



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Groundfish: Council Takes Final Action on Framework 66 with Fishing Year 2024-2026 Specs; Halibut and Scallop AM Changes

The New England Fishery Management Council selected final measures for Framework Adjustment 66 to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan during its [December 5-7, 2023 meeting](#) in Newport, RI. The action, once approved and implemented by NOAA Fisheries, will guide the groundfish fishery for fishing year 2024.

Some of the Framework 66 provisions apply to fishing years 2025 and 2026 as well. Each new groundfish fishing year begins on May 1.



### What's in Framework 66? Key Components At-a-Glance

The framework includes:

- Fishing year 2024 and 2025 total allowable catches for three shared U.S./Canada resources – Eastern Georges Bank cod, Eastern Georges Bank haddock, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder (see table on page 2);
- Fishing year 2024 and 2025 specifications for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder, whitehake, and Gulf of Maine haddock;
- Fishing year 2024, 2025, and 2026 specifications for Acadian redfish, northern windowpane flounder, and southern windowpane flounder;

#### Commercial Groundfish Sub-Annual Catch Limits (sub-ACLs) in Metric Tons with Percentage Change for Fishing Year 2023 vs. Proposed for Fishing Year 2024

Sub-ACLs are for sectors  
and the common pool  
fishery combined.

	Stock	Commercial groundfish sub-ACL		
		FY2023	Proposed FY2024	% Change
Allocated Stocks	GB Cod	375	386.1	3%
	GOM Cod	279	281.3	1%
	GB Haddock	11,080	6,570.9	-41%
	GOM Haddock (in FW65)	1,208	1,435.1	19%
	GOM Haddock Emergency Action	1,569	1,435.1	-9%
	GB Yellowtail Flounder	84	56.1	-33%
	SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	33	33.4	1%
	CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	985	876.4	-11%
	American Plaice	5,360	5,191.6	-3%
	Witch Flounder	1,145	1,145.5	0%
	GB Winter Flounder	1,634	1,487.5	-9%
	GOM Winter Flounder	607	607.2	0%
	SNE/MA Winter Flounder	441	440.8	0%
	Redfish	9,469	7,891.7	-17%
	White Hake	1,826	1,828.1	0%
	Pollock	13,124	12,183.6	-7%
Non-allocated Stocks	GOM/GB Windowpane Flounder	105	93.6	-11%
	SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder	45	29.7	-34%
	Ocean Pout	49	49.0	0%
	Atlantic Halibut	64	58.2	-9%
	Atlantic Wolffish	87	86.5	-1%

KEY: Georges Bank (GB); Gulf of Maine (GOM); Southern New England (SNE); Mid-Atlantic (MA); and Cape Cod (CC).



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- A subcomponent analysis that led to adjustments in groundfish quotas for Gulf of Maine cod, Gulf of Maine haddock, white hake, northern windowpane flounder, southern windowpane flounder, and Atlantic halibut based on accounting for catches in state waters and other federal fisheries;
- Removal of the management uncertainty buffer for sectors for white hake and Gulf of Maine haddock until the next specifications cycles and assessments for these stocks in 2025 and 2024, respectively, if the at-sea monitoring target coverage rate is set at 90% or greater;
- Atlantic halibut management revisions to address the impacts of large swings in Canadian halibut catch on U.S. management actions; and
- Temporary modification of the trigger for the Atlantic sea scallop accountability measures implementation policy for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder.

**PROPOSED CATCH LIMITS:** Tables showing revised overfishing limits (OFLs), acceptable biological catches (ABCs), annual catch limits (ACLs), and sub-ACLs for all groundfish stocks for fishing years 2024, 2025, and 2026 can be found [in this document](#) beginning on page 8.

Comparisons between fishing year 2023 sub-ACLs and proposed 2024 sub-ACLs for commercial groundfish sectors and the common pool fishery combined are shown in the table on page 1 of this news release. The table at right shows changes for the recreational fishery and other fisheries with catches of groundfish.



Atlantic halibut

## Atlantic Halibut Trigger for Accountability Measures

Framework 66 modifies the trigger for Atlantic halibut accountability measures (AMs). When AMs are triggered, area closures are implemented [as shown here](#) and possession of halibut is not

### Groundfish Sub-Annual Catch Limits (sub-ACLs) for Other Fisheries in Metric Tons with Percentage Change for Fishing Year 2023 vs. Proposed Fishing Year 2024

Fishery	Stock	FY2023	Draft FY2024	% Change
Recreational Groundfish	GOM Cod	192	192	0%
	GOM Haddock FW65	610	759	24%
	GOM Haddock Emergency Action	793	759	-4%
Sea Scallop	GB Yellowtail Flounder	16.5	11	-33%
	SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	2.7	2.7	0%
	GOM/GB Windowpane Flounder	31	26.6	-14%
	SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder	129	71.3	-45%
Midwater Trawl	GB Haddock	221	131	-41%
	GOM Haddock FW65	18	22	22%
	GOM Haddock Emergency Action	23	22	-4%
Small-Mesh	GB Yellowtail Flounder	2	1.3	-35%
Other Sub-components – Large-Mesh Non-Groundfish <sup>1</sup>	SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder	184	98	-47%

<sup>1</sup> The other sub-component for SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder is used to evaluate AMs for large-mesh non-groundfish trawl fisheries (e.g., summer flounder and scup trawl fisheries).

### Proposed Fishing Year 2024 U.S./Canada TACs in Metric Tons (mt)

Total Allowable Catches (TACs)	Eastern Georges Bank Cod	Eastern Georges Bank Haddock	Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared Catch	520 mt	10,000 mt	168 mt
U.S. TAC and Percentage Share	151 mt 29% of total	3,100 mt 31% of total	71 mt 42% of total
Canada TAC and Percentage Share	369 mt 71% of total	6,900 mt 69% of total	97 mt 58% of total

U.S./Canada allocation shares for 2024 are based on the following formula: (a) historical catches are weighted 10%; and (b) resource distribution based on trawl surveys is weighted 90%.



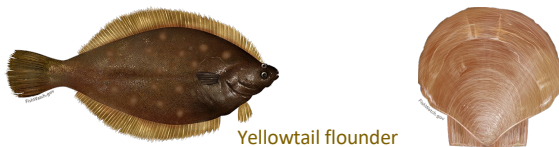
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allowed for most federal fisheries. Changing the AM trigger will eliminate the potential situation where U.S. fisheries are unnecessarily penalized for higher than anticipated Canadian catch.

Atlantic halibut is a non-allocated groundfish stock in the U.S. under the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Catches are limited to one fish per vessel per trip with a 41" minimum fish size.

The Atlantic halibut stock area includes Canadian waters adjacent to the U.S. The two countries do not jointly manage the resource, but the U.S. accounts for Canadian catches when setting the U.S. ABC. It does so by first subtracting estimated Canadian catches from the overall ABC for the full stock area. From this reduced number, the U.S. sets its specifications.

Under Framework 66, if the U.S. ABC is exceeded but the overall ABC is **not** exceeded, accountability measures for Atlantic halibut will not be triggered. More information is available in this Groundfish Plan Development Team [Atlantic halibut memo](#) and [here on page 12](#).



Yellowtail flounder

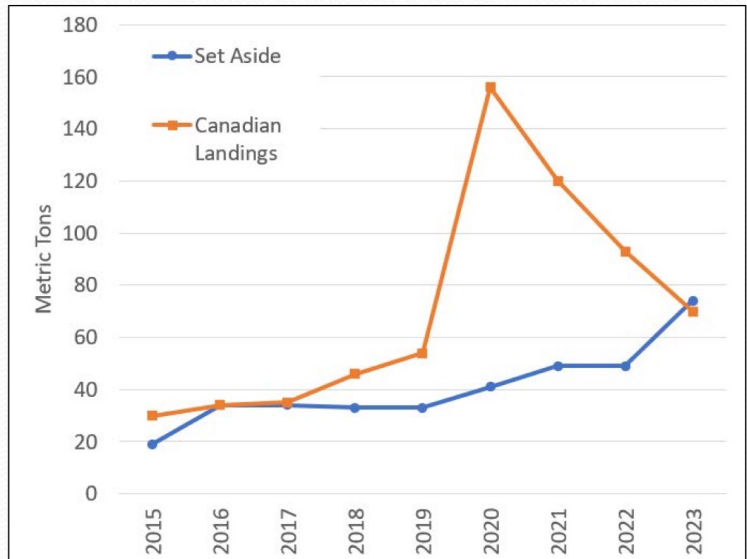
## Atlantic Sea Scallop AM Modification for Yellowtail Flounder

The groundfish plan contains an AM implementation policy that triggers accountability measures for the scallop fishery when it exceeds a sub-ACL beyond certain thresholds for yellowtail flounder or windowpane flounder stocks.

The scallop fishery currently is operating under a reactive AM due to sub-ACL overages for northern windowpane flounder and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder in 2021. The AM requires use of modified dredge gear when fishing in Area II. It has been in place for the 2022 and 2023 scallop fishing years and likely will be in place in fishing year 2024 due to continued overages of the northern windowpane sub-ACL.

Framework 66 includes a temporary modification to the AM trigger for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder. Under this temporary change, which applies only to catches in the 2024 and 2025 fishing years, an AM

### Canadian Landings of Atlantic Halibut



*Atlantic halibut landings in Canada are tabulated by calendar year. The 2023 landings shown above are preliminary and based on data as of November 9, 2023 (personal communications with Fisheries and Oceans Canada). The blue line depicts the Council's projected estimate of Canadian landings based on recent catch history in the Atlantic halibut stock area. This is known as the set aside. The orange line shows actual annual Canadian landings.*



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will be implemented only if: (1) the scallop fishery exceeds its sub-ACL for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder; and (2) the overall ACL is also exceeded. Additional information is available on [pages 13 and 14 here](#).

The Council has made it a [2024 priority](#) under both groundfish and scallops to review yellowtail flounder and windowpane flounder sub-ACLs overall and the AM triggers that apply to the scallop fishery.

## Scientific and Statistical Committee and Assessment Reports

Before the Council took final action on Framework 66, it first received the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) recommendations on OFLs and ABCs for Gulf of Maine haddock, Acadian redfish, northern windowpane flounder, southern windowpane flounder, and white hake.

- The SSC's presentation is [available here](#). Related memos are posted [on this webpage](#).

### Recent Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and Scallop Fishery Sub-ACLs and Catches

Groundfish Fishing Year	Total Shared TAC	US % Share	US TAC	% US TAC Caught	Scallop sub-ACL	Scallop catch	%Scallop sub-ACL Caught
FY2018	300	71%	213	20%	33	12.7	38%
FY2019	140	76%	106	4.6%	<u>1.8</u>	1.7	96%
FY2020	162	74%	120	7%	18.6	1.5	7.9%
FY2021	125	64%	80	25.2%	12	29.1	242.6%
FY2022	200	61%	122	7.1%	19	7.8	40.8

**Note:** Retention of Georges Bank yellowtail is prohibited in the scallop fishery. The fishing year 2019 sub-ACL (underlined above) accounts for a 15.2-metric-ton mid-year transfer of yellowtail from the scallop fishery to the groundfish fishery.

The Council also received a [presentation](#) from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center on the [peer-reviewed results](#) of the September 2023 Management Track Stock Assessments, which, among other stocks, included Acadian redfish (pictured below), northern windowpane flounder, and southern windowpane flounder. Acadian redfish and southern windowpane are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The status of northern windowpane is unknown based on the recommendations of the 2023 peer review panel.

**Other Actions:** The Council received a very brief update on work being conducted for two other important groundfish actions: (1) [Framework Adjustment 68](#), which is being developed to consider adjustments to the

Council's ABC control rules for groundfish; and (2) the Atlantic Cod Management Transition Plan, which is focused on how to address cod management given the [2023 Atlantic Cod Research Track Assessment](#) conclusion that cod is made up of four biological units. More to come on both actions!



### QUESTIONS? NEED MORE INFO?

- Contact Groundfish Plan Coordinator Dr. Jamie Cournane at (978) 465-0492 ext. 103, [jcournane@nefmc.org](mailto:jcournane@nefmc.org). Or contact
- Robin Frede at (978) 465-0492 ext. 124, [rfrede@nefmc.org](mailto:rfrede@nefmc.org).
- Groundfish materials used during [this meeting](#) are posted [HERE](#). Visit the Council's [groundfish webpage](#). Documents related to the 2024 Council Priorities discussion are [here](#).