

## Northeast Multispecies: Brainstorming Mitigation Alternatives for Fishing Year 2013

Prepared for the NEFMC Executive Committee, July 30, 2012

The Northeast multispecies fishery is facing many challenges in 2013. The notes below were compiled for a brainstorming session during the NEFMC's Executive Committee meeting. The bullets clearly show the need and importance of the NEFMC and NOAA Fisheries Service working together mitigate some of the possible impacts on the fishery.

- **FY 2013 Catch Limits (Framework 48)** – Several important fish stocks are in poor condition and some catch limits for 2013 will be reduced markedly from 2012. We're working on final numbers, but preliminary information indicates the following reductions.

Stock/Species	Change: FY2012 to FY2013 ACLs	Change: FY2011 commercial catch to FY2013 ACL
Georges Bank cod	-70	-57
Gulf of Maine cod	-72	-76
Gulf of Maine haddock	-73	-64
Georges Bank yellowtail flounder	-51	-94
Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine yellowtail flounder	-45	-28
American Plaice	-69	-39

These reductions will have impact across all segments of the groundfish fleet. Reductions in yellowtail flounder will also affect the scallop fishery. The reduction in catch limits is largely a result of the need to prevent overfishing. Several stocks have experienced several consecutive years of poor recruitment, while some remain subject to continued overfishing, despite stringent management requirements.

- **Closures to Protect Harbor Porpoise** - Waters from northern Massachusetts to Portland, Maine will be closed to gillnetting in October and November, each year, beginning in 2012 to protect harbor porpoise. These closures are the result of having exceeded the specified rate of harbor porpoise bycatch over a 2-year period. In addition, if bycatch rates of porpoise remain high, it is possible that closures in the Southern New England area could be triggered in the future.
- **Atlantic Sturgeon Biological Opinion** – The multispecies fishery interacts with Atlantic sturgeon. In February 2012, NMFS listed five distinct populations of Atlantic sturgeon as endangered or threatened. NOAA is analyzing the effect the fishery may have on sturgeon, and will be working with the NEFMC to determine whether new protective measures need to be implemented.
- **Industry-Funded At-Sea Monitoring** - The industry is scheduled to begin paying for at-sea monitoring in FY 2013. The exact levels of coverage have not yet been determined; however, the industry has stated that it can ill afford to pay the required costs and maintain solvency. Estimated costs per day are upwards of \$650. The NEFMC has requested that the government fully support continued funding of this program.
- **Fuel Prices** - The price of diesel fuel has risen significantly in the past several years, increasing operating costs for the fleet. Increases to other operational costs are also affecting profitability.