

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Groundfish Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The Groundfish Oversight Committee has not met since the last Council meeting. The Trans-Boundary Management Guidance Committee met September 9-10, 2008, and a report is attached. The Groundfish Plan Development Team held a conference call September 11, 2008, and a report is attached. The Groundfish Advisory Panel met on September 16, 2008, and the Recreational Advisory Panel met September 17, 2008; reports are attached.
- B. Amendment 16: The Amendment 16 scoping period ended December 31, 2006. Scoping hearings were held in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York. The Committee and Council reviewed scoping comments at the February 2007 and June 2007 Council meetings. The Gulf of Maine Research Institute and the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Institute hosted meetings to help proponents of alternative management systems develop detailed proposals. In June 2007 the Council decided that Amendment 16 will modify the effort control system in order to continue stock rebuilding, and will modify existing sectors and adopt new sectors. The Committee focused on resolving the policy issues necessary to facilitate adoption of seventeen additional sectors and modifications to two existing sectors until the September Council meeting. At that meeting, the Council directed the Committee to work on other measures and postpone further sector development until that work was completed. In November, the Council directed the Committee to resume working on sector policies for inclusion in Amendment 16. At the January, 2008 Council meeting, the Council discussed sector policies and selected four alternatives for calculating the potential sector contribution for each permit. The full range of alternatives for this amendment were approved by the Council at the February, 2008 Council meeting. After that meeting the Committee and Council continued to develop the management measures approved for inclusion in February, and have added additional measures. In June 2008 the Council was scheduled to approve measures for public hearings to be held in the summer.

At the September Council meeting, the Council received the report of the Groundfish Assessment Review Meeting (GARM III). The Groundfish Oversight Committee planned to meet September 26, 2008 to develop effort control alternatives based on that report. The plan was for the Council to approve those measures for development into a DEIS, with the goal of approving the DEIS at the November Council meeting. Unfortunately, during the PDT conference call on September 11, 2008, it was learned that critical PDT members were unable to work on Amendment 16 alternatives because they were busy working on a groundfish interim action being developed by NMFS. As a result, the Committee does not have effort control alternatives for review at this meeting. As a result, it is unlikely a DEIS will not be ready for approval in November, which will affect the amendment timeline.

The Council will receive reports from the Groundfish Advisory Panel and the Recreational Advisory Panel. The Council may also review alternative rebuilding trajectories for newly overfished stocks if the PDT is able to complete its development of alternatives prior to the Council meeting.

- C. The Transboundary Management Guidance Committee will recommend US/Canada area TACs for FY 2007.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

- A. Approval of TACs for Eastern Georges Bank cod and haddock, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder.

III. INFORMATION

1. Draft Amendment 16 management measures
2. Groundfish Committee meeting summary, August 29, 2008

3. September 11, 2008 PDT conference call summary, dated September 26, 2008
4. Groundfish Advisory Panel meeting summary, September 16, 2008
5. Recreational Advisory Panel meeting summary, September 17, 2008
6. Transboundary Management Guidance Committee guidance document for 2008
7. US/CA Resources Sharing Understanding catch reports
8. Correspondence