



New England Fishery Management Council

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Groundfish: Council Discusses Recreational Fishing Issues, Monitoring Amendment 23, Fishery Data, and New Sector

On January 30, midway through its three-day meeting in Portsmouth, NH, the New England Fishery Management Council covered a wide range of groundfish-related issues. These included:

- The Fishery Data for Stock Assessment Working Group’s final report;
- The peer review of the working group’s report by a subpanel of the Scientific and Statistical Committee;
- A brief overview of the December 17, 2018 meeting of the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP), which included an announcement that NTAP is soliciting candidates through February 22, 2019 to [serve on the panel](#);
- A progress report on Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23;
- Consideration of whether the [Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office \(GARFO\)](#) should approve a new lease-only groundfish sector called [Mooncusser Sector](#), which the Council supported based on a recommendation from its Groundfish Committee that followed [guidance on the process for new sectors](#);
- A short update on the Council’s Groundfish Catch Share Review – here’s the [draft outline](#); and
- A number of recreational fishing issues.

Recreational Measures:
What’s Going on in 2019?

Given the extended federal government shutdown, recreational fishermen are questioning what will happen come May 1, the start of the 2019 groundfish fishing year.

The short answer is that 2018 measures for Gulf of Maine cod, Gulf of Maine haddock, and Georges Bank cod, which are shown in the table at right, **will remain effective** until replaced by a new rule in 2019.

Current Recreational Fishing Measures

Remain effective until replaced by new 2019 measures

Gulf of Maine Cod Haddock

Fishing Year 2018 Recreational Fishing Measures for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock

Year	Gulf of Maine Haddock			Gulf of Maine Cod		
	Bag Limit	Size Limit	Open Season	Bag Limit	Size Limit	Open Season
2018	12	17 inches	May 1 – September 16 November 1 – February 28 and April 15 – April 30	Gulf of Maine Cod Possession Prohibited		

Bag limits are per person per day and size limits are minimum total length.

Georges Bank Cod

Fishing Year 2018 Recreational Fishing Measures for Georges Bank Cod

Year	Bag Limit	Size Limit	Open Season
2018	10	23 inches	All Year

Bag limits are per person per day and size limits are minimum total length.



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Usually, each year during its January meeting, the New England Council makes recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS, NOAA Fisheries) on recreational fishery management measures. However, those recommendations are based on advice from the Council's Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) and then vetted through the Groundfish Committee before being forwarded to the full Council.

This year, however, the RAP's January 15 meeting was postponed because key personnel from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center were furloughed due to the government shutdown and, as such, necessary analyses couldn't be conducted. Therefore, the RAP never had the chance to formulate final 2019 recommendations.

During its October 2018 meeting, the RAP agreed to consider "separate measures by recreational fishing mode (charter, party, and private) for Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock while being fair and equitable across modes." The RAP's next meeting is scheduled for February 22. At that time, the RAP will develop more defined recommendations for consideration at the Groundfish Committee's February 26 meeting. Meeting details will be available soon on the Council's [groundfish webpage](#).

Recognizing the complications caused by the government shutdown, the Council voted on January 30 to have the Groundfish Committee, using the RAP's advice:

- Formulate 2019 recreational fishing recommendations;
- And forward the package to the Executive Committee, which, on behalf of the full Council, will submit recommendations to GARFO for consideration.

The Council emphasized that this is not how it typically develops recreational fishing measures, and the process will apply only to 2019 in consideration of the compressed timeline related to the shutdown.

Furthermore, despite the Council's best efforts, GARFO's regional administrator cautioned that 2019 recreational measures likely would not be ready by May 1 given the backlog of regulatory actions needing to be reviewed and implemented by NMFS. Hence, 2018 measures will remain in place until superseded.

Recreational Workshops

GARFO, with help from Tidal Bay Consulting, intended to hold three recreational fishing workshops on January 8, 10, and 12 respectively in Portsmouth, NH, Narragansett, RI, and Plymouth, MA. Those workshops were postponed due to the shutdown. The Council received a short presentation on the purpose of the workshops, and organizers said they intended to reschedule these events, most likely in the fall when fishing activity slows down. Check the [workshop webpage](#) for future updates.



A large haddock caught on a recreational charter boat trip.
– Dave Waldrup photo



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Addressing Recreational Management Issues

The Council also had a broad discussion about how to better incorporate recreational issues into its planning process. Executive Director Tom Nies said the purpose of the discussion was to “get some ideas on the table” for further consideration and potential follow-up.

The Council initially scheduled this discussion thinking it would have feedback from GARFO’s recreational workshops. The workshops were intended to give participants an opportunity to brainstorm short- and long-term approaches for possible future recreational fisheries management strategies, and the resulting recommendations were to be forwarded to the Council’s Recreational Advisory Panel, Groundfish Committee, and the full Council.

Even though the workshops were postponed, Council members voiced several approaches that possibly could be pursued. Next, the Executive Committee will consider the input and bring forward a proposal for further Council discussion.

Fishery Data for Stock Assessment Working Group

The Fishery Data for Stock Assessment Working Group presented its final report to the Council. Dr. Steve Cadrin of the School for Marine Science and Technology at UMass Dartmouth chaired the working group. The information and recommendations presented in the final report will be used to help inform Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, which is being developed by the Council to improve reliability and accountability of groundfish catch reporting and to ensure a precise and accurate representation of catch, meaning both landings and discards.

The Four “Deliverables”

The working group was charged with reviewing:

- How fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data are used in stock assessments;
- The utility and limitations of catch per unit effort (CPUE) as an index of abundance for northeast multispecies (groundfish) stocks;
- Fishery factors and fishery-dependent data needed for a reliable CPUE index; and
- Desired factors with existing conditions and data for the fishery.

The group developed 10 recommendations, which then were peer reviewed by a subpanel of the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The SSC subpanel was chaired by Dr. Patrick Sullivan of Cornell University.

SSC REVIEW DRAFT

Fishery Data for Stock Assessment Working Group Report

November 19, 2018

Working Group: Steve Cadrin (Chair, SMAST), Robin Frede (NEFMC), Emily Keiley (GARFO), Brian Linton (NEFSC), Jean-Jacques Maguire (SSC), Paul Rago (NEFSC retired), Rich Bell (TNC), Vito Giacalone (NESC), Chad Demarest (NEFSC), Chris Brown (FV Proud Mary) and Mark Gibson (RDEM retired)

Other Contributors: Cate O’Keefe (MADMF), Greg DeCelles (MADMF), Brooke Wright (SMAST), Alex Hansell (SMAST), Chris McGuire (TNC), Dan Hennen (NEFSC)



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Accurate indices of abundance are vital to fisheries assessment and management. The SSC reviewers noted that indices can come from a variety of sources but may vary in information content and quality.

The SSC peer review subpanel concluded, “In this report, we expand slightly on the type of information that might be gathered from fishery-dependent sources and why reconsideration of these data as input into stock assessment and management should be made.”

“The Working Group Report provides a clear, thorough and comprehensive analysis of how fishery-dependent data can be used, the strengths and weaknesses of such data, and how they compare in their characterization of the fishery relative to data gathered from fishery-independent sources.”

– SSC Peer Review Panel conclusion

Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23

The Council’s Groundfish Committee and Plan Development Team (PDT) will continue to work on Amendment 23 utilizing the information garnered from the Fishery Data for Stock Assessment Working Group.

The SSC will conduct a peer review of the PDT’s analyses for Amendment 23, possibly in February, and then the Groundfish Committee, PDT, and Groundfish Advisory Panel will meet collectively this spring and discuss monitoring standards for the amendment.

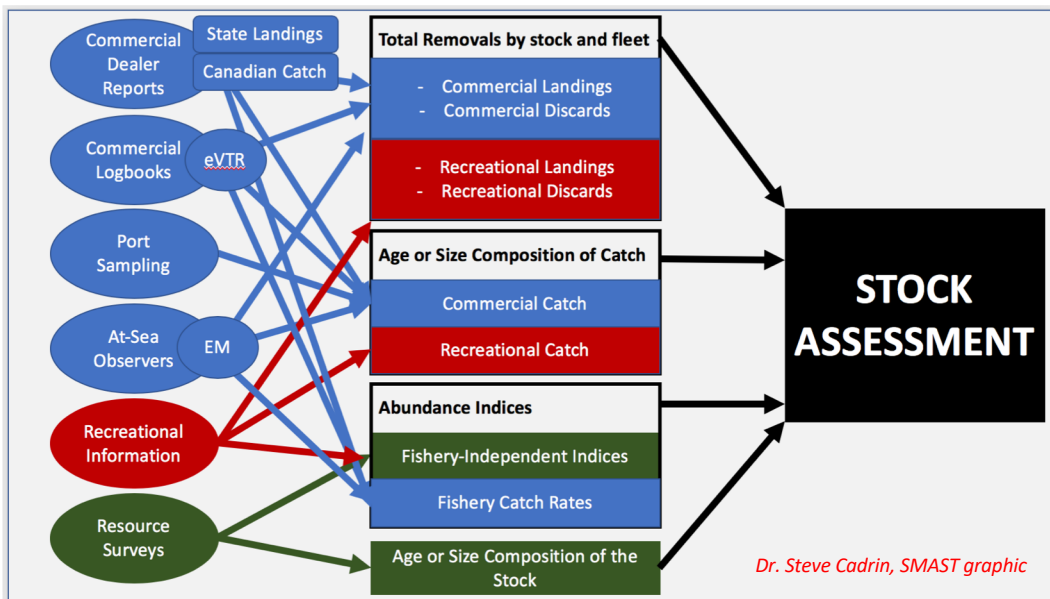
The Council may approve the range of alternatives for this amendment during its mid-April meeting and potentially hold

public hearings this summer if the necessary analyses are completed.

A complete archive of related documents can be accessed on the [Amendment 23 webpage](#).

For more information on the Council’s groundfish actions, contact:

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- A copy of the Fishery Data for Stock Assessment Working Group Report and related materials can be found at [FDSA WG](#).
- A copy of the Peer Review Report and related materials are available at [Scientific and Statistical Committee Panel](#).