



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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Council to Hold April 15 Meeting

Newburyport, MA The New England Fishery Management Council will hold a meeting on Tuesday, April 15 in Danvers, MA to examine several important issues that relate to the development of Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 8 a.m. and will be held at the Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel.

According to Council Chairman Tom Hill, “the goal of the meeting is to allow the Council to review and further deliberate on a number of approaches to achieving fishing mortality and biomass targets for the 20 stocks managed under the Groundfish Plan to ensure they comport with the Magnuson-Steven Act.”

Three alternative proposals that address these issues, known as biological reference points, are currently under consideration. The reference points are values that represent the level of fishing effort that will be allowed as well as the level to which stock biomass must be rebuilt to achieve maximum sustainable yield. Fishing restrictions to be implemented in Amendment 13 are dependent on which proposal is ultimately selected by the Council. On Tuesday Council members will determine whether to move forward with an analysis of the three existing proposals or whether to modify or eliminate any of them.

Discussion is likely to focus on the use of an adaptive approach to meeting the fishing mortality and biomass targets. One of the proposed biological reference point alternatives approved for consideration and developed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) contains biomass target estimates for several species that have never been observed in the past.

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While a recent independent peer review of the NMFS work concluded that the science used in their analyses was sound, the reviewers advised caution in attempting to achieve such targets, suggesting an adaptive or step-wise management approach. In light of this advice, the Council is reviewing the alternatives, two of which involve setting intermediate fishing mortality and biomass targets as opposed to defining end targets that may not be achievable.

The Council also will address several other outstanding issues related to the draft Amendment 13 management measures at this meeting and prior to further analysis and preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The entire Amendment 13 package will be approved at the July Council meeting followed by public hearings to be scheduled in the late summer.

The New England Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils established by federal legislation in 1976, is charged with conserving and managing fishery resources from three to 200 miles off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

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