



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



Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Actions

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Meeting of the
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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New England Council Actions

Small-Mesh Multispecies

Proposed 2018-2020 Small-Mesh Multispecies Specifications

On April 12, 2018, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 15780) to set the small-mesh multispecies specifications for the 2018-2020 fishing years as recommended by the Council. Overall, the proposed specifications represent increases in the catch limits of the northern hake stocks, and decreases in the limits of the southern hake stocks. The Council recommends increasing Northern red and northern silver hake total allowable landings (TALs) by 128 and 33 percent, respectively; and decrease southern red and southern whiting TALs by 59 and 39 percent, respectively. The most recent stock assessment update shows that the risk of overfishing in the northern red and silver hake stocks is relatively low; but that southern red hake is overfished and overfishing is occurring, and while southern whiting is not overfished, the stock is declining. The decrease in southern catch limits is intended to end overfishing on these stocks, and the Council will begin development of a rebuilding program within the next year. All other management measures in the small-mesh multispecies fishery (such as possession limits) will remain unchanged. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180 or email at Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov

Groundfish

Framework Adjustment 57

On May 1, 2018, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 18985) approving Framework Adjustment 57 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Framework 57 increases quotas for 11 stocks compared to 2017, including: Georges Bank cod (139%), Gulf of Maine cod (41%), and Gulf of Maine haddock (190%). Quotas decreased for nine stocks, including Southern New England yellowtail flounder (-75%) and Gulf of Maine winter flounder (-45%). Framework 57 also adjusts allocations for several fisheries, revises accountability measures, and makes other minor changes to groundfish management measures. The new measures were effective for the start of the 2018 fishing year on May 1, 2018. For additional information, please contact Mark Grant at (978) 281-9145 or email at Mark.Grant@noaa.gov.

2018 Sector Rule

On May 1, 2018, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 18965) to allocate quota to 17 of 19 groundfish sectors and grant a new regulatory exemption for sector vessels. Allocations were based on 2018 sector enrollment and updated catch limits in Framework 57. The newly approved exemption allows Day gillnet vessels to fish 50 additional gillnets if those nets are 10-inch or larger mesh and fished east of 70 degrees West longitude. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email kyle.molton@noaa.gov.

2018 Recreational Measures for Gulf of Maine Cod and Haddock, and Georges Bank Cod

On May 1, 2018, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 18972) to set 2018 recreational measures for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock, and Georges Bank cod. We are maintained status quo (2017) management measures for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock. We are increased the minimum size of Georges Bank cod from 22 to 23 inches. We also implemented a 10-fish, per person, per day, possession limit for the for-hire fishery. The 10-fish possession limit for private recreational anglers will remain in place. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116 or email Emily.keiley@noaa.gov.

Scallops

None at this time

Herring

None at this time

Monkfish

2018 Monkfish Specifications

On **May 3, 2018**, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 19462) approving the 2018 monkfish quotas. Based on the recommendation from the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils for fishing years 2017-2019, we are maintaining the 2017 monkfish quotas in the Northern and Southern Fishery Management Areas for the 2018 fishing year. The rule also announced the continuation of revised days-at-sea and possession limits. 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 4, 2018. For additional information, please contact Allison Murphy at (978)281-9122 or email at allison.murphy@noaa.gov.

Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab

None at this time

Skate

None at this time

Mid-Atlantic Council Actions

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

Scup Commercial Quota Period Modification Framework Adjustment

On April 18, 2018, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 17314) that implements modifications to the commercial scup quota period, as recommended by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Beginning this year, this action moves the month of October from the Summer Period to the Winter II period. The intent of this rule is to increase fishing opportunities and allow more scup to be landed by extending the Winter II Period when possession limits are higher. For additional information, please contact Emily Gilbert at (978) 281-9244 or email at emily.gilbert@noaa.gov

2018 Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Recreational Measures

On May 31, 2018, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 24945), effective immediately, announcing 2018 Federal recreational management measures for the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries. This action maintains conservation equivalency for summer flounder, continues status quo measures for scup, and liberalizes Federal measures for black sea bass by removing the current seasonal closure in September and October. 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

None at this time

Tilefish

Tilefish IFQ Cost Recovery

Tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) cost recovery bills for the 2017 calendar year were issued on April 23, 2018, and payment is due by June 7, 2018. The total recoverable costs in 2017 were \$25,420 (down from \$56,166 in 2016). The costs in 2016 were particularly high because of work on the IFQ program review, which was finished and approved by the Council in December 2017. The 2017 costs are closer to the average of the first six years of the tilefish IFQ program. The total ex-vessel value of the fishery was \$4.5 million. As a result, the cost recovery fee percentage is 0.5663%, well below the 3% maximum under the MSA. Details are available in the annual IFQ cost recovery report, which is available on our website. For additional information, please contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341 or Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov.

Other Actions

Blueline Tilefish

None at this time

Paperwork Reduction Act

None at this time

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 February 13, 2018, NMFS published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (83 FR 6152) proposing to designate 13 New Jersey artificial reef sites as Special Management Zones. This action would allow only handline, rod and reel, or spear fishing (including the taking of fish by hand), in the artificial reef designated areas (year round). This action would not prohibit commercial fishing on these reef sites but would prohibit the use of pot and trap gear commonly used by commercial anglers. The comment period on this action closed on March 15, 2018. We are currently considering the public comments and developing a final rule. 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 May 4, 2018, NMFS received a complete application from the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries for a Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA). The LOA under consideration would allow 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

On April 24, 2018, NMFS received an application for an Exempted Educational Activity Authorization (EEAA) from the University of New Hampshire (UNH) in support of two marine sciences courses held at Shoals Marine Laboratory. The requested EEAA would allow two commercial fishing vessels to participate in educational activities in support of courses offer by UNH. 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 May 3, 2018 NMFS issued renewed Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP) to the Northeast Coastal Communities Sector and commercial fisherman Richard Burgess. These EFP renewals under consideration exempt 5 commercial fishing vessels from closed area restrictions in the Gulf of Maine to test the selectivity of hook gears for catching haddock and pollock while avowing bycatch of cod and other species. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at kyle.molton@noaa.gov.

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On April 9, 2018, NMFS issued a LOA to the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR). The LOA allows 3 commercial fishing vessels under the control of DMR to capture, tag, and release halibut in support of DMR research into halibut distribution, habitat use, and other biological characteristics. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at kyle.molton@noaa.gov.

On May 24, 2018, NMFS issued an EEAA to the Shoals Marine Laboratory (SML). The EEAA allows 4 research vessels under the owned and operated by SML to participate in educational activities that support SML academic programs. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at kyle.molton@noaa.gov.

On April 10, 2018, NMFS issued a Scientific Research Permit to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in support of the 2018 Gulf of Maine Longline Industry-Based Survey. The SRP allows two commercial fishing vessels to conduct a bottom longline survey in areas of the western and central Gulf of Maine that are inaccessible to mobil trawl gear. The survey focuses on providing information about species that utilize rocky habitats that may be under-represented in the Center's Bottom Trawl Survey. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232.

On May 2, 2018, NMFS issued an EFP to The Nature Conservancy to renew an EFP issued in 2017. The EFP renewal exempts 21 commercial fishing vessels from the Atlantic halibut possession and minimum size limit. Vessels will be collecting biological samples of Atlantic halibut in support of research focusing on halibut stock structure, seasonal movements, behavior, and life history. The project is funded through the Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at spencer.talmage@noaa.gov.

On May 2, 2018, NMFS issued an EFP to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in support of the 2018 Study Fleet Program. The EFP exempts 31 commercial fishing vessels from several regulations, including: Minimum fish size restrictions; fish possession limits for species not protected under the Endangered Species Act; gear specific fish possession restrictions for the purpose of at-sea sampling; and retaining and landing of prohibited fish species. The Study Fleet Program allows the Center to provide sampling opportunities for research when traditional sample sources would otherwise be unavailable. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at spencer.talmage@noaa.gov.

On May 21, 2018, NMFS issued an EFP renewal to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. The EFP renewal exempts a commercial fishing vessel from minimum mesh size and possession limits in order to test the efficacy of an off-bottom trawl fitted with a small-mesh codend, designed to target redfish and haddock. The project is funded through the Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at spencer.talmage@noaa.gov.

On April 30, 2018, NMFS issued an EFP to The Nature Conservancy renewing an EFP issued in fishing year 2017. This EFP authorizes a maximum of 14 vessels to continue using electronic monitoring (EM) in lieu of human at-sea monitors (ASM) on trips selected for ASM coverage for fishing year 2018. All video from these selected trips will be reviewed and used to identify and enumerate discards of groundfish species. A continuation of this project will enable The Nature Conservancy and its partners to further improve the functionality of EM, refine fish handling protocols, and support future implementation of EM. For additional information, please contact Claire Fitz-Gerald at (978) 281-9255, or email at claire.fitz-gerald@noaa.com.

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On May 3, 2018, NMFS issued an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance renewing an EFP issued in fishing year 2017. A maximum of 24 vessels are authorized to fish under the EFP. Under the EFP, participating vessels are required to use EM, and adhere to catch handling and reporting requirements, on 100 percent of sector trips. Data collected through this EFP will be used to further explore an audit-based EM model, in which vessel trip reports are used to account for discards and a subset of EM video footage is reviewed to ensure accurate reporting. Participating vessels are authorized to access the Western Gulf of Maine Closure Area, portions of Cashes Ledge Closure Area (excluding the Ammen Rock Habitat Management Area), and Closed Area II, seasonally, with fixed gear. For additional information, please contact Claire Fitz-Gerald at (978)281-9255, or email at claire.fitz-gerald@noaa.gov.