



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Council Endorses 2019 U.S./Canada TACs; Receives Progress Report on Groundfish Framework 58, Monitoring Amendment

The New England Fishery Management Council has accepted 2019 total allowable catches (TACs) for three groundfish stocks on Georges Bank (GB) that the U.S. shares with Canada – Eastern GB cod, Eastern GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder. The TACs were recommended by the U.S./Canada Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC) based on advice from the U.S./Canada Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee (TRAC). The U.S. has members on both the TMGC and the TRAC.

The TACs will be included in Framework Adjustment 58 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, which is still under development. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS, NOAA Fisheries) must approve the TACs before they are implemented.

### Proposed Fishing Year 2019 U.S./Canada Total TACs in Metric Tons (mt)

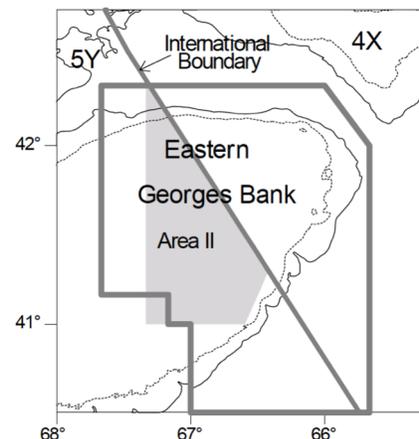
Total Allowable Catches (TACs)	Eastern Georges Bank Cod	Eastern Georges Bank Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder
<b>Total Shared Catch</b>	650 mt	30,000 mt	140 mt
<b>U.S. TAC and Percentage Share</b>	189 mt 29% of total	15,000 mt 50% of total	106 mt 76% of total
<b>Canada TAC and Percentage Share</b>	461 mt 71% of total	15,000 mt 50% of total	34 mt 24% of total

The allocation shares for 2018 are based on the following formula: historical catches weighted 10%; and resource distribution based on trawl surveys weighted 90%.

The TACs reflect the following changes from 2018 for **U.S. quotas**:

- **Eastern Georges Bank Cod:** 68 mt decrease
- **Eastern Georges Bank Haddock:** 600 mt decrease
- **Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder:** 107 mt decrease

*The map at right shows the area that applies to both Eastern Georges Bank cod and Eastern Georges Bank haddock.*

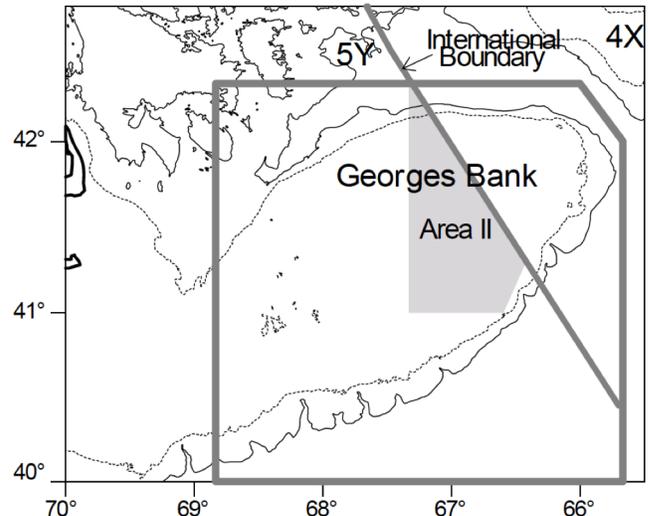




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The TMGC made the following comments about each of the shared stocks.

- **Eastern Georges Bank Cod** – “The status of the stock remains poor.” The 650 mt total U.S./Canada TAC is “a 32% reduction from 2018 and is within the catch advice that the TRAC provided. The TMGC sought to balance the utilization of other species and signals of the survey indices. The TMGC also highlighted concerns around the size and potential survival of the 2013 year class, combined with the concern about the apparent lack of recent recruitment.”
- **Eastern Georges Bank Haddock** – “The TRAC was requested to provide guidance on whether a quota of 40,000 mt was appropriate based on a set of indicators. The TRAC determined that 40,000 mt is too high. As a result, the TMGC adopted a 25% reduction compared to the 2018 TAC. This quota continues to take into account the growth of the 2013 year class, the need to manage that year class, and provides some stability in inter-annual TAC setting while still acknowledging that biomass is expected to remain high. In 2019, it is expected that the TRAC will provide a full assessment update to help inform future catches.”
- **Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder** – “The declining trend of the stock remains. However, available information suggests that current levels of catch are not the primary factor impacting stock rebuilding. Total mortality remains high in spite of record low catches. The large inter-annual change in the survey indices with minimal catch resulted in concern about the accuracy of some of the survey estimates. In light of this information, the TMGC sought to balance yellowtail flounder stock conditions and the utilization of other species. A quota of 140 mt is above the TRAC’s recommendation. However, it is a 53% reduction from 2018 and the lowest quota on record.”



*The area above, which includes water on both sides of the U.S./Canada international boundary, applies to Georges Bank yellowtail flounder.*

## Groundfish Framework Adjustment 58

The Council also approved the range of alternatives for Framework Adjustment 58 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. The measures will be analyzed by the Groundfish Plan Development Team and reviewed by the Groundfish Committee and Advisory Panel before the Council takes final action at its December 4-6, 2018 meeting in Newport, RI. The Council is working to ensure that NOAA Fisheries will be able to review and implement the measures by the May 1 start of the 2019 fishing year.



*Haddock offloaded in Gloucester, MA. – NEFMC photo*



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**Framework 58** includes:

- The 2019 U.S./Canada TACs for shared stocks on Georges Bank;
- Revised and/or new rebuilding programs for several groundfish stocks, including: (a) Georges Bank winter flounder; (b) Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder; (c) witch flounder; (d) Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank northern windowpane flounder; and (e) ocean pout;
- An exemption for vessels fishing in Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) waters from U.S. commercial minimum sizes in the Council's Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan; and
- An extension of the temporary measure regarding the scallop fishery's trigger for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder accountability measures (AMs).

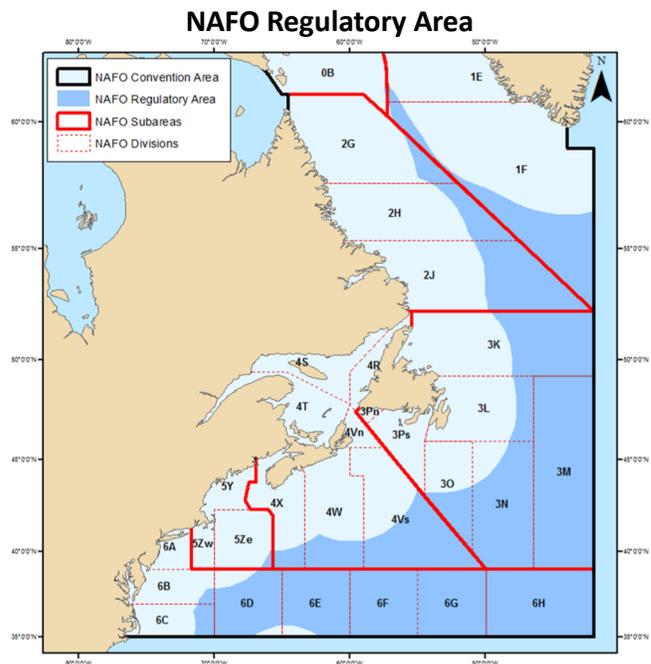
The trigger measure is scheduled to expire at the end of the 2018 fishing year. Groundfish Framework 58 will consider extending the temporary measure through fishing years 2019 and 2020. Under the trigger, the scallop fishery would be subject to AMs if: (1) the sub-annual catch limit (sub-ACL); *and* (2) the total ACL for Georges Bank yellowtail is exceeded. The measure would sunset after fishing year 2020. The extension is intended to provide flexibility for the scallop fishery to better achieve optimum yield on scallops while preventing overfishing on Georges Bank yellowtail flounder, which will have a lower catch limit in 2019 compared to 2018.

## Groundfish Rebuilding Programs

Regarding the rebuilding programs, the Council received a letter from the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office of NOAA Fisheries back on August 31, 2017 stating that the Council was not making adequate progress in rebuilding the five groundfish stocks listed above that are considered to be overfished. Consequently, the Council is working on rebuilding plans to address the situation.

The Council received general guidance from its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on rebuilding strategies, which the Groundfish Plan Development Team will take into consideration as it works on Framework 58.

The SSC further recommended that the Council continue to "investigate ways to improve the performance of stock assessment projections as a high priority for the species under the New England Fishery Management Council's jurisdiction."



*The objective of Framework 58 is "to meet regulatory requirements to prevent overfishing, ensure rebuilding, and help achieve optimum yield in the commercial and recreational groundfish fishery."*



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## Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23

The Council also received a progress report on Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23, which is being developed to consider changes to several facets of the groundfish monitoring program. The Council is taking this action to ensure that the program is providing accurate catch information necessary to manage the fishery efficiently and effectively.

The Council agreed that improving catch accounting should be the primary goal of the amendment. Based on a recommendation from its Groundfish Committee, the Council agreed to convene a joint Plan Development Team, Groundfish Advisory Panel, and Committee meeting later this year to establish standards for improving catch accounting and monitoring. The goal is to determine the appropriate level of monitoring needed to be used as a standard to improve catch accounting.

The Council potentially may select the range of alternatives for Amendment 23 at its January 29-31, 2019 meeting in Portsmouth, NH.

### Purpose and Need of Amendment 23

*“To implement measures to improve reliability and accountability of catch reporting and to ensure a precise and accurate representation of catch (landings and discards).”*

*“To improve the accuracy of collected catch data. Accurate catch data are necessary to ensure that catch limits are set at levels that prevent overfishing and to determine when catch limits are exceeded. To create fair and equitable catch reporting requirements for all commercial groundfish fishermen, while maximizing the value of collected catch data and minimizing costs for the fishing industry and the National Marine Fisheries Service.”*

Information about the Fishery Data for Stock Assessment Working Group can be found at [FDSAWG](#).



Atlantic cod. – Northeast Fisheries Science Center photo

- Groundfish documents used during this September Council meeting can be found at [Groundfish Report](#).
- For more information about groundfish actions, contact Dr. Jamie Cournane, the Council's groundfish plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 103, email [jcournane@nefmc.org](mailto:jcournane@nefmc.org).