



## New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chair* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 21, 2022  
**TO:** Scientific and Statistical Committee  
**FROM:** Tom Nies, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** **Terms of Reference – Overfishing Limits and Acceptable Biological Catches for Seven Groundfish Stocks**

#### *Terms of Reference*

- 1A.** Review information provided by the Council’s Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) and the results of recent 2022 management track stock assessments for Georges Bank (GB) haddock, Gulf of Maine (GOM) haddock, GB winter flounder, GOM winter flounder, American plaice, pollock, and Atlantic halibut.
- 1B.** Recommend overfishing limits (OFLs) and acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for GB haddock, GOM haddock, GB winter flounder, GOM winter flounder, American plaice, pollock, and Atlantic halibut for fishing years 2023, 2024, and 2025 that will prevent overfishing, meet the management objective to rebuild, are consistent with the Council’s ABC control rules and rebuilding plans, and consider the Council’s Risk Policy Statement.

#### *Background*

The most recent stock assessments of GB haddock, GOM haddock, GB winter flounder, GOM winter flounder, American plaice, pollock, and Atlantic halibut were management track assessments in the fall of 2022. The peer review occurred in September of this year.

#### *The Council’s Groundfish ABC Control Rules*

Acceptable biological catches (ABC) recommendations are to be based on the fishing mortality strategies approved by the Council in Amendments 13 and 16 and related management actions. Status determination criteria should be used that are specified in Amendment 16 or subsequent actions. The general control rule for groundfish stocks that has been adopted is:

*"These ABC control rules will be used in the absence of better information that may allow a more explicit determination of scientific uncertainty for a stock or stocks. If such information is available - that is, if scientific uncertainty can be characterized in a more accurate fashion -- it can be used by the SSC to determine ABCs, these ABC control rules can be modified in a future Council action (an amendment, framework, or specification package):*

- 1. ABC should be determined as the catch associated with 75% of FMSY.*
- 2. If fishing at 75% of FMSY does not achieve the mandated rebuilding requirements for*

*overfished stocks, ABC should be determined as the catch associated with the fishing mortality that meets rebuilding requirements (Frebuild).*

3. *For stocks that cannot rebuild to BMSY in the specified rebuilding period, even with no fishing, the ABC should be based on incidental bycatch, including a reduction in bycatch rate (i.e., the proportion of the stock caught as bycatch).*
4. *Interim ABCs should be determined for stocks with unknown status according to case-by-case recommendations from the SSC."*

## **Information**

1. Presentation: Overview of Stock Assessments and PDT Report (NEFMC & NEFSC staff)
2. Assessment supporting materials available at:  
[https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi/sasi\\_report\\_options.php](https://apps-nefsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/saw/sasi/sasi_report_options.php)
3. 2022 Fall Management Track Assessment Report for GB Haddock
4. 2022 Fall Management Track Assessment Report for GOM Haddock
5. 2022 Fall Management Track Assessment Report for GB Winter Flounder
6. 2022 Fall Management Track Assessment Report for GOM Winter Flounder
7. 2022 Fall Management Track Assessment Report for American Plaice
8. 2022 Fall Management Track Assessment Report for Pollock
9. 2022 Fall Management Track Assessment Report for Atlantic Halibut
10. 2022 Fall Management Track Peer Review Panel Report
11. Memo from PDT to SSC re possible OFLs and ABCs for seven groundfish stocks
12. 2020-2022 SSC OFL and ABC recommendations for groundfish stocks (including GB winter flounder, American plaice, Atlantic halibut, GB haddock, GOM haddock, pollock, and white hake)
13. 2020-2022 SSC OFL and ABC recommendations for four groundfish stocks (final recommendations for American plaice, GB haddock, GOM haddock, and pollock)
14. 2021-2023 SSC OFL and ABC recommendations for groundfish stocks (including GB winter flounder, GOM winter flounder, and Atlantic halibut)
15. The Council's Risk Policy Road Map (2016), that includes the Risk Policy Statement and Implementation Plan, see pp. 4-5 and 10-12.
16. Risk policy matrix for GB Haddock
17. Risk policy matrix for GOM Haddock
18. Risk policy matrix for GB Winter Flounder
19. Risk policy matrix for GOM Winter Flounder
20. Risk policy matrix for American Plaice
21. Risk policy matrix for Pollock
22. Risk policy matrix for Atlantic Halibut
23. Affected Environment, Excerpt from Framework Adjustment 63
24. FY2021 Year-End Multispecies (Groundfish) Catch Report, GARFO
25. State of the Ecosystem and Current Conditions. NOAA/NEFSC. Available at :  
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/ecosystems/state-ecosystem-reports-northeast-us-shelf>