



***New England Fishery Management Council
News Release***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 20, 2013**

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***New England Council Initiates Renewed Efforts
To Address Atlantic Herring Fishery Issues***

Newport, RI Testimony from fishermen both supporting and opposing the issue of whether the New England Fishery Management Council should request that NOAA Fisheries take emergency action to effectively close the Atlantic herring midwater trawl fishery was among the key topics at the Council's one-day meeting in Newport today.

At issue is the perception as well as the opinion of many groundfish fishermen and environmental advocates that the midwater trawl fleet catches and discards large amounts of groundfish, particularly small haddock, in the course of catching Atlantic herring. Herring fishermen argued that their fishery is not catching large amounts of haddock and they support additional observer coverage. While existing records that were reviewed at the meeting indicate that levels of groundfish bycatch have been relatively low, there are concerns that the current level of observer coverage does not provide adequate information to document the extent of bycatch in the large volume herring fishery.

Lengthy debate, and a great deal of public participation resulted in the Council's conclusion that while there are problems in the Atlantic herring fishery, they do not meet the strict requirements for an emergency action. Ultimately, its members voted to address this issue during a meeting to be scheduled as soon as possible, focusing on the most pressing problems in the fishery, including requirements for observer coverage.

The meeting also would address the development of an action to reconsider measures that were adopted by the Council in Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan, but disapproved by NOAA Fisheries last month, including net slippage provisions (dumping of unwanted catches) and dealer weighing requirements.

The NEFMC, one of eight regional organizations 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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