

Use of New Gears in the B-Regular DAS Program and the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock SAP

In response to a Council request in June 2007, NMFS issued a final rule (72 FR 72965) on December 26, 2007 to amend the procedures and requirements for approval of additional gear types for use in the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock Special Access Program (SAP) or additional trawl gear in the Northeast multispecies Regular B DAS (Days-at-Sea) Program.

The regulations allow the Council or its Executive Committee to request the Regional Administrator to authorize additional gear for use in both programs through a notice action if the proposed gear meets one of two standards in the regulations.

The standards require that new gear either reduce the catch of each regulated stock of species of concern or other non-groundfish stocks that are overfished or subject to overfishing, by at least 50% (by weight on a trip-by-trip basis); or that its catch of each regulated stock of species of concern, or other non-groundfish stocks that are overfished or subject to overfishing, be less than 5% of the total catch of regulated groundfish (also by weight on a trip-by-trip basis). The approval process is as follows:

- 1) Before the Council considers recommending a new gear for either program, the proposed gear must have been the subject of a completed experiment and results reviewed by the Council's Research Steering Committee (RSC) in accordance with that committee's research review policy. (This step is specified in the final rule cited above). The RSC report to the Council will contain a recommendation concerning the sufficiency of the experimental results for management decision-making.
- 2) The Research Steering Committee will forward its findings to the full Council or the Council's Executive Committee, if time constraints are an issue, for development of a recommendation to the Regional Administrator.
- 3) If approved, a formal request will be forwarded to the National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Administrator recommending that the new gear type be added to the allowed gears that may be used in the B Regular DAS program or the Haddock SAP.