



# New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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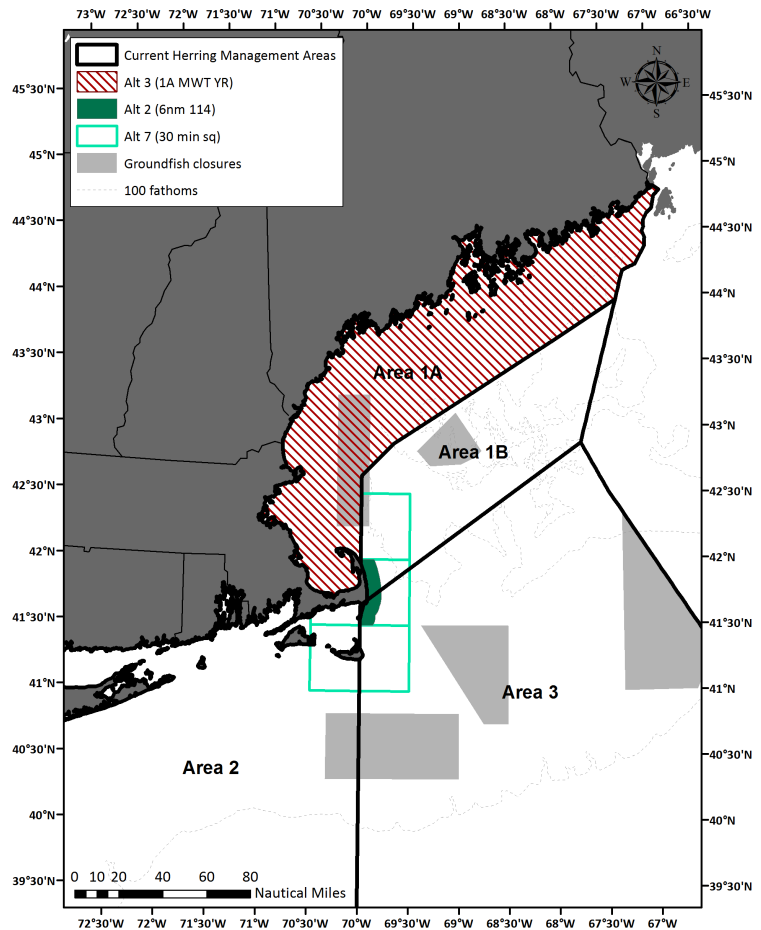
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## Council Approves Atlantic Herring Alternatives for Analysis

During its April 18-20 meeting in Mystic, CT, the New England Fishery Management Council reviewed Draft Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and subsequently approved a wide range of alternatives for further analysis. The alternatives fall into two categories: (1) proposals to address potential localized depletion and user conflicts in the fishery; and (2) options to establish an acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rule that would be used when setting specifications and catch limits.

The Council advanced **nine primary localized depletion/user conflicts alternatives** for additional development:

- **Alternative 1** – No action, meaning no new measures would be implemented;
- **Alternative 2** – A June 1-August 31 closure to all vessels and gear types fishing for Atlantic herring within 6 nautical miles (nm) from shore in Area 114 (solid green area off the back of Cape Cod in map at right);
- **Alternative 3** – A *year-round* prohibition on using midwater trawl gear in Atlantic Herring Management Area 1A (red hatching in map);
- **Alternatives 4, 5, and 6** – Three “buffer zone” proposals that would prohibit midwater trawl gear inside of 12 nm, 25 nm, and 50 nm respectively in Herring Management Areas 1B, 2, and 3 *year-round* from Cape Cod to the North/South Carolina border (see map next page);
- **Alternative 7** – A prohibition on midwater trawl gear *year-round* within five different thirty minute squares – 99, 100, 114, 115, and 123 (green outlined blocks in map at right);
- **Alternative 8** – Revert to original boundary line between Area 1B and 3 (see map page 3);
- **Alternative 9** – Modify the Area 1B seasonal closure to open January 1 instead of May 1.



Pictured above, localized depletion/user conflict Alternative 3 (red hatching), Alternative 2 (solid green), and Alternative 7 (green outlined blocks). Details in text at left.

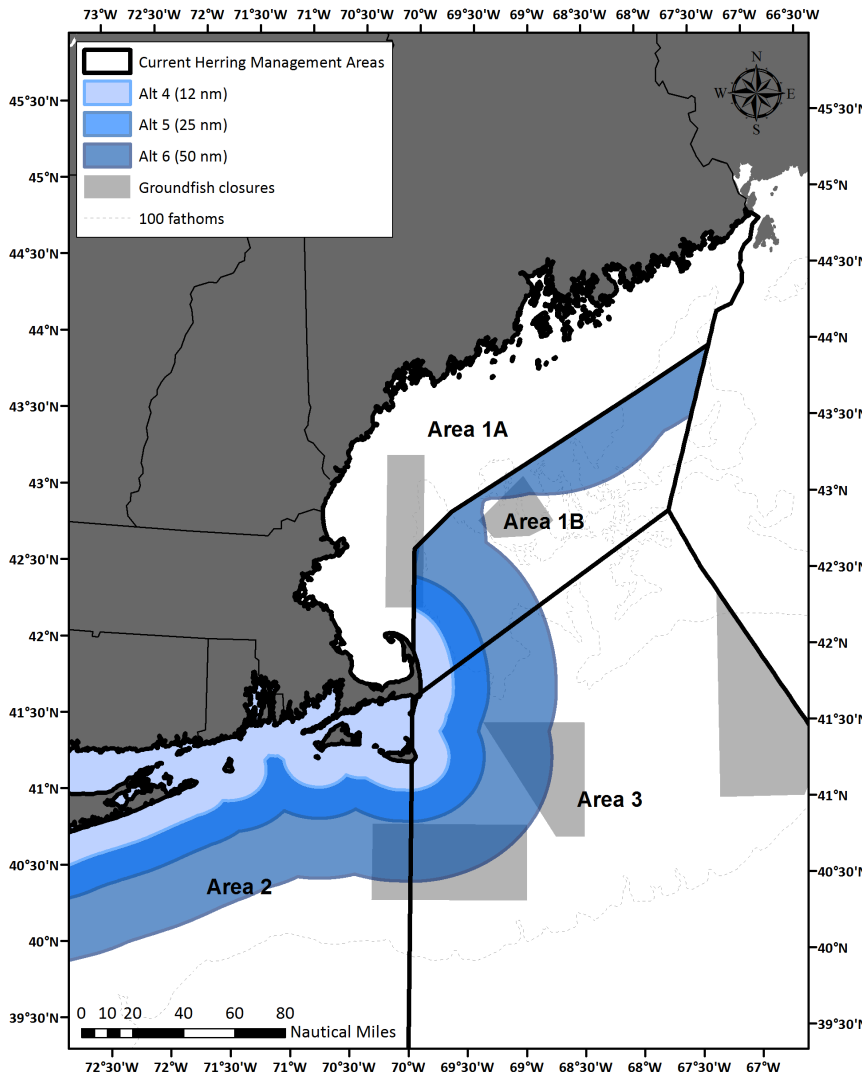
– NEFMC graphic



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Also related to potential localized depletion and user conflicts, the Council voted to:

- Add a **seasonal sub-option** to Alternatives 4-7 that would prohibit midwater trawl gear from June through September instead of year-round in the 12 nm, 25 nm, and 50 nm buffer zones and the five identified 30 minute square blocks; and
- Add a **spatial sub-option** to remove Herring Management Area 2 from Alternatives 4-7, which means a midwater trawling prohibition would apply *only* to Area 1B and Area 3 if this sub-option is selected.



Color coded above are Buffer Zone Alternatives 4, 5, and 6, which could be applied year-round or seasonally, where midwater trawl gear would be prohibited inside 12 nautical mile (nm), 25 nm, or 50 nm zones in Herring Management Areas 1B, 2, and 3 from Cape Cod to the North/South Carolina border. – NEMFC graphic

- Add a **seasonal sub-option** to Alternative 2 that would expand the 6 nm closure of Area 114 to June 1-Oct. 31.

## IMPORTANT POINTS

For clarification purposes, the Council said it intended to:

- Maintain the current June-September prohibition on midwater trawling in Area 1A regardless of which options are chosen (NOTE: Area 1A also is closed to directed fishing by all gear types from January through May); and
- Allow research set-aside (RSA) compensation fishing to be exempt from all area restrictions.

*Amendment 8 states, "In general, localized depletion is when harvesting takes more fish than can be replaced either locally or through fish migrating into the catch area within a given time period."*

*Scoping comments for this amendment identified concerns that localized depletion "may cause detrimental socioeconomic impacts on other user groups that depend on adequate local availability of herring to support business and recreational interests."*

*The Council said it "intends to further explore these concerns through examination of the best available science ..."*



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## Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Used to Develop ABC Control Rule

The Council is continuing to work on an ABC control rule through the MSE process – a collaborative decision-making approach that utilizes more input and analysis upfront and involves all stakeholders.

Control rules are used by fishery managers to set catch limits. Back in 2015, the Council initiated Amendment 8 specifically to develop and implement a long-term ABC control rule that: (1) addresses the biological needs of the resource; and (2) considers the ecological importance of Atlantic herring, including its role as a forage species.

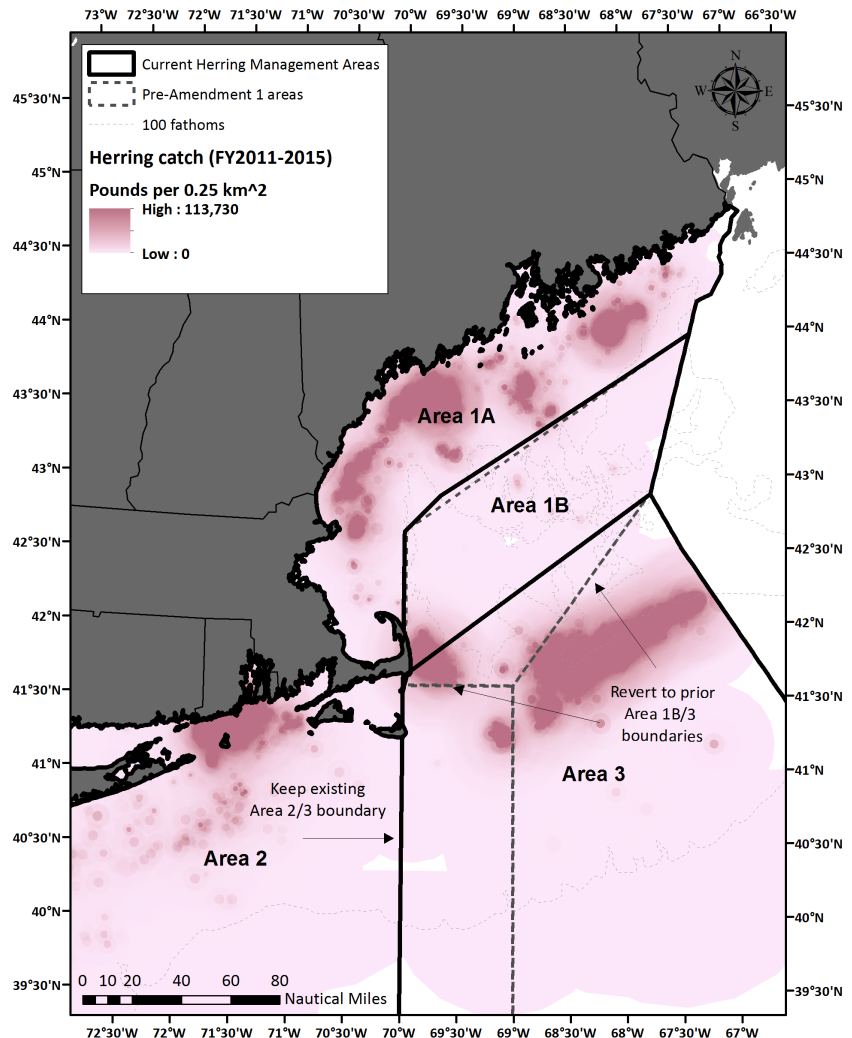
The Council hosted two, well-attended MSE workshops – one in May 2016 and another in December 2016. Thousands of potential ABC control rules came out of the initial model runs.

On April 20, however, the Council whittled the number of options down to nine based on advice from workshop attendees and the Atlantic Herring Committee, Advisory Panel, and Plan Development Team.

These nine options, which involve two different biomass-based types of control rules to determine ABC either through one-year or three-year approaches, will be more fully developed and analyzed for further consideration.

The Council is tentatively expected to select preferred alternatives for public hearing at its September meeting.

*For more information, contact Atlantic Herring Plan Coordinator Deirdre Boelke at (978) 465-0492 ext. 105, [dboelke@nefmc.org](mailto:dboelke@nefmc.org).*



**Localized depletion/user conflict Alternative 8:** The solid black lines in the map above outline the current herring management area boundaries. Alternative 8 proposes to revert the Area 1B/3 boundary to pre-Amendment 1 coordinates but maintain the Area 2/3 boundary as it stands today. If approved, this alternative would substantially expand the size of Area 1B and commensurately reduce Area 3 to encompass less inshore water. Herring catches are shown in pink. The darker patches indicate areas with higher catches. – NEFMC graphic