



# New England Fishery Management Council

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

## Council Approves Groundfish Framework 57 With Annual Catch Limits, Halibut/Southern Windowpane AMs, and More

The New England Fishery Management Council has approved Framework Adjustment 57 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. The framework contains fishery specifications and annual catch limits (ACLs) for the 2018-2020 fishing years, as well as: (a) U.S./Canada total allowable catches (TACs) for shared stocks on Georges Bank; (b) Atlantic halibut management measures; (c) modifications to the southern windowpane flounder accountability measures (AMs) for large-mesh non-groundfish trawl fisheries such as scup and summer flounder; (d) adjustments to how common pool trimester TACs are apportioned; and (e) a temporary change to the scallop fishery's AM implementation policy to cover the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder stock. The Council also discussed actions related to recreational fisheries and approved a temporary administrative measure to give the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) regional administrator the authority to adjust recreational measures for Georges Bank cod.

### 2018-2020 Fishing Year Specifications

The new specifications in Framework 57 include substantial quota increases for several commercially important groundfish stocks, including Georges Bank cod, Gulf of Maine cod, Gulf of Maine haddock, and pollock, as well as smaller but important increases for a few "choke" stocks. These are stocks with low quotas that can make accessing healthy, high-quota stocks more difficult (see table).

Catch limits for some stocks will decrease, and fishermen will continue to face challenges with non-allocated stocks such as windowpane flounder. Overall, however, the 2018 quotas are expected to provide a number of groundfish fishing opportunities on healthy resources.

**Fishing Year 2018 Commercial Groundfish Sub-ACLs in Metric Tons With Percent Changes From 2017 Allocations**

	Stock	FY 2017 commercial groundfish sub- ACL	FY 2018 commercial groundfish sub- ACL	% Change
Allocated Stocks	GB Cod	531	1,360	156.1%
	GOM Cod	280	390	39.3%
	GB Haddock	52,620	44,659	-20.8%
	GOM Haddock	3,018	8,738	189.5%
	GB Yellowtail Flounder	163	169	3.7%
	SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	187	42	-77.5%
	CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	341	398	16.7%
	American Plaice	1,218	1,580	29.7%
	Witch Flounder	734	849	15.7%
	GB Winter Flounder	620	731	17.9%
	GOM Winter Flounder	639	357	-44.1%
	SNE/MA Winter Flounder	585	518	-11.5%
	Redfish	10,183	10,755	5.6%
	White Hake	3,358	2,735	-18.6%
	Pollock	17,817	37,400	109.9%
Non-allocated Stocks	GOM/GB Windowpane Flounder	129	63	-51.2%
	SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder	104	53	-49%
	Ocean Pout	130	94	-27.3%
	Atlantic Halibut	91	93	2.2%
	Atlantic Wolffish	72	82	13.9%



# New England Fishery Management Council

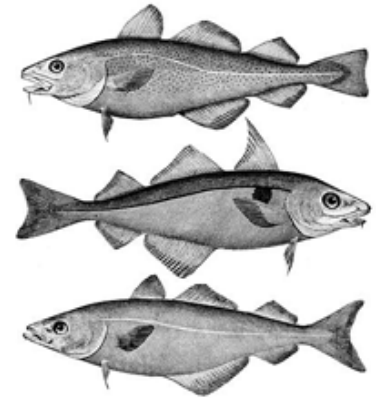
The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) made overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendations – the starting point for calculating catch limits – for all groundfish stocks except Atlantic halibut. In order to prevent delays in the implementation of Framework 57, the Council agreed *in advance* to accept the halibut OFL and ABC recommendations that the SSC intends to make during a December 18 webinar meeting.

The Council also approved sub-ACLs for: (a) Gulf of Maine cod and haddock for the recreational fishery; (b) four flatfish stocks for the scallop fishery; (c) Georges Bank yellowtail flounder for small-mesh fisheries; and (d) Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank haddock for the midwater trawl fishery as shown in the table below.

**Fishing Year 2018 Sub-ACLs in Metric Tons With Percentage Change**

Fishery	Stock	FY 2017 sub-ACL	FY 2018 sub-ACL	% Change
Recreational Groundfish	GOM Cod	157	220	40.1%
	GOM Haddock	1,160	3,358	189.5%
Sea Scallop	GB Yellowtail Flounder	32	33	3.1%
	SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	34	5	-85.3%
	GOM/GB Windowpane Flounder	36	18	-50%
	SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder	209	158	-24.4%
Midwater Trawl	GB Haddock	801	680	-15.1%
	GOM Haddock	42	122	190.5%
Small-Mesh	GB Yellowtail Flounder	4	4	0%
Other Sub-components – Large-Mesh Non-Groundfish <sup>1</sup>	SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder	249	218	-12.4%

<sup>1</sup>The value for Other Sub-components for SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder includes the other sub-component value for Large-Mesh Non-Groundfish Trawl Fisheries.



– NOAA graphic

During its September meeting in Gloucester, the Council approved 2018 fishing year TACs for three shared U.S./Canada groundfish stocks on Georges Bank, which also are part of Framework 57.

The U.S. share for Eastern Georges Bank cod increased 76% from 2017. Eastern Georges Bank haddock decreased 47.1%. Georges Bank yellowtail flounder went up 2.9%

**Fishing Year 2018 U.S./Canada TACs in Metric Tons (mt)**

	Eastern GB Cod	Eastern GB Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared TAC	951	40,000	300
U.S. TAC	257	15,600	213
Canada TAC	694	24,400	87



# New England Fishery Management Council

## Revised Common Pool Vessel Trimester TAC Apportionments

The Council also voted to revise the common pool trimester TAC apportionments based on a request from industry. However, the Council limited these revisions to stocks that have experienced early closures in Trimester 1 or Trimester 2 since the implementation of Amendment 16.

The qualifying stocks are: Georges Bank cod, Gulf of Maine cod, Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder, Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine yellowtail flounder, American plaice, and witch flounder. These stocks are shaded in grey in the table below showing the revised 2018 common pool trimester apportionments and TACs.

In order to facilitate management of the common pool fishery, the Council voted to broaden the authority of the GARFO regional administrator to modify common pool trimester TACs and accountability measures. This way, the regional administrator will have more flexibility to make necessary changes without requiring further Council action.

**Fishing Year 2018 Common Pool Trimester Apportionments and TACs in Metric Tons**

Stock	Percentage Apportionments			Trimester TACs (mt)		
	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3
GB Cod	28%	34%	38%	7.0	8.5	9.6
GOM Cod	49%	33%	18%	6.2	4.2	2.3
GB Haddock	27%	33%	40%	84.0	102.6	124.4
GOM Haddock	27%	26%	47%	25.6	24.7	44.6
GB Yellowtail	19%	30%	52%	0.5	0.8	1.3
SNE/MA Yellowtail	21%	28%	51%	1.7	2.2	4.1
CC/GOM Yellowtail	57%	26%	17%	10.0	4.6	3.0
American Plaice	74%	8%	18%	21.8	2.4	5.3
Witch Flounder	55%	20%	25%	10.4	3.8	4.7
GB Winter	8%	24%	69%	0.5	1.4	4.2
GOM Winter	37%	38%	25%	6.5	6.7	4.4
Redfish	25%	31%	44%	14.8	18.4	26.1
White Hake	38%	31%	31%	8.3	6.8	6.8
Pollock	28%	35%	37%	66.4	83.0	87.7

***TIMING:*** The Council voted on December 6, 2017 to submit Framework 57 to the National Marine Fisheries Service – NOAA Fisheries – for review. The target implementation date is May 1, 2018, the start of the new fishing year. Additional Framework 57 measures are described on the following two pages.



# New England Fishery Management Council

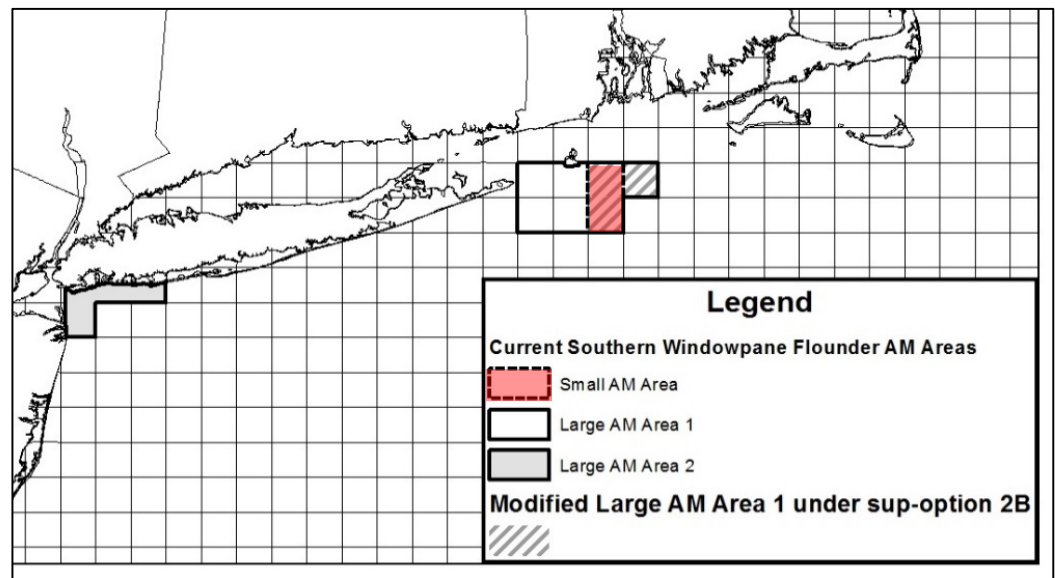
## Southern Windowpane Flounder Accountability Measures for Large-Mesh Non-Groundfish Trawl Fisheries

Also in Framework 57, the Council agreed to modify the southern windowpane flounder accountability measures for large-mesh **non-groundfish** trawl fisheries, which include scup, summer flounder, and other trawl fisheries. Staff from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council collaborated extensively with the New England Council staff to develop the measures and conduct the necessary analyses for this action.

The changes are two-fold. First, the Council extended the flexibility provisions already in place for the commercial groundfish fishery to the large mesh non-groundfish trawl fisheries. These provisions reduce the size and duration of the AMs under certain conditions depending on the status of the stock and fishery performance.

Second, the Council approved changes to the Gear Restricted Areas (GRAs) that apply to large-mesh non-groundfish trawl fisheries. The GRAs are shown in the map below.

*These modifications are expected to provide additional fishing opportunities while continuing to reduce impacts on southern windowpane flounder.*



If either a “small” or “large” accountability measure is triggered – the size depends on the magnitude of the quota overage – the following measures would apply:

- The Small AM Area east of Montauk, NY (in red on map) would be implemented seasonally from September 1 through April 30 instead of year round;
- The *revised* Large AM Area 1 east of Montauk (hatched area on map) would be implemented year round; and
- The Large AM Area 2 off western Long Island would remain unchanged.



# New England Fishery Management Council

## Atlantic Halibut Management Measures

The Council approved changes to the Atlantic halibut accountability measures for vessels possessing federal groundfish permits. If the AMs are triggered, the following would pertain to the halibut GRAs.

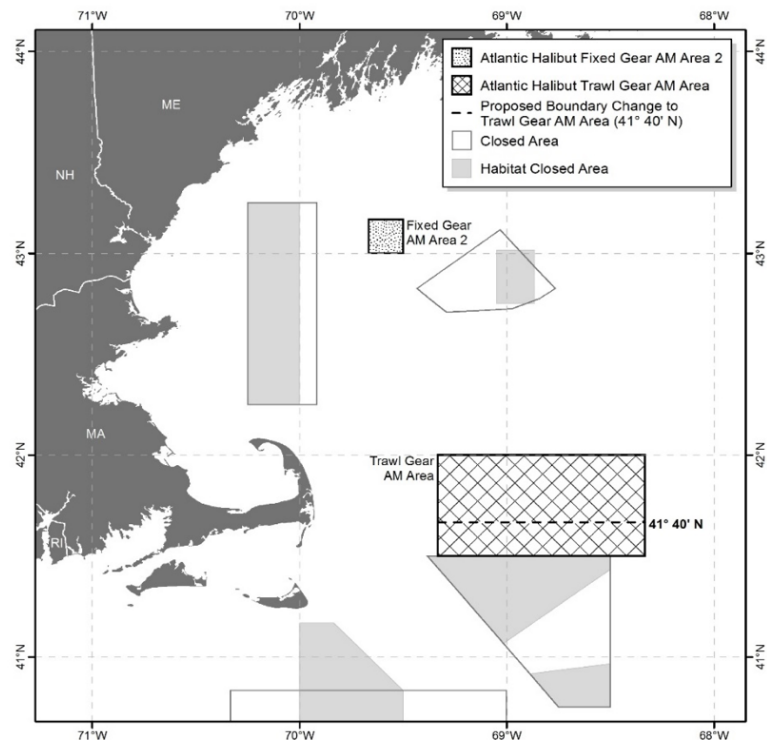
- For the fixed gear AMs, the Council: (1) exempted longline gear; (2) removed Fixed Gear AM Area 1 on Stellwagen Bank; (3) retained the **Fixed Gear AM Area 2 on Platts Bank** for gillnet gear and added a provision to allow gillnet fishing from November through February in that area (see map).
- For the Trawl Gear AM Area (see map), selective trawl gear approved by the regional administrator would be required within the entire Trawl Gear AM Area. The Council agreed to allow standard trawl gear in the portion of the area between 41° 40' N and 42° seasonally from April 1 through July 31.

All other provisions of the gear restricted areas remain in place. The Council made the above modifications to continue protecting halibut while preserving fishing opportunities for vessels targeting other species.



Atlantic halibut. – J. Cournane, NEFMC photo

Also related to halibut, the Council approved an accountability measure stipulating that if the halibut sub-ACL is exceeded, a zero possession limit would apply to all federal permit holders, with an exemption for the following permits: party/charter; highly migratory species (HMS) angling; and HMS charter/headboat.



- Groundfish documents used during this meeting are available for at: <https://www.nefmc.org/library/groundfish-committee-december-2017>
- Visit the New England Council's groundfish webpage at: <https://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/northeast-multispecies>
- For more information contact Dr. Jamie Cournane, the Council's groundfish plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 103, email [jcournane@nefmc.org](mailto:jcournane@nefmc.org)