



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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NE Fishery Council to Work on New Groundfish Rules

NEWBURYPORT, MA At its meeting in Portland, ME this week, the New England Fishery Management Council formally began the development of new management measures that could affect both commercial and recreational fishermen who participate in the region's groundfish fishery. Referred to as Framework Adjustment 45 to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan, new measures discussed could mitigate some of the negative impacts being experienced by several "sectors" and the "common pool" fishery organized under the rules of the newly implemented catch share program, Amendment 16 to the Groundfish Plan.

Issues identified included the following, beginning with a request to the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee to review any new data collected and determine whether these would affect the current allowable biological catch (ABC) recommendation for winter flounder:

- Adopting new status determination criteria for pollock, and setting a new allowable biological catch and annual catch limit for 2011-2012 -- a change that could result in an increase in pollock catches.
- Modifying the Georges Bank yellowtail flounder rebuilding strategy - possibly resulting in a longer rebuilding period with less negative consequences for fishermen.
- Adopting new sectors based on requests received by May 1, 2010.
- Exempting Handgear A and B permits from dockside monitoring requirements (currently scheduled to be effective in fishing year 2012 for common pool vessels).
- Protecting spawning cod aggregations; during this very preliminary discussion, the action was intended to apply to specifically identified aggregations targeted by recreational fishermen in the Ipswich Bay/Whaleback areas of Mass Bay and sector vessels fishing in blocks 132 and 133; it also could include a May and June prohibition of cod possession by recreational fishermen in defined areas of blocks 132 and 133, or a closure of these areas to recreational fishermen, and removal of the sector exemption from the June rolling closure in blocks 132 and 133.
- Allowing General Category scallop dredge vessels to fish in the Great South Channel area year round (remove the current seasonal prohibition during yellowtail flounder spawning).

The Council also voted to reaffirm the existing control date for Northeast Multispecies party/charter permits (March 30, 2006). While there was recognition that it needed to address the management concerns of the party/charter industry, the development of additional party/charter measures will be determined through the Council's priority setting process.

Fish Facts: Georges Bank haddock and Gulf of Maine haddock are rebuilt and are being harvested at sustainable levels. Gulf of Maine cod is no longer overfished and is at a stock size that has not been seen in 30 years. Acadian redfish is very close to or fully rebuilt, although that determination awaits confirmation by a stock assessment. While they are not fully rebuilt, increases in many of the stocks in the groundfish complex are being observed for the first time in nearly a decade.

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