



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
 NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
 NORTHEAST REGION  
 55 Great Republic Drive  
 Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

OCT 27 2010



Subject: Haddock Incidental Catch Cap and Potential Closure Affecting the Atlantic Herring Fishery

Dear Herring Permit Holder:

This letter is to remind you of the haddock incidental catch cap and the ramifications for the Atlantic herring (herring) fishery if this cap is fully caught. As of October 21, 2010, 80.5% of the current 189,597-lb haddock cap had been caught. If the cap is fully caught, the regulations require that the directed herring fishery must be closed in the Gulf of Maine (GOM)/Georges Bank (GB) Herring Exemption Area (see map below) through the remainder of the groundfish fishing year, i.e., through April 30, 2011. This closure would mean that any herring vessel would be prohibited from catching more than 2,000 lb of herring per trip from the area.

The haddock incidental catch cap was established by Framework Adjustment 43 (FW 43) to the Northeast (NE) Multispecies Fishery Management Plan in 2006. It is set annually for the NE multispecies fishing year (May 1-April 30) at 0.2% of the combined total allowable catch of GOM and GB haddock. Please note that any closure would last until May 1, 2011.

To monitor this cap, FW 43 regulations require vessels with All Areas or Areas 2 and 3 (Category A and B) limited access herring permits to retain all haddock, including undersized fish. If the cap is caught, this allowance is suspended and the haddock possession limit for these vessels reverts to 0 lb per trip, regardless of whether the trip is inside the GOM/GB Herring Exemption Area or not. Therefore, should a closure be required, retention of any haddock by these vessels could result in a violation.

Although the haddock incidental catch cap applies just to haddock caught by vessels with Category A and B permits, the closure of the herring fishery in the GOM/GB Herring Exemption Area would apply to all herring vessels, including those with limited access Category C and open access Category D herring permits.

The vast majority of observed haddock bycatch has been caught on GB (in Herring Area 3), specifically along the northern edge of GB. In past years, most herring vessels have moved in the late fall from Herring Area 3 into Herring Area 1A, before moving to Herring Area 2 in late December/January through April. If the fishery follows this same pattern, and avoids fishing in Herring Area 3 while haddock are present, it is possible that the remaining haddock incidental catch would not be caught and no closure of the GOM/GB Herring Exemption Area would be necessary.

We have received reports that the herring fishery voluntarily moved away from Herring Area 3 at

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the beginning of October, and many industry members have expressed intentions to keep out of this area to help avert any potential for a closure of the directed herring fishery in the much larger GOM/GB Herring Exemption Area. I strongly encourage you to continue to avoid fishing for herring in Herring Area 3, particularly in areas with high haddock bycatch, and in any other areas where haddock may be encountered. The cooperation of individuals in the herring industry can help prevent a significant disruption to the fishery as a whole.

Sincerely,

*Patricia A. Kurkul*  
for Patricia A. Kurkul  
Regional Administrator

GOM/GB Herring Exemption Area: Hatched area represents the area that would be subject to a limit of 2,000 lb herring per trip if the haddock bycatch allowance is caught.

