

CORRESPONDENCE

3

From: GallJ1@aol.com [<mailto:GallJ1@aol.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, January 06, 2016 1:13 PM
To: Tom Nies
Subject: Fwd: Reconsider Winter Flounder Quotas

Mr. Nies:

Please send back the proposed 60% quota raise to the SCC for reconsideration. With the NEFMC listing the status of GOM winter flounder as "UNKNOWN" I find it absurd that they are raising the quota by 60%. It is my understanding that the commercial fishermen barely met 50% of their current allocation. Why then is there a proposal to increase the quota? Give the winter flounder population an opportunity to rebound and base any future increases on "KNOWN", not "UNKNOWN", status estimates.

The real issue should be the number of draggers currently operating and the heavy toll they take on all fish species and the ocean ecosystem. Thank you for your consideration.

John Gallacher
19 Cleveland St.
Enfield, CT 06082

jc/jp ~ 1/8/16



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116
E.F. "Terry" Stockwell III, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

December 23, 2015

Melville P. Coté Jr.
Chief, Surface Water Branch
U.S. EPA, Region 1
5 Post Office Square, Suite 100
Boston, MA 02109

Dear Mel:

Thank you for contacting our office to seek comments on the disposal at sea of the F/V Westward. We have reviewed the disposal request, EFH consultation letter, and draft permit. We evaluated spatial data on the location of trawl fishing effort in the vicinity of the disposal site, and solicited feedback from industry members familiar with the location. We are in agreement with EPA's assessment that the site is not a location typically fished with mobile bottom-tending gears, such that scuttling the vessel will have limited negative impacts on the commercial fishing industry. Our understanding that trawling typically occurs east of the disposal site, roughly 8-10 miles southeast of Mistaken Ground. In addition, the site is outside of any existing or proposed essential fish habitat management areas that could be negatively impacted by sinking a vessel. While there are sensitive hard bottom and deep-sea coral habitats in the Gulf of Maine, to the best of our knowledge your site assessment is accurate and the disposal site is soft bottom habitat. Overall, we do not expect this disposal to have substantial impacts on fishing operations or fish habitats of concern to the New England Fishery Management Council.

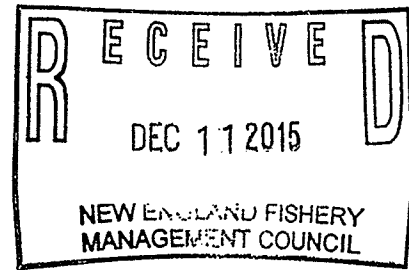
Sincerely,

Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director

cc: Eric Nelson, EPA
Lou Chiarella, NMFS

December 11, 2015

Dr. William Karp
Science and Research Director
Northeast Fisheries Science Center



VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dear Bill:

For over 10 years, Dr. Douglas Butterworth, Professor Emeritus, University of Cape Town, has made a valuable contribution to the groundfish assessment process in New England.

We are writing to request that the NEFSC welcome Doug's participation as a working group member of the "Models Meeting" scheduled for the Benchmark Review of Witch Flounder (Tuesday Oct 4 through Friday Oct 7 2016), and that Doug be provided any and all data necessary to fully participate. A letter of invitation to Doug will also assist his speedy passage through US customs.

Sincerely,

Maggie Raymond
Associated Fisheries of Maine

Vito Giacalone
Gloucester Fishing Community Preservation Fund

Jackie Odell
Northeast Seafood Coalition

jc/jp - 12/11/15

Late Correspondence Received during December 2015 Council meeting**From:** Michael Pierdinock**Sent:** Thursday, December 03, 2015 5:54 PM**To:** Tom Nies**Cc:** John Bullard; Barry Gibson; Charlie Wade; Dave Waldrup; David Pierce; Frank Blount; Terry Alexander; Ellen Goethel; Doug Grout**Subject:** NEMFC Vote Limited Access Fishery for Charter Boats

Tom:

I recently heard the news that the Limited Access Fishery for Charter Boats was voted upon today to my dismay. I voted against it at the RAP meeting and made select NEFMC members that didn't vote in favor of it today aware of my position. I thank them for their support. I didn't attend or take appropriate measures to make sure other NEMFC members were aware of my position that I am adamantly against Limited Access and a 2006 cut off date since I was reassured by many that this matter was dead in the water even though the RAP voted for it. When this matter was before the NEFMC a few years ago me and the Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association was adamantly and unanimously against it.

I have been reassured the scope and extent of Limited Access is yet to be defined that will go out for public comment in 2016/2017. Me and other Charter Boat Captains met with John Bullard a few weeks ago promoting separate bag limits for Charter Boats/For Hire vessels v the private recreational community. I hope this is the road we are going down. If it is a catch share limited access type of system where one needs to purchase a permit, me and many others are adamantly against it. I look forward to the public comment period on this matter the timing and extent of which is yet to be established.

If you have any questions, please email or give me a call.

Thanks

Capt. Mike Pierdinock**CPF Charters "Perseverance" - New Bedford**

Recreational Fishing Alliance - Massachusetts Chairman

Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association - Board of Directors

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council - Recreational Seat

New England Fishery Management Council - Recreational & Enforcement Advisory Panels

(617) 291-8914

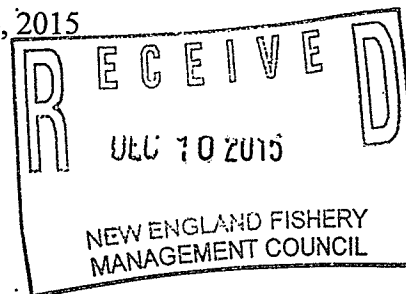
JC, JP 12/4/15



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

3

December 4, 2015



Mr. Hank Soule
Sustainable Harvest Sector III
P.O. Box 356
South Berwick, ME 03908

Dear Mr. Soule,

On December 2, 2015, we received your request to modify some of the voluntary restrictions that Sustainable Harvest Sector III implemented for fishing years 2015 and 2016. Enclosed is a copy of the amendment, which you should append to your copies of the approved operations plan. If you have any questions, please contact Mark Grant at 978-281-9145.

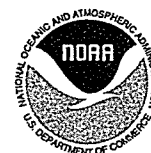
Sincerely,

Michael Pentony
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Sustainable Fisheries

cc. Tom Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council

Enclosure

jcl/jp/c 12/11/15



AMENDMENT 2 TO THE SUSTAINABLE HARVEST SECTOR I OPERATIONS PLAN

APPROVED BY NOAA'S NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE DECEMBER 4,
2015

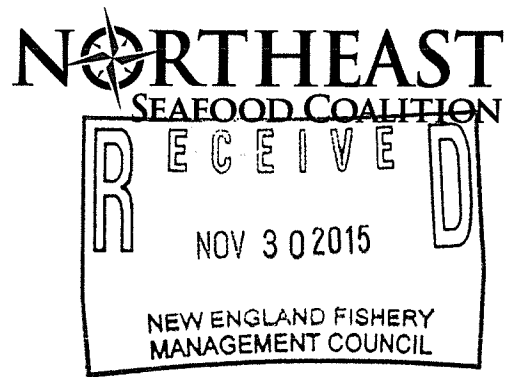
EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 4, 2015, THROUGH APRIL 30, 2017

This amendment modifies some of the voluntary restrictions that Sustainable Harvest Sector I had implemented for fishing years 2015 and 2016. Section 2.2.9.2 of the Operations Plan is revised to read:

Gulf of Maine Cod Program

Sector Members agree to abide by the following fishing restrictions to reduce catch of Gulf of Maine cod. In the event the GOM cod allocation is increased, the NMFS implements other GOM cod effort control restrictions, or for other cause, these restrictions may be canceled by the Sector.

- No sector trip fishing allowed in statistical areas 124 and 125, excepting gillnet gear with 10" or greater mesh size, except:
 - A rectangular section of 124 bounded by these coordinates:
 - 1 (Northwest): Nlat 42 deg. 30.0 min / Wlon 70 deg. 25.0 min
 - 2 (Southwest): Nlat 42 deg. 26.0 min / Wlon 70 deg. 25.0 min
 - 3 (Northeast): Nlat 42 deg. 30.0 min / Wlon 70 deg. 15.0 min
 - 4 (Southeast): Nlat 42 deg. 26.0 min / Wlon 70 deg. 15.0 min
- No sector trip gillnetting in statistical areas 132 and 133, excepting gillnet gear with 10" or greater mesh size.
- No sector trip fishing in a rectangular area of Wildcat Ridge during the months of February, March, and April, bounded by these coordinates, excepting gillnet gear with 10" or greater mesh size:
 - 1 (Northwest): Nlat 43 deg. 16.0 min / Wlon 69 deg. 44.0 min
 - 2 (Southwest): Nlat 43 deg. 03.0 min / Wlon 69 deg. 44.0 min
 - 3 (Northeast): Nlat 43 deg. 16.0 min / Wlon 69 deg. 30.0 min
 - 4 (Southeast): Nlat 43 deg. 03.0 min / Wlon 69 deg. 30.0 min
- Minimum allocation of 250 pounds of Gulf of Maine cod for any vessel to start a sector trip in the Gulf of Maine Broad Stock Area
- Daily cod catch report required for any vessel fishing in the GOM BSA.



November 30, 2015

Terry Stockwell, Chairman
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Terry,

As the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) prepares to take final action on Framework Adjustment 55 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, NSC strongly urges the Council to consider a regulatory measure necessary for the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) to reconsider the ABC for witch flounder and to support updated methodology when calculating the "total observed coverage rates" for the at sea monitoring program.

These requests offered by the NSC further refine yet remain consistent with the intent of the recommendations supported by the Groundfish Committee during their meeting held on November 18, 2015.

NSC strongly supports the Groundfish Committee's request to set a preliminary ABC for witch flounder in Framework 55 until the SSC is able, and directed by the Council, to reconsider the ABC. However, NSC urges the Council to incorporate into Framework 55 an exception to the ABC Control Rule for witch flounder so that the ABC is constrained by the OFL rather than 75% of Fmsy. Once this has been incorporated into Framework 55 the SSC can reconsider an ABC that is not constrained by 75% of Fmsy.

NSC also supports the Groundfish Committee's request to utilize information provided in the Plan Development Team Memo dated November 16, 2015 as a baseline to evolve the methodology used to set coverage rates for the At Sea Monitoring Program. The approach of combining information across multiple fishing years for the purposes of trip coverage rate calculations is viewed by the NSC as the only viable concept presently considered for the 2016 fishing year.

This Committee's request follows the same logic as the present calculation being conducted, specifically that a previous fishing year's discard outcomes are relevant for predicting the upcoming fishing year discard outcomes. However, the methodology of pooling information across fishing years may produce more stable estimates and avoid outlier years.

NSC recommends the Council adopt a five year moving window; this reflects the depth of data available since the inception of the sector program. We also offer analytical guidance based upon statistical advice NSC recently received. Since there may be differing numbers of trips observed for a given stock across fishing years, the methodology should pool fishing trips from multiple years of data into one large sample which would then be used to calculate one combined multi-year discard rate and variance. This result should then be fed into the formula for calculating anticipated trip coverage rates. The method of simply averaging trip coverage rates as calculated from single fishing years as the Plan Development Team indicates in Appendix IV of the

4 PARKER STREET, STE. 202, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930
62 HASSEY STREET, NEW BEDFORD, MA 02740
TEL: 978.283.9992 | FAX: 978.283.9959
NORTHEASTSEAFOODCOALITION.ORG

pmf, jc, jp - 12/4/15

November 16, 2015 Memo would weight information from all fishing years equally, which NSC has been advised may not be statistical best practices.

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of the NSC recommendations for inclusion in Framework 55. NSC is hopeful these slight modifications for Framework 55 will provide some necessary relief for the commercial groundfish fishery for the 2016 fishing year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jackie Odell".

Jackie Odell
Executive Director

Sherie Goutier

From: KC Lee <kclee113@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 27, 2015 9:25 AM
To: comments
Subject: RAP Motion 2

I am disappointed that the New England Fisheries Management Council is considering an increase to the commercial winter flounder harvest despite the fact that NMFS's own Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel recommended that the proposal be rejected. This is a species that currently has very little fishing pressure and it still has not rebounded throughout the vast majority of its range. If that is not an indication that the quota should not be increased, I'm not sure what is.

The recent closures of GOM Cod and the much needed increase of restrictions around Striped Bass should be lessons about conservation not reason to increase fishing pressure on an additional fragile stock. I recently read an outdated article about the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 (from 2010) describing how it is now U.S. law that all commercial stocks must be rebuilt by 2014.

Well, it's 2015, how are we doing?

Sherie Goutier

From: Simon Winchell-Manning <winchellmannings@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 26, 2015 10:57 PM
To: comments
Subject: Comment regarding winter flounder harvest

Dear Executive Director Nies,

I am deeply concerned that the commission is considering an increase to the commercial winter flounder harvest. This is a fragile stock as evidenced by the difficulty it has had rebounding throughout the vast majority of its historic range. Winter flounder are also incredibly important as a recreational opportunity for shore-based and inshore fishermen and charter boats. With the ban on recreational cod fishing, concern over striper stocks, and down cycles in smelt (this fall notwithstanding) and bluefish, this is one of the few promising nearshore fisheries left, and the recreational community would be devastated if it was damaged. Please heed the RAP's Motion 2 and protect our flounder!

All best,
Simon Winchell-Manning

Sherie Goutier

From: David Fleishman <dflash50@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, November 26, 2015 1:18 PM
To: comments
Subject: Please do not increase the commercial flounder quota

Council Chairman Terry Stockwell and Executive Director Thomas Nies,

Please don't raise the quota for winter flounder in the Gulf of Maine. It just makes no sense at all. This would greatly punish me and anyone else who is a sport fisherman. I have done recreational fishing here for well over 45 years. Typically, I go with friends or on charter boats out of Quincy, Plymouth, Hyannis, or Westport. Flounder fishing has been particularly enjoyable for my children and, more recently, grandchildren.

I just learned the quota for winter flounder for commercial fisherman could be raised by your committee by nearly 60%. But this past year's 489 MT quota was supposedly not even reached. So there is no logical basis for your plan to now advance the current quota up to a proposed 776 MT.

Do you ever take your children or grandchildren flounder fishing? It would show no integrity if your NEFMC only represented the interests of commercial fishing. That would be awful and totally unfair, in my opinion.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
David A. Fleishman, MD
20 Kings Road
Sharon, MA 02067

Sherie Goutier

From: Christopher Flaherty <christopherflaherty24@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 26, 2015 12:14 PM
To: comments
Subject: Winter Flounder

Mr. Executive Director,

An increase in the Winter Flounder Quota would be an epic mistake. I'm 30 years old. As I kid I grew up only hearing of the bus loads of recreational fisherman who came to Boston to go out on charter boats or rent tin boats out on Houghs Neck. The only flounder we would see were those that were on the brass plaques next to the sewers in Southie, advising not to dump in the sewers because it drains to Boston Harbor. In the last 10 years the flounder has made a small comeback. They have not bounced back to the days when you could take a drop line from any pier in the city or greater Boston and "fill a barrel". But they actually can be targeted in certain areas around the harbor, huge progress from a few years ago when it wasn't even worth it to make a day of flounder fishing. An avid recreational fisherman, I am hopeful that day will return. An increase in the quota to the gulf of Maine would fracture this great comeback which is in progress. This being said, I'm a strong supporter of the New England commercial fisherman. The quota increase shouldn't be put off forever, it should be considered for the future when the flounder population is strong and plentiful to support all. Please don't make premature increase and setback this species for another 30 years.

With Warm Regards,

Christopher Flaherty

Sent from my iPhone

Sherie Goutier

From: Mike Cantrell <mikecbptfiveoh@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 26, 2015 9:41 AM
To: comments
Subject: Winter Flounder

Sir, I'm 59 years old. I've watched the Winter Flounder stock decline to the point where it's often not worth the time and effort to target this wonderful fish as a sportsman.

I request the commission not increase the quota for Winter Flounder.

Sent from my iPhone

Sherie Goutier

From: Lisa Cohen <njcohen50@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, November 26, 2015 9:34 AM
To: comments
Subject: Winter Flounder Commercial Quota Increase

Sir/Madam:

I heard that you were considering increasing the winter flounder commercial quota. I have been recreationally fishing winter flounder for over the past 40 years. In the 1970's I would fish in the Marblehead/Salem area with the occasional trip to Quincy. We would always catch as many fish as we wanted to catch. The catch dramatically decreased over the years to the point where I would go to the same spots that had been productive before and I would catch nothing. It seems that the fishing has improved over the last 5 years, but not to what it was. Somedays I would be able to catch 4 or 5, but some other days I would still catch nothing. In fact this past season, I only remember getting one keeper. As long as the fishing stock is still so low as to produce such inconsistent results, I can't see how you would consider increasing the commercial quota. The results to the limited stock that we have left would be devastating.

Thank you,

Neal J. Cohen
15 Tedesco ST
Marblehead, MA 01945

Sherie Goutier

From: John Hilton <hiltonjh@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 10:36 PM
To: comments
Subject: RAP Motion 2

Dear sir.

Please hold off for a couple of seasons on the proposal to increase the commercial quota on winter flounder. I think it is imperative that we proceed slowly as recent history demonstrates that population estimates have not been reflective of the actual numbers.

Thanks for your time,

John Hilton

54 North River Drive

Marshfield, Ma 02050

Sent from my T-Mobile 4G LTE Device

Sherie Goutier

From: Ron Onorato <captron1@optonline.net>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 9:01 PM
To: comments
Subject: Commercial flounder increase

I am opposed to the proposed increase in commercial winter flounder.

Ron Onorato

Sent from my iPad

Sherie Goutier

From: Corey Briggs <cwbriggs@ramboll.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 8:45 PM
To: comments
Subject: Stop the madness

The new commercial founder quota is ridiculous!! I can't even catch enough for dinner. They raped the cod fishery and now flounder. Oppose this measure. C

Corey W. Briggs CIH, CET, FAIHA
Senior Manager
Ramboll Environ US Corporation
20 Custom House St
Ste 800
Boston, MA 02110
Cell: 617-259-0172
Office: 617-946-6107
Fax: 617-946-3229
Cwbriggs@ramboll.com

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Sherie Goutier

From: Mike Calkins <netdy7@charter.net>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 8:43 PM
To: comments
Subject: RAP Motion 2

Chairman Terry Stockwell,

I am writing to you this evening to express my outrage at the New England Fisheries Management Council's plan to incentivize the commercial fleet into Targeting Gulf of Maine Flounder---Boston Harbor flounder. Your own Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel has UNANIMOUSLY recommended that the Council reject this proposal. This is nothing more than a bone thrown to the commercial fleet now that they can't fish for cod anymore because they put money over the well-being of our cod biomass. Please do not let the same thing happen to the flounder fishery in Boston. A move from 489 to 776 metric tons, to reward the commercial fleet for destroying the cod fishery is borderline criminal in my opinion. Please heed the advice of your RFAP.

Respectfully,

Michael Calkins
Oxford, Mass
508-864-3846

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other." John Adams

Sherie Goutier

From: Nicholas DiCosmo <NDMgr@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 8:25 PM
To: comments
Subject: RAP motion 2

For the Attention of Council Chairman Terry Stockwell

Dear Mr. Stockwell,

I am appalled at the info listed in On The Water magazine. Perhaps we should utilize logic and common sense regarding this idiotic plan to increase the commercial quota of winter flounder. But then again, governmental offices have no logic and common sense. Have none of you at the New England Fisheries Management Council learned from the decades of total mismanagement of Cod?!? Recreational fishermen have grown tired of the one-sided stance of all these government councils, boards, and departments. Maybe you all will be satisfied and happy when there are no fish left in the ocean! Recreational fishermen and women are hard working people who enjoy their free time fishing with their families and friends. Bringing home a few fish for the dinner table is an added bonus. Commercial fishermen have no respect for the ocean or its resources. They only see dollar signs.

Sherie Goutier

From: dangray2 <dangray2@verizon.net>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 7:32 PM
To: comments
Subject: Flounder fishing

To whom it may concern

This increase in commercial flounder fishing is heart breaking to me. I'm a 53 year old father of 4,I have seen epic flounder fishing as a youngster, but have seen a steady decline through the years,and lately you're lucky if you can catch a few,these commercial fisherman will wipe out the FEW remaining flounder,I'm sure. Please stop this from happening.

Sincerely

Dan Gray

Braintree Yacht Club

Sent from my Verizon Wireless 4G LTE smartphone

Sherie Goutier

From: carlmvining@gmail.com
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 6:23 PM
To: comments
Subject: Ridiculous to increase quota. Next step no flounder

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S® III mini, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone

Sherie Goutier

From: Jhasychak@aol.com
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 6:23 PM
To: comments
Subject: RAP MOTION 2:Colby/Swanson

Dear Sirs

I am writing to express my concern and dismay that the **unanimous** vote on RAP Motion 2: Colby/Swanson has been totally ignored in an obvious closed door " smoke filled back room" committee meeting, and will not even be presented to the Full Council on December 2.

As the Motion was unanimously approved, it most certainly must be of considerable merit and warrant every consideration.

At the very least we recreational fisherman deserve to have our voices heard at the December 2 Full Council meeting in Portland. Raising commercial quotas are nothing short of criminal, especially when accurate data on the actual flounder population is unknown. Were it huge, the commercial interest would have had no trouble filling their current quotas.

Best to error on the side of being conservative and killing fewer fish than killing too many.

Please, I implore you, consider the best use of the flounder stocks!! Recreational fisherman inject far more money into the overall economy, and have a much greater economic impact than do commercial fisherman. Recreational fisherman do not waste huge numbers of by catch or kill tons of juvenile stock, or destroy bottom habitat as do commercial fishing methods. Less environmental impact and more positive economic impact make the recreational fisherman a better long term steward of the resource than the commercial fisherman.

Please allow RAP MOTION 2:Colby/Swanson to stand, and be approved by the Full Council meeting. **Please** conserve the flounder stock from destruction and preserve it for our future recreational fisherman!

Most sincerely,

John Hasychak, Jr
36 Wood Lane Box 73
Hollis, NH 03049

Sherie Goutier

From: Skain136 <steve.kaine@johnstonesupply.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 6:14 PM
To: comments
Subject: Winter flounder

My son and i are avid recreational fisherman. It has been so great to see Boston Harbor regain the fishing stocks of years past. My son and I look forward every spring to flounder fishing. We purchased a new bigger boat this year and were so looking forward to going off shore cod fishing. We were obviously disappointed when the season was closed due to commercial overfishing! I fear the flounder stock will see the same pressure if the commercial quota is increased. We buy our bait and tackle from local small shops and fish every weekend from mid April to November 1. Please do not increase the flounder commercial quota. I fear the same thing will happen as it has with cod.

Thanks

Steve Kaine
781-333-9330

Sent from my iPad

Sherie Goutier

From: len@patriotvit.com
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 6:13 PM
To: comments
Subject: RAP MOTION 2, flounder

Sir,
Please do not allow theorizing in the subject line to pass.
Many reasons for this
It will destroy the flounder fishing in Boston Harbor, the little that is left of the comeback if incentivizing the catch by commercials by 60 percent is allowed to pass.
My family and relatives come back to Bostpn and the north shore for weeks each summer for the fishery as an annual tradition. We won't be spending thousands as a group any more if you destroy the flounder stocks by overfishing the same way as the cod and haddock stocks you have destroyed by overfishing.
We will go elsewhere once this happens outside New England.
The flounder fishing has not been as good as past years but is still adequate to return here for our vacations You will lose our annual spending forever.
Note that the Mass delegation stated the subject motion should be thrown out and denied the 60 percent increase and we all agree.

Respectfully,
Len Hawrilenko

Sent from my iPhone@ crt

Sherie Goutier

From: John <jlawless79@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 5:46 PM
To: comments
Subject: I oppose an increase in winter flounder quota

Council Chairman Terry Stockwell or Executive Director Thomas Nies,

I strongly oppose the 60% increase in the quota, having seen the impact of adjustments made by NMFS based on near-term stock assessments. Please use discretion in the increase in the quota, to no more than 20% for several years, and provide proper measurement of the impact prior to adjustment.

As much as I'd like to see the commercial fishing concerns placated by alternatives to GOM codfishing, a large swing such as that proposed does no one any good in the long term. Face the facts, we have overfished many of the stocks, and must allow them to rebuild over a longer term than 5 years. Bite the bullet now, and we can all look back in 5-10 years and say we made good choices in fisheries management, and not lament the bad choices we had made.

John Lawless
617.365.5003

Sherie Goutier

From: Jonathan Parsons <j5parsons@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 4:08 PM
To: comments
Subject: RE: winter flounder RAP Motion 2

I'm a recreational winter flounder fisherman who spends a good amount of money supporting local bait and tackle shops during late Spring and early Summer targeting winter flounder. They are just starting to come back in the harbor after years of nothing. Those years of nothing followed years of overfishing by commercial fishermen. Let's not repeat the same mistakes of the past.

Please heed RAP Motion 2.

Thank you,
Jon Parsons

Sherie Goutier

From: Mark Feldman <markofeldman@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 10:10 AM
To: comments
Cc: Jason Colby
Subject: Please support RAP Motion 2: Colby/Swanson

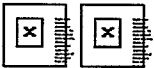
Dear Terry Stockwell

Regarding the recreational Fishery Advisory Panel Meeting; the NEFMC stated that data about GOM Winter Flounder biomass was "unknown" and that the 489 MT quota was not being met and made the proposal to raise the quota to 776 MT, an over 60% increase. This is **irresponsible and unsound**. The logical reason the quota's aren't being met is that there are not enough winter flounder out there to catch.

Please support the **RAP Motion 2: Colby/Swanson** and do NOT RAISE THE QUOTA.

Sincerely,

Mark Feldman
781-330-0081



Sherie Goutier

From: RP <PORTKINS@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 6:46 AM
To: comments
Subject: flounder

Council Chairman Terry Stockwell

Having grown up fishing for flounder, and then not being able (STILL) to fish for winter flounder in RI, I ask you as a parent or grandparent think of the future generations and DO NOT INCREASE THE QUOTA for flounder.

thanks

Sherie Goutier

From: Zima, Frank <ZimaF@mail.amc.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 4:04 PM
To: comments
Subject: ATTN: Terry Stockwell and Tom Nies...

Hello. Please DON'T raise the quota on winter flounder. Please let their numbers rebound significantly before doing that. Reducing quotas has helped other species rebound in the past. Please heed RAP Motion2: Colby Swanson.

Thankyou,

Frank J. Zima

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Sherie Goutier

From: VERDINI Glenn (AREVA) <Glenn.Verdini@areva.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 3:20 PM
To: comments
Cc: Glenn Verdini (personal)
Subject: Winter Flounder Quote - Commercial Fisherman

Terry Stockwell, Council Chairman

Dear Mr. Stockwell,

I am a longtime fisherman, both ocean and freshwater, and have fished a number of years for winter flounder in the Boston Harbor area. I am writing you to express my support and to ask for yours in heeding the RAP Motion 2: Colby/Swanson to not raise the quota for commercial fisherman for winter flounder.

I've fished for a number of years with Captain Jason Colby and have seen the changes in the winter flounder catch. Please keep the commercial quota the same or less so as to help the winter flounder to recover their numbers.

Thank You,

Glenn Verdini

Best Regards/Cordialement/Mit besten Grüßen.

Glenn Verdini
Quality Assurance
AREVA Inc., Audits & Programs Group
Lead Auditor
AREVA Inc. Audit Coordinator
400 Donald Lynch Boulevard W375-04
Marlborough, MA 01752
w 508-573-6607
c 508-769-2320 (personal)
glenn.verdini@areva.com

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Sherie Goutier

From: Steve Sink <stevesinkreddrum@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 12:09 PM
To: comments

Dear Mr. Stockwell I understand, very well, that you have a very difficult and thankless job, and admire your ability to take abuse from all fronts, But I would respectfully request that you honor Captain Colby's request to not raise the commercial quota just yet. I am 71 years old, and have been involved in almost every kind of construction business around here, and have done some fresh water commercial fishing years ago to make ends meet. I've been a high school advanced math and Calculus teacher for 36 years, and am not unfamiliar with how statistics on wildlife are arrived at. It may surprise you, I being involved with mathematics most of my life, that I have far more trust in the information from both commercial and recreational fishermen than I have in statistics taken by those trained in those capacities of sample testing and "conclusions" that they draw.

I do know this, that (1) it is necessary to harvest fish stocks so that their reproductive instincts can be triggered, and (2) both commercial and sport fishing techniques have become so exponentially improved in the last three decades that irreparable damage can be done to our fish stocks. Long gone are the days when haul seines, set nets, hand lines, etc. were the only small threats to our stocks.

When in doubt about all the statistics, input from special tunnel visioned groups, and political pressures (of which I'm sure give you headaches every day), I feel that it is best to err on the conservative side somewhat.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider these things. A lot of responsibility rests on your shoulders. I do not envy your job.

Have a fine and safe Thanksgiving.

Steve C. Sink

1911 Clyde Fitzgerald Rd.

Linwood, N.C.

27299

Cell Phone 336-250-0710

Sherie Goutier

From: Chuck Leigh <chuck@trurorealestate.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 10:54 AM
To: comments
Subject: RAP Motion 2

Tom Nies
Terry Stockwell

RAP Motion 2 must prevail.

Chuck Leigh
Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Sherie Goutier

From: clydejazz@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 11:51 AM
To: comments
Subject: flounder quota

Dear Chairman Stockwell,

Recreational saltwater fishing in New England has suffered greatly with the reduction in the numbers of striped bass in our waters. Understandably, many fishermen are targeting flounder these days. Increasing the commercial quota by 60%, when there are not enough flounder to meet the current quota, is a terrible idea. Please heed RAP Motion 2.

Thank you,
Clyde Cortright
74 Beach St. unit 5-5
Woburn, MA 01801

Sherie Goutier

From: Tina Lyons <tina@ccpiercecompany.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 10:43 AM
To: comments
Subject: Recreational Fishing - RAP Motion 2

As a recreational fishing woman I ask that you heed the RAP Motion 2 to please do not raise the QUOTA for Winter Flounder. We as a family love to be out there fishing for flounder and teach our children how to respect the ocean.

Thank you,
Tina Lyons
CC Pierce Co.
104 Tremont St.
Suite 3
Duxbury, MA 02332

Ph: 781-934-8300
Fx: 781-934-7755

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Sherie Goutier

From: kprouty <kprouty@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 10:37 AM
To: comments
Subject: Rap motion 2

Dear sirs...as an avid recreational fisherman, please reject or unfavour the rap motion 2 proposal....our fish stocks are disarray and it is an injustice that our stocks are in peril because of commercial over harvesting and the recreational fisherman suffers.

Thank You,
Kurt Prouty
647 Main St
Norwell, MA

Sent from my Verizon Wireless 4G LTE smartphone

Sherie Goutier

From: Jack Bosch <jack.bosch19@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 8:58 AM
To: comments
Subject: RAP Motion 21

Council Chairman Terry Stockwell or Executive Director Tom Nies
We must heed this amendment as submitted by advisory panel
Jack Bosch

Sent from my iPhone

Sherie Goutier

From: Clark, Brian <BClark@blankrome.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 8:09 AM
To: comments
Subject: RAP Motion 2

Dear Mr. Stockwell and Mr. Nies:

As an avid fisherman, I find it unfortunate that we, as Americans can ignore something that seems so obvious. As you may be aware, RAP Motion 2 was a motion that was passed unanimously during the November 17, 2015 Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel Meeting. This Motion was based upon the realization that the GOM Winter Flounder biomass is not strong enough to endure over fishing. When the 489 MT quota for the 2015 season cannot be met, how in all good sense would it make sense to raise the quota to 776 MT, a 60% increase. To quote the great Theodore Roosevelt, "Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance." By ignoring RAP Motion 2, you are abusing the resources and ensuring that my children and their children will not be able to enjoy them the same ways I have.

Please heed RAP Motion 2 and either keep the quota at the current levels or, as may seem wiser over the long term, please lower the quota.

Brian A. Clark |

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Sherie Goutier

From: Jim Mulvey <jdmulvey@verizon.net>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 7:39 AM
To: comments
Subject: RAP Motion 2

Good Morning Terry Stockwell and Thomas Nies,

I am writing to you to ask that you recognize and heed the motion brought up by Colby/Swanson at the Recreational Fishing Advisory Panel Meeting on November 17, 2015 to not raise the quota for winter flounder for next year. The current quota was not met this past year, and the new quota calls for an increase of 60%. As a recreational fisherman who fishes for winter flounder, it is my position that raising the quota would be irresponsible and not in the best interests toward maintaining and growing the current biomass. The Recreational Fishing Advisory Panel unanimously agreed that this opinion was both sound and responsible (11 yeas/0 nays/0 abstentions). Please see to it that the voice of recreational fishermen is heard during your full counsel meeting on December 2, 2015.

Best Regards,
Jim Mulvey
423 Valley Road
Gillette, NJ 07933

908) 256-6595 cellular
866) 400-0842 eFax

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jimmulvey>

Sherie Goutier

From: Brian Butler <butler@oxbowassociates.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 10:14 AM
To: comments
Subject: GOM Winter Flounder Quota

Dear Chairman Stockwell:

Despite its failure to emerge from the RAP Committee following the November 17 meeting, I urge you to reconsider RAP Motion 2. The winter flounder stocks in the GOM are in a slow, tenuous recovery from former viable/harvestable stock levels and cannot sustain increasing commercial quotas at this time. Hopefully, with proper management and quota administration the fishery will be capable of sustaining significant commercial (and recreational) harvest in the foreseeable future, but quota boosting at this time is a clear and certain detriment to the health of the GOM Winter Flounder Fishery.

Sincerely,

Brian O. Butler
18 ROBBINS ST
ACTON, MA 01720
978-929-9058 x.104

Sherie Goutier

From: Alan Sharaf <ASharaf@weclosetheloan.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 9:38 AM
To: comments
Subject: winter flounder limits

Dear Mr. Stockwell:

I along with hundreds of others enjoy recreational fishing for winter flounder in Boston/Quincy Harbor. We strongly encourage you to limit and not increase the catch for this valuable resource.

I am also troubled by the fact the a recommendation passed by the Recreational Fishing Advisory Panel Meeting by a 11 to 0 vote to not raise the quota will not be considered by the full council. What is the point of involving volunteers to spend their time and resources and to study these complex matters, report their findings, represent their constituency, if their voices are completely ignored.

Alan B. Sharaf
Fishing the waters of Boston and Cape Code for over 60 years.

Alan B. Sharaf, Esq.

SKM Title & Closing Services, P.C.
Sharaf & Maloney, P.C.
1583 Beacon Street
Brookline, MA 02446
Phone: (617)277-7887
Fax: (617) 734-9593

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Sherie Goutier

From: Tom Heneghan <Tom.Heneghan@halo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 8:41 AM
To: comments
Subject: Winter Flounder Quota

I am writing to express my opposition to an increase in the quota. As a recreational fisherman for many years, I have not seen a return to the plentiful populations that we saw around 15 years ago. Even experienced anglers frequently cannot reach the limit of 8 fish in a full day of fishing. Increasing the commercial quota could lead to a collapse similar to what has occurred with codfish.

Sincerely,

Tom Heneghan CAS



Lee Wayne Corporation

518 Elm St. Duxbury, MA 02332

Tel: 781-934-0340

FAX: 781-300-7124 * Cell: 508-740-6977

tom.heneghan@halo.com

Browse our websites:

www.tom.halocatalog.com

www.halo.com/tom-heneghan

www.imprintablefashion.com/halotomheneghan

Sherie Goutier

From: Bboutdoor1@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 8:36 AM
To: comments
Cc: Jason Colby
Subject: Fisheries board members

Good morning,

I am writing to save a fishery from over harvest, the flounder. If we go up on these numbers we most certainly will hurt a fragile fish. The MT was not reached in 2015 so to go higher and put more fisherman on this fish would for sure hurt a fish that has finally seen a comeback but not enough just yet to put draggers over them and kill them off. Keep or even drop the MT for 2016 please.

Thank you

Bill Biswanger
1 Hayes Dr
Townsend Ma

Sherie Goutier

From: William P. Tukey, Jr. <wptukeyjr@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 8:35 AM
To: comments
Cc: Jason Colby
Subject: Winter Flounder

Dear Sirs,

I do a lot of saltwater fishing in southern RI, and I think it is good policy to reduce quotas on these valuable species to preserve them for the future.

Sincerely,

Bill Tukey, Jr.
Wakefield, RI

Sherie Goutier

From: Craig Whitehead <craigwhitehead@btinternet.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 7:20 AM
To: comments
Subject: Flounder - message to Terry Stockwell and Tom Nies

Sirs,

We have no reliable data on flounder stock and it is totally irresponsible to increase the quota on these valuable resources, we cannot sustainably take from nature on the basis of unreliable data. This would be a costly mistake and I ask you to support the motion to not change the flounder limits.(motion 2) Craig L Whitehead Charlestown MA

Sent from my iPad

Sherie Goutier

From: FishingLSister@aol.com
Sent: Friday, November 27, 2015 9:26 AM
To: comments
Cc: Jason Colby
Subject: Public Comment for NEMFC Meeting 12/1-3, 2015

Dear Mr. Stockwell and Mr. Nies,

My name is Jason Colby and I'm on the GOM RAP. At our meeting on 11/17/15 I noticed that there are proposed increases for the 2016 harvest of winter flounder in The GOM and this jumped out at me because I fish for winter flounder exclusively from May through July each year. I have my finger on the pulse of the population and I monitor it very closely and from what I see, the population has been going down the past several years. What I've also seen is that because there are decreased cod available in The GOM, "fisheries management", in general, have been trying to alleviate financial stress on the dragger fleet but directing them into other fisheries, like winter flounder for example.

The problem with this kind of thinking is you are not considering the implications this can and will cause for another major user of this resource which, of course is the recreational fisherman. I have watched this fishery come back from the brink of oblivion over the past 15 years and despite increasing recreational fishing pressure, the fishing has been getting better every year until 2012. In 2013 the cod quotas in the GOM went downhill rapidly and the commercial pressure on winter flounder went up. The flounder recovery we had been witnessing over the past 12 or 13 years started to reverse immediately and this past spring we had the worst season in the past 10 for both size and numbers. What I also noticed was a large increase of occurrences of "net rash", the markings left on a fish after surviving an encounter with a net. Whether these fish (mostly smalls) went through the larger mesh draggers are now required to use, if they were picked off the deck and returned to the water or if the net simply ran them over I can't say but what is sure is that I saw it over 50 times this season while in past years I've seen it less than a dozen. That indicates to me that we had a major increase in commercial winter flounder effort and with that and major downturn in recreational opportunity. In essence, what you are doing by increasing the quota is you are taking the fish from one user group that has been utilizing the stock in a responsible manner (they have been increasing in abundance until the draggers have been jumping in) and handing the resource over to a different user group that can and will quickly deplete it to a point where it will do no user group any good.

What good is fishery management in the 1st place if it is all for one user groups "short term gain"?

As you may or may not know, "Motion 2" from the aforementioned RAP meeting stated that The RAP recommends that you do not raise the GOM winter flounder quota. I request that you fully consider this motion. There are thousands of recreational fishermen that depend on this fishery and many dozens of charter boats, tackle shop and other businesses that depend on a healthy winter flounder stock. There are restaurants and hotels that charter clients use and the sights and tourist attractions that their families enjoy while they are in New England.

I also write a monthly column for The New England Fisherman Magazine and we have 10's of thousands of readers, all recreational fishermen and they deserve an inshore fishery that isn't "pick up what the dragger leave us" for a change. Since the MS law went into effect and "maximum sustainable yield" has been the mantra, we have done far more damage to our inshore stocks than 200 years of foreign fleets could have imagined. We have too many draggers catching/working on too few fish. These boats are too efficient and quite frankly, only one such 80 foot steel dragger can catch the entire quota of GOM cod and flounder by itself and yet there are 100's of them.

Please do not further direct them towards winter flounder!

Yours,

Captain Jason Colby
Little Sister Charters
fishinglsister@aol.com
617-755-3740
www.littlesister1.com

Sherie Goutier

From: LLOYD DAVIS <lloydmdjr@msn.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 28, 2015 8:42 PM
To: comments
Subject: Winter Flounder

Increasing the limits in commercial harvest quotas will destroy this species! You are substituting the desecration of one species for another!

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

Sherie Goutier

From: Shirish Nadkarni <SNadkarni@ironwoodpharma.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 29, 2015 1:48 PM
To: comments
Subject: Commercial Flounder harvest

Dear Executive Director Nies,

I am deeply concerned that the NEFC is considering an increase to the commercial winter flounder harvest. This is a fragile stock as evidenced by the difficulty it has had rebounding throughout the vast majority of its historic range. Winter flounder are also incredibly important as a recreational opportunity for shore-based and inshore fishermen and charter boats. With the ban on recreational cod fishing, concern over striped stocks, and down cycles in smelt (this fall notwithstanding) and bluefish, this is one of the few promising nearshore fisheries left, and the recreational community would be devastated if it was damaged. Please heed the RAP's Motion 2 and protect our flounder!

Best,
Shirish Nadkarni

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Thank you for your cooperation.

Sherie Goutier

From: Reilly, Christopher <creilly959@g.rwu.edu>
Sent: Monday, November 30, 2015 10:05 PM
To: comments
Subject: Winter Flounder

Dear Executive Director Nies,

I am deeply concerned that the NEFC is considering an increase to the commercial winter flounder harvest. This is a fragile stock as evidenced by the difficulty it has had rebounding throughout the vast majority of its historic range. Winter flounder are also incredibly important as a recreational opportunity for shore-based and inshore fishermen and charter boats. With the ban on recreational cod fishing, concern over striper stocks, and down cycles in smelt (this fall notwithstanding) and bluefish, this is one of the few promising nearshore fisheries left, and the recreational community would be devastated if it was damaged. Please heed the RAP's Motion 2 and protect our flounder!

Sincerely,
Chris Reilly

Sherie Goutier

From: mikxmikx@gmail.com on behalf of Michael Mikhaylov <mm@izba.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 02, 2015 10:39 AM
To: comments
Subject: Winter Flounder commercial quota increase

Dear Executive Director Nies,

I am deeply concerned that the NEFC is considering an increase to the commercial winter flounder harvest. This is a fragile stock as evidenced by the difficulty it has had rebounding throughout the vast majority of its historic range. Winter flounder are also incredibly important as a recreational opportunity for shore-based and inshore fishermen and charter boats. With the ban on recreational cod fishing, concern over striper stocks, and down cycles in smelt (this fall notwithstanding) and bluefish, this is one of the few promising near-shore fisheries left, and the recreational community would be devastated if it was damaged. Please heed the RAP's Motion 2 and protect our flounder!

Sincerely,

Michael Mikhaylov, Recreational Fisherman
46 Little Farms Rd,
Framingham, MA, 01701

Sherie Goutier

From: Jonathan Geary <jongeary@jkgitc.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 03, 2015 10:48 AM
To: comments
Subject: Winter Flounder proposed commercial increase

Dear Executive Director Nies,

I am deeply concerned that the NEFC is considering an increase to the commercial winter flounder harvest. This is a fragile stock as evidenced by the difficulty it has had rebounding throughout the vast majority of its historic range. Winter flounder are also incredibly important as a recreational opportunity for shore-based and inshore fishermen and charter boats. With the ban on recreational cod fishing, concern over striped stocks, and down cycles in smelt (this fall notwithstanding) and bluefish, this is one of the few promising nearshore fisheries left, and the recreational community would be devastated if it was damaged.

Please heed the RAP's Motion 2 and protect our flounder!

Regards,

Jonathan Geary
Chatham MA

Sherie Goutier

From: William Erickson <wericars@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 03, 2015 11:00 PM
To: comments
Subject: RAP motion 2

Please do not increase the limit for winter flounder. This species has never recovered.

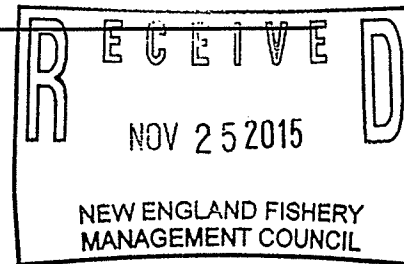
ASSOCIATED FISHERIES OF MAINE

PO Box 287, South Berwick, ME 03908

November 25, 2015

Mr. Terry Stockwell, Chair
New England Fishery Management Council

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL



Dear Terry:

The SSC recommendation for ABC for witch flounder will create an unprecedented dilemma for groundfish sectors.

Groundfish sectors, through self management techniques like gear modifications and self-imposed closed areas, have been successful in complying with extremely low sub ACLs for stocks found in one broad stock area, e.g. Gulf of Maine cod, GB yellowtail, SNE yellowtail, etc.

However, this will be the first time that sectors are challenged by an unrealistic sub ACL for a unit stock (witch flounder), found in all broad stock areas (covering nearly 80,000 square nautical miles), that cannot be avoided by relocating fishing activity to a different stock area (or subset of a stock area).

Therefore, the Associated Fisheries of Maine seeks the Council's support for the unanimous groundfish committee motion to accept a preliminary ABC for witch flounder, and to ask the SSC to reconsider the ABC taking into account unavoidable catch of witch flounder by groundfish sectors.

The ACL for witch flounder, after being reduced by 25% or roughly 100 mt for other fisheries (without accountability measures for groundfish bycatch), leaves an unworkable sub ACL of 277 mt for groundfish sectors. That other, non- groundfish fisheries have an estimated need of 100 mt highlights the broad range of this stock, and the difficulty to avoid bycatch.

As always, we appreciate your careful consideration of our views.

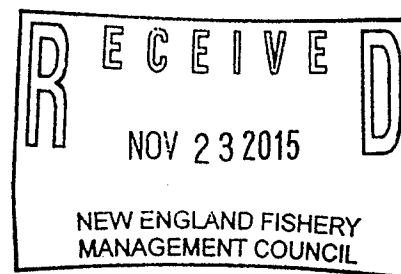
Sincerely,

M. Raymond

Maggie Raymond
Executive Director

jc/jp c 11/25/15

From: Jim Ford- F%2FV Lisa Ann II [<mailto:captainjim1@comcast.net>]
Sent: Monday, November 23, 2015 12:46 PM
To: Bill Karp; Pat Fiorelli
Cc: John Hoey
Subject: lisa ann III



Bill, Council,

I just wanted you to know the same stuff is still going on with observers, throwing fish over and not recording it on some trips, looking at one tow but not the next on day boats, allowing some gill netters and trawlers to toss cod. This is all coming from various captains. I am absolutely so frustrated with this whole program that I don't want anything to do with it. I am amazed that this information is still being held in high regard. This is a bad situation, but until they stop counting discards against quota you will never see accurate data. I think using a estimated discard rate would go further than the way it is being done now. I have really given up on the observer program along with most fishermen and now we will be paying for horrible data that's even worse. I understand you have a tough job but this problem is far from being fixed.

Thanks,
Jim Ford

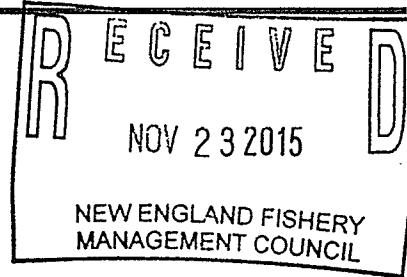
jc/jp/mj

SUSTAINABLE HARVEST SECTOR

PO Box 356, So. Berwick ME 03908 | 207-956-8497 | www.groundfish.org

November 23, 2015

Terry Stockwell, Chair
NEFMC
50 Water St., Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950



Dear Chairman Stockwell,

It has come to our attention that the New England Fishery Management Council will debate a Groundfish Committee recommendation to request that the Scientific and Statistical Committee revisit the ABC for witch flounder.

Attached please find a document that describes the witch flounder utilization by the Sustainable Harvest Sectors, which we hope will inform your discussion.

We are concerned that the ABC recommendation, particularly as reduced by the sub ACL for other fisheries, results in a groundfish sector sub ACL that will create an untenable situation for sectors in the coming fishing years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank Patania".

Frank Patania
President

jc/jp/pmf

Witch Flounder Utilization in the Sustainable Harvest Sectors

Allocation & Use

Witch flounder is a high-demand stock. Under five years of sector management, the fleet has caught most of its annual allocation, exceeding 100% in FY2013, when a lawsuit filed by environmental firm Oceana forced the NMFS to retroactively reduce the fleet's ACE late in the fishing year (Table 1).

Table 1: Sectors' Witch Utilization Rates

FY	SECTOR ALLOCATION	CATCH	PCT CAUGHT
2010	852	725.3	84%
2011	1236	997.1	82%
2012	1448	983.3	69%
2013	610	642.3	107%
2014	610	515.4	86%
2015 (est)	610	530	87%
2016 (SSC)	277 (approx)		

Witch is harvested not only for its own value, but as an important bycatch component for trawlers targeting monkfish in the Northern Fishery Management Area. When targeting monkfish (which at times can add 20% to the value of a groundfish trip), witch bycatch is largely unavoidable. Of the Sustainable Harvest Sector's (SHS) 350 trawl trips which landed 1,000 pounds or more of monkfish in FY14, 99% landed some amount of witch as well (Table 2).

Table 2: Witch Bycatch in the SHS Trawl Directed Monk Fishery, FY14

Trip Median Catch – Monkfish: 2,130 pounds
Trip Median Catch – Witch: 600 pounds
Witch Leverage Ratio: 3.5 : 1

Witch is also of increasing importance to the inshore fleet, whose opportunities to harvest other stocks have diminished under sector management. Our <50 ft vessels are very reliant on plaice, conducting 120 trips last year which caught at least 100 pounds of plaice. Just one of those trips had no witch catch (Table 3).

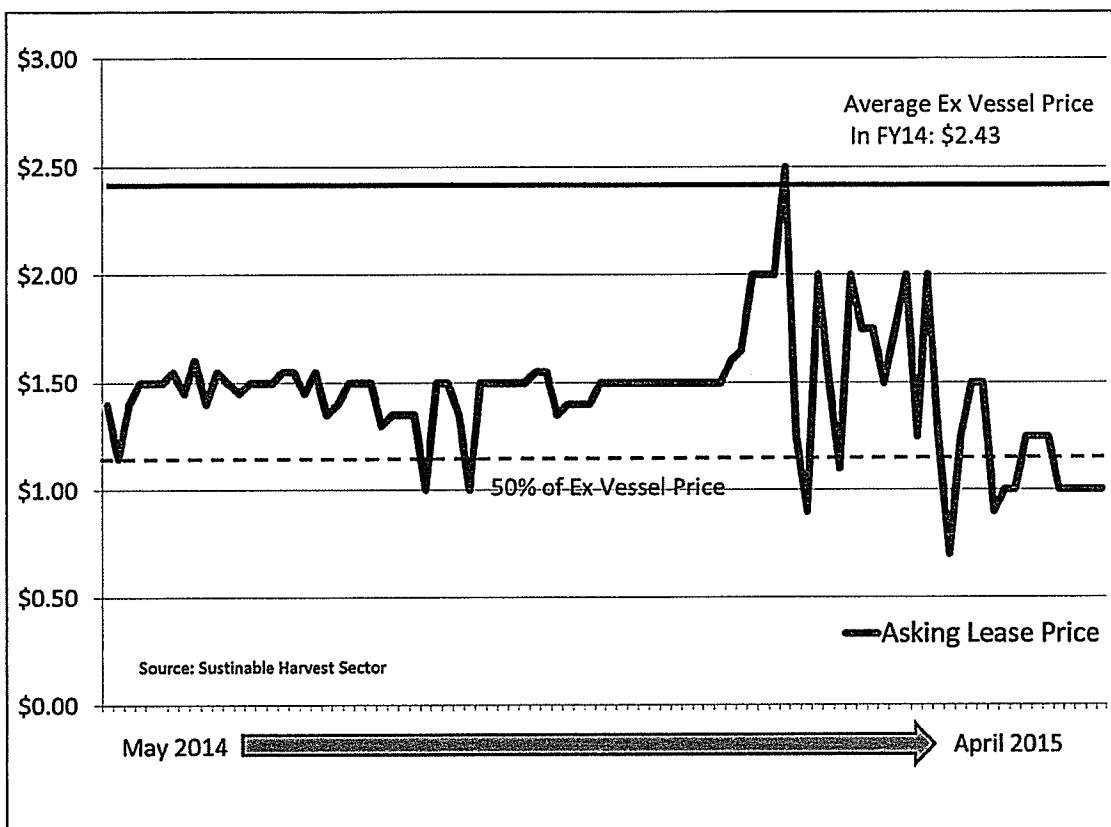
Table 3: Witch Bycatch in the SHS <50 ft Plaice Fishery, FY14

Trip Median Catch – Plaice: 1,430 pounds
Trip Median Catch – Witch: 450 pounds
Witch Leverage Ratio: 3.2 : 1

Witch Flounder Utilization in the Sustainable Harvest Sectors

Lease demand for ACE is high. Lease prices for witch are among the top five of the seventeen tradeable stocks¹, a function of both the ex-vessel value of the fish and its high utilization. The NMFS estimates witch ACE prices range from 25%-50% of the ex-vessel price¹ from 2010-2013; our recent experience suggests that ratio has increased (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Witch ACE Lease Price Offers in the SHS, FY14



In summary, witch allocation is in high demand, nearly fully utilized, and sought for both its value as a standalone stock, and to leverage the harvest of several million dollars of other stocks annually.

¹ Source: 2013 Final Report on the Performance of the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery, <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd1502/>.

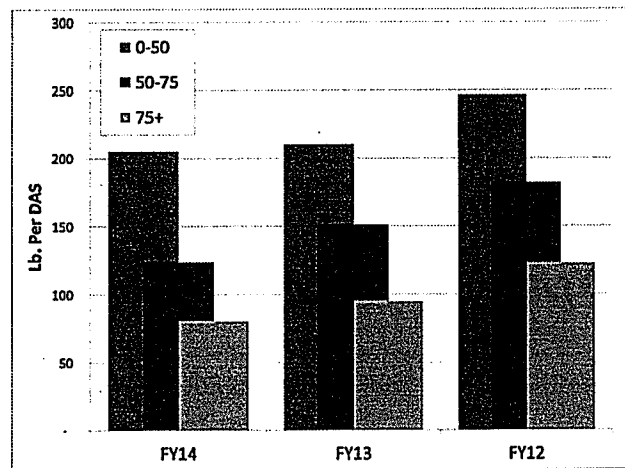
Witch Flounder Utilization in the Sustainable Harvest Sectors

SHS Landings

In FY14, 88% of our sector's total trawl trips landed some amount of witch. There were about 1,000 trips; nearly all fished in Broad Stock Areas 1, 2 and 3.

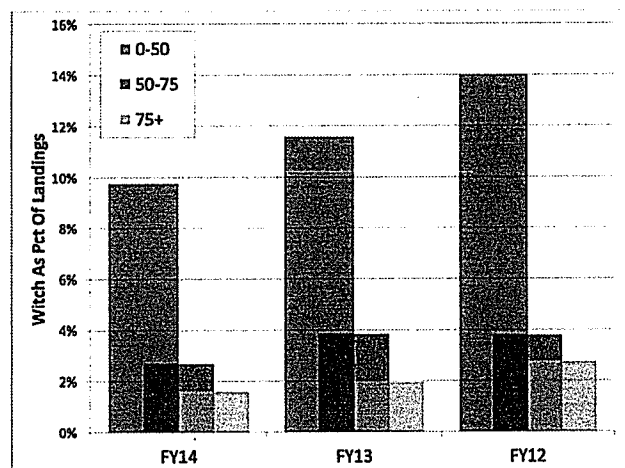
Our small boats are more reliant on the witch resource than larger boats, with the smallest vessel class generally catching twice as much as the largest class, per day fished (Figure 2).

Figure 2: SHS Vessel Witch Catch Per DAS, By Vessel Length



Witch also comprises a greater percent of landings of the smallest vessels, which is logical: they are unable to pursue in commercial quantities several stocks available to their larger brethren (e.g. redfish; the eastern Georges stocks) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: SHS Vessel Witch Landings As Pct of Total Landings, By Vessel Length
[Includes non-groundfish stocks caught on groundfish trips]



Witch Flounder Utilization in the Sustainable Harvest Sectors

As allocations are cut, the small boat fleet is running out of opportunity stocks. The FY14 variability of groundfish landings by vessel size in our sector illustrates the issue. Two of our <50 ft. fleet's top three landed stock ACEs (GOM cod and witch) are or will be set at near-moratorium levels (Figure 4).

Figure 4: SHS <50 ft Trawl Vessel Diversity of Landings, FY14
[Groundfish only]

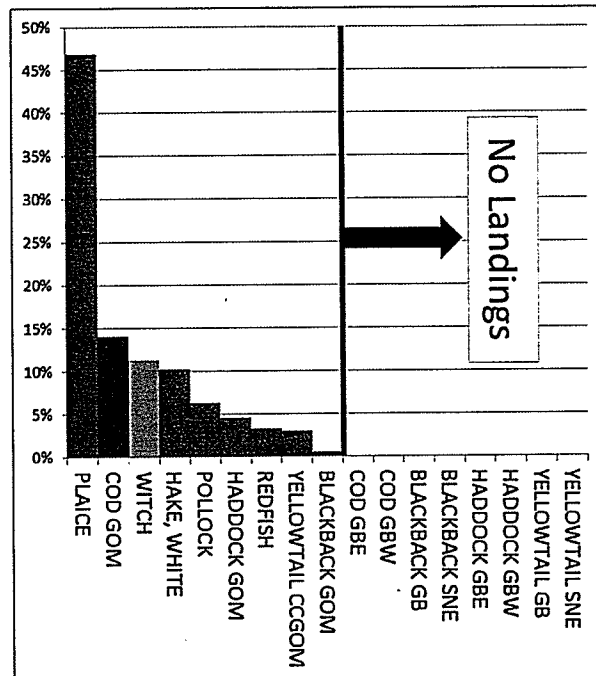


Figure 4 shows FY14's catch composition, which included GOM cod catch under a quota which was four times higher than this year's. This fleet's reliance on plaice and witch has likely increased in FY15.

Witch Flounder Utilization in the Sustainable Harvest Sectors

Distribution

The SHS encounters witch throughout the Gulf of Maine and on Georges Bank, both in and offshore. Over the last four years, observers have monitored 3,400-5,400 of our vessels' tows annually, with similar encounter rates (Table 4).

Table 4: Sustainable Harvest Sector | Observed Trawl Tows | FY10-FY14
Percent Of Tows Where Some Witch Was Encountered

BSA	Stat Area	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14		Avg Annual Tows
1	464	44%	49%	41%	26%		54
1	465	82%	100%	95%	92%		43
1	511	100%	100%	88%	86%		26
1	512	94%	98%	86%	88%		153
1	513	93%	93%	96%	92%		552
1	514	71%	65%	78%	73%		599
1	515	78%	67%	72%	62%		1,116
2	521	67%	51%	59%	52%		865
3	522	67%	83%	68%	72%		508
3	525	6%	0%	0%	4%		30
3	561	57%	27%	33%	50%		80
3	562	6%	0%	0%	0%		9

As a 'unit' stock, witch is harvested in all four broad stock areas. In Figure 5 below, the statistical areas shaded in grey represent a reasonable facsimile of where most of the catch occurs. The total of those grey areas encompasses 73,000 square miles of fishing grounds (less the 8,300 square miles of the five permanently closed areas) (Figure 5, next page).

In FY15, the commercial fleet is allocated 610 MT (1,345,000 pounds) of witch flounder. This is the equivalent of 18 pounds of allocation per square mile, higher only than Georges Bank yellowtail at 16 pounds per square mile (even Gulf of Maine cod fares better, at 23 pounds per square mile of fishing ground) (Table 5, next page).

Witch Flounder Utilization in the Sustainable Harvest Sectors

Figure 5: Groundfish Catch Stock Attribution

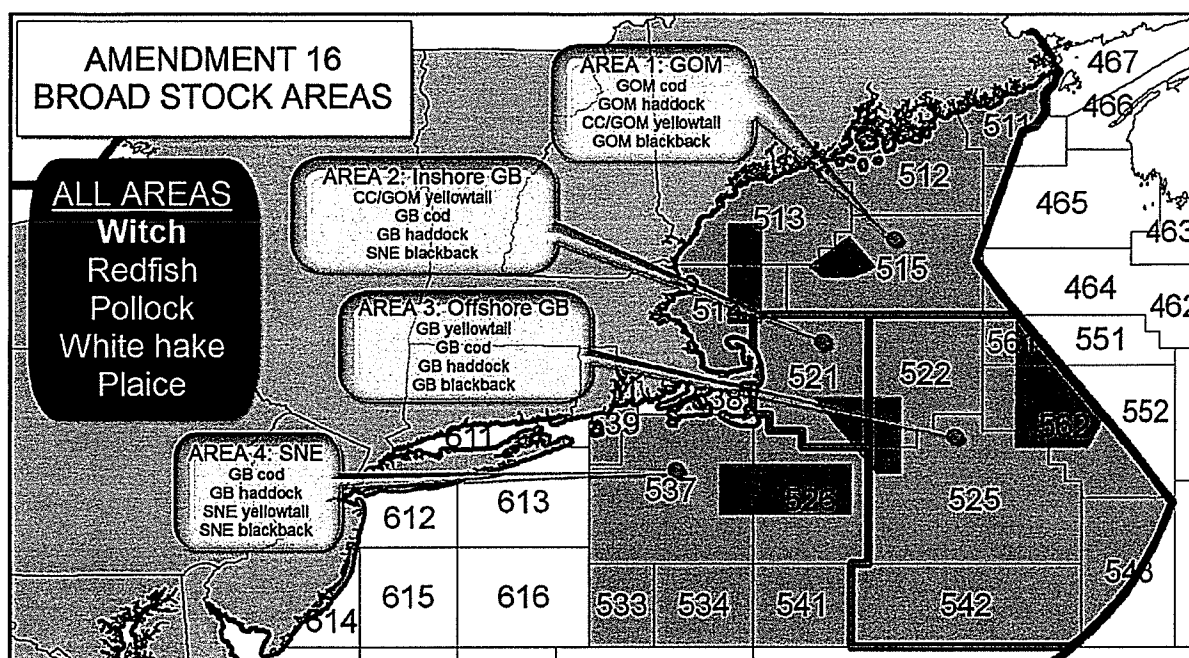


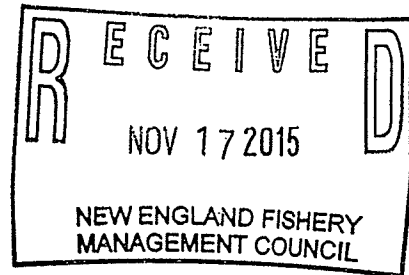
Table 5: FY15 Allocation Availability Per Square Mile of Fishing Grounds

Stock	Available Harvest Area in Square Miles	FY15 Commercial Allocation - MT	FY15 Commercial Allocation - Lb	Allocation Available Per Square Mile
HADDOCK GB	53,100	21,759	47,978,595	903
POLLOCK	73,000	13,720	30,252,600	414
REDFISH	73,000	11,034	24,329,970	333
BLACKBACK GB	27,100	1,891	4,169,655	154
HAKE, WHITE	73,000	4,343	9,576,315	131
BLACKBACK SNE	26,100	1,306	2,879,730	110
HADDOCK GOM	19,900	958	2,112,390	106
COD GB	53,100	1,787	3,940,335	74
YELLOWTAIL SNE	21,500	557	1,228,185	57
BLACKBACK GOM	19,900	392	864,360	43
PLAICE	73,000	1,408	3,104,640	43
YELLOWTAIL CCGOM	24,500	458	1,009,890	41
COD GOM	19,900	207	456,435	23
WITCH	73,000	610	1,345,050	18
YELLOWTAIL GB	27,100	195	429,975	16

An allocation of witch flounder of 277 MT to sectors next year is the equivalent of about 8 pounds of ACE per square mile.

[END]

Hank Soule
88 Rocky Hill
Somersworth NH 03878



Frank Blount, Chair
NEFMS Groundfish Committee
50 Water St. Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Frank,

I'm writing at the last minute which I hate to do. My objective is to find a solution to unaffordable ASM coverage levels whilst maintaining good data quality. My concern is (a) that no timely solution is forthcoming, and (b) we have heard the redfish CV, of all stocks, requires ASM coverage of around 40% next year. I present two ideas which, if your committee concurs, would be moved forward for analysis.

Based on Standard Deviation of CV Values

At our recent Groundfish AP meeting, we noted that CVs on most stocks were well below 30, and remarked how unfortunate it was that one or two stocks with unusually high CVs drove ASM coverage rates far above what they otherwise would need to be. Appended are five years of CV/coverage figures that show the issue.

The AP wanted to get at a way to identify the outliers that drive ASM coverage unnecessarily high, so I calculated the standard deviation (SD) of all stocks' Realized CVs (there are twenty; I exclude the eastern/western SDs for Georges cod and haddock). Each year there are one or more stocks whose CVs exceed the SD by a factor of three or more (from what I understand, and I'm no statistician, values exceeding 3X SD are often considered to be outliers).

Those values are highlighted yellow in the tables (I've also highlighted the outlier coverage rates). Some values even exceed 4X SD, which are highlighted red.

Request: Will the NEFMC examine the feasibility of excluding the outlier stocks from the list which sets overall ASM rates, based on standard deviation from the average?

Based on Mitigating Risk of Exceeding Assumed Discards

The purpose of using CVs to set ASM coverage rates is to provide the NEFMC assurance that sector discards are being accurately counted and thus sectors remain within their ACEs. If a stock's CV exceeds 30, the risk of actual discards exceeding calculated discards rises.

This risk is quantifiable in terms of pounds discarded, meaning: It is possible to calculate the upper-bound discard volume for a CV of 50 as opposed to 30.

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Therefore sectors might be willing to give up pounds of fish, as additional assumed discards, in order to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for ASM coverage. For example, assume next year the redfish CV requires an ASM coverage rate of 40%. If the ASM rate was kept at 20%, that might introduce much uncertainty in redfish discard estimates. But the stock is so healthy that even a fivefold increase in discards (either actual or assumed) would have no negative impact on either sectors or the stock.

One could perform this test for the next highest stock on the list. After redfish, we've heard that next year the GOM winter flounder CV will require ASM coverage of about 20%. Sectors might happily accept a fivefold increase in assumed discards on that stock if that mean the resulting ASM coverage rate was dropped to 10%. Of course, the redfish rate would then have to be recalculated. But you get the drift.

The flip side is that as ASM rates decrease, you run the risk of higher assumed discards on more in-demand stocks. But an analysis would tease information this out.

Request: Will the NEFMC conduct this analysis based on FY2015's expected ACLs and the CV rates to be used? (Note: I've been advised this concept may not be frameworkable)

Thank you for the consideration,



Hank Soule

Appendix: CVs and ASM Coverage Required, FYs 2010-2014

FY 2014	FY14 Realized CV	FY14 CV30 Pct Coverage Required
REDFISH	24.84	24.84
WINTER GOM	29.06	25.99
YT SNE	23.08	13.93
YT GB	21.14	11.59
WINTER GB	20.84	11.27
WINTER SNE	16.66	10.84
OCEAN POUT	16.50	7.44
WHITE HAKE	15.29	7.51
YT GOM	14.10	7.35
COD GB	13.94	6.41
WINDOWPANE S	12.75	5.31
HADDOCK GOM	12.03	5.76
COD GOM	11.16	5.02
POLLOCK	9.72	3.31
WOLFFISH	9.72	3.16
WITCH	8.95	2.54
HADDOCK GB	8.55	2.71
WINDOWPANE N	8.26	2.04
PLAICE	7.33	1.75
HALIBUT	6.97	1.68
Mean (average)	15.38	8.62
Median	13.35	6.09
Standard deviation (population)	8.28	8.53

FY 2013	FY13 Realized CV	FY13 CV30 Pct Coverage Required
YT SNE	23.08	20.44
YT GB	24.84	12.42
WINTER SNE	23.00	10.63
WINTER GB	21.16	9.87
REDFISH	21.05	11.77
WINDOWPANE S	16.69	6.45
WINTER GOM	15.10	6.40
COD GB	14.56	5.19
HADDOCK GOM	12.98	4.84
HADDOCK GB	11.94	3.41
WHITE HAKE	11.81	3.59
OCEAN POUT	11.57	2.80
YT GOM	9.55	2.24
WOLFFISH	9.32	2.43
WINDOWPANE N	7.98	1.74
HALIBUT	7.68	1.43
POLLOCK	7.64	1.41
WITCH	7.41	1.35
COD GOM	6.51	1.05
PLAICE	6.07	1.11
Mean (average)	13.91	5.54
Median	11.88	3.50
Standard deviation (population)	6.88	5.01

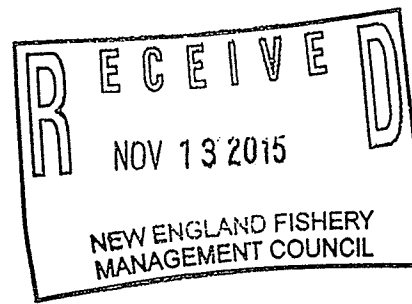
FY 2012	FY12 Realized CV	FY13 CV30 Pct Coverage Required
HADDOCK GB		
WINTER GB		8.87
WINTER SNE	15.97	5.11
YT GB	15.44	7.24
REDFISH	13.79	4.87
YT SNE	12.95	4.44
HADDOCK GOM	12.90	4.63
WHITE HAKE	12.26	4.60
OCEAN POUT	11.70	3.55
WINDOWPANE S	11.01	3.21
COD GB	10.70	2.99
WINDOWPANE N	10.50	3.03
COD GOM	9.73	2.95
WINTER GOM	8.96	2.54
WITCH	8.87	2.05
WOLFFISH	8.34	1.93
YT GOM	7.80	1.81
POLLOCK	7.71	1.64
HALIBUT	6.66	1.22
PLAICE	5.52	0.82
Mean (average)	11.68	3.94
Median	10.86	3.12
Standard deviation (population)	4.22	2.57

FY 2011	FY11 Realized CV	FY13 CV30 Pct Coverage Required
WINTER GB		
WINTER SNE	12.85	7.74
HADDOCK GB	10.36	3.69
YT SNE	10.22	4.55
YT GB	9.39	4.15
HADDOCK GOM	9.38	3.36
WINTER GOM	9.11	3.68
OCEAN POUT	9.04	3.15
WINDOWPANE N	8.98	3.11
WINDOWPANE S	8.81	3.50
REDFISH	8.39	3.05
COD GB	8.22	3.23
WHITE HAKE	7.76	2.36
YT GOM	7.00	1.90
HALIBUT	6.95	1.93
WOLFFISH	6.91	1.88
POLLOCK	6.90	2.07
WITCH	5.11	1.06
COD GOM	4.74	1.04
PLAICE	4.36	0.76
Mean (average)	9.11	3.90
Median	8.60	3.13
Standard deviation (population)	4.70	4.35

FY 2010	FY10 Realized CV	FY13 CV30 Pct Coverage Required
YT SNE		8.77
WINTER GB		
WINDOWPANE S		8.08
WINTER SNE	11.51	6.15
WINTER GOM	11.13	4.29
REDFISH	10.61	7.20
HADDOCK GOM	10.56	6.19
WINDOWPANE N	9.94	5.56
HADDOCK GB	9.69	4.58
OCEAN POUT	9.40	4.61
YT GB	9.21	4.15
YT GOM	9.12	4.75
WHITE HAKE	8.66	4.19
POLLOCK	8.01	3.19
WOLFFISH	6.66	2.18
HALIBUT	6.34	2.01
COD GB	5.76	1.60
WITCH	5.61	1.70
COD GOM	4.96	1.23
PLAICE	4.74	1.33
Mean (average)	9.27	4.61
Median	9.31	4.44
Standard deviation (population)	3.01	2.56

11/13/2015

Michael P Leary
3 Orchard Drive
Hampton Falls, NH 03844



Tom Nies
Executive Director
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

RE: Regulated mesh measurement

Dear Tom.

I would like the council to revisit the regulated mesh measuring regulations to allow for a tolerance for the shrinkage of the mesh during use. Currently we have a 6.5 inch, 6 inch and 5.5 inch regulated mesh regulations here in the northeast multispecies fishery. The mesh manufacturers have been trying to calculate the rate of shrinkage and now provide cod ends with an overage of about an eighth of an inch, so a new cod end measures $6 \frac{5}{8}$ of an inch when we purchase them. The $\frac{1}{8}$ inch overage hopefully will shrink to 6.5 inch. Depending on the bottom sediment where we tow the nets i.e. sand, silt, mud, gravel the nets shrink and different rates.

In the past 12 months I have been boarded four times and had my nets measured differently each time. The current method of measuring the twine is very subjective. To take an average of 20 meshes without a tolerance allowance puts us at a disadvantage. One boarding in August the Coast Guard measured the cod end and found that all the meshes were undersized. The observer we had onboard measured the same net and found the meshes slightly oversized. A new cod end for my vessel cost between 900 dollars and 1200 dollars depending on

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the diameter of the twine. I use to wear out a cod end before I had to change it and now I have purchased four cod ends in the past 12 months.

A quarter inch tolerance will help to solve this problem. We are currently using the largest cod ends in any regulated fishery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael P. Leary', written over the printed name.

Michael P Leary

F/V RyanWilliam



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Douglas E. Grout (NH), Chair

James J. Gilmore, Jr., (NY), Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal, Executive Director

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

NEW ENGLAND FISHERIES
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

November 16, 2015

John Bullard
NOAA Fisheries Service
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930-2276

Tom Nies
New England Fisheries Management Council
50 Water Street
Newburyport, Massachusetts 01950

John Tom,
Dear Mr. Bullard and Mr. Nies,

I am writing on behalf of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Winter Flounder Management Board (Board). The Board is concerned about the status of winter flounder stocks, particularly the critical condition of the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) population. Information from the 2015 stock assessment indicates the stock is overfished and biomass estimates are at 23% of the target. While there have been some modest increases over the last decade, the stock has remained at approximately a quarter of the target since the early 2000s. Since 1981 recruitment has been declining, 2013 is the lowest in the time series which is approximately 4% of the estimated recruitment in 1981 (the highest in the time series). While the 2014 recruitment estimate increased slightly, the overall stock productivity continues to decline.

The 2015 assessment biomass estimates and the states' fishery independent indices show a downward trend in the most recent years, reversing what appeared to be some modest recovery during the four-year harvest moratorium period in federal waters. Stock projections indicate the stock can not rebuild by 2023 with fishing mortality at zero (50% probability). Based on the updated assessment and state survey's, the Board urges the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and NOAA Fisheries to implement increased conservation measures, including reductions in the ABC and set possession limits to unavoidable bycatch levels in federal waters. The Commission has maintained a very restrictive commercial bycatch limit of 50 pounds or 38 fish per trip and a recreation bag limit of two fish in state waters.

The Board is also seeking ways to collaborate more closely with the NEFMC and NOAA Fisheries on management of winter flounder. The Commission is willing to send representatives to the NEFMC meetings or invite Council representative to our meetings to facilitate better coordination. Thank you for your consideration and please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Beal

cc: ASMFC Winter Flounder Board

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