

# SUSTAINABLE HARVEST SECTOR

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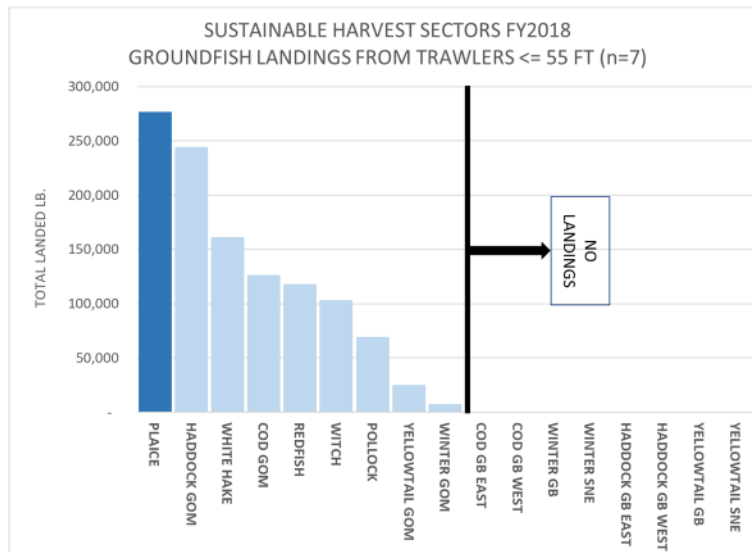
November 19, 2019

Dr. John Quinn, Chair  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill 2  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Dr. Quinn,

We write regarding FY2020's allocation of plaice. In a letter to you dated November 18, Associated Fisheries of Maine contends the Council should remand the SSC's recommended ABC for plaice (and some other stocks) back to the Committee for revision consistent with NEMC policy. We urge the Council to support this request, on behalf of our small-boat fleet.

Our sectors' trawlers are historically reliant on availability of plaice in the Gulf of Maine; the membership holds about a third of the sector PSC for this stock. It is the #1 stock landed by our small-boat fleet, comprising nearly 25% of all groundfish landed by them:



This fleet has had some recent success targeting the abundant GOM haddock resource (as well as redfish, though the figure shown above warrants a caveat – 80% of the redfish catch shown came from one vessel). However, two of the top four stocks (GOM cod and white hake) are slated for quota reductions, so our small trawlers must seek alternatives. The healthy plaice stock represents one of those, and if there is no biological reason to constrain the catch, we request the Council provide access to that fish.

Sincerely,

Hank Soule  
Sector Manager