



The Council Report summarizes major actions approved at NEFMC meetings or highlights items of interest to stakeholders.

**At its June 18-20, 2013 meeting, the Council:**

- ◆ Initiated an action affecting the Atlantic herring fishery
- ◆ Addressed several important groundfish issues
- ◆ Selected habitat alternatives for analyses

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# Council Report

July 2013

## River Herring/Shad Catch Caps to be Considered

The Council began work on Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in June, and in doing so began a process to protect river herring (alewife and blueback herring) and both American and hickory shad from being taken as a bycatch in the Atlantic herring fishery.

The primary amendment alternative, a cap on the amounts of river herring and shad that may be taken in the Atlantic herring fishery, will be considered in the context of the following goals:

- To provide strong incentives for the industry to continue to avoid and reduce the catch of these species to the extent practicable;
- To enhance coordination with the Mid-Atlantic Council to address overlapping fisheries; and

- To promote flexibility to adjust the cap in the future as more information becomes available.

The Council also agreed that the river herring/shad catch cap would apply to all trips landing more than the open access possession limit of 6,600 pounds of Atlantic herring and directed the Herring Plan Development Team to analyze the catch cap areas by statistical area clusters and gear type. Measures, if approved, are expected to be in place during the 2014-2015 fishing years.

In mid-June, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved a cap on incidental catch of river herring and shad in the Atlantic mackerel fishery for 2014.



The proposed Atlantic herring fishery limits, or caps, on shad and river herring incidental catches were developed based on 2008-2012 observer data.

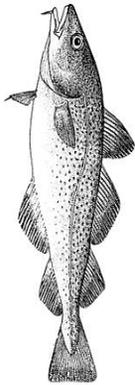
## Wide-Ranging Groundfish Topics Addressed

**Amendment 18** First, based on recent information and input from the Groundfish Advisory Panel, the Council replaced the goals and objectives for Amendment 18, an action that would promote fleet diversity and address the accumulation of excessive shares in the fishery.

The new goals would:

1. Promote a diverse groundfish fishery, including different gear types, vessel sizes, ownership patterns, geographic locations and levels of participation through sectors and permit banks;
2. Enhance sector management to effectively engage industry to achieve management goals and improve data quality;
3. Promote the resilience and stability of fishing businesses by encouraging diversification, quota utilization and capital investment; and
4. Prevent any individual(s), corporation(s) or other entity (ies) from acquiring or controlling excessive shares of the fishery access privileges.

## More Groundfish News



### Framework Adjustment 51

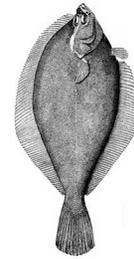
The Council initiated this framework adjustment to set Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for the jointly managed U.S./Canada stocks, revise the rebuilding plans for Gulf of Maine cod and plaice and set quotas for white hake.

### Trading U.S./Canada

**Stocks** In a related matter and following an overview about potentially trading the U.S./Canada stocks --- Eastern Georges Bank cod, and Eastern Georges haddock and Georges

Bank yellowtail flounder --- the Council unanimously approved the concept of implementing trading mechanisms.

A pilot program developed under the auspices of the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee could allow the U.S. to receive additional quota for fishing year 2013 in return for giving additional quota to Canada in fishing year 2014.



*Cod and yellowtail flounder line art courtesy of NOAA/NEFSC*

## SSC Reports on Monkfish ABCs and CATT Work

The Council tasked its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) to develop an Acceptable Biological Catch for the east coast monkfish resource for fishing years 2014-2016 and review the approach and analyses used by the Closed Area Technical Team (CATT) to develop important juvenile groundfish and spawning locations.

In the case of monkfish, the SSC reported to the Council

that additional work should be completed before it provides catch advice to the Council.

It also asked the Monkfish Plan Development Team to provide additional OFL/ABC options after applying adjustments for retrospective bias, per the advice of the operational assessment peer review panel, among other requested analyses, and that the status quo ABCs be considered.

The SSC determined that the approach used by the CATT is technically sound and that the analyses, results and hotspot summaries are appropriate for developing management alternatives.

The SSC also concluded that future development and evaluation of management measures will be improved by a well-designed research and monitoring program.

*A Council motion clarified the NEFMC's intent in developing proposed habitat management areas. The areas are not intended to be added to existing areas, but instead would modify or supersede the existing groundfish or habitat closures.*

## Habitat Alternatives Selected for Analysis

The NEFMC approved a range of management alternatives for analysis in the Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The amendment will consider measures to minimize the adverse effects of fishing on Essential Fish Habitat, and changes to the groundfish year-round and seasonally closed areas.

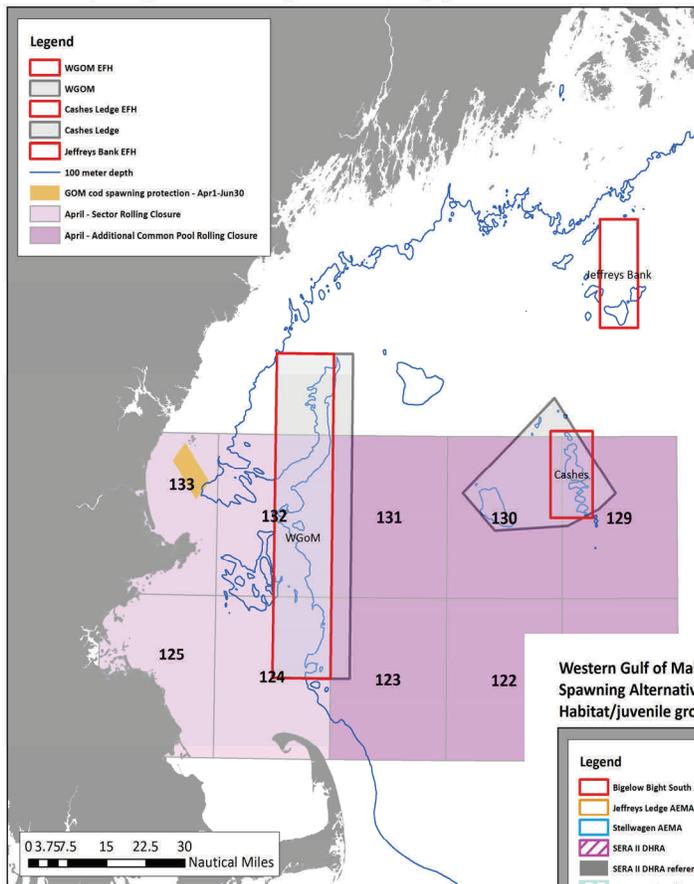
Two broad categories of alternatives are under

consideration in the amendment --- regional spawning areas and habitat areas along with associated management measures. Spawning areas will have seasonal restrictions on gears capable of catching groundfish; habitat areas will have year-round restrictions on mobile bottom tending gears or trawl gear modifications, with possible exemptions for hydraulic clam dredges. Three

Dedicated Habitat Research Areas are included in the alternatives.

While working to narrow the large number of alternatives, the Council unanimously voted to use a combination of status quo measures, CATT and Habitat Plan Development Team-developed alternatives and Swept Area Seabed Impact model derived areas to achieve the goals and objectives of the amendment closures.

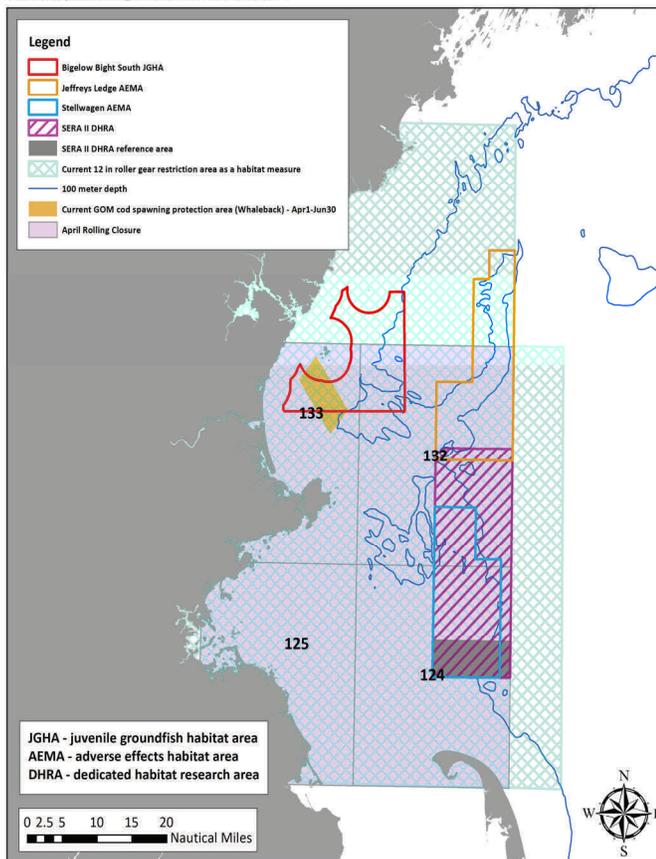
Gulf of Maine  
No Action Spawning and Habitat Management Alternative, April



There are many possible changes to habitat and groundfish areas that will be considered in the Habitat Amendment. The two maps shown here are an example of how the alternatives in the DEIS could be combined differently.

The *No Action Spawning and Habitat Management Alternative/April* map represents the current set of regulations for that month for both spawning and habitat protection, and includes the groundfish and habitat closures (grey and red outlines), sector and common pool rolling closures (pink and dark pink shading) and the Whaleback Area (gold shading).

Western Gulf of Maine  
Spawning Alternative 2 (April areas shown)  
Habitat/juvenile groundfish Alternative 4



The map at right illustrates one possible alternative that combines one spawning alternative with one habitat-juvenile groundfish alternative.

The Western Gulf of Maine habitat closure is reconfigured as two smaller adverse effects minimization habitat areas and a research area; the Bigelow Bight juvenile groundfish habitat area also is added.

Given that existing 12-inch roller gear area is designated as a habitat measure in the draft amendment, it is also included in this example.

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**Next Council  
Meeting**

**November 19-21,  
Newport Marriott  
Newport, RI**

The New England Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional organizations created by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, initially enacted in 1976.

The Council develops rules for both large and small-scale commercial and recreational fisheries that operate between three and 200 miles off the region's coastline. NEFMC management authority extends to fishing grounds in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank and southern New England and overlaps with the Mid-Atlantic Council for some species.

**In Other Actions, the Council...**

**Initiated Framework**

**Adjustment 8 to the Monkfish FMP**, an action that would specify annual catch targets (ACTs), days-at-sea, trip limits and possibly other management program modifications for fishing years 2014-2016.

NEFMC members also revised and prioritized the Council's monkfish cooperative research program priorities in the following order:

- 1) Monkfish life history focusing on a.) age and growth, b.) longevity, c.) reproduction and d.) natural mortality;
- 2) Migration patterns focusing on a.) short and long-term movements with respect to management areas and off-shelf movements and b.) habitat use;
- 3) Trophic interactions of monkfish with other species and monkfish cannibalism;
- 4) Cooperative surveys to fill address gaps in current

- 5) survey coverage; Bycatch and discard mortality focusing on a.) target species, i.e. monkfish or groundfish, and b.) non-target species, i.e. monkfish or skate;
- 6) Trawl and gillnet gear studies focusing on a.) size and/or species selectivity, and, b.) bycatch reduction, including reducing bycatch of and interactions with protected species.

**Approved wider distribution of the draft Standard Bycatch Reporting Methodology Amendment** for the purpose of receiving comments from interested parties about proposals that will eventually be included in both the New England and Mid-Atlantic Council's fishery management plans.

The document, prepared by NOAA Fisheries staff, explains the methods and processes by which bycatch is currently

monitored and assessed for Northeast Region fisheries. When finalized, it will include a determination about whether these methods and processes need to be modified and/or supplemented; establish standards of precision for bycatch estimation for all Northeast Region fisheries; and will serve to document the SBRM established for all fisheries managed through the FMPs of the Northeast Region.

**Accepted the recommendation of its Enforcement Committee** to adopt the new *Enforcement Precepts*, as developed by NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Coast Guard, to replace the Council's current Enforcement Policy.