



New England Fishery Management Council

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

Atlantic Herring: Council Provides Guidance on Actions to Rebuild Stock, Consider Spawning Protection on Georges Bank

The New England Fishery Management Council received a progress report during its [April 13-15, 2021](#) webinar meeting on two evolving framework adjustments to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan. The Council discussed both actions and provided feedback to guide the Herring Plan Development Team (PDT), Herring Committee, and Herring Advisory Panel (AP) on the work these groups will continue to conduct in the months ahead.

FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 9 – This framework includes two components:

- Measures to rebuild the Atlantic herring resource; and
- Measures to potentially adjust accountability measures (AMs) in the fishery.

In October 2020, the Council received [a letter](#) stating that “NOAA’s Assistant Administrator for Fisheries formally determined the Atlantic herring stock is overfished based on the [best scientific information available](#).” The agency asked the Council to develop and submit a rebuilding program within 15 months, which would give NOAA Fisheries time to review and implement the program within the two-year timeframe required under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act for stocks in an overfished condition.

Despite the current low biomass of Atlantic herring, overfishing is not occurring. This factor led several Council members to question whether environmental factors beyond the Council’s control were impacting the status of the stock and whether there were ways to account for environmental impacts in the rebuilding program.

At present, Framework 9 includes

View a Copy
of the
Presentation
Summing Up
Both Herring
Frameworks
[HERE](#)



Atlantic herring. – Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries photo



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two rebuilding options that need further development and analyses. These focus on: (1) using the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) control rule that the Council approved in [Amendment 8](#) to the herring plan; or (2) using a constant fishing mortality rate (F) based on rebuilding the resource in seven years instead. More information on both approaches will become available at future meetings.

Regarding accountability measures, the herring plan currently includes AMs to adjust sub-annual catch limits (sub-ACLs) due to quota overages and/or to potentially allow carryover of unharvested catch.

As part of Framework 9, the Council will consider options to adjust AMs when overages occur. However, due to concerns about unintended distributional impacts among the different herring management areas and given the current status of the stock, the Council will not pursue options to allow more flexibility for carryover. This way, unharvested fish will remain in the water to contribute to stock rebuilding. The Council will receive more information about Framework 9 at its June meeting, when it is scheduled to approve the range of alternatives for further development. Final action is expected to take place during the September meeting.

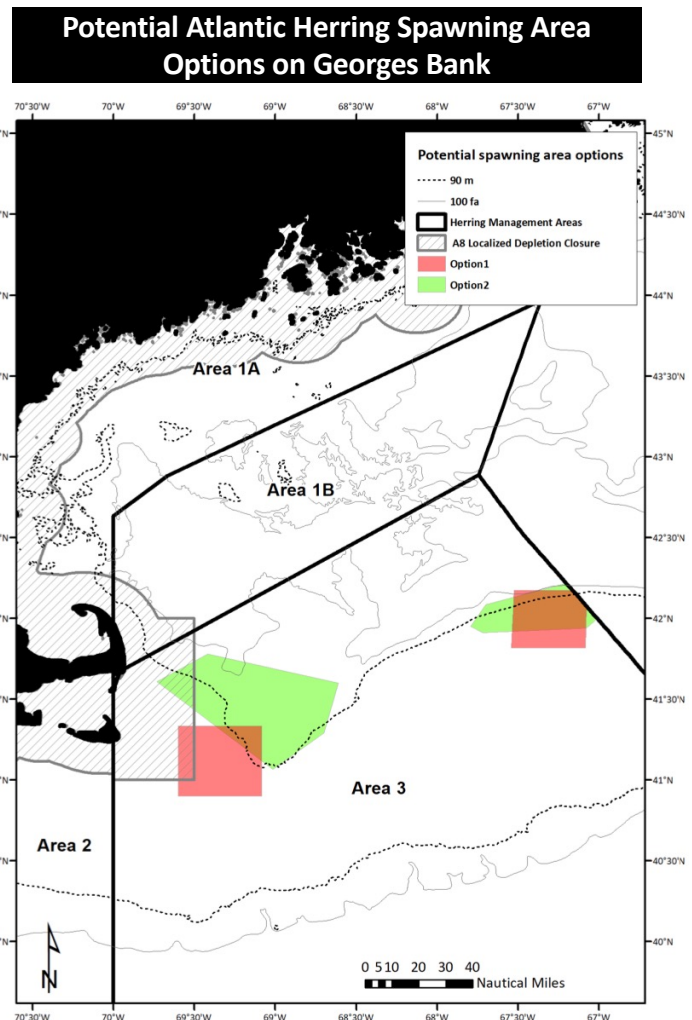
FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 7 – This framework focuses on protecting spawning herring on Georges Bank and is on a longer timeline than Framework 9. The Council will receive another progress report on this action in June.

During the April meeting, the Council took two votes to clarify the scope of the action, which now will allow the Herring PDT, Committee, and AP to proceed with their work. The Council agreed to:

- Specify that any ultimate restrictions related to spawning protection apply only to vessels on a declared Atlantic herring trip; and
- Refine the goals and objectives of [Framework 7](#) to specify that this action will focus only on measures that minimize potential impacts on adult spawning aggregations of herring.

➤ *Copies of all herring-related materials used during the Council's discussion are available [here](#).*

➤ ***Questions?** Contact Deirdre Boelke, the Council's herring plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492 ext. 105, dboelke@nefmc.org.*



Potential options for Georges Bank spawning closures. **Option 1** is colored red and **Option 2** is green. The gray hatched area is the Inshore Midwater Trawl Restricted Area approved in [Amendment 8](#).