



New England Fishery Management Council

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Groundfish: NEFMC Selects Wide Range of Monitoring Alternatives for Amendment 23; Initiates Framework 57

Following a review of written and oral public comments collected during the Feb. 17-April 3 scoping process, the New England Fishery Management Council today approved an extensive range of alternatives for development and further consideration in Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23.

The Council identified the amendment's purpose and need and then voted to include the following elements to achieve the purpose:

- Electronic monitoring (EM) alternatives;
- A dockside monitoring program option;
- Alternatives to determine the total monitoring coverage rate, including reevaluating the 30% coefficient of variation (CV) precision standard and how it is applied, for example, on a fishery vs. stock level;
- An option to facilitate knowing the total coverage rate at a time certain to assist sectors for business planning; and
- Proposals to streamline and improve the sector weekly reporting process.



Haddock. – NEFMC photo

“The purpose of Amendment 23 is to implement measures to improve reliability and accountability of catch reporting and to ensure a precise and accurate representation of catch (landings and discards).”

“The need of Amendment 23 is to improve the accuracy of collected catch data. Accurate catch data are necessary to ensure that catch limits are set at levels that prevent overfishing and to determine when catch limits are exceeded. A second need is to create fair and equitable catch reporting requirements for all commercial groundfish fishermen while maximizing the value of collected catch data and minimizing costs for the fishing industry and the National Marine Fisheries Service.”



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Electronic Monitoring Range of Alternatives

Regarding electronic monitoring, the Council voted to include the following items for further development and analysis within the range of alternatives:

- EM as an approved alternative to at-sea monitors to directly estimate discards;
- An audit-based approach where EM operates on 100% of the trips with a subset of hauls or trips reviewed to verify vessel trip reported discards; and
- A maximized retention approach where EM verifies that all groundfish are landed and dockside monitoring is used to sample catch.

In other Amendment 23 related action, the Council directed its Groundfish Committee to discuss potentially convening a workshop to: (1) educate stakeholders on the difference between the terms accuracy and precision; and, in light of this, (2) evaluate how monitoring data, such as data collected through at-sea monitoring, is used in stock assessments and leads to the resulting biomass estimates.

The Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) will work on Amendment 23 throughout the summer and present a progress report to the Groundfish Committee and full Council in September.

Framework Adjustment 57 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan

The Council also initiated Framework 57 during this June 20-22 meeting in Portland, ME and recommended that the framework include the following items:

- Status changes and **specifications for all groundfish stocks** for fishing years (FY) 2018 to 2020;
- **Specifications for FY 2018 for US/Canada stocks** of Eastern Georges Bank cod, Eastern Georges Bank haddock, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder;



Haddock being offloaded in Gloucester.— NEFMC photo



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- **Common pool trimester total allowable catch (TAC)** adjustments for stocks that have experienced early closures in Trimesters 1 and 2 since the implementation of Amendment 16;
- **Atlantic halibut** management modifications with three alternatives to be analyzed:
 - (1) a tiered accountability measure (AM) system, such as zero possession for overages up to 120% of the annual catch limit (ACL) and then zero possession *plus* area AMs for overages greater than 120% of the ACL,
 - (2) a new AM area for Atlantic halibut in federal waters off eastern Maine, and
 - (3) extending halibut reactive AM possession restrictions to all federal permit holders whether they fish in state or federal waters;
- **Recreational management measures process** revisions within the narrow range of alternatives that the Council identified to modify the timing of the regulatory process so regulations for the recreational fishery be made available sooner; and
- **Southern windowpane flounder accountability measure** revisions for large-mesh non-groundfish fisheries that: (1) are consistent with Framework 52 AMs for groundfish fisheries, or (2) involve modifications to the size, location, duration, or trigger of those AMs.

Framework 57 Timeline – September and December Actions

Framework 57 is on an ambitious track. At its Sept. 26-28 meeting in Gloucester, the Council is expected to adopt TACs for US/Canada stocks and review a draft range of alternatives for measures that are *not* related to stock status. Also, the Council may identify its highest management priorities within the framework for continued development while ensuring specifications will be in place on time for the May 1 start of the 2018 fishing year.

An operational assessment to update the status of all 20 groundfish stocks is being conducted this summer. A peer review of the assessment results is scheduled for Sept. 11-15.

The Council will review these results at its Dec. 5-7 meeting in Newport, RI and take final action on the entire framework.

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Atlantic halibut, dressed and iced. – NEFMC photo

Documents used during today's discussion are available at <http://www.nefmc.org/library/june-2017-groundfish>.
