



Council Report

The Council Report summarizes major actions approved at NEFMC meetings or highlights items of interest to stakeholders.

At its Sept., 30 – Oct. 2 2014 meeting in Hyannis, MA the Council:

- **Added measures to Framework Adjustment 26 to the Sea Scallop FMP**
- **Worked on Framework Adjustment 53 to the Groundfish FMP, adding measures to address the status of Gulf of Maine cod**
- **Approved management adjustments to the whiting rules for further analysis**

Next Council Meeting

Please note the dates!
Monday-Thursday

Nov. 17-20, 2014
Newport, RI

Sept/Oct2014

Member News

Council Members Elected for 2014-2015

As its first order of business at the September 30 - October 2 Council meeting in Hyannis, MA, the Council elected officers for the upcoming year. Last year's Chair, Terry Stockwell and Vice Chair, Dr. John Quinn, were each named by acclamation last month to again serve in their respective positions.

Mr. Stockwell, who been the Council's Vice Chair for a number of years, is the Director of External Affairs at the Maine Department of Marine Resources. Dr. Quinn is a former Massachusetts legislator and the Director of Public Interest Law Programs at UMASS Dartmouth's School of Law.

Three members were elected to serve on the NEFMC's Executive Committee. Again, these are the same individuals who held leadership positions last year. The Council put their confidence in NH fisherman Peter Kendall, who is serving his second term on the NEFMC, and officials from two state fisheries agencies. They are NH Fish and Game Department Chief Doug Grout, and MA Division of Marine Fisheries Deputy Director Dr. David Pierce.

The fall meeting was the first for newly-appointed Council member Libby Etrie from Gloucester, MA.

Sea Scallops

Alternatives Added to Scallop FW 26

Since its June meeting, the Council added several new alternatives for consideration in Framework Adjustment 26 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Plan. The highlights are provided below for quick reference:

- Measures to reduce incidental mortality on small scallops in three specific areas; in an extension of the scallop access area in Closed Area II, a small extension of the scallop access area in Nantucket Lightship, and a closure within the northwest corner of the Elephant Truck Access Area
- Limits on crew sizes as a potential measure to reduce impacts on small scallops in the Mid-Atlantic Access Areas only
- A slight revision to the regulations for the flaring bar on turtle deflector dredges
- An alternative that would increase the access for Limited Access General Category (LAGC) vessels in the Mid-Atlantic Access Areas, in addition to access planned for the limited access fleet

In addition, the Council recognized the lengthy list of items now in Framework 26 and

continued on next page



*Photo courtesy of
NOAA Fisheries*

Important Meeting Dates!

Scallop Advisory Panel
Tues., Oct. 28, Providence, RI

Scallop Committee
Wed., Oct. 29, Providence, RI

Scallop Advisory Panel
Thurs., Nov. 13, Revere, MA

Scallop Committee
Fri., Nov. 14, Revere, MA

ACE

*or annual catch entitlement,
with respect to the ground-
fish fishery, means the
share of the annual catch
limit (ACL) for each ground-
fish stock that is allocated
to an individual sector or
state-operated permit bank,
based upon the cumulative
fishing history attached to
each permit participating in
that sector or held by a
state-operated permit bank
in a given year.*

More Scallop Framework 26

continued from p.1

prioritized the issues for the Scallop PDT, given the limited time available to complete any necessary analyses by the November meeting, when the Council takes final action. The issues are in the order agreed to by the Council.

1. Develop specifications, including modifications to the scallop access areas (and a scenario with increased access in the Mid-Atlantic Access Areas for the LAGC fishery, up to 2 million pounds)
2. Revise turtle deflector dredge regulations associated with the flaring bar
3. Address the ME state waters issue associated with fishing in the Northern Gulf of Maine
4. Provide consistency among turtle regulations (turtle deflector dredge and chain mat regulations)
5. Develop proactive accountability measures to address potential overages of northern windowpane flounder, and the Georges Bank and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic stocks of yellowtail flounder
6. Allow limited access vessels to operate off the clock when steaming back to port
7. Develop reactive accountability measures for northern windowpane flounder, and similarly revise the scallop fishery's yellowtail flounder accountability measures for yellowtail stocks on Georges Bank and in Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic area

Groundfish

Emergency Action for Gulf of Maine Cod As has been widely reported by the media, the Council approved a motion on October 2 “to request an emergency action to reduce fishing mortality on Gulf of Maine cod for fishing year 2014.”

Notably, the Regional Administrator of NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) agreed with the majority of Council members by voting yes on the action, although he could not provide details on what the agency might do in response to the request. Emergency actions are developed and implemented solely by NMFS outside of the Council process.

U.S./Canada TACs Approved The Council approved the 2015 quotas, or Total Allowable Catches as recommended by the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee, a group made up of Council members, NOAA/NMFS representatives, and Canadian officials, for the three stocks governed by the U.S./Canada Resource Sharing Understanding. They will be incorporated into Framework 53 at the November Council meeting.

- Eastern Georges Bank cod – 650 metric tons (mt) U.S. share, 124 mt
- Eastern Georges Bank haddock – 37,000 mt; U.S. share, 17,760 mt
- Georges Bank yellowtail flounder – 354 mt; U.S. share, 248 mt

Framework Adjustment 53 Alternatives The Council focused on a number of Framework 53 alternatives in September, approving them for further analysis and discussion, and approval, if appropriate, at its November meeting in Newport, RI. They addressed several major topics.

continued on next page

More Groundfish Framework 53

Actions Affecting Cod Fishery Operations

The Council tasked the Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) with analyzing the impacts of a zero possession limit in the commercial and recreational fisheries for Gulf of Maine cod. The groups would continue to receive an allocation of the species to account for catches of cod, and be subject to existing accountability measures.

An additional alternative that is designed in a way similar to measures adopted in Northeast Groundfish Sector operations plans would prohibit commercial groundfish vessels from operating west of $70^{\circ} 15' W$ longitude and from conducting fishing activity east of $70^{\circ} 15' W$ longitude, on the same trip, unless carrying an observer. This option aims

to improve catch accounting of Gulf of Maine cod by restricting where commercial vessels can fish without an observer onboard.

Cod Spawning Closures To protect spawning fish from the impacts of fishing operations, the Council tasked the PDT to further analyze two sets of spawning closure alternatives for consideration in the framework. They would apply to both commercial and recreational fisheries. The numbers refer to the 30-minute squares on the maps below.

1st Alternative — Left Maps/Yellow

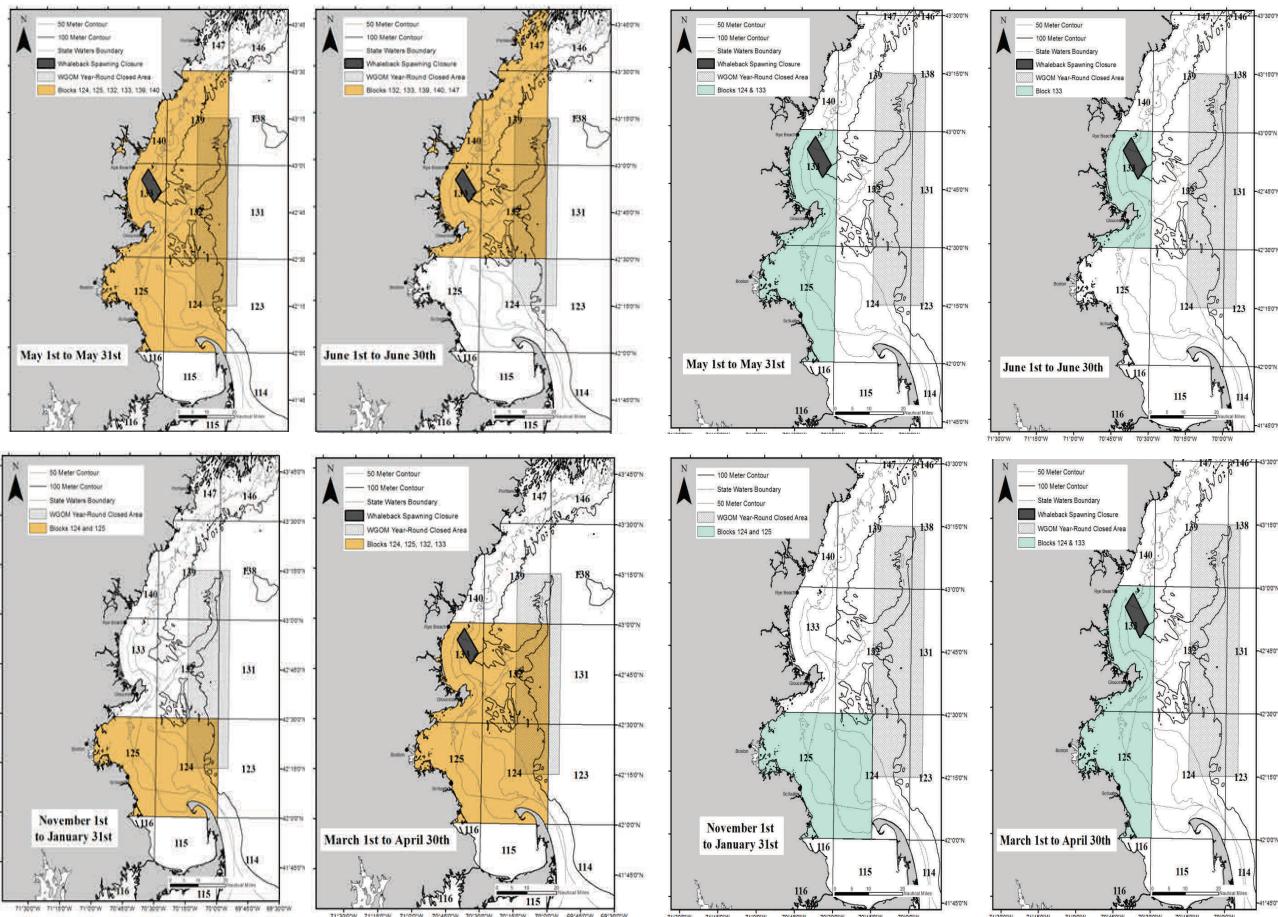
May: 124, 125, 132, 133, 139, 140
 June: 132, 133, 139, 140, 147
 November-January: 124-125
 March-April: 124, 125, 132, 133

Prohibit recreational fishing in the Western Gulf Maine Closed Area.

2nd Alternative — Right Maps/Green

May - 125, 133
 June - 133

Nov – January – 124, with an eastern boundary defined at $70^{\circ} 15' W$, 125
 March – April - 125, 133



**NEW ENGLAND
FISHERY MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL**

50 Water Street, Mill
2
Newburyport, MA
01950

Phone: 978.465.0492
Fax: 978.465.3116
www.nefmc.org

For more information about this publication, please contact Patricia Fiorelli at pfiorelli@nefmc.org or 978 465 0492 ext. 106.

Correspondence to NOAA/NMFS

The Council approved several requests to the agency to be made via correspondence:

- * Examine the eligibility of extending the rebuilding period for GOM cod beyond ten years, in accordance with the criteria provided in the National Standard I guidelines.
- * Support at least the same number of observed trips on directed groundfish trips in the Gulf of Maine in fishing year 2015 as were taken in that same broad stock area in FY2014.
- * Target recreational anglers in outreach efforts if an emergency action is approved that affects that sector of the groundfish fishery.
- * Request the NEFSC to review, summarize and communicate as quickly as possible the most recent updated information on Georges Bank cod (the available survey indices, catch and recruitment indicators).

The New England Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional organizations created by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, initially enacted in 1976.

The Council develops rules for both commercial and recreational fisheries that operate between three and 200 miles off the region's coastline. NEFMC management authority extends to fishing grounds in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank and southern New England and overlaps with the Mid-Atlantic Council for some species.

Framework 53 - continued from p.3

Rollover of Current Specifications To address the issue of beginning a fishing year without specifications (OFLs, ABCs ACLs), so-called “rollover provisions” or “default measures” have been adopted in other NEFMC and MAFMC FMPs. Through Framework 53, the Council has explored options that would enable the rollover of prior-year’s specifications to address all instances in which a fishing year could begin without OFLs, ABCs, and ACLs in place for a stock due to a potential delay in rule making.

The Council directed the Groundfish PDT to examine a range of percentages for their consideration at the November meeting — specifically, to rollover a small percentage (10-35%) of the stock specific ABC and ACLs — until new specifications are implemented, (unless the rolled over ACLs exceed forthcoming ABC recommendations).

Cap Sector ACE Carryover This alternative would cap the available unused sector annual catch entitlement, or ACE, carried over from, in this case, fishing year 2014. The amount could not exceed the ABC level, minus the annual catch limits for the fishing year in which the carryover would be landed --- in this case again, fishing year 2015. Sectors also would be required to pay back any used carry-over catch only when both the sector sub-ACL and total stock ACL is exceeded.

Windowpane Flounder Council members voted to include in Framework 53 an alternative that would split the existing commercial sub-ACLs for the northern and southern windowpane stocks between groundfish sectors and the common pool.

The PDT is also exploring a broader range of sub-allocation options for a scallop sub-ACL for the northern windowpane stock based on recent catch by scallop vessels. The PDT will apply methods similar to those used to establish the yellowtail flounder sub-ACLs in the scallop fishery.

Small Mesh Multispecies

Preliminary Discussion on Specifications The Council moved specification and management measures forward for small mesh multispecies at the September Council meeting. They will be finalized at the November 17-19 in Newport, RI. If approved by the NOAA/NMFS the measures will become effective in May 2015 for the 2015-2017 fishing years.

In the Gulf of Maine and northern Georges Bank, the proposed silver hake catch limit would increase by 85%, while the red hake limit would increase by 2.6%. For southern Georges Bank, Southern New England, and the Mid-Atlantic, silver hake catch limits would decline by 8.2%. Red hake catch limits would decrease by 2.4%. Except for northern red hake, where overfishing was occurring in 2013, no overfishing is occurring on any stock and all stocks are above minimum biomass thresholds.

Other measures may include changes in the northern red hake possession limits to reduce the risk of future overfishing. Lower possession limits are expected to discourage targeting red hake in the Gulf of Maine and encourage vessels to avoid areas of high red hake catches when targeting silver hake.