



National Marine Fisheries Service
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov



Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Actions

Prepared for the October 5-8, 2023
Meeting of the
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

September 29, 2023

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New England Council Actions

Small-Mesh Multispecies

None at this time.

Groundfish

Framework 65

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) approved Framework Adjustment 65 to the Northeast Multispecies (Fishery Management Plan) FMP in a final rule, effective August 18, 2023. Framework 65 revised the rebuilding plan for Gulf of Maine cod, set catch limits for 16 of the 20 multispecies (groundfish) stocks, and made a temporary modification to the accountability measures for Georges Bank cod. Simultaneously, the final rule implemented an emergency action to increase the Gulf of Maine haddock quota. The comment period for the emergency action closed on September 18, 2023. For additional information, please contact Liz Sullivan at (978) 282-8493 or email at Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov.

Fishing Year 2023 Recreational Management Measures

On August 14, 2023, NMFS published a final rule (88 FR 54899) for fishing year 2023 recreational measures for Georges Bank (GB) cod and Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod and haddock. We implemented Council-recommended measures for GB and GOM cod and mode-based measures for GOM haddock (15 fish at 18 inches for-hire, 10 fish at 17 inches private). For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov.

Scallops

None at this time.

Herring

None at this time.

Monkfish

Framework Adjustment 13

NMFS approved Framework Adjustment 13 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan in a final rule (88 FR 54495), effective August 11, 2023. The rule implements specifications for fishing years 2023 through 2025, adjustments to the annual days at sea allocation, and on May 1, 2026,

an increase in the minimum gillnet mesh size for monkfish vessels. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov.

Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab

None at this time.

Skate

None at this time.

Mid-Atlantic Council Actions

Spiny Dogfish

None at this time.

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

2023 Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Recreational Management Measures

On August 15, 2023, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (88 FR 55411) implementing 2023 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. We approved conservation equivalency for the summer flounder and black sea bass recreational fisheries. Under conservation equivalency, states or regions develop minimum sizes, possession limits, and fishing seasons that will achieve the necessary level of conservation. For scup we implemented a Federal recreational possession limit of 40 fish, and an open season from May 1-December 31. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116 or Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov.

Scup Commercial Quota Transfer

On September 7, 2023, NMFS published a temporary rule in the *Federal Register* (88 FR 61477) to adjust the commercial scup quota and possession limit for the Winter II quota period. We transferred 804,630 lb of unused quota from the Winter I commercial scup fishery to the Winter II fishery, resulting in a revised Winter II commercial scup quota of 3,037,824 lb. We also increased the commercial scup possession limit for the Winter II season to 13,500 lb, per trip (from 12,000 lb), based on the amount of quota being rolled over from Winter I to Winter II. The new possession limit is effective October 1 through December 31, 2023. For additional information, please contact Laura Deighan at (978) 281-9184 or Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov.

Surfclam and Ocean Quahog

None at this time.

Atlantic Bluefish

None at this time.

Quota Transfers

On August 18, September 18, and September 26, 2023, NMFS published notices (88 FR 56544; 88 FR 63861; 88 FR 65823) of summer flounder quota transfers in the *Federal Register*. The State of North Carolina transferred 1,232 lb of summer flounder commercial quota to the Commonwealth of Virginia; the State of North Carolina transferred 529 lb of summer flounder commercial quota to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; the State of North Carolina transferred 20,441 lb of summer flounder commercial quota to the Commonwealth of Virginia. All transfers were made through mutual agreements of the states to repay landings made by out-of-state permitted vessels under safe harbor agreements. For additional information, please contact Laura Deighan at (978) 281-9184 or Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov.

On August 4 and 29, 2023, NMFS published notices (88 FR 51737; 88 FR 59469) of bluefish quota transfers from the Commonwealth of Virginia to the States of North Carolina and Rhode Island and from the State of New Jersey to the States of North Carolina and Rhode Island in the *Federal Register*. Virginia transferred 55,000 lb of bluefish commercial quota to North Carolina and 25,000 lb to Rhode Island through mutual agreements of the states. New Jersey transferred 45,000 lb to North Carolina and 15,000 lb to Rhode Island through mutual agreements of the states. These transfers were requested to ensure North Carolina and Rhode Island would not exceed their 2023 state quotas. For additional information, please contact Laura Deighan at (978) 281-9184 or Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov.

Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish

None at this time.

Tilefish

None at this time.

Other Actions

Paperwork Reduction Act

None at this time.

Jonah Crab

None at this time.

Industry Funded Monitoring Omnibus Amendment

None at this time.

Lobster

Effort Control Measures and Mandatory Harvester Reporting for the American Lobster Fishery

On September 29, 2023, NMFS filed an interim final rule that implements mandatory harvester reporting, maximum trap cap reductions, and ownership caps, in the American lobster fishery. Based on proposed rule comments, this rule also allows for additional comment on maximum trap cap reductions and ownership caps. NMFS is implementing electronic federal vessel trip reports for all federal lobster permit holders, including five additional data elements, beginning April 1, 2024. The Area 2 and 3 ownership caps will be effective May 1, 2025. There were also several updates and corrections to the regulatory text that will be effective 30 days after publication. For additional information please contact Allison Murphy at (978) 281-9122 or email at Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov.

Habitat Actions

None at this time.

Protected Resources Actions

None at this time.

Research Permits and Acknowledgments - Applications Under Review

On August 30, 2023, NMFS received a LOA application from Rutgers University to investigate the relative abundance and demographics of structure-associated fish species in the Ocean Wind 1 lease area prior to, during, and after construction of wind turbines using chevron traps, rod and reel gear, and baited cameras. Research trips will be conducted between 10/02/2023 and 9/30/2024. For additional information, please contact Elise Scholl at (978) 281-9189 or email at Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov.

On September 12, 2023, NMFS received a LOA application from the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation to collect fishery and oceanographic data during and after construction of South Fork Wind Farm using beam trawl gear. Research trips will be conducted between 10/15/2023 and 9/30/2024. For additional information, please contact Elise Scholl at (978) 281-9189 or email at Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov.

On September 15, 2023, NMFS received a LOA application from the Commercial Fisheries

Research Foundation to explore the applications of mechanical jigging for benthic fish surveys as compared to previous gillnet surveys within the South Fork Wind Farm gillnet survey areas. Research trips will occur between 10/23/2023 and 10/22/2024. For additional information, please contact Elise Scholl at (978) 281-9189 or email at Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov.

Research Permits and Acknowledgments – Application Review Completed

On September 26, 2023, NMFS issued an Exempted Educational Activity Authorization to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to conduct Northeast Fisheries Observer Program training onboard commercial bottom trawl vessels. Training trips will take place from September 2023 to September 2024. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or Christine.Ford@noaa.gov.

On September 21, 2023, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA) to Rutgers University to assess susceptibility of coastal ocean aquaculture of Atlantic Surfclams to multiple environmental stressors. For additional information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or Christine.Ford@noaa.gov.

On August 14, 2023, NMFS issued an EFP to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to test on-demand fishing technology and gear marking systems in trap/pot fisheries under a range of conditions. Research trips will take place from August 2023 to August 2024. For additional information, please contact Laura Deighan at (978) 281-9184 or Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov.

On September 5, 2023, NMFS issued an LOA to SMAST to conduct an industry funded drop camera survey of the Atlantic sea scallop resource in areas of overlap between planned offshore wind development and scallop rotational areas in the Mid-Atlantic. Areas to be surveyed include the New York Bight and Elephant Closed Scallop Rotational Areas. For more information, please contact Louis Forristall at (978) 281-9321 or Louis.Forristall@noaa.gov.

On September 18, 2023, NMFS issued a LOA to the Maine Department of Marine Resources in support of an inshore trawl survey to conduct stock assessments of groundfish and other organisms in Maine and New Hampshire. Under this LOA, one vessel will conduct two 25 day trips during Fall 2023 and Spring 2024. During each cruise, bottom trawl gear will be used to collect biological samples. For additional information, please contact Elise Scholl at (978) 281-9189 or email at Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov.

On September 25, 2023, NMFS issued a LOA to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute to conduct a midwater trawl to validate species composition and size distributions of acoustic scattering layers monitored by the ship's multifrequency echosounders. Research trips will take place between 10/09/2023 and 9/30/2024. For additional information, please contact Elise Scholl at (978) 281-9189 or email at Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov.