



New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 22, 2022

PRESS CONTACT: Janice Plante
(607) 592-4817, jplante@nefmc.org

Groundfish: Council Initiates Framework Adjustment 65 with Specifications, Rebuilding Plans, and Management Measures

The New England Fishery Management Council initiated Framework Adjustment 65 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan when it met [April 12-14, 2022](#) for a hybrid meeting in Mystic, CT. The framework will contain the following components:

- Revised status determination criteria specifying when overfishing is occurring or a stock is overfished;
- Revised rebuilding plans for Gulf of Maine cod and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder;
- Fishing year 2023 and 2024 total allowable catches for the U.S./Canada management units of Eastern Georges Bank cod and Eastern Georges Bank haddock, as well as Georges Bank yellowtail flounder;
- Fishing year 2023 and 2024 specifications for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and Georges Bank cod, including a cod catch target for the recreational fishery;
- Fishing year 2023, 2024, and 2025 specifications for 14 groundfish stocks – Georges Bank haddock, Gulf of Maine haddock, Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine yellowtail flounder, Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder, Georges Bank winter flounder, Gulf of Maine winter flounder, Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder, American plaice, witch flounder, pollock, white hake, Atlantic halibut, ocean pout, and Atlantic wolffish;
- Additional measures to promote stock rebuilding for Gulf of Maine cod and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder, and
- Revised [acceptable biological catch \(ABC\) control rules](#) in consultation with the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee.

The Council's Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) and Groundfish Committee, with input from the Groundfish Advisory Panel and Recreational Advisory Panel, will work on Framework 65 throughout the year. The Council will take final action on the framework during its December 2022 meeting.



Atlantic cod, haddock, and pollock caught on a research trip. – SMAST photo



New England Fishery Management Council

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder

During its March meeting, the Groundfish Committee asked the PDT to conduct a preliminary analysis of Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) winter flounder catches in non-groundfish federal fisheries and to bring the information to the full Council in April.

The Council received an overview of the [preliminary analysis](#), which showed that SNE/MA winter flounder is caught in the scallop and squid fisheries and, to a lesser extent, a few other fisheries as well.

The PDT's report will help guide the Council's work in: (1) developing a rebuilding plan for this stock; and (2) considering additional measures to promote stock rebuilding as part of Framework Adjustment 65.

Gulf of Maine Cod Rebuilding and Atlantic Cod Stock Structure

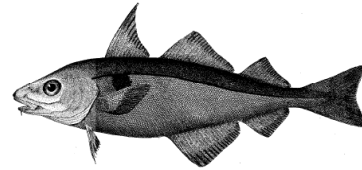
The Groundfish PDT also will begin working on a [Gulf of Maine cod rebuilding plan](#) this spring as part of Framework Adjustment 65. Given that cod stock structure may change in the future, the PDT will be looking at cod spawning protections in addition to fishing mortality and other metrics that are routinely considered, although the rebuilding plan itself will continue to use the current Gulf of Maine cod stock boundaries.



University of New England photo

Stock Assessment Updates

The Council received a [presentation](#) from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (Science Center) on the recent [Gulf of Maine Haddock Research Track Assessment](#), which was peer reviewed in [January 2022](#).



The Council also received updates on recent research track assessments for [butterfish](#) and [lllex squid](#).

The Science Center will host a [May 23-24, 2022](#) Assessment Oversight Panel (AOP) meeting to determine the level of review needed for stocks scheduled for [September 2022 Management Track Assessments](#). The stocks being discussed by the AOP are:

- Monkfish (North and South)
- Gulf of Maine haddock
- Georges Bank haddock
- Gulf of Maine winter flounder
- Georges Bank winter flounder
- Witch flounder
- Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine yellowtail flounder
- Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder
- Atlantic halibut
- Atlantic wolffish
- Ocean pout
- Pollock
- White hake

The AOP will determine whether each stock will undergo a Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 assessment as explained [here](#). View this [infographic](#) for a quick rundown of the difference between management track and research track assessments. The stock assessment process is fully described [in this document](#).



New England Fishery Management Council

During its [February 2022](#) meeting, the Council received a [presentation](#) on the 2021 Atlantic Cod Stock Structure Workshops, as well as the [draft final report](#) resulting from the workshops. It also received an [update](#) on work being done by the [2023 Atlantic Cod Research Track Working Group](#).

Following these February reports, the Council had a preliminary discussion about the potential implications of a [change from the current number of management units for cod](#) – Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank – to up to five management units. The Council agreed to further consider next steps at its April meeting.

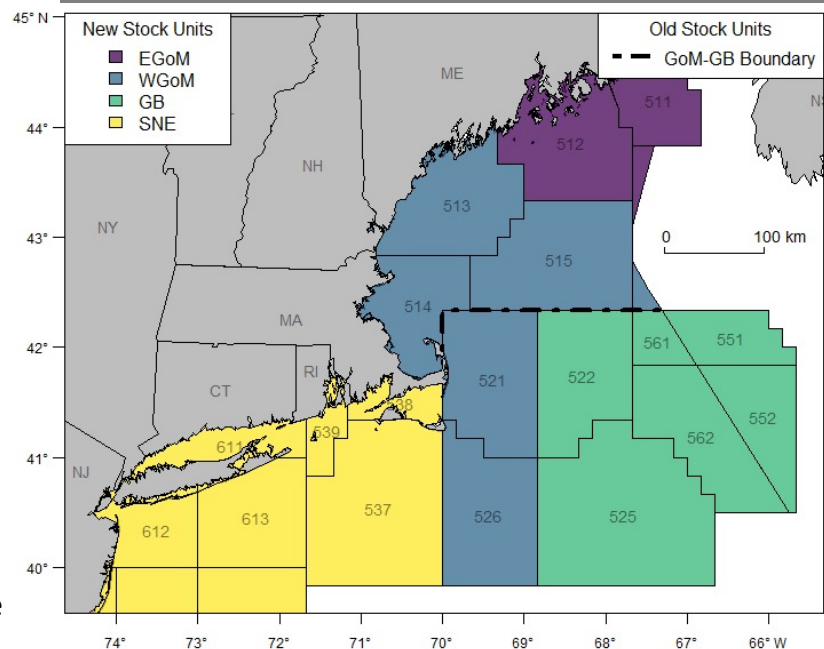
Change in Groundfish Priorities

To set the stage, it's important to know that the Council approves work priorities each year in December for the following year. The [2022 Council priorities](#) were approved during the Council's December 2021 webinar meeting. Once priorities are established, a change can only be made by a two-thirds majority vote of the Council.

At the April meeting, the Council voted unanimously to proceed with a change to its 2022 groundfish priorities by adding "a transition plan for Atlantic cod management from the current two management units to up to five units." The Council agreed to make this a multiyear priority, recognizing that the work would extend beyond 2022.

As part of the transition plan, the Council supported the development of a white paper on potential approaches to allocate Georges Bank cod to the recreational fishery. The white paper will be delivered to the Council in 2022 to inform the discussion about 2023 priorities. This white paper already was part of the Council's multiyear groundfish priorities, but now it is being referred to as part of the transition plan related to cod structure.

Four Biological Stock Units Recommended by the 2023 Atlantic Cod Research Track Working Group



Interested in following the Atlantic Cod Research Track Working Group's meetings? Agendas and webinar links are posted [HERE](#) when available.





New England Fishery Management Council

Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23

On the first day of the Council's April 2022 meeting, Regional Administrator Mike Pentony [announced that NOAA Fisheries had approved Amendment 23](#) to the groundfish plan. The Council developed this amendment "to improve the reliability and accountability of catch reporting in the commercial groundfish fishery to ensure there is precise and accurate representation of catch," defined as both landings and discards. The comment period on the [proposed rule](#) ended March 30, 2022. A final rule has not been published yet but is expected shortly after the May 1 start of the 2022 fishing year.

Electronic Monitoring Maximized Retention

Amendment 23 applies to groundfish sector vessels. It gives these vessels the option of: (1) carrying a human at-sea monitor to meet the amendment's requirements; or (2) using electronic monitoring under one of two models – the [Audit Model or the maximized retention model](#).

The Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) gave a presentation to the Council on its [Electronic Monitoring Maximized Retention Pilot Project](#) during the April meeting. GMRI began working on the project in 2018 and was then joined by The Nature Conservancy.

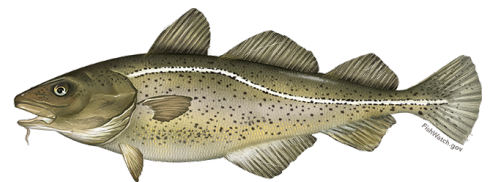
Maximized retention has two legs: (1) an at-sea component where strategically mounted cameras are used to verify that allocated groundfish stocks are not discarded (see GMRI photo below); and (2) a dockside monitoring component to collect information on allocated groundfish discards at the dock that otherwise would be collected at sea. Landings of all fish, including fish below the minimum size in the regulations, would be reported to NOAA Fisheries by the dealer.

Additional details can be found in the [Amendment 23 documents](#).

Amendment 23 Resources

Learn more about the development of Amendment 23 and ongoing implementation and outreach work.

- Visit the Council's [Amendment 23 webpage](#).
- Visit the NOAA Fisheries [Northeast Groundfish Monitoring Program webpage](#), which focuses on Amendment 23.
- Visit the NOAA Fisheries Amendment 23 [Outreach Events webpage](#).



Need More Info? All documents, presentations, and correspondence associated with the Council's April 13, 2022 groundfish discussion are [posted HERE](#).

Questions? Contact Dr. Jamie Cournane, the Council's groundfish plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492 ext. 103. She can be reached by email at jcournane@nefmc.org.