

## NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

### Habitat

#### I. STATUS

##### MEETINGS AND ONGOING WORK

The Habitat Committee met on December 4. With respect to gear modification options, the Committee did not recommend moving forward with any of the trawl ground cable recommendations developed by the advisory panel. They did request that the PDT develop a data collection protocol to enable such information to be used in future management actions, and suggested that gear modifications be made frameworkable (motions 1-3 in Document 1). They also asked the PDT to develop a suite of gear modifications for scallop dredges in the Great South Channel, should closure of GSC areas to scallop dredge gear be an alternative in the amendment (motion 4). They also asked the PDT to evaluate modified boundaries for the GSC areas (motion 5).

With respect to Dedicated Habitat Research Areas, the Committee recommended further development of three specific areas: (1) western Gulf of Maine on and east of Stellwagen Bank, (2) central Georges Bank near Closed Area I, and (3) eastern Maine offshore of Mt. Desert Island (motions 6, 7, and 9). They also recommended that research areas sunset after 3 years if work has not been initiated (motion 8).

The Habitat PDT held a conference call on January 15 and an in-person meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss the issues raised by the Committee, and also to review data relevant specifically to the northern edge of Georges Bank. Reports from these meetings will be provided to the Council at a later date.

The range of area management options and alternatives is described in Document 2.

The development of management options related to groundfish objectives is summarized on the Groundfish status sheet.

#### II. COUNCIL ACTION

No formal action required. Provide feedback on Habitat Committee recommendations for adverse effects minimization areas and habitat research areas.

#### III. INFORMATION

1. Meeting summary from Habitat Committee meeting, 12/04
2. Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 options/alternatives document. Includes area management options for minimizing the adverse effects of fishing on EFH as well as Dedicated Habitat Research Areas.
3. Meeting summary from Habitat PDT call and meeting, 1/15 and 1/17 (*to be distributed*)