



New England Fishery Management Council

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Groundfish: Council Receives Updates on Cod Stock Structure Workshops & ABC Control Rule Review; Initiates Framework 63

The New England Fishery Management Council covered three groundfish topics during its [June 22-24, 2021](#) meeting that all addressed this year's management priorities for Northeast multispecies. The Council:

- Received an update on work being done to evaluate alternative acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rules for groundfish, also referred to as harvest control rules;
- Initiated Framework Adjustment 63 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, which includes specifications and management measures for fishing years 2022 to 2024; and
- Received a progress report on a two-part series of workshops related to Atlantic cod stock structure.

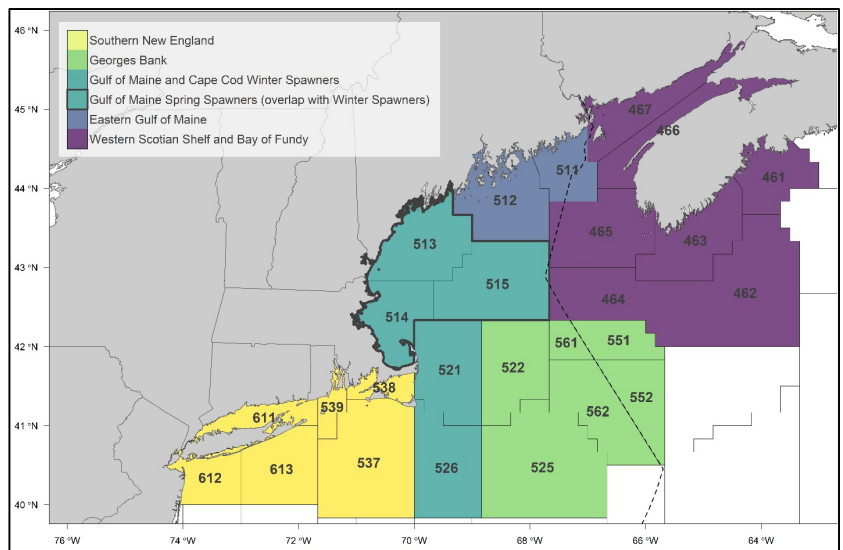
Atlantic Cod Workshops

For several years now, the Council has been supporting work to better define the biological stock structure of Atlantic cod, which currently is assessed and managed as two stocks. A working group that reviewed all available information [concluded](#) that cod as a species more appropriately consists of five stocks (see map at right). The group's work was [peer reviewed](#).

The Council and Northeast Fisheries Science Center, with contracted support from the University of New Hampshire and New Hampshire Sea Grant, decided to host two sets of public workshops to gain additional perspectives on science and management issues associated with a potential change in stock status.

Three [science/assessment workshops](#) were held by webinar on June 1, June 7, and June 25, 2021. A fourth workshop

Atlantic Cod Stock Structure Working Group's Five-Stock Proposal



An Atlantic Cod Stock Structure Working Group was formed in early 2018 to inventory and summarize all relevant peer-reviewed information about the stock structure of Atlantic cod in U.S. and adjacent waters.

Atlantic cod currently is managed as two stocks – Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank. However, the working group concluded in its 2020 report that the population of Atlantic cod in New England waters consists of five distinct biological stocks as shown in the map above.



New England Fishery Management Council

was scheduled for July 1 as a backup but turned out to be unnecessary. The agendas and all presentations for the science/assessment workshops are posted [HERE](#) on the workshop webpage.

Next up are five management workshops to be held this summer. The focus of this series is to gather input on potential management changes and the possible economic and social impacts that could occur if changes to the stock structure of Atlantic cod are made.

Framework Adjustment 63

Also at its June meeting, the Council initiated Framework 63. This action will:

- Set 2022 total allowable catches for the U.S./Canada management units for Eastern Georges Bank cod and Eastern Georges Bank haddock, as well as 2022-2023 specifications for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder;
- Set 2022-2024 specifications for Georges Bank cod and Gulf of Maine cod and possibly adjust 2022 specifications for Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine haddock;
- Adjust 2022 specifications for white hake based on the Council's rebuilding plan;
- Adopt additional measures to promote stock rebuilding; and
- Develop alternatives to the current system for setting groundfish [default specifications](#).

Register [HERE](#) for the Management Workshops!



All five workshops will be held by from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. by webinar on the following dates.

- Thursday, August 12, 2021
- Tuesday, August 17, 2021
- Thursday, August 19, 2021
- Thursday, September 9, 2021
- Monday, September 20, 2021

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JUNE 2021
MEETING.

Agendas for the cod management workshops will be posted shortly on the [2021 Workshop Webpage](#).

The Council will continue to work on Framework 63 throughout the summer and fall. Final action is scheduled to take place during the Council's [December 7-9, 2021](#) meeting with the intent of having the framework implemented by the May 1 start of the 2022 fishing year.

Groundfish ABC Control Rules

Questions? Contact Dr. Jamie Cournane, the Council's groundfish plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492 ext. 103, jcournane@nefmc.org.

ABC or harvest control rules set guidelines to determine the level of fishing that can take place on fish stocks based on the best information available. The Council has an [existing ABC control rule](#) for groundfish. Last year, the Council contracted the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) to evaluate the performance of the current control rule and investigate alternatives that may perform better under a range of current groundfish conditions and stock assessment issues. GMRI gave a [presentation](#) to the Council on its findings, which are detailed in a summary report titled [Evaluation of Alternative Harvest Control Rules for New England Groundfish](#). The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee provided [feedback](#) on this report. Next, the Council will work on how to address the conclusions of the ABC control rule evaluation.