



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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New England Fishery Council Moves Forward with Groundfish Annual Catch Limits

Newburyport, MA The New England Fishery Management Council took an important step at its Plymouth, MA meeting this week by moving forward with its first set of annual catch limits for many of the region's commercially and recreationally harvested fish. The Council supported a proposed approach to setting the limits, which when approved in November will apply to the groundfish stock complex. Included are thirteen species and 22 stocks of fish, such as cod, haddock, pollock and a number of flounders.

As required by the 2007 amendments to the nation's most important federal fisheries legislation, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, annual catch limits or the amount of each type of fish allowed to be caught in a year, must be set at levels that do not exceed the scientific recommendations made by the regional fishery management councils' scientific committees.

A Council technical committee, the Groundfish Plan Development Team, which includes Council staff, as well as state, federal and independent fishery specialists, presented its information and preliminary estimates for the 2010-2012 groundfish annual catch limits to address the uncertainty associated with many fishing rules.

With some modifications, the Council agreed with the Plan Team's proposed method to deduct 3% from the overall limits set by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee in cases where fishing rules have a greater likelihood of success and 7% when results are less certain. Uncertainty is caused by limited enforcement, a lack of effective catch monitoring, and the accuracy with which fishery analysts are able to predict the success of various rules, as well as track the catch of groundfish in other fisheries. The Council also directed the Plan Team to bring information forward describing the impacts of these allocations on the fisheries regulated through its groundfish management program.

Please note the Groundfish Plan Team's report is located on the Council website at <http://www.nefmc.org/nemulti/index.html> dated August 24, 2009. Some of the numbers in that report will change because of Council decisions at this meeting. Final approval of the groundfish annual catch limits will occur at the November 17-19 Council meeting in Newport, RI.

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