



New England Fishery Management Council

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

Council Approves 2017 US/Canada TACs; Receives Progress Report on Groundfish Framework Adjustment 56 Proposals

The New England Fishery Management Council today approved 2017 total allowable catches (TACs) for three groundfish stocks on Georges Bank (GB) that the U.S. shares with Canada. The TACs were recommended by the U.S./Canada Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC) and 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 56 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 2017 U.S./Canada TACs in Metric Tons (mt)

	Eastern GB Cod	Eastern GB Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared TAC	730	50,000	300
U.S. TAC	146	29,500	207
Canada TAC	584	20,500	93

- **Eastern Georges Bank Haddock** – This “is a stock that has increased tremendously from a very low state in the 1990s and is showing improved recruitment with the production of five strong year-classes in the last 13 years. In the most recent stock assessment (TRAC 2015), adult biomass at the beginning of 2015 was

The 2017 TACs reflect the following changes from 2016 levels for U.S. quotas:

- **Eastern GB cod: 8 mt increase**
- **Eastern GB haddock: 14,330 mt increase**
- **GB yellowtail flounder: 62 mt decrease**

estimated to be the second highest in the time series.” –TRAC

- **Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder** – “Stock biomass is low and productivity is poor. The declining trend in survey biomass to low levels for the past three years, despite

reductions in catch to historical low amounts, indicates a poor state of the resource.” –TRAC

- **Eastern Georges Bank Cod** – “Average survey biomass shows no evidence of rebuilding, and recruitment has been poor for the last 25 years.” –TRAC



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The Council also received an update on Framework Adjustment 56, which, in addition to 2017 U.S./Canada TACs, will include: (1) 2017-2019 witch flounder specifications; (2) establishment of a sub-annual catch limit (ACL) for northern windowpane flounder for the scallop fishery; (3) a potential increase to the sub-ACL for Georges Bank haddock for the Atlantic herring midwater trawl fishery; (4) a potential change to the Georges Bank yellowtail flounder accountability measure triggers for the scallop fishery; and (5) approaches for earlier announcement of recreational fishery measures.

The Council is concerned that Atlantic halibut catches nearly reached the acceptable biological catch (ABC) for this stock in fishing year 2015, which ended April 30, 2016. The state of Maine has a directed fishery for halibut, and these catches were considered in the final catch estimates. Federal permit holders are subject to restrictive accountability measures when the ABC is exceeded. Consequently, the Council agreed to send a letter to Maine asking it to consider this information when making adjustments to the state measures for Atlantic halibut in order to prevent the overall ABC from being exceeded in 2017.

The Groundfish Committee will continue to work on the suite of measures contained in Framework 56. The Council is scheduled to take final action on most of the measures at its Nov. 15-17 meeting in Newport, Rhode Island.

Scientists are currently conducting a benchmark stock assessment for witch flounder, so the Council will take final action on Framework 56 specifications for this stock at the January Council meeting.

In other news, the Council received a briefing on the Plan Development Team's Groundfish Monitoring White Paper. The Council will develop a draft Federal Register Notice of Intent (NOI) to alert stakeholders that it will be developing a groundfish monitoring amendment in the future. The Council will review the draft NOI at the November meeting.



Portland Fish Exchange photo

For more information about groundfish actions, call or email Groundfish Plan Coordinator Dr. Jamie Cournane at (978) 465-0492 ext. 103, jcournane@nefmc.org. Or visit the Council's Northeast multispecies webpage at <http://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/northeast-multispecies>.