



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 13, 2012
TO: Groundfish Oversight Committee
FROM: Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT)
SUBJECT: **PDT Conference Call, April 10, 2012**

1) The PDT held a conference call to address issues related to sector monitoring and setting ABCs for FY 2013-2014. The focuses of the call were cost-sharing for monitoring, observer bias, and on setting ABCs.

2) PDT members participating in the call included Tom Nies and Anne Hawkins (NEFMC), Sarah Heil, Melissa Vasquez, Michael Ruccio, and Dan Caless (NMFS NERO), Chad Demarest, Paul Nitschke, and Evan Bing-Sawyer (NMFS NEFSC), Sally Roman (SMASST), Steve Correia (MA DMF), and Sally Sherman (Maine DMR). Also participating in the call were Amy Van Atten (NEFOP), Michael Palmer and Susan Wigley (NMFS NEFSC).

Sector Framework

3) The PDT discussed cost-sharing strategies in order to identify methods that would allow a monitoring program to be adequately funded. They identified several strategies that may be considered for inclusion in the sector framework, although some may have legal barriers to implementation in the groundfish fishery. The work has been included in the PDT's draft white paper "Developing Effective Monitoring for the Northeast Multispecies Fishery: Methods and Considerations" and will be distributed separately from this report.

4) Michael Palmer presented an overview of the observer pre-trip notification system (PTNS) selection process and system performance.

- a) The selection process is rather complex, and uses several tiers for trip selection including SBRM-level coverage, protected species limited sampling coverage, and NMFS-funded at-sea monitor coverage. Selection is stratified by sector, gear/mesh, and area fished; the program is designed to have consistent coverage across strata, and not at the individual vessel level. Modifications were made to the PTNS system in the middle of 2010 in order to make coverage more even, because once it was implemented it became apparent that it did not sufficiently account for intentional observer avoidance on the part of the vessel operator. The system was modified in 2010 to require vessels that canceled trips scheduled for observer coverage to carry an observer on all subsequent trips declared until they actually carried an observer. This modification was only partially successful. Because day trip vessels tend to cancel trips more often due to bad weather, the change tended to inflate coverage rates for these vessels. The system was modified a second time to track individual vessel coverage rates and classifies whether a vessel is compliant/non-compliant based on whether the vessel's coverage rate is above/below a compliance threshold. This ensures that, as the number of trips a vessel takes increases, the coverage level normalizes.
 - b) Figure 1 shows coverage rates for FY 2010 and FY 2011 at the stratum, vessel, and sector levels. Coverage is now more evenly distributed than it was at the original implementation. However, there are still vessel-related causes and provider-related causes that may interfere with the ability to achieve ideally distributed coverage levels.
 - c) Changes to monitoring requirements (for example, reducing coverage on trips targeting skates or monkfish) will require modifications to the system and may require additional data collection.
- 5) The PDT continues to investigate whether there is any monitoring bias, and discussed several ways to refine the analyses.

ABCs

- 6) The PDT briefly discussed setting ABCs for FY 2013-2014. While the report of the SSC meeting held March 27, 2012, is not yet final, at the meeting SSC members indicated they were not comfortable using projections for setting ABCs for several stocks given the tendency of projections to be biased high. The PDT was directed to investigate three broad approaches for setting ABCs: catch based on projections using the default control rules, catch based on an evaluation of the best estimate of stock size or fishing mortality, and catches based on time series analyses. This is a large task that will consume a lot of PDT time over the course of this summer.
- 7) With respect to using the default ABC control rule, the PDT has several issues to resolve. For several stocks the assessment update report did sensitivity analyses for projections based on different assumptions and the PDT will have to consider how to present that information. A brief summary of the issues, by stock:
 - All stocks: 2012 catch assumption. Example projections included in the assessment update report were based on target fishing mortalities based on the updated assessments. As a result, in many cases the assumption is lower than would be expected under the current ACLs and needs to be revisited. For example, the assessment update projection

assumes a GB cod catch in 2012 of between 900 and 2,000 mt at Frebuild (combined U.S. and Canada); the 2012 U.S. ACL is 4,861 mt.

- GB Cod:
 - What sensitivity runs? Retro adjusted? T+1 nrs at age?
 - CC/GOM yellowtail flounder:
 - Any sensitivity runs?
 - Plaice:
 - What sensitivity runs? T+1 nrs at age
 - Witch:
 - What sensitivity runs? Retro pattern? T+1 nrs at age?
 - GOM haddock
 - Any sensitivity runs?
 - White Hake: No assessment update available
- 8) The PDT will attempt to identify ways to use the projections that might result in better performance. Other alternatives suggested by the SSC are still under development.

Figure 1 – Observer coverage at the stratum, sector, and vessel level

