and correct regulations. The comment period closed on January 7, 2026. We intend to implement approved measures as soon as possible. For additional information, please contact Liz Sullivan at (978) 282-8493 or email at Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov.

Scallops

None at this time.

Herring

2026 Management Area 1B Possession Limit Adjustment

On January 12, 2026, NMFS published a temporary rule in the *Federal Register* (91 FR 1096) implementing a 2,000-lb possession limit in Herring Management Area 1B beginning on January 9, 2026. Herring regulations require that we implement this possession limit adjustment beginning on the date the catch is projected to reach 92 percent of the Area 1B sub-ACL. If final fishery data indicate that total catch exceeded the Area 1B sub-ACL, the amount of the overage may be deducted from the Area 1B sub-ACL and ACL in 2028. This temporary rule expires on December 31, 2026. For additional information, please contact Carrie Nordeen at (978) 281-9272 or email at Carrie.Nordeen@noaa.gov.

2026 Atlantic Herring Specifications

On December 23, 2025, NMFS published a temporary rule in the *Federal Register* (90 FR 60021) implementing the 2026 Atlantic herring specifications. This action is necessary to finalize the previously projected 2026 herring specifications, including river herring and shad catch caps. All specifications are consistent with New England Fishery Management Council recommendations. This temporary rule expires on December 31, 2026. For additional information, please contact Carrie Nordeen at (978) 281-9272 or email at Carrie.Nordeen@noaa.gov.

2025-2027 Atlantic Herring Specifications

On December 11, 2025, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (90 FR 57376) implementing the 2025-2027 Atlantic herring specifications. This action sets new 2025 herring specifications and projects herring specifications for 2026 and 2027, maintains the current river herring and shad catch caps for 2025 and projects the current catch caps for 2026-2027, and revises the target rebuilding date for herring from 2028 to 2031. All specifications are consistent with New England Fishery Management Council recommendations. For additional information, please contact Carrie Nordeen at (978) 281-9272 or email at Carrie.Nordeen@noaa.gov.

Monkfish

None at this time.

Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab

None at this time.

Northeast Skate Complex

None at this time.

Mid-Atlantic Council Actions

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

A proposed rule was published in the *Federal Register* (90 FR 57018) on December 9, 2025, for the proposed 2026 and projected 2027 summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish specifications. The rule proposes 2026 and projects 2027 catch limits. The proposed

specifications are consistent with the recommendations of the Council and the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Boards. Any adjustments necessary to account for previous overages will be made in the final rule. The public comment period closed on December 24, 2025. For additional information, please contact Laura Deighan at (978)-281-9184 or Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov.

Spiny Dogfish

None at this time.

Surfclam and Ocean Quahog

Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Amendment 21 Notice of Availability

A Notice of Availability was published in the *Federal Register* on December 29, 2025 (90 FR 60604), for Amendment 21 to the Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Fishery Management Plan, also known as the Species Separation Requirements Amendment. Amendment 21 would allow both surfclams and ocean quahogs to be landed on the same fishing trip. To ensure accurate accounting for the catch, the amendment would also implement additional monitoring and reporting requirements, both at sea and at the dealer where the mixed catch would be sorted. The comment period closes on February 27, 2026. A proposed rule for regulatory changes to implement the Amendment would be published at a later date to allow additional time to develop the monitoring programs. For additional information, please contact Douglas Potts at (978) 281-9341 or Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov.

2026 Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Specifications

On January 13, 2026, we published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (91 FR 1255) implementing status quo fishing quotas for the 2026 Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries. The quotas have remained unchanged since 2004. In addition, the Atlantic surfclam minimum size limit will be suspended for the 2026 fishing year, as it has been every year since 2005. There is currently no minimum size for ocean quahogs. For additional information, please contact Douglas Potts at (978) 281-9341 or Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov.

Atlantic Bluefish

None at this time.

Tilefish

None at this time.

Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish

None at this time.

Quota Transfers

Between December 4, 2025, and December 30, 2025, NMFS published *Federal Register* notices of summer flounder quota transfers from North Carolina to Massachusetts (90 FR 55814), North Carolina to New York (90 FR 60021), and North Carolina to New Jersey (90 FR 61068). The transfer to Massachusetts was made to repay landings made by an out-of-state permitted vessel under a state harbor agreement. The remaining transfers were made to ensure that New York and New Jersey would not exceed their 2025 commercial summer flounder quotas. For additional information, please contact Matthew Rigdon at (978) 281-9336.

Between December 4, 2025, and December 30, 2025, NMFS published *Federal Register* notices of bluefish quota transfers from Rhode Island to North Carolina (90 FR 55814), New York to North Carolina (90 FR 60020), and New Jersey to North Carolina (90 FR 61068). The transfers were made to ensure that North Carolina would not exceed its 2025 commercial bluefish quota. For additional information, please contact Matthew Rigdon at (978) 281-9336.

Other Actions

Paperwork Reduction Act

None at this time.

Jonah Crab

None at this time.

Industry Funded Monitoring Omnibus Amendment

None at this time.

Lobster

None at this time.

Habitat Actions

None at this time.

Protected Resources Actions

None at this time.

Research Permits and Acknowledgments - Applications Under

Review

On December 15, 2025, NMFS received a Scientific Research Permit (SRP) application from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), to conduct its Gulf of Maine Bottom Longline Survey. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or at christine.ford@noaa.gov.

On December 18, 2025, NMFS received a Scientific Research Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA) from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), to conduct its Nearshore Trawl Survey of the Mid-Atlantic and Southern New England. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or at christine.ford@noaa.gov.

On January 15, 2026, NMFS received an SRP application from the NEFSC, to conduct its annual Core Surveys. For additional information, please contact Elise Scholl at (978) 281-9189 or at elise.scholl@noaa.gov.

On January 20, 2026, NMFS received an LOA application from VIMS, to develop a sampling framework for whelk species. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or at christine.ford@noaa.gov.

Research Permits and Acknowledgments – Application Review Completed

On December 1, 2025, NMFS issued an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to the Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR), to conduct on-demand fishing trials. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or at christine.ford@noaa.gov.

On December 9, 2025, NMFS issued an LOA to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, to conduct a study of ecosystem dynamics and production on the Northeast U.S. shelf. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or at christine.ford@noaa.gov.

On December 29, 2025, NMFS issued three Scallop Research-Set-Aside Letter of Authorization (RSA LOA) to the University of Massachusetts, to conduct compensation fishing in support of its drop camera, optical survey, and temperature tolerance projects. For additional information, please contact Ashley Trudeau at (978) 281-9252 or Ashley.Trudeau@noaa.gov.

On January 14, 2026, NMFS issued an EFP to the NEFSC, to conduct on-demand fishing trials. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or at christine.ford@noaa.gov.

On January 14, 2026, NMFS issued an EFP to the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, to conduct on-demand fishing trials. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or at christine.ford@noaa.gov.

Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Regulatory Actions

On January 14, 2026, NMFS issued an EFP to ME DMR, to conduct its annual ventless lobster survey. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or at christine.ford@noaa.gov.

On January 14, 2026, NMFS issued an EFP to the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, to continue its surfclam and quahog alternative cage tag project. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or at christine.ford@noaa.gov.