



New England Fishery Management Council

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Council Recommends 2018 Recreational Measures for Cod/Haddock and Revised Charter/Party Control Date

The New England Fishery Management Council yesterday asked the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to take three actions related to the recreational groundfish fishery, covering both the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank.

First, the Council voted to recommend that NMFS – also called NOAA Fisheries – implement “status quo” management measures for **Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock** for fishing year 2018, *unless* the Commonwealth of Massachusetts continues to allow private recreational anglers to retain one Gulf of Maine cod per trip in fishing year 2018. The status quo measures, which were supported by the Council’s Recreational Advisory Panel and Groundfish Committee, are:

- Gulf of Maine cod – zero possession year-round; and
- Gulf of Maine haddock – a 12-fish bag limit, 17 inch minimum size, a March 1 through April 14 haddock closed season, and a September 17 through October 31 haddock closed season.

If Massachusetts does *not* prohibit possession of Gulf of Maine cod by private anglers, then the Council recommends that NMFS implement split measures for the recreational fishery as follows.

- **Gulf of Maine cod:**
 - zero possession year-round;
- **Gulf of Maine haddock:**
 - **For Hire Fleet** – a 10-fish bag limit, 17 inch minimum size, and two haddock closed seasons: (a) March 1-April 14, and (b) September 17-October 31.
 - **Private Anglers** – a 12-fish bag limit, 17 inch minimum size, and three haddock closed seasons: (a) March 1-April 14; (b) May 1-31; and (c) September 17-October 31.



A double-tagged Atlantic cod (floy tag in yellow, acoustic tag in green) being measured on a cooperative research trip. – Dr. James Sulikowski lab, University of New England photo



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Second, for **Georges Bank cod**, the Council voted to recommend that NMFS implement a 10-fish bag limit for private, charter, and party boat anglers with an increase in the minimum size from 22 inches up to 24 inches.

In addition, at its December 2017 meeting, the Council finalized Framework Adjustment 57 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, which contains a temporary administrative measure to allow NMFS's Greater Atlantic Regional Administrator to adjust the recreational measures for Georges Bank cod for fishing years 2018 and 2019.

Framework 57 includes annual catch limits (ACLs) for the 2018 groundfish fishing year, which begins May 1. If approved by NMFS, the sub-ACLs for the recreational fishery will be:

- Gulf of Maine cod – 220 metric tons (mt); and
- Gulf of Maine haddock – 3,358 mt.

The limiting factor in the recreational fishery is the cod sub-ACL. Analyses indicate that recreational fishermen will not come near harvesting the full Gulf of Maine haddock sub-ACL. The overwhelming challenge in this fishery is catching haddock while avoiding cod.

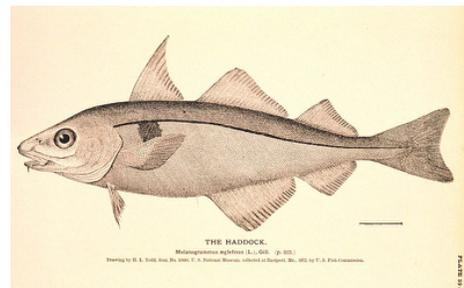
The Council makes *recommendations* to NMFS about recreational measures, but NMFS makes the final determination.

Charter/Party Fishery Control Date

Third, the Council requested that NMFS publish a revised control date for the charter/party groundfish fishery. The current control date is March 30, 2006. The new control date will be the actual day NMFS publishes a notice in the Federal Register, which may not occur for several weeks.

The Council agreed that it was important to “refresh” the control date, which will make it a more useful marker in determining activity in the fishery.

During its December meeting, the Council agreed to investigate whether limited entry should be adopted for the charter/party fishery. This item is one of the Council's multi-year groundfish priorities. Given this intent, the Council supported asking NMFS to publish a new control date.



Q: What does a control date do?

A: The control date puts the public on notice that future participation in the fishery might not be guaranteed for people who enter the fishery after the published date. However, the Council is not obligated to use the control date when developing qualification criteria.



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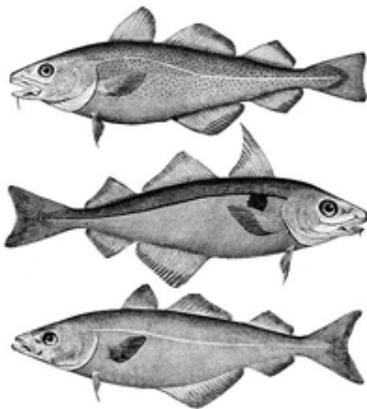
Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23 – Fishery Dependent Data Working Group

The Council received a quick progress report on Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23. The Groundfish Committee is expected to present a range of potential alternatives at the April Council meeting. The amendment is aimed at improving monitoring of both landings and discards in the commercial fishery.

The Council also received a brief update on the Executive Committee's recommendations for convening a Fishery Dependent Data Working Group. The group's charge is to discuss how fishery dependent data can be used to inform stock abundance. The Council agreed in December that establishing a working group would be a 2018 groundfish priority.

During its January 26 meeting, the Executive Committee determined that the group would consist of six scientists, two industry members, and two Council or NMFS staff members. Of the six scientists:

- Two will come from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center;
- Two others will be nominated by the science center; and
- Two will be nominated by the New England Council.



– NOAA graphic

The working group's consensus report will be reviewed by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, with the aim of presenting a preliminary report to the full Council at its June meeting.



– Northeast Fisheries Science Center photo

- Groundfish documents used during the Council's January 30-31, 2018 meeting can be found at <https://www.nefmc.org/library/january-2018-groundfish-committee-report>.
- The Council's groundfish webpage is located at <https://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/northeast-multispecies>.
- For more information contact Dr. Jamie Cournane, the Council's groundfish plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 103, jcournane@nefmc.org.