



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Stakeholder Input at Core of Atlantic Herring Amendment 8; Council Votes for “No Action” on Framework Adjustment 5

The New England Fishery Management Council yesterday reviewed results from its second Atlantic Herring Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Workshop, which was held in early December.

After considering extensive input from workshop attendees and, subsequently, the Herring Plan Development Team (PDT), Herring Advisory Panel (AP), and Herring Committee, the Council whittled down the list of potential acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rules to be analyzed for further deliberation.

The Council is developing a new ABC control rule as part of Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan. A control rule is a method for establishing an annual catch limit or target fishing level based on scientific advice, and the Council is using the MSE process to incorporate ground-level stakeholder input and early-stage technical analyses before selecting a range of alternatives to send to public hearing later this fall.

Workshop attendees were asked to provide input on potential tradeoffs in the fishery, some of which involved choosing desired levels of herring yield and harvest while accounting for factors such as predator needs and uncertainty related to issues such as climate change.

Given the collective feedback, the Council took four types of control rules off the table: constant catch; conditional constant catch; biomass-based for five years; and biomass based for three years with restrictions.

This move allows the PDT to focus on analyzing annual and three-year-based biomass control rules, which were favored by a majority of workshop attendees.

In March, an independent peer review panel will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the MSE methods and data used to develop Atlantic herring ABC control rules and comment on any constraints that may hinder use of the MSE model and outcomes in preparing management alternatives.

All Workshop Attendees		Workshop Participants*	
Council	10 (12%)	Herring fishery	12 (18%)
Advisors	12 (14%)	Lobster fishery	3 (5%)
Facilitators	4 (5%)	Other fisheries	16 (25%)
Staff/PDT	14 (17%)	Env. NGO	8 (12%)
Others	43 (52%)	State/federal	8 (12%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>83 (100%)</b>	Scientists/other	18 (28%)
		<b>Total</b>	<b>65 (100%)</b>

\*Excludes facilitators, staff, and PDT members.



Attendees at the Dec. 7-8, 2016 Atlantic Herring MSE Workshop in Portsmouth, NH listen to Dr. Jon Deroba of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, who served on the MSE Workshop Steering Committee and developed some of the models used in the MSE analysis. – NEFMC photo



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Amendment 8 also contains a set of alternatives to address potential localized depletion and user conflicts. The Herring Committee is scheduled to meet Tuesday, Feb. 7 at the Sheraton Harborside in Portsmouth, NH to continue its work on refining these alternatives.

**Framework Adjustment (FW) 5:** The Council has been working on a range of alternatives to potentially modify the Georges Bank haddock accountability measures (AMs) that apply to the herring midwater trawl fishery. However, after reviewing the alternatives and receiving advice from the Herring AP and Committee, the Council voted to select “no action,” which means existing regulations will continue to govern AMs for the herring midwater trawl fishery.

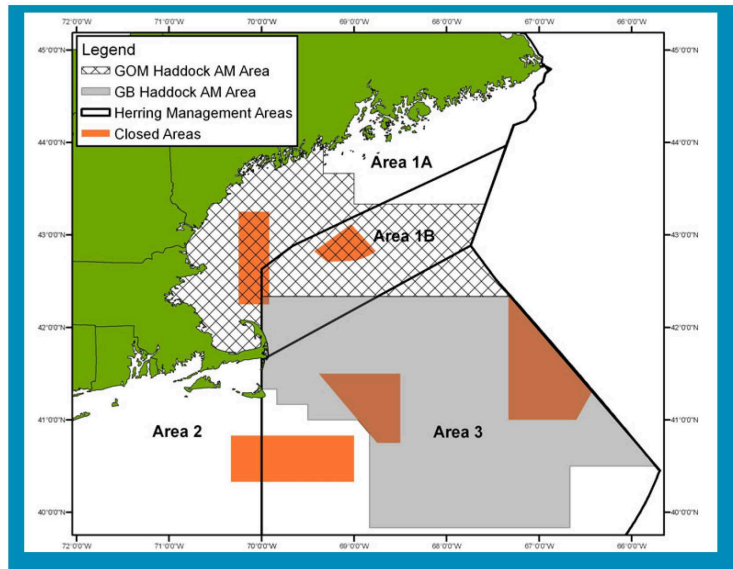
The Council had considered using “proactive” closures to prevent herring vessels from fishing in areas where haddock are prevalent at certain times of the year. Ultimately, the Council concluded that haddock distribution is too unpredictable to select fixed closures, and offshore closures have the potential of forcing the herring fleet closer to shore.

Framework 5 included another option to seasonally split the haddock catch cap for herring midwater trawlers with 80% of the allocation made available on May 1 and 20% on Nov. 1. However, monitoring concerns led the Council to reject this alternative as well. Technical analyses indicated that both the seasonal quota split and proactive seasonal closures could produce negative, unintended consequences, which factored heavily into the Council’s final decision.

The Council’s November vote to increase the herring midwater trawl fishery’s Georges Bank haddock sub-annual catch limit from 1% to 1.5% through FW 56 to the groundfish plan also played a role in the decision. The higher haddock sub-ACL, if approved, will reduce the risk of triggering the herring AMs, which, in turn, will provide the midwater trawl fleet with more opportunity to maximize revenue from herring landings.

The AMs that remain in place are:

- Inseason closures when the haddock bycatch cap is reached (see map); and
- A pound-for-pound payback for any overages that do occur.



Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank Haddock Accountability Measure Areas that apply to Atlantic herring midwater trawl vessels when haddock bycatch caps are reached.

**ASMFC:** The Council also agreed to send a letter to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission requesting that a New England Council representative be allowed to serve on the Commission’s Atlantic Herring Section in a non-voting capacity.

Herring documents used during this meeting are available at:  
<http://www.nefmc.org/library/herring-january-2017>.

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