



New England Fishery Management Council

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Groundfish: Council Accepts 2020 U.S./Canada TACs; Receives Progress Report on Framework 59, Monitoring Amendment

The New England Fishery Management Council spent an entire day on groundfish-related issues during its late-September meeting in Gloucester, MA. In addition to receiving a progress report on the Council's Groundfish Catch Share Program Review and an update on the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel's recent activities, the Council:

- Discussed and approved comments on the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS/NOAA Fisheries) Draft Policy Directive on Electronic Monitoring Video Retention Periods;
- Received recommendations from its Enforcement Committee on a variety of groundfish topics;
- Received a report from the U.S. co-chair of the Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee (TRAC), which provided catch advice to the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC) for three resources on Georges Bank that the U.S. shares with Canada (see table below);
- Accepted the TMGC's recommendations for 2020 U.S./Canada total allowable catches (TACs);
- Reviewed the list of items under development for Framework Adjustment 59 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan; and
- For several hours discussed the range of alternatives under development for Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23 and provided further direction to the Groundfish Committee.

Proposed Fishing Year 2020 U.S./Canada Total TACs in Metric Tons (mt)

Total Allowable Catches (TACs)	Eastern Georges Bank Cod	Eastern Georges Bank Haddock	Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared Catch	650 mt	30,000 mt	162 mt
U.S. TAC and Percentage Share	188.5 mt 29% of total	16,200 mt 54% of total	120 mt 74% of total
Canada TAC and Percentage Share	461.5 mt 71% of total	13,800 mt 46% of total	42 mt 26% of total

Percentage shares for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and for the management units of Eastern Georges Bank cod and Eastern Georges Bank haddock are determined as follows: historical catches are weighted 10%; and resource distribution based on trawl surveys is weighted 90%.



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The TACs reflect the following changes for **U.S. quotas** from 2019:

- **Eastern Georges Bank Cod:** 0.5 mt *decrease*
- **Eastern Georges Bank Haddock:** 1,200 mt *increase*
- **Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder:** 22 mt *increase*

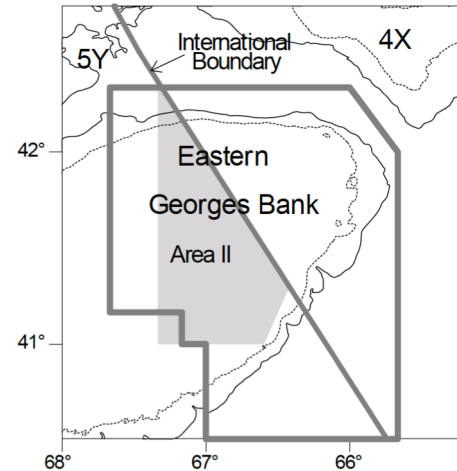
The TMGC and/or TRAC offered the following comments.

- **Eastern Georges Bank Cod** – The TRAC did not provide new catch advice for the management unit because of the absence of a usable model, so last year’s advice remains in place. Moving forward, the TRAC will provide catch advice based on biological and fishery indicators. New methodologies will be explored for use until a new benchmark assessment is conducted.
- **Eastern Georges Bank Haddock** – The model for this management unit was rejected by the TRAC. The TRAC provided catch advice based on fishery and biological indicators and other factors. The 2013 year class is the largest ever observed in the time series. Biomass is well above the time series average but is projected to decline even if no catch occurs in 2020. That’s because the 2013 year class naturally will continue to decline with age. The TMGC requested that a benchmark assessment be conducted by the TRAC. A U.S. research track assessment for Georges Bank haddock is scheduled for 2021.
- **Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder** – The 2020 TAC is a small increase from 2019 that “sought to balance stock conditions and utilization of other species.” The condition of the resource remains poor. Total mortality remains high despite record low catches. Current levels of catch are not the primary factor affecting stock rebuilding.

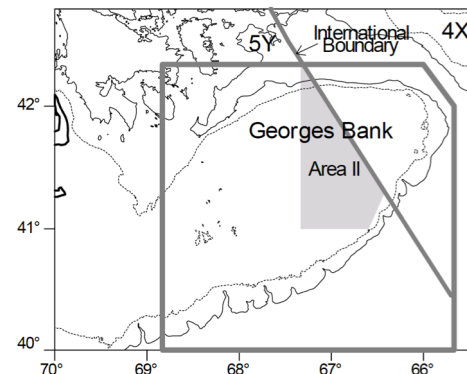
Framework Adjustment 59

The Council received a progress report on Framework Adjustment 59, which contains:

- 2020 TACs for U.S./Canada stocks on Georges Bank;
- 2020-2022 specifications for 15 groundfish stocks (see next page for list);
- Potential action to address commercial/recreational allocation issues if raised by new data from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP); and
- A measure to revise the Georges Bank cod incidental catch TAC to remove the allocation to the Closed Area I Hook Gear Haddock Special Access Program.



The map above, which includes water on both sides of the U.S./Canada international boundary, shows the area that applies to the Eastern Georges Bank cod and Eastern Georges Bank haddock management units. The area in the map below applies to the entire Georges Bank yellowtail flounder stock.





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The Council is scheduled to take final action on Framework 59 at its December meeting. The framework then will be submitted to NMFS for review and implementation. The goal is to have the new specifications and measures in place by May 1, which is the start of the 2020 fishing year.

Here are the 15 groundfish stocks that will receive new specifications for the 2020-2022 fishing years through Framework 59:

- Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine cod
- Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine haddock
- Georges Bank yellowtail flounder
- Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine yellowtail flounder
- Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail
- Georges Bank winter flounder
- American plaice
- Witch flounder
- Pollock
- White hake
- Atlantic halibut
- Northern and southern windowpane flounder

Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23

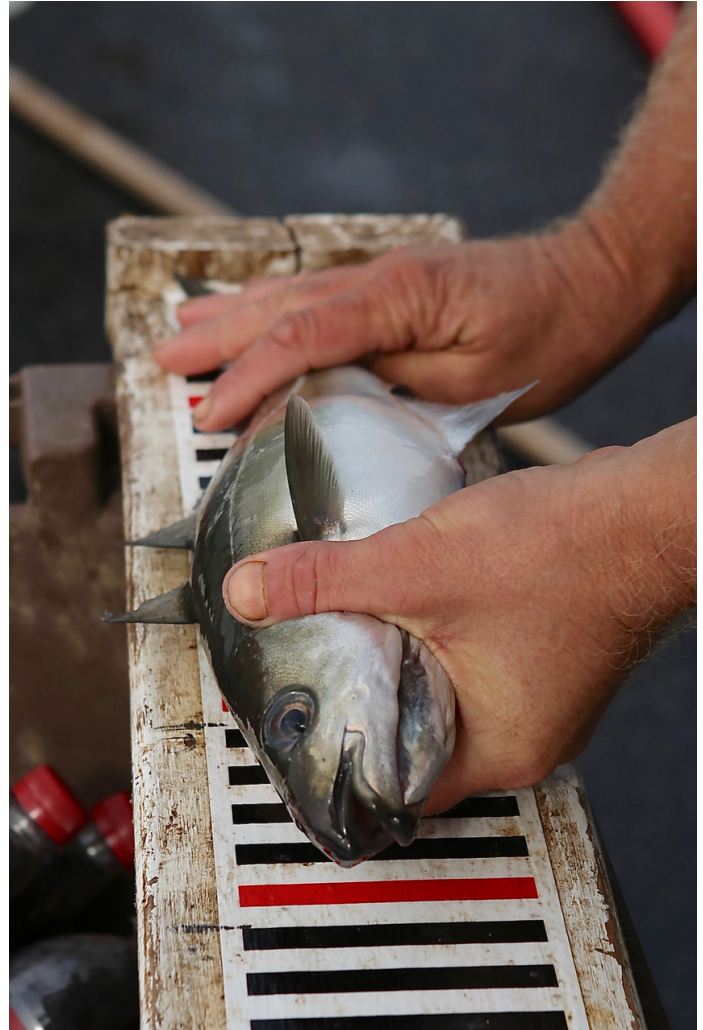
Although the Council initially intended to approve the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Amendment 23 at the September meeting, important analyses still needed to be completed. Therefore, the Council used the available time on the agenda to: (1) gain a better understanding of the range of alternatives that are under development in the amendment; and (2) review *preliminary* information about the potential impacts and costs associated with the alternatives.

Much more information is available:

- On the Council's [Amendment 23 webpage](#); and
- Within the [groundfish meeting materials](#) used during the September Council meeting.

U.S./CANADA QUESTIONS?

Visit the [TRAC](#) and [TMGC](#) webpages.



Measuring pollock. — Energy Films photo, courtesy of The Nature Conservancy

The Council's Groundfish Committee and Groundfish Advisory Panel will meet jointly on October 30 and again on November 25 to continue working on the amendment and Framework 59 in preparation for the Council's December 3-5, 2019 meeting in Newport, RI.

Meeting updates and materials will be posted on the Council's [groundfish webpage](#).