

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Whiting (Small Mesh Multispecies) Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Amendment 19: At the April meeting, the Council postponed submission of a final amendment to consider a new alternative which would increase the southern whiting possession limit for vessels using 3-inch or larger mesh trawls. To give the Council some latitude in selecting a final alternative after analysis and public comment, two alternatives were added to the amendment with an analysis of effects (see Sections 8.1.8, 8.2.4, and 8.7.8).

One alternative includes a range of possession limits from 30,000 to 40,000 lbs. that would apply throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Southern New England Exemption Areas. The other alternative would raise the possession limit to 40,000 over a narrower geographical range. These alternatives were circulated to the Oversight Committee and Advisors for comment before inclusion in the revised draft amendment and public hearing document.

Unless the Council reconsiders the previously approved alternatives, the final amendment document will include the following final alternatives. These final alternatives have not been incorporated into the revised draft document, because the public comment period was extended.

- Updated overfishing definitions recommended by the benchmark assessment and reviewed by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (Section 5.1.1)
- A three-year specifications package process, beginning with the 2015 fishing year (Section 5.2.1.1)
- Annual monitoring reports prepared by NMFS and reviewed by the Whiting PDT (Section 5.2.2.3)
- Assignment of landings to stock area using required weekly VTRs (Section 5.2.3.1)
- Stock-wide annual TALs for the northern and southern stock areas (Sections 5.3.1 and 5.5.1)
- In-season accountability measures using incidental possession limits of 400 lbs. for red hake (Sections 5.4.1 and 5.6.1) and 2000 lbs. for silver and offshore hake (combined) (Sections 5.4.2 and 5.6.2)
- A 5,000 lbs. year round red hake possession limit for northern and southern stock areas (Sections 5.7.1 and 5.7.2)
- Reduction in the incidental possession limit trigger as a post-season accountability measure (Section 5.8.2)

- B. Meetings: On May 29 in Mansfield, MA, the Council held a supplemental public hearing on a revised draft amendment, followed by a Skate/Whiting Oversight Committee

meeting to recommend a final alternative.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

- A. Approve a final alternative revising the southern whiting year around possession limit for vessels using trawls having 3-inch or larger square or diamond mesh
- B. Approve submission of a Final Amendment 19 document to NMFS, subject to review by the Whiting Committee chair and Executive Director.

III. INFORMATION

- 1. Draft Amendment 19 public hearing document, revised May 2012
- 2. Draft Amendment 19 to the NE Multispecies FMP, revised May 2012
- 3. Summary of public hearing comments, May 29, 2012
- 4. Written comments on revised Draft Amendment 19