



# New England Fishery Management Council

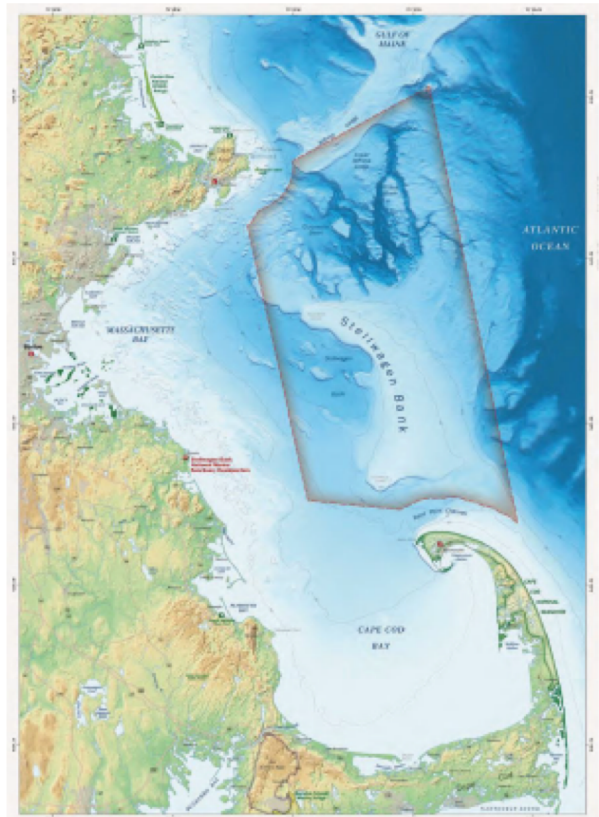
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 29, 2020

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## Council Addresses Recreational eVTRs, Chub Mackerel Issue; Receives Updates on Ecosystem, Stellwagen, Right Whales

The New England Fishery Management Council met April 14-15, 2020 by webinar and covered a wide range of issues. In addition to the actions it took on [Atlantic sea scallops](#), [groundfish](#), [Atlantic herring](#), and red hake, the Council also:

- Discussed matters involving recreational electronic vessel trip reports (eVTRs) and Atlantic chub mackerel – see pages 2 and 3 for details;
- Received a presentation from: (1) the Northeast Fisheries Science Center on the [2020 State of the Ecosystem](#) report covering New England, and (2) the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, which made [recommendations](#) on the report;
- Received a short update on [work](#) being conducted by the Council's Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM) Committee;
- Listened to a presentation on [sand habitat research](#) in the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and then received an overview of the sanctuary's [2020 Condition Report](#), which updates the 2007 report by identifying gaps in data and monitoring efforts and highlights issues for consideration in the sanctuary's [management plan review](#) (see cutline at right); and
- Received a North Atlantic right whale [presentation](#) from NOAA Fisheries that: (1) described updates to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan, and (2) provided information about the reinitiation of consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act on the "continued implementation of management measures" for lobster, deep-sea red crab, northeast multispecies, monkfish, spiny dogfish, bluefish, skates, mackerel, squid, butterfish, summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The consultation is being conducted to



*Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary lies within the area outlined above. The sanctuary's management plan is undergoing review this year, and the new 2020 Condition Report will help shape the management updates. The revised draft management plan, environmental review, and proposed updates to regulations will be available for [public comment](#).*



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ensure that the actions of these fisheries “do not jeopardize” the continued existence of right whales or destroy or adversely modify their critical habitat.

## Recreational Electronic Vessel Trip Reports (eVTRs)

Earlier this winter, the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils both took [final action](#) on an omnibus framework adjustment that, once implemented, will require commercial fishermen to submit vessel trip reports (VTRs) electronically instead of on paper for all species managed by both Councils. The framework is now under review by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries). Rulemaking is expected to begin in the near future.

A 2018 action by the Mid-Atlantic Council required the use of eVTRs for all vessels with recreational for-hire permits for species managed by that Council. As a result of this action, the majority of for-hire vessels in

New England already are subject to the eVTR requirement because they hold permits for Mid-Atlantic Council-managed species. The New England Council, taking the next step, prioritized developing an action in 2020 to address the remaining 15 or so for-hire vessels that are not yet held to the requirement.

The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) sent an April 2 [letter](#) to the Council about this issue. GARFO recommended that NMFS use its authority under section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) to extend the commercial eVTR rulemaking action to cover the remaining for-hire vessels, which would help reduce confusion and streamline the outreach process.

The Council [discussed this option](#) and voted to support GARFO’s proposed course of action. GARFO said it would reach out individually to the New England for-hire vessels that will be impacted by the upcoming requirement to submit VTRs electronically.



New England  
Fishery Management  
Council



MID-ATLANTIC  
FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

### Regulatory Omnibus Framework Adjustment to Modify Reporting Requirements for Electronic Vessel Trip Reports (eVTRs) by Commercial Vessel Operators Holding Federal Permits for Species Managed by the MAFMC and NEFMC

Joint Action  
Including a Regulatory Impact Review,  
Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, and Justification for Categorical Exclusion

Prepared by:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) in collaboration with the  
New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and the  
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

- **A copy of the eVTR Omnibus Framework is available [here](#).**
- **The joint news release issued by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils describing this action can be found [here](#).**
- **More information is available on the eVTR [webpage](#).**

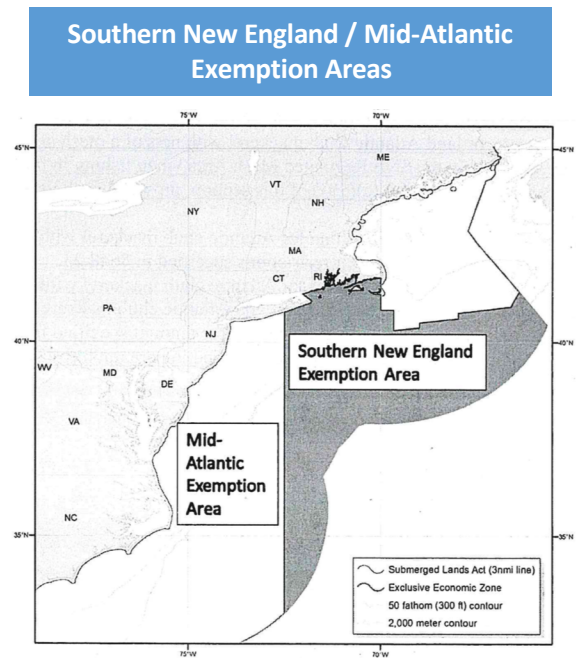


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**ATLANTIC CHUB MACKEREL:** The Council also discussed a [proposal](#) from GARFO to add Atlantic chub mackerel as an exempted species in the Southern New England Exemption Area and create an exempted Atlantic chub mackerel fishery in the Mid-Atlantic Exemption Area.

Back in March of 2019, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council adopted [Amendment 21](#) to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in order to integrate chub mackerel as a stock in the FMP. While developing the proposed rule for the amendment, GARFO said it recognized exemptions from gear and mesh restrictions in the Northeast Multispecies FMP would be needed in order to allow vessels to catch chub mackerel using small-mesh bottom trawl gear. As such, GARFO wanted to consult with the New England Council on this issue.

The Council expressed some [concerns](#) about the proposal but also acknowledged that chub mackerel landings were minimal in the Southern New England Exemption Area. Since GARFO heard the Council’s comments during the discussion, the Council agreed by consensus that it did not need to draft a formal letter.



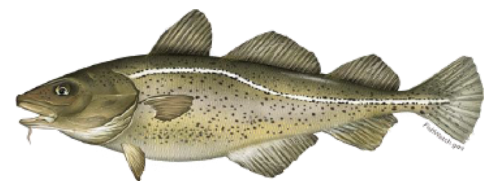
## Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23 Public Hearing Update!

The Council has scheduled two more webinar public hearings on Groundfish Monitoring Amendment 23. These will be held on:

- **Tuesday, May 12, 2020** from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and
- **Thursday, May 21, 2020** from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Information about how to register for each webinar is available in the [hearing notice](#). Here’s what else you need to know.

- **IMPORTANT:** The deadline for public comment on this amendment has been extended to **June 30, 2020**.
- The Amendment 23 Public Hearing Document is available [HERE](#) and the staff presentation can be found [HERE](#).
- All materials related to the development of this action are posted on the Council’s [Amendment 23 webpage](#).



The Council **POSTPONED** final action on Amendment 23 until after its June meeting. Learn more about why the Council took this step in the [April Groundfish news release](#).