

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Groundfish Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The Groundfish Oversight Committee has not met since the last Council meeting. The Groundfish PDT met July 8, 2009 to prepare multispecies ABC that were reviewed by the Science and Statistical Committee on August 10. For information on that meeting refer to Tab 12. The PDT met again on August 24, 2009 to begin development of ACLs for FY 2010 – FY 2012; a PDT report is attached.
- B. Multispecies Annual Catch Limits: The PDT will present preliminary ACLs for FY 2010 – 2012 for Trans-Boundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC): The TMGC met September 15 – 16, 2009 to develop recommendations for FY 2010. The Council will review and approve those recommendations at this meeting. NERO asked that the Council consider suggesting management measures for the US/CA area for FY 2010 (such as excluding trawl gear until August 1, 2010, similar to the measure in place in FY 2009.
- C. Council discussion. This will include a discussion on the allocation of yellowtail flounder to the scallop fishery. The Council may wish to provide guidance on evaluating management uncertainty to the PDT, and information the Council will need to determine the yellowtail flounder allocation for the scallop fishery. The PDT will use this guidance to prepare a specifications package for the Council's approval at the November 2009 Council meeting.
- D. Cod/pollock issues: The Council will discuss a letter from the Regional Administrator reporting industry concerns over the Amendment 16 measures for GOM cod and pollock. The Council may decide to take action to address those concerns.
- E. 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 to 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 facilitated 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. The full range of alternatives for this amendment were originally approved by the Council at the February, 2008 Council meeting. After that meeting the Committee and Council continued to develop the management measures and have since added additional measures. In June 2008 the Council was scheduled to approve the DEIS for public hearings to be held in the summer, but this was delayed when it appeared from preliminary assessment information that the management measures were targeting mortality reductions on the wrong stocks.

At the September 2008 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. 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 did not have effort control alternatives for review at that meeting. The PDT resumed development of effort controls in mid-October and presented several alternatives to the Committee at the end of the month. These were reviewed by the Committee, modifications made, and revised alternatives presented to the Council in November. The Council approved the measures for development in November, and authorized the Committee to continue to develop the measures as necessary. The Committee and PDT continued their work over the next two months.

The Council approved the draft Amendment 16 and its DEIS at its February meeting. The document was submitted to NMFS at the end of March. Public hearings were held at the end of May/beginning of June, 2009. The comment period for the draft document ended June 8, 2009. The Council made final decisions at the June 22 – 25, 2009 Council meeting. Staff is preparing the document for submission.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

- A. Possible initiation of an action to modify management measures for cod and pollock.
- B. Approval of FY 2010 TACs for Eastern GB cod, eastern GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder.

III. INFORMATION

- 1. TRAC status reports for Eastern Georges Bank Cod, Haddock and Georges Bank Yellow Tail Flounder – June 2009
- 2. US/CA Resources Sharing Understanding catch reports
- 3. Groundfish Plan Development Team meeting report, August 24, 2009 (report dated September 11, 2009)
- 4. Groundfish Oversight Committee Meeting summary from June 17, 2009
- 5. Correspondence