



New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 27, 2017

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

Council Endorses 2018 U.S./Canada TACs; Receives Progress Report on Groundfish Framework 57, Monitoring Amendment

The New England Fishery Management Council today accepted 2018 total allowable catches (TACs) for three groundfish stocks on Georges Bank (GB) that the U.S. shares with Canada – Eastern GB cod, Eastern GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder. The TACs were recommended by the U.S./Canada Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC) based on advice from the U.S./Canada Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee (TRAC). The U.S. has members on both the TMGC and the TRAC.

The TACs will be included in Framework Adjustment 57 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, which is still under development. The National Marine Fisheries Service must approve the TACs before they are implemented.

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

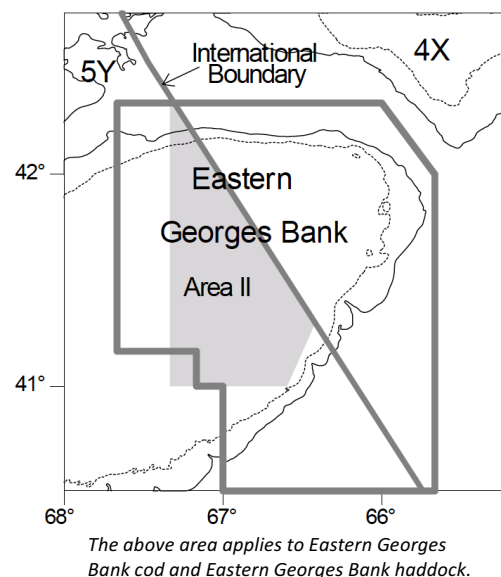
	Eastern GB Cod	Eastern GB Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared TAC	951	40,000	300
U.S. TAC	257	15,600	213
Canada TAC	694	24,400	87

The allocation shares for 2018 are based on the following formula: historical catches weighted 10%; and resource distribution based on trawl surveys weighted 90%.

The TACs reflect the following changes from 2017 levels for U.S. quotas:

- **Eastern Georges Bank Cod:** 111 mt *increase*
- **Eastern Georges Bank Haddock:** 13,900 mt *decrease*
- **Eastern Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder:** 6 mt *increase*

The TMGC recommended that 40,000 mt also be used as the “upper bound” when determining 2019 catch advice for Eastern Georges Bank haddock. Furthermore, the TMGC requested that the U.S./Canada Steering Committee consider a benchmark assessment for this stock as a priority.

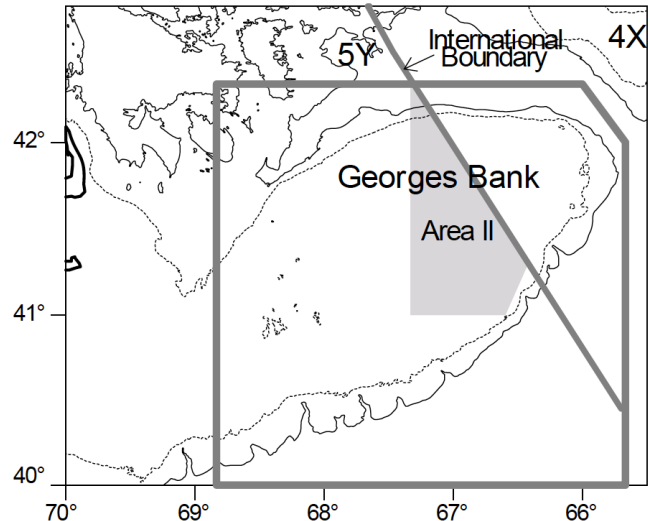




New England Fishery Management Council

The TMGC made the following comments about each of the shared stocks.

- **Eastern Georges Bank Cod** – “The status of the stock remains poor. However, there have been recent improvements in survey indices. Accordingly, the TMGC sought to balance the utilization of other species while continuing to promote biomass growth.”
- **Eastern Georges Bank Haddock** – “Although model projections show a decrease in biomass in upcoming years, biomass is expected to remain high. The total 2018 quota represents a 10,000 mt reduction compared to the 2017 TAC and addresses concerns around the growth of the 2013 year class and the request from industry for stability in the inter-annual TACs.”
- **Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder** – “The change in survey catchability in this year’s empirical approach resulted in an increased estimate of survey biomass, although the declining trend of the stock remains. Available information suggests that catch is not a major driver of current stock conditions because total mortality remains high in spite of record low catches. In light of this information, the TMGC sought to balance yellowtail flounder stock conditions and the utilization of other species.”



The area above, which covers water both in the U.S. and Canada, applies to Georges Bank yellowtail flounder.

Groundfish Operational Assessments

The Council received an overview from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center of the recent operational assessments conducted for the 20 groundfish stocks managed under the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. The assessment for Atlantic halibut is delayed, but here are the peer review panel’s stock status recommendations for the other 19:

- **Not Overfished and No Overfishing Occurring:** Georges Bank haddock, Gulf of Maine haddock, Georges Bank winter flounder (an improvement in status for this stock), American plaice, Acadian redfish, white hake, pollock, and southern windowpane flounder
- **Overfished but No Overfishing Occurring:** Southern New England winter flounder, wolffish, northern windowpane flounder, and ocean pout
- **Overfished and Overfishing Occurring:** Gulf of Maine cod, Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine yellowtail flounder, Georges Bank yellowtail flounder (this assessment was conducted by the TRAC), and Southern New England yellowtail flounder
- **Not Overfished and Overfishing Occurring:** Zero



New England Fishery Management Council

- **Overfished and Overfishing Unknown:** Georges Bank cod and witch flounder
- **Overfished Unknown and No Overfishing:** Gulf of Maine winter flounder

Framework Adjustment 57 Components

The Council received a progress report on Framework Adjustment 57, which, in addition to setting 2018 specifications for U.S./Canada stocks, will:

- Incorporate any needed status changes for groundfish stocks based on the recent operational assessments; and
- Set fishing year 2018-2020 specifications for all groundfish stocks.

Related to specifications, the Council voted to include the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) recommendations for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder overfishing limits (OFLs) and acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for fishing years 2018 and 2019 in the framework. The SSC recommended that the ABC for the Georges Bank yellowtail flounder stock should not exceed 300 mt for fishing years 2018 and 2019, with the expectation that the 2019 catch specifications will be revisited and possibly adjusted following the 2018 TRAC assessment. The OFL for the stock remains unknown.

The above items are regulatory requirements and must be accomplished in Framework 57. Of the remaining management issues currently identified for the framework, the Council prioritized them in the following order, starting with the highest. It then authorized the Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) and Groundfish Committee to discontinue work on the lowest priority items – or reduce the number of options within each – if time constraints develop. The Council recognized that the top priority is to ensure timely implementation of fishery specifications on May 1, 2018, the start of the new fishing year. The additional Framework 57 items, in descending order, are:

1. Modify Atlantic halibut management;
2. Modify the southern windowpane flounder accountability measures for all large-mesh non-groundfish fisheries, including the scup and summer flounder fisheries, among others, with the “extension of Framework Adjustment 52 provisions to large-mesh non-groundfish trawl fisheries” being the first priority in this section;
3. Revise common pool trimester TACs; and
4. Revise the recreational management measures process.

The Council's Groundfish PDT, SSC, Groundfish Advisory Panel, Recreational Advisory Panel, and Groundfish Committee will meet on various dates throughout October and November. The Council is expected to take final action on Framework 57 at its December 5-7 meeting in Newport, RI.

Finally, the Council received a progress report on Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23, which included a



New England Fishery Management Council

a review of the range of alternatives under consideration. The alternatives fall into four broad categories covering: (1) monitoring coverage levels; (2) improving the monitoring of discards; (3) improving the monitoring of landings; and (4) streamlining sector reporting.

Back in June, the Council discussed the possibility of holding a workshop to help people better understand the terminology and issues involved with various aspects of stock assessments and usage of data. During its three-day meeting here in Gloucester, MA, the Council took the next step and voted to ask its Executive Committee to “discuss convening a working group to identify and/or improve methods for using monitoring data in stock assessments to estimate stock biomass.”



Haddock being offloaded in Gloucester, MA. – NEFMC photos

- Groundfish documents used during this meeting are available for downloading at: <https://www.nefmc.org/library/september-2017-groundfish>
- 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
- Information about the recent operational assessments is available on the Northeast Fisheries Science Center website at: <https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/groundfish/operational-assessments-2017/agenda.html>