



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Council Recommends 2024 Recreational Measures for Cod and Haddock; Discusses Upcoming Atlantic Cod Transition Plan

The New England Fishery Management Council voted on recreational fishing measures for three groundfish stocks when it met [January 30-February 1, 2024](#) in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The proposed measures, which are in the form of recommendations to NOAA Fisheries, include bag limits, fishing seasons, and minimum fish sizes for Gulf of Maine cod, Gulf of Maine haddock, and Georges Bank cod. NOAA Fisheries will strive to implement final measures by May 1, which is the start of the 2024 fishing year for groundfish.

The Council also received a [presentation](#) from NOAA Fisheries on its Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), which included a status update on the agency's [Fishing Effort Survey Pilot Study](#) and next steps.

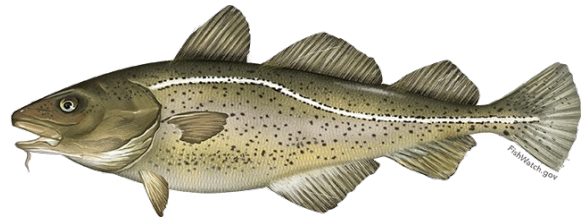
Additionally, the Council:

- Discussed the upcoming management track stock assessments for the four new Atlantic cod biological units and received an overview of what to expect next with the [Atlantic Cod Transition Plan](#);
- Received a progress report on the Groundfish Plan Development Team's work to [develop metrics](#) to evaluate the groundfish monitoring program in Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan; and
- Reviewed a [quarterly outlook](#) for the year ahead.

### ~ Recreational Measures ~

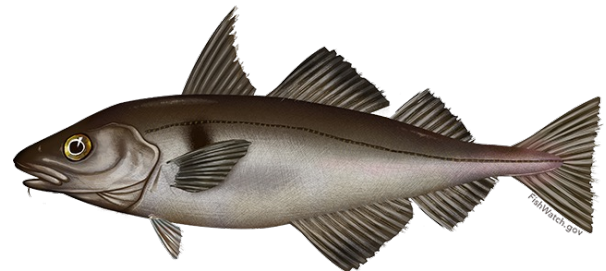
Here are the Council's recommendations for recreational measures for the 2024 fishing year. More information about the process is outlined in orange at right.

- **Gulf of Maine Cod:**
  - Open Season: September 1-October 31, 2024
  - Bag Limit: one fish per day
  - Minimum Size: 23 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 2024 recreational sub-ACL for Gulf of Maine cod is 192 metric tons (mt). For Gulf of Maine haddock, the sub-ACL is 759 mt.*





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- **Gulf of Maine Haddock:**

- Open Season: May 1, 2024 through February 28, 2025 and April 1-30, 2025, leaving only March 2025 closed to recreational fishing
- Bag Limit: 15 fish per day
- Minimum Size: 18 inches

- **Georges Bank Cod (Status Quo from 2023 Fishing Year):**

- Open Season: May 1-31, 2024 and September 1, 2024 through April 30, 2025, meaning June, July, and August 2024 will be closed
- Bag Limit: five fish per day
- Minimum Size: 23 inches
- Catch Target: The 2024 recreational catch target for Georges Bank cod is 113 metric tons. The measures listed above are expected to keep the recreational fishery within this target.

**ATLANTIC COD ASSESSMENTS:** The four new Atlantic cod biological stock units (see map at right) will be undergoing management track stock assessments in [June 2024](#). As a first step, an assessment oversight panel (AOP) will meet on [February 28, 2024](#) to determine the level of review needed for each of these cod stocks and others on the [June assessment schedule](#).

Management track assessments are subject to different levels of peer review based on the complexity of the work needed (see slide 2 [here](#)). The Council voted to write a letter to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center requesting that the four Atlantic cod management track assessments have “robust external peer reviews.”

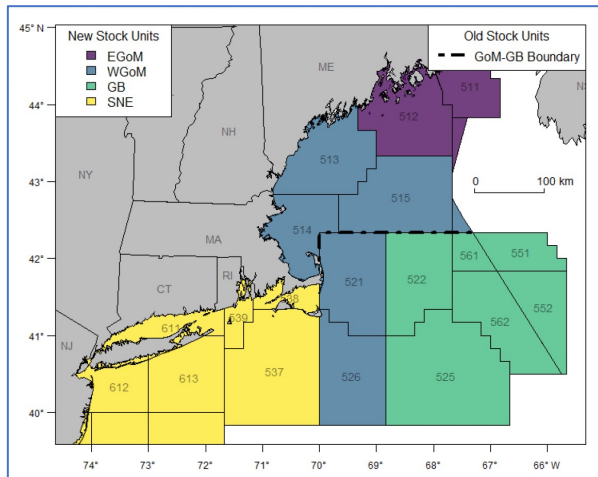
The Council cited several reasons for this request, including “the fact that these assessments incorporate a profound change in our understanding of cod stock structure and are the first time this new understanding will be used in management,” meaning for the 2025 fishing year.

~ **Questions? Contact Groundfish Plan Coordinator Dr. Jamie Cournane at [jcournane@nefmc.org](mailto:jcournane@nefmc.org). January 2024 Council meeting materials for groundfish are [posted here](#).** ~



Cod, haddock, and pollock caught on a research trip.  
– SMAST photo

## Atlantic Cod Four New Biological Stock Units



*The [2023 Atlantic Cod Research Track Stock Assessment](#) concluded that cod is better defined by four biological stock units: (1) Eastern Gulf of Maine; (2) Western Gulf of Maine (winter/spring spawners); (3) Georges Bank; and (4) Southern New England. Atlantic cod previously was assessed as two stocks: Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank.*