Council Schedules Three Facilitated Workshops to Solicit Public Input on Atlantic Cod Management Transition Plan

The New England Fishery Management Council will host three in-person public workshops to identify challenges and begin discussing ideas for how to address Atlantic cod management considering that, moving forward, Atlantic cod will be assessed as four biological stock units instead of two.

The Council used to receive stock assessments for Gulf of Maine cod and Georges Bank cod. It now will receive stock assessments for: (1) Western Gulf of Maine cod; (2) Georges Bank cod under new stock boundaries; (3) Eastern Gulf of Maine cod; and (4) Southern New England cod (see graphic below).

As a result, the Council must deal with these new biological stock units on a management level. The three workshops will offer fishermen and other stakeholders an opportunity to weigh in before the Council begins formulating alternatives under Phase 2 of the Atlantic Cod Management Transition Plan (see next page).

ATTEND A WORKSHOP IN MAINE, MASSACHUSETTS, OR RHODE ISLAND

- **Portland, Maine:** Tuesday, April 30, 2024 at the Westin Hotel, 157 High Street
- **Wakefield, Massachusetts:** Wednesday, May 1, 2024 at the Four Points by Sheraton, One Audubon Road
- **South Kingstown, Rhode Island:** Thursday, May 2, 2024 at the Hampton Inn, 20 Hotel Drive

➢ LEARN MORE: The workshop meeting notice is posted here. All three workshops begin at 9:30 a.m.
Workshop Goal and Objectives

**Workshop Goal:** Engage a cross-section of fishing industry members and other stakeholders to identify challenges and develop alternatives for addressing Atlantic cod management considering the new biological stock units.

**Workshop Objectives:**

- Focus on cod management transition planning based on the new understanding of five distinct biological cod stocks that will be assessed as four separate cod stocks for Eastern Gulf of Maine, Western Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern New England in June 2024.
- Learn from each other about the challenges and concerns for both short- and long-term management needs for Atlantic cod (see graphic below for steps under Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this work).
- Discuss possible management options for the Atlantic cod management transition plan to better reflect the new understanding of cod stock structure.

What is the Difference Between Phase 1 Versus Phase 2

For these workshops, the Council is primarily looking for feedback on Phase 2 of the Atlantic Cod Management Transition Plan. The workshops are a platform for gathering different perspectives on longer-term issues such as allocation of cod quota to groundfish sectors and other practical matters associated with fishing under the new understanding of cod stock structure. Here’s a short overview of the two phases of the Council’s work.

**PHASE 1:** This is the most immediate action needed under the transition plan. The Council must complete its annual framework adjustment to the groundfish plan to incorporate necessary management measures and catch limits in time for the May 1 start of the 2025 groundfish fishing year. This framework, which the Council will begin working on in June 2024, will include fishing year 2025-2027 catch limits for the four Atlantic cod stock units.

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**First draft of transition plan – January-June 2024**

**Second draft of transition plan – June-September 2024**

**Council approves transition plan – December 2024**

**Regional workshops (to inform Phase 2) - Spring 2024**

**Phase 1 – Implementation May 1, 2025**

**Phase 2 – Continue through 2025 and beyond**
**PHASE 2:** This is where the Council needs the most public input. The Council must develop a follow-on framework adjustment or amendment with a broader range of measures to consider a longer-term approach to its Atlantic Cod Management Transition Plan. This action may adopt new management units and include adjustments to allocations and other additional measures to protect spawning cod.

**IMPORTANT:** The in-person-only workshops will not be scoping specific management actions or making formal recommendations. These are a platform for discussions and gathering different perspectives. Here’s a high-level overview of the agenda. Revisiting the merits of the peer-reviewed cod stock structure will not be part of the workshops.

**MORNING SESSION**

- Groundfish Committee welcome;
- Workshop goals and guidelines;
- Understanding the science – How did we get here;
- Understanding the Council process – Where we are and where we are going;
- Overview of Phase 1 of transition plan – changes for 2025 – discuss concerns and challenges as Council advances Phase 1 and possible options;
- Overview of Phase 2, changes to occur after 2025 – define what needs to happen and potential approaches.

**AFTERNOON SESSION**

- Phase 2 breakout discussions – identify concerns and challenges as Council works on Phase 2 and possible options;
- Plenary discussion; and
- Next steps, then adjournment.

**Planning to Attend a Workshop?**

Help Us Out!

Everyone is welcome to attend a workshop, even if you don’t decide until the last minute. Just show up. However, if possible, please fill out this Google Form to let us know which workshop you’ll be attending – Portland, Wakefield, or South Kingstown. Early estimates of potential attendees will facilitate planning for each event.

**The Four New Biological Stock Units for Atlantic Cod**

Learn more here.