



New England Fishery Management Council

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

Council Recommends 2020 Recreational Measures for Gulf of Maine Cod/Haddock for GARFO's Consideration

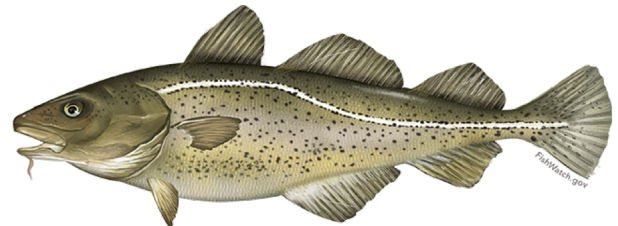
The New England Fishery Management Council is supporting 2020 recreational fishing measures for Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock that provide an additional springtime window of fishing opportunity for cod and greater access to the abundant haddock resource. The Council took this position during its late-January 2020 meeting in Portsmouth, NH based on advice from both its Recreational Advisory Panel and Groundfish Committee.

The measures are **recommendations only** that are being submitted to the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) of NOAA Fisheries for consideration. NOAA Fisheries will make the final decision and anticipates implementing recreational measures by May 1, the start of the new fishing year.

Here are the Council's recommendations:

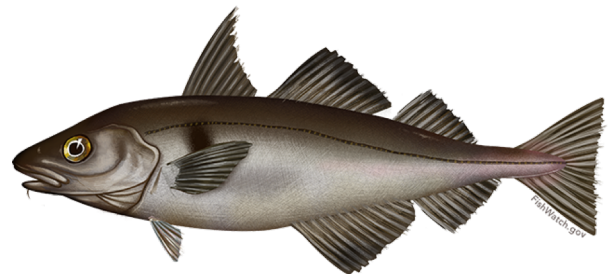
- **Gulf of Maine Cod:**

- Open Season: September 15-30, 2020 and April 1-14, 2021
- Bag Limit: one fish per day
- Minimum Size: 21 inches



- **Gulf of Maine Haddock:**

- Open Season: May 1, 2020 through February 28, 2021 and April 1-30, 2021 (two weeks longer in April than the current fishing year), leaving only March 2021 closed to recreational fishing for this stock, assuming the seasons are approved
- Bag Limit: 15 fish per day
- Minimum Size 17 inches



– NOAA Fisheries graphics

- **Georges Bank Cod (no changes recommended from the 2019 fishing year):**

- Open Season: year round
- Bag Limit: 10 fish per day
- Minimum Size: 21 inches

NOTE: The Council made the decision to stick with status quo recommendations for Georges Bank cod back at its December 2019 meeting. The 2020-2022 recreational catch target for this stock is proposed to be 138 metric tons.



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Last year, the Council recommended an April 15-30 open season for Gulf of Maine cod in addition to the two-week September season. NOAA Fisheries, however, did not approve the Council's recommendation in part due to concerns over existing cod protection measures, such as the Spring Massachusetts Bay Spawning Protection Area, which could be undermined if recreational fishermen were allowed to keep cod during this period. NOAA Fisheries' rationale is explained in the [2019 final rule](#) and this [2019 bulletin](#).

The Council's Recreational Advisory Panel emphasized the importance of a spring fishery for cod and suggested the first half of April as an alternative. The Groundfish Committee and, subsequently, the full Council, supported an April 1-14 season.

Future Considerations

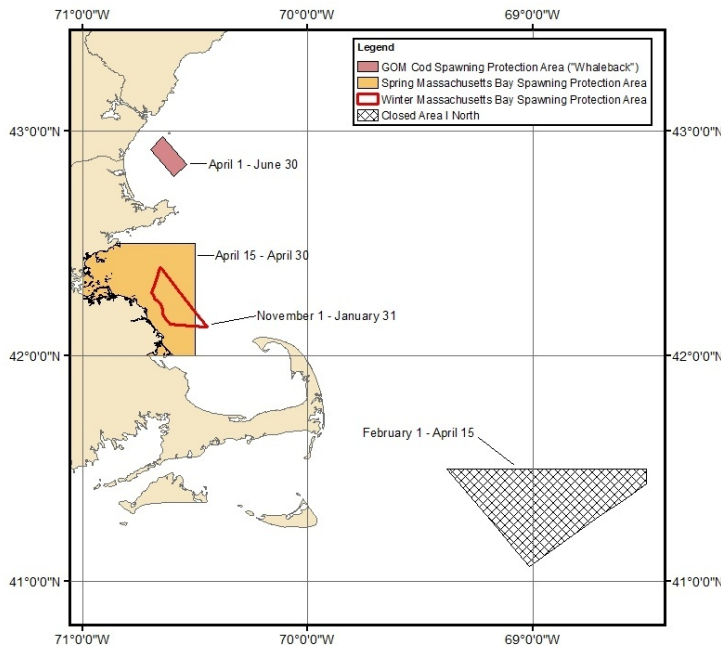
The Council acknowledged that many private recreational vessels and some smaller party boats will not be able to fish during the proposed April 1-14 season when weather conditions can be more challenging.

In order to make future access more equitable, the Groundfish Committee requested that other alternatives be analyzed for further discussion next year. These included:

- A Gulf of Maine cod open season in August for as many consecutive days as possible given the available sub-ACL for the recreational fishery; and
- A mid-August to September season for as many three-day weekends as possible, defined as Friday/Saturday/Sunday.

Questions? Contact Dr. Jamie Cournane, the Council's groundfish coordinator, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 103; jcournane@nefmc.org. Also visit the Council's [groundfish webpage](#).

Seasonal Spawning Protection Areas



Learn more about restrictions within all Gulf of Maine Seasonal and Closed Areas [here](#). – GARFO graphic

HOW IT WORKS: The Council sets sub-annual catch limits (sub-ACLs) for Gulf of Maine cod and Gulf of Maine haddock and then recommends to GARFO a series of proactive accountability measures in the form of seasons, bag limits, and minimum fish sizes to keep the fishery within its catch limits. The proposed 2020 sub-ACLs are 193 mt for Gulf of Maine cod and 6,210 mt for Gulf of Maine haddock.

The haddock resource is underutilized, which is why the Council is supporting an increased open season. While Gulf of Maine cod remains overfished and overfishing is occurring, the proposed recreational measures balance the need to keep the catch below the sub-ACL while providing some recreational fishing opportunities.