



New England Fishery Management Council

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Groundfish: Council Recommends 2023 Recreational Cod and Haddock Measures; Revises Halibut ABC in Framework 65

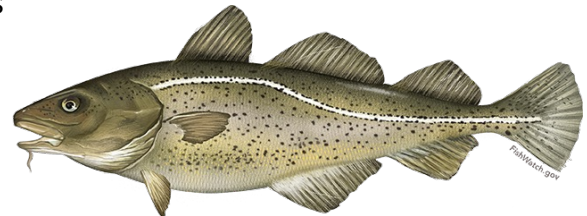
During its [January 24-26, 2023](#) meeting in Portsmouth, NH, the New England Fishery Management Council voted on a suite of recreational fishing measures for Gulf of Maine cod, Gulf of Maine haddock, and Georges Bank cod that it will recommend to NOAA Fisheries for the 2023 fishing year. The Council also received:

- A revised recommendation from its Scientific and Statistical Committee regarding fishing year 2023-2025 acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for Atlantic halibut, which the Council approved and incorporated into Framework Adjustment 65;
- A progress report on work being conducted to develop metrics to evaluate the groundfish monitoring program in Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan; and
- An update on the [2023 Atlantic Cod Research Track Stock Assessment](#).

~ Recreational Measures ~

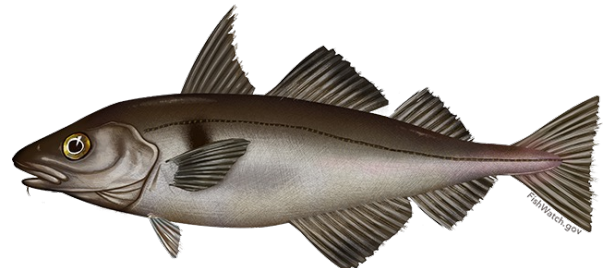
Here are the Council's recommendations for recreational measures for the 2023 fishing year, which begins on May 1 (more information about the process at right).

- **Gulf of Maine Cod:**
 - Open Season: September 1-October 31, 2023
 - Bag Limit: one fish per day
 - Minimum Size: 22 inches
- **Gulf of Maine Haddock:**
 - Open Season: May 1, 2023 through February 28, 2024 and April 1-30, 2024, leaving only March 2024 closed to recreational fishing for this stock
 - Bag Limit: 15 fish per day
 - Minimum Size: 18 inches



Recreational fishing measures for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock take the form of bag limits, minimum sizes, and seasons. The measures are determined annually by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) of NOAA Fisheries in consultation with the Council.

The Council and GARFO aim to achieve but not exceed each stock's sub-annual catch limit (sub-ACL). The proposed 2023 recreational sub-ACL for Gulf of Maine cod is 192 metric tons (mt). For Gulf of Maine haddock, the sub-ACL is 610 mt, which represents an 83% decline from the 2022 fishing year.





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- **Georges Bank Cod:**

- Open Season: May 1-31, 2023 and September 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024, meaning June, July, and August 2023 will be closed
- Bag Limit: five fish per day
- Minimum Size: 23 inches
- Catch Target: The 2023 recreational catch target for Georges Bank cod is 113 mt. The measures in the three bullets above are expected to keep the recreational fishery within its catch target.



Before making these recommendations, the Council's Groundfish Committee and Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) met the week before the Council meeting and reviewed [extensive information](#) from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and the Groundfish Plan Development Team for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock, as well as Georges Bank cod.

The Council considered additional information on January 25, 2023 before casting its vote on the recommendations. GARFO will make the final determination for 2023 recreational measures. The agency fully considers the Council's recommendations.

Atlantic Halibut in Framework Adjustment 65

The New England Council signed off on [Framework Adjustment 65](#) to the groundfish plan during its December 2022 meeting. The framework contains the Council's specifications and other measures for the 2023 fishing year and beyond.

In early January, the Council received a letter from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center informing the Council that an error was detected in the recent [Atlantic Halibut Management Track Stock Assessment](#) (this link leads to the corrected assessment document). The correction to the error resulted in a potential 11 mt increase in the acceptable biological catch for this stock, bumping the ABC up from 149 mt to 160 mt.



The Scientific and Statistical Committee considered the revised information and recommended the ABC be increased to 160 mt, which the Council supported and incorporated into Framework 65.



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Amendment 23 Metrics: The Council developed [Amendment 23](#) to revise and improve the accuracy of the groundfish monitoring program. NOAA Fisheries implemented the amendment on [January 9, 2023](#). The amendment sets the at-sea monitoring [coverage target at 100%](#) for four years provided federal funding can support industry and agency costs to cover this level of monitoring. The requirement can be carried out using human at-sea monitors or electronic monitoring (EM).

Amendment 23 included a provision requiring a review of the monitoring program after two full years of data are collected. The Council currently is developing a list of metrics for the review to gauge how well the monitoring program improved accuracy of the data collected while maximizing value and minimizing costs.

The Council received a [progress report](#) on the metrics work during its January meeting. Additional details are available in this Groundfish Plan Development Team [memo](#). Also, read the Draft Amendment 23 Review Metrics [Discussion Paper](#) for more information.

What is a Metric?

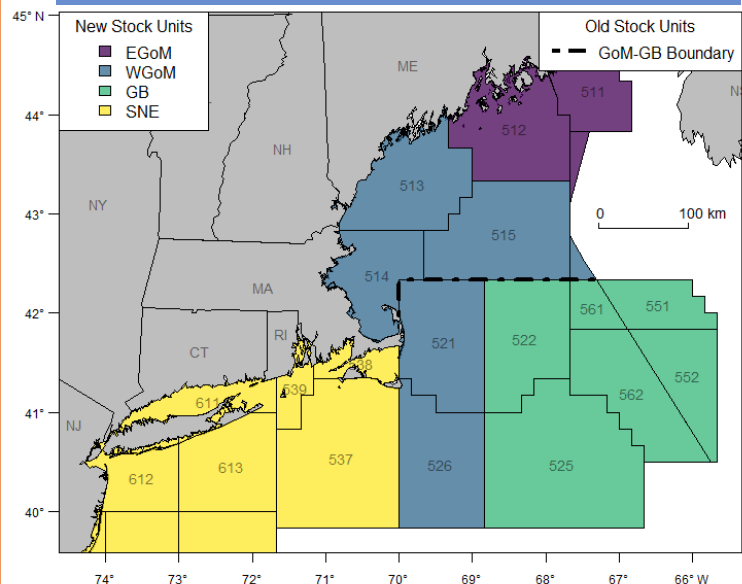
Q: What is a metric?

A: A metric is a quantifiable measure that is used to track, compare, and assess performance or processes.

Q: What is an example of a metric that could be used to gauge the success of the groundfish monitoring program?

A: The Council may want to analyze overall industry and NOAA Fisheries costs for meeting the monitoring requirements, including a cost comparison between EM-monitored trips and human at-sea monitored trips. It also may want to assess the true cost of monitoring at much higher targets by sea days, not days absent.

Atlantic Cod Stock Structure Existing Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank Units Versus the New Four-Stock Thinking



Atlantic Cod Stock Structure: Finally, the Council received a [progress report](#) on the 2023 Atlantic Cod Research Track Stock Assessment. The [working group](#) for this assessment is considering new information indicating that Atlantic cod may be made up of four stock units instead of simply Gulf of Maine cod and Georges Bank cod (see map above for new units). The peer review meeting for this research track assessment will be held [July 31-August 3, 2023](#). As a priority, the Council will be developing a transition plan for Atlantic cod management to shift from the current two stock units to four or five units. The work will include addressing allocation issues and considering potential new measures to protect cod spawning.

Questions? Contact Groundfish Plan Coordinator Dr. Jamie Cournane at jcournane@nefmc.org.