



National Marine Fisheries Service
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov



Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Actions

Prepared for the August 13-16, 2018
Meeting of the
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

August 14, 2018

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New England Council Actions

Small-Mesh Multispecies

2018-2020 Small-Mesh Multispecies Specifications

On June 14, 2018, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 27713) approving the 2018-2020 small-mesh multispecies specifications. Based on the recommendation from the New England Fishery Management Council, these specifications increase the northern red and northern silver hake total allowable landings (TAL) by 128 and 33 percent, respectively; and decrease southern red and southern whiting TALs by 59 and 39 percent, respectively. All other management measures in the small-mesh multispecies fishery (such as possession limits) remain unchanged. Because the final rule was not effective before the start of the 2018 fishing year (May 1, 2018), rollover specifications were in effect until the final rule became effective on June 14, 2018. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180 or email at Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov.

Groundfish

Northeast Fishery Sectors 7 and 9

On July 20, 2018, NMFS published an interim final rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 34492) that approved the Northeast Fishery Sector 9 operations plan to allow it to operate as a lease-only sector. The interim final rule also allocated 2018 quotas to Sectors 7 and 9 based on catch limits approved earlier this year. In addition, an amendment to Sector 7's operations plan was approved as submitted, to make all vessels owned by Carlos Rafael inactive in the groundfish fishery unless and until the vessels are sold to an independent third party. The comment period for the interim final rule closes on August 20, 2018. For additional information, please contact Liz Sullivan at (978) 282-8493 or email at Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov.

Gulf of Maine Haddock Trimester TAC Area Closure

On July 2, 2018, NMFS published a temporary rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 30887) closing the Trimester Total Allowable Catch (TAC) Area for Gulf of Maine haddock to groundfish common pool vessels fishing with trawl, sink gillnet, and longline/hook gear. This closure affects statistical areas 513, 514, and 515. This closure is required when catch information shows the common pool fishery has harvested 90 percent of its Trimester 1 TAC for Gulf of Maine haddock. The area will reopen at the start of Trimester 2 on September 1, 2018. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov.

Scallops

Scallop Research Set-Aside Program

On May 16, 2018, NMFS announced the 2018/2019 Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) program grant recipients. NMFS awarded scallop RSA quota to 15 projects that will address the Council's research priorities, with particular focus on resource surveys. The awards are expected to generate more than \$12 million; \$3 million to fund research and \$9 million to compensate industry partners that harvest set-aside quota. For additional information, please contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326 or email at ryan.silva@noaa.gov.

Herring

2018 Adjustments to Atlantic Herring Fishery Catch Limits

NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* on June 20, 2018, (83 FR 28545) revising the Atlantic herring annual catch limit (ACL) and sub-ACLs for 2018. This action is required to correct Atlantic herring catch limits that were published on February 15, 2018 (83 FR 6797) to account for Atlantic herring catch overages and underages in 2016. This action became effective on June 20, 2018, and will be effective through through December 31, 2018. For additional information, please contact Alyson Pitts at (978) 281-9352 or email at alyson.pitts@noaa.gov.

Monkfish

Adjustment to 2017 Monkfish Research Set-Aside

On June 8 and July 12, 2018, NMFS received requests from the Cornell Cooperative Extension (Cornell) and the University of Massachusetts School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST), respectively, to increase the assigned pound value of the 2017 research set-aside (RSA) days-at-sea (DAS) from 3,552 lb to 4,074 lb. This increase would be commensurate with the possession limit increase already implemented in the monkfish fishery under Framework Adjustment 10, and would increase the incentive to participate in the RSA program. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180 or email at Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov.

2018 Monkfish Research Set-Aside Program

On July 25, 2018, NMFS announced the 2018/2019 Monkfish Research Set-Aside (RSA) program grant recipients. NMFS awarded the 500 annual (1000 over the full award period) RSA days-at-sea (DAS) to three projects that will span two years. The awards are expected to generate more than \$5 million; \$500,000 to fund research and \$4.5 million to compensate industry partners that harvest monkfish using RSA DAS. For additional information, please contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326 or email at ryan.silva@noaa.gov.

Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab

None at this time

Skate

Skate Framework Adjustment 5 and 2018-2019 Specifications

NMFS published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 31354) on July 5, 2018, for Framework Adjustment 5 and 2018-2019 specifications. This action proposes to increase the annual catch limit for the skate complex, increase total allowable landings of skate wings and skate bait, allow limited possession of barndoor skate in the skate wing fishery, and exempt vessels from some specific domestic skate regulations when fishing exclusively within the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization Regulatory Area. The 2018 fishing year started on May 1, 2018, and the 2017 specifications and possession limits, including the prohibition on retention, possession, and landing of barndoor skates remain in effect until they are replaced. A permit holder letter announcing initial 2018 measures was sent out on April 30, 2018. The public comment period for the Framework Adjustment 5 proposed rule closed on August 6, 2018. For additional information, please contact Deb Lambert at (301) 427-8560 or email at deb.lambert@noaa.gov.

Mid-Atlantic Council Actions

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial Accountability Measure Framework Adjustment

On August 9, 2018, NMFS published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 39398) that proposes to adjust the non-landings commercial accountability measures (AM) for the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries. The proposed revisions are designed to better account for the variability in commercial discard estimates and provide additional flexibility to these AMs based on stock status and the biological consequences, if any, of estimated discard overages. NMFS adopted similar AMs for the recreational fisheries management by the Council in 2013 (78 FR 76759). The comment period on this action closes on September 10, 2018. For additional information, please contact Emily Gilbert at (978) 281-9244 or email at emily.gilbert@noaa.gov

Surfclam and Ocean Quahog

None at this time

Atlantic Bluefish

None at this time

Spiny Dogfish

None at this time

Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish

Amendment 20 Notice of Availability

On July 27, 2018, NMFS published a notice of availability in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 35602) notifying the public that Amendment 20 to the Atlantic Mackerel Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan is available for public comment. This action would requalify existing longfin squid moratorium permits into a tiered permit system that reflects historic participation in the fishery. This action would also reduce the longfin squid possession limit for open access incidental catch permits and when the Trimester II (May - August) longfin squid quota is harvested from 2,500 pounds per trip to 250 pounds per trip. This action is intended to address unused effort in the fishery and avoid excessive longfin squid catch during Trimester II. The comment period on the notice of availability closes on September 25, 2018. For additional information, please contact Douglas Christel at (978) 281-9141 or email at douglas.christel@noaa.gov.

Proposed Rule for Amendment 20

NMFS expects to publish a proposed rule to implement Amendment 20 to the Atlantic Mackerel Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan in the *Federal Register* soon. As noted above, this amendment would requalify existing longfin squid moratorium permits into a tiered permit system that reflects historic participation in the fishery and reduce possession limits for incidental catch permits and when the Trimester II longfin squid quota is harvested. For additional information, please contact Douglas Christel at (978) 281-9141 or email at atdouglas.christel@noaa.gov.

On August 14, 2018, NMFS published a temporary rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 40157) closing the directed *Illex* squid fishery effective August 15, 2018, because it was projected to meet 95 percent of the domestic annual harvest quota by this date. For the remainder of the fishing year, vessels will be prohibited from fishing for more than 10,000 lb of *Illex* squid per calendar day, in or from federal waters until the fishery reopens on January 1, 2019. For additional information, please contact Alyson Pitts at (978) 281-9352 or email at alyson.pitts@noaa.gov.

Tilefish

None at this time

Other Actions

Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Competition

None at this time

Paperwork Reduction Act

Comment Period for New Longfin Squid Data Collections

NMFS expects to publish a proposed rule for Amendment 20 to the Atlantic Mackerel Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan in the *Federal Register* soon, requesting comments on new collection of information requirements associated with this action. New data collections include an application for a new incidental catch longfin squid moratorium permit, an appeals process for vessels that do not qualify for the highest tier longfin squid moratorium permit, and a for to swap longfin squid moratorium permits between vessels owned by the same entity. The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 requires the Department of Commerce to attempt to reduce paperwork and respondent burden on proposed and continuing data collections. Comments are invited on the necessity of the collections, the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden, ways to enhance the collection, and ways to minimize the burden on respondents. Direct all written comments to OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov, or fax to (202) 395-5806. For additional information, please contact Douglas Christel at (978) 281-9141 or email at douglas.christel@noaa.gov.

Comment Period for Information Collection for Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan.

NMFS published a notice in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 39075) on August 8, 2018, requesting comments under the Paperwork Reduction Act on the continued collection of information associated with Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Comments are invited on the necessity of the collections, the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden, ways to enhance the collection, and ways to minimize the burden on respondents. Groundfish sectors are required to comply with reporting and monitoring requirements, as established by Amendment 16 and revised by subsequent framework adjustments to the Fishery Management Plan, in return for increased operational flexibility. The comment period for the information collection is open through October 8, 2018. For additional information, please contact Liz Sullivan at (978) 282-8493 or email at liz.sullivan@noaa.gov.

Jonah Crab

None at this time

Industry Funded Monitoring Omnibus Amendment

None at this time

Lobster

None at this time

New Jersey Special Management Zone Action (NJ SMZ)

Special Management Zone Designation for 13 Artificial Reef Sites in the Exclusive Economic Zone

On July 9, 2018, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 31684) to designate 13 New Jersey artificial reef sites as Special Management Zones. This action only allows handline, rod and reel, or spear fishing (including the taking of fish by hand) in the artificial reef designated areas (year-round). This action does not prohibit commercial fishing on these reef sites, but does prohibit the use of pot and trap gear commonly used by commercial fishermen. This action became effective on August 8, 2018. For additional information, please contact Travis Ford at (978) 281-9233 or email at travis.ford@noaa.gov.

Cost Recovery Programs

Cost Recovery Transition to CRS

GARFO is working to transition some aspects of cost recovery billing and collections for our catch share programs (LAGC Scallop IFQ, Tilefish IFQ, and Surfclam and Ocean Quahog ITQ) to Central Receivables Service (CRS). CRS is a free service of the Treasury Dept. that assists other federal agencies to issue bills and collect past-due funds. This transition should help streamline our process and reduce some administrative costs currently charged to the industry. We are still finalizing some aspects of this change. When we finalize the new system, we will have a larger outreach effort to make sure the Council and the industry know exactly what these changes mean for them. For additional information, contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341. For additional information, please contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341 or email at Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov.

Protected Resources Actions

None at this time

Research Permits and Acknowledgments - Applications Under Review

On August 2, 2018, NMFS received a complete application from Florida State and Temple Universities for a Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA). The LOA under consideration would acknowledge a deep-water ecosystem survey in canyon, seep, and coral sites where interaction with energy industry activities are most likely to occur. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180 or email at Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov.

On July 24, 2018, we received an LOA renewal request from the Maine Department of Marine Resources to conduct an inshore bottom trawl survey in the Gulf of Maine. The survey will be conducted from the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border to the Maine-New Brunswick border. This bi-annual survey has been conducted since 2000. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at kyle.molton@noaa.gov.

Research Permits and Acknowledgments - Application Review Completed

On June 7, 2018, NMFS issued two LOAs to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science to complete abundance, distribution, and biomass surveys of the scallop resource in Closed Area I (CAI), Closed Area II (CAII), and the Nantucket Lightship Access Area (NLAA) and surrounds. The surveys will complete a fine scale, high resolution dredge survey in both 2018 and 2019. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (987) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.jaburek@noaa.gov.

On June 7, 2018, NMFS issued three LOAs to the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology to complete intensive surveys of CAI, the Great South Channel (GSC), NLAA and surrounds, and the Gulf of Maine using its drop camera sampling pyramid. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (987) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.jaburek@noaa.gov.

On June 7, 2018, NMFS issued two LOAs to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute to conduct high resolution optical surveys using the HabCam in the Mid-Atlantic Bight including both inshore and offshore areas, CAI, CAII Habitat Area of Particular Concern, and the western GSC. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (987) 282-8456 or email at Shannah.jaburek@noaa.gov.

On July 5, 2018, NMFS issued an LOA to the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution to conduct research the life history, abundance, and distribution of northern sand lance within the SBNMS and southern New England. The LOA allows three research vessels and two alternates (as needed) to conduct survey trawls throughout the study area and retain up to 200 sand lance per tow for further laboratory study. This LOA expires on July 31, 2019. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180 or email at Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov.

On June 6, 2018, NMFS issued an LOA to Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries in support of gear research. The LOA allows one commercial fishing vessel under control of MA DMF to conduct testing of an experimental off-bottom trawl net with a small-mesh codend to compare it to trawl nets currently approved for use in the NE multispecies fishery. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at spencer.talmage@noaa.gov

Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Regulatory Actions

On August 6, 2018, NMFS issued an LOA to NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration to conduct an exploration expedition to collect critical baseline information in deepwater areas of the Atlantic margin off the Northeast U.S. coast. The LOA acknowledges a research cruise on the R/V *Okeanos Explorer* from August 10 through September 2, 2018; beginning in Norfolk, VA, ending in Davisville, RI, and conducting operations covering waters of Canada, and the U.S. Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Regions. The research will consist of multibeam and sonar mapping, CTD (conductivity, temperature, and depth) casts, and remotely operated vehicle (ROV) operations at selected sites throughout the study area, in water depths ranging from 250 m to approximately 6,000 m. This LOA expires on September 30, 2018. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180 or email at Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov.

On August 6, 2018, NMFS issued an Scientific Research Permit (SRP) to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in support of the 2018 Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog Dredge Survey. This SRP allows a commercial fishing vessel under NEFSC control to conduct the survey within a study area from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina to the eastern edge of Georges Bank. The study will take place in water depths ranging from 5 to 60 fathoms. For more information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at spencer.talmage@noaa.gov.

On August 7, 2018, NMFS issued an LOA renewal to Northeastern University in support of a cod population dynamics study. The LOA allows two vessels under the control of Northeastern University to collect cod using rod and reel in the Cashes Ledge Closed Area, on Jeffrey's Ledge, and in the former Closed Area 1. No catch will be retained for sale. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at spencer.talmage@noaa.gov.

On August 9, 2018, NMFS issued an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute to test a maximized retention electronic monitoring (EM) program. Under the EFP, participating vessels are required to retain all catch of allocated groundfish, including undersized groundfish that would normally be discarded. Vessels are required to use EM on 100 percent of groundfish trips, and the video footage is reviewed to verify that vessels adhered to the retention requirements. All catch will be assessed via a dockside monitoring program. Participants are authorized to access the non-Habitat Management Area portions of Closed Area II from May 1 through February 15. Participants are authorized to use a 5.1-inch square mesh codend configuration with a haddock separator or Ruhle trawl and/or a 4.5-inch diamond mesh codend configuration within the Redfish Exemption Area. For additional information, please contact Claire Fitz-Gerald at (978)281-9255, or email at claire.fitz-gerald@noaa.gov.