



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Groundfish: Council Approves Framework 59; Receives Progress Report on Monitoring Amendment 23

During its early December meeting in Newport, RI, the New England Fishery Management Council approved Framework Adjustment 59 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Among other provisions, the framework includes 2020-2022 specifications for 15 groundfish stocks in the Northeast multispecies complex, as well as total allowable catches (TACs) for three groundfish resources on Georges Bank that the U.S. shares with Canada.

Also on the groundfish end, the Council received:

- A presentation from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) on the recent operational assessments for 14 groundfish stocks – the report and presentation are available [here](#);
- A report from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the SSC's overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendations for groundfish stocks and Atlantic sea scallops – the presentation and related documents can be found [here](#);
- A progress report on Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23;
- A report on this spring's recreational public listening sessions, which were held to gauge interest in whether the Council should pursue developing a limited access program for the groundfish party and charter

### Commercial Groundfish Sub-Annual Catch Limits (sub-ACLs) in Metric Tons with Percentage Change Fishing Year 2019 vs. Proposed Fishing Year 2020

1. Sub-ACLs are for sectors/common pool combined.
2. Georges Bank cod reflects updated information from the NEFSC.
3. Stocks marked \*\* will be revisited by the SSC for further consideration and are subject to change.

#### Commercial groundfish sub-ACL

Stock		FY2019 (adjusted for FY2017 overages*)	Proposed FY2020	% Change
Allocated Stocks	GB Cod	1,568	1,073	-32%
	GOM Cod*	360	275	-24%
	GB Haddock**	53,276	69,521	+30%
	GOM Haddock**	8,312	7,020	-16%
	GB Yellowtail Flounder	85	95	+12%
	SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	32	15	-53%
	CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	398	688	+73%
	American Plaice**	1,467	2,630	+79%
	Witch Flounder	854	1,310	+53%
	GB Winter Flounder	774	522	-33%
	GOM Winter Flounder	355	287	-19%
	SNE/MA Winter Flounder	518	539	+4%
	Redfish	10,972	11,231	+2%
	White Hake	2,735	2,019	-26%
	Pollock**	37,400	13,895	-63%
Non-allocated Stocks	GOM/GB Windowpane Flounder	63	38	-40%
	SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder	53	48	-9%
	Ocean Pout	94	92	-2%
	Atlantic Halibut	75	77	+3%
	Atlantic Wolffish	82	82	0%

**KEY:** Georges Bank (GB); Gulf of Maine (GOM); Southern New England (SNE); Mid-Atlantic (MA); and Cape Cod (CC). – NEFMC graphic



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fishery – a summary of the sessions is available [here](#); and

- An overview of the October 2019 New England Recreational Fishing Workshops conducted by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) – visit [here](#) to view the presentation and preliminary workshop summaries.

## Framework Adjustment 59

The proposed specifications in Framework 59 are based on OFL and ABC recommendations from the Council's SSC, which developed this advice using:

1. Results from the latest peer-reviewed groundfish assessments; and
2. Input from the Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT).

The Council then used the SSC's recommendations to determine catch limits for 2020-2022, although it did vote to send the

ABCs for four stocks – Gulf of Maine haddock, Georges Bank haddock, American plaice, and pollock – back to the SSC for reconsideration. In short, the SSC supported a “constant catch” approach for these stocks, keeping the ABC fixed for all three fishing years. The Council asked the SSC to review whether to maintain this approach or allow the ABC to change based on the catch associated with 75% of the fishing mortality rate at the stock's maximum sustainable yield (MSY). This second approach is part of the default ABC control rule for groundfish in Amendment 16 and would result in higher catch limits compared to the constant catch approach. All four stocks are healthy and well above their spawning stock biomass targets based on the latest assessments.

The Council agreed in advance to accept the SSC's final recommendations for the four stocks “without objection” following this ABC review in order to prevent a delay in implementation, which is targeted for May 1, the start of the 2020 groundfish fishing year pending NOAA Fisheries review and approval.

### Groundfish Sub-Annual Catch Limits (sub-ACLs) for Other Fisheries in Metric Tons with Percentage Change Fishing Year 2019 vs. Proposed Fishing Year 2020

Fishery	Stock	FY2019 sub-ACL	Proposed FY2020	% Change
Recreational Groundfish	GOM Cod	220	193	-12%
	GOM Haddock**	3,194	3,634	+14%
Sea Scallop	GB Yellowtail Flounder	17	19	+12%
	SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	15	2	-87%
	GOM/GB Windowpane Flounder	18	12	-33%
	SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder	158	143	-9%
Midwater Trawl	GB Haddock**	811	1,396	+72%
	GOM Haddock**	116	107	-8%
Small-Mesh	GB Yellowtail Flounder	2	2	0%
Other Sub-Component	SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder	218	196	-10%

**Stocks marked \*\* will be revisited by the SSC for further consideration and are subject to change.** – New England Fishery Management Council graphic

### Proposed Fishing Year 2020 U.S./Canada Total TACs in Metric Tons (mt)

Total Allowable Catches (TACs)	Eastern Georges Bank Cod	Eastern Georges Bank Haddock	Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder
<b>Total Shared Catch</b>	650 mt	30,000 mt	162 mt
<b>U.S. TAC and Percentage Share</b>	188.5 mt 29% of total	16,200 mt 54% of total	120 mt 74% of total
<b>Canada TAC and Percentage Share</b>	461.5 mt 71% of total	13,800 mt 46% of total	42 mt 26% of total

Percentage shares for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and for the management units of Eastern Georges Bank cod and Eastern Georges Bank haddock are determined as follows: historical catches are weighted 10%; and resource distribution based on trawl surveys is weighted 90%.



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As part of the framework, the Council also voted to:

- Revise the allocation between the commercial and recreational fisheries for Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock based on the new 2019 assessments for those stocks, which used updated data from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP);
- Revise the Georges Bank cod incidental catch TAC to remove the allocation to the Closed Area I Hook Gear Haddock Special Access Program; and
- Increase the Atlantic herring midwater trawl fishery's sub-ACL for Georges Bank haddock from 1.5% to 2% of the U.S. ABC for the stock.

## Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23

The Council spent time reviewing the latest updates to Groundfish Monitoring [Amendment 23](#), which is being developed to improve the reliability and accountability of catch reporting in the commercial groundfish fishery. The Council is working to ensure that both landings and discards are precisely and

accurately represented in the fishery. Proposals under consideration include a wide range of potential sector monitoring standards and tools, monitoring coverage levels, reporting provisions, possible use of dockside monitoring, and much more.



*"It is the Council's intent that the catch reporting requirements are fair and equitable 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."*

*– Draft Amendment 23*

At its January 28-30, 2020 meeting in Portsmouth, NH, the Council will approve the Amendment 23 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) containing the full range of alternatives going out to public hearing this spring. The Council also will approve preliminary preferred alternatives in January.

- Visit the Amendment 23 [webpage](#).
- All groundfish-related materials using during the Council's December meeting can be found [here](#).
- Questions? Contact Dr. Jamie Cournane, the Council's groundfish plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 103, [jcournane@nefmc.org](mailto:jcournane@nefmc.org).

*A groundfish gillnetter using electronic monitoring on the trip in lieu of a human, at-sea monitor. – The Nature Conservancy photo*