

National Marine Fisheries Service  
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office  
Sustainable Fisheries Division  
[www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov](http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov)

# Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Actions

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Prepared for the April 9-11, 2024  
Meeting of the  
Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council

April 5, 2024

## **Mid-Atlantic Council Actions**

### **Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass**

#### **2024 and 2025 Summer Flounder and Scup, and 2024 Black Sea Bass Recreational Management Measures**

On February 23, 2024, NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 13674) proposing 2024 and 2025 summer flounder and scup, and 2024 black sea bass recreational management measures. This action proposed establishing conservation equivalency (i.e., waiving Federal recreational management measures) for summer flounder in 2024 and 2025, and black sea in 2024. For scup, no adjustments to the Federal recreational management measures were proposed. The comment period closed on March 11, 2024. The final rule is in development. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116 or [Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov).

### **Spiny Dogfish**

None at this time.

### **Surfclam and Ocean Quahog**

None at this time.

### **Atlantic Bluefish**

None at this time.

### **Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish**

#### **2024-2025 Atlantic Mackerel Specifications**

On February 28, 2024, NMFS published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 14617) for the 2024-2025 Atlantic mackerel specifications. The rule proposes an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 3,200 mt and after deductions a commercial quota of 868 mt. This commercial quota is a 76 percent reduction from the 2023 commercial quota. This rule also proposes reduced catch limits including 20,000 lb for limited access permits and 5,000 lb for open access permits. Once 80 percent of the commercial quota is harvested these trip limits will be further reduced to 10,000 lb for limited access permits and 2,500 lb for open access permits. The comment period closed on March 14, 2024. The final rule is pending publication. For additional information, please contact Carly Bari at (978) 281-9150 or [Carly.Bari@noaa.gov](mailto:Carly.Bari@noaa.gov).

## **Tilefish**

### **2024 Golden Tilefish and Blueline Tilefish Specifications**

On March 20, 2024, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 19760) for 2024 specifications for the golden tilefish and blueline tilefish fisheries. The rule sets ABC, annual catch limit (ACL), and total allowable landings (TAL) for both species. The 2024 blueline tilefish commercial ACL was reduced by 4,470 lb to account for an overage in 2023. The rule also changed the blueline tilefish recreational season to May 15 through November 14, instead of the previous May 1 through October 31. For additional information, please contact Douglas Potts at (978) 281-9341 or [Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov](mailto:Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov).

## **Quota Transfers**

In February and March, NMFS published *Federal Register* notices of four summer flounder quota transfers through mutual agreements of the states. The transfers were made to repay landings made by out-of-state vessels under safe harbor agreements between North Carolina and Virginia (89 FR 9793); Virginia and Massachusetts (89 FR 15484); Virginia and New Jersey (89 FR 18831); and Virginia and North Carolina (89 FR 20877). For additional information, please contact Laura Deighan at (978) 281-9184 or [Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov).

## **New England Council Actions**

### **Small-Mesh Multispecies**

None at this time.

## **Groundfish**

### **2024 Sector Rule**

On April 5, 2024, NMFS published the final “Sector” rule that allocates initial annual catch entitlements to groundfish sectors for fishing year 2024. The final rule is based on catch limits set by Framework Adjustment 65 and default specifications. The Sector rule will be effective May 1, 2024. For additional information, please contact Pete Christopher at 978-281-9288 or [peter.christopher@noaa.gov](mailto:peter.christopher@noaa.gov).

### **Framework 66**

On March 22, 2024, NMFS published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 20412) to solicit comments on Framework Adjustment 66 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. This action would set catch limits for 8 of the 20 multispecies stocks, modify the accountability measure trigger for Atlantic halibut, and make a temporary modification to the accountability trigger for the scallop fishery for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder. The comment period closed on April 8,

2024. We intend to implement the approved measures as soon as possible. For additional information, please contact Mark Grant at (978) 281-9145 or [Mark.Grant@noaa.gov](mailto:Mark.Grant@noaa.gov).

### **Preliminary 2024 At-Sea Monitoring Coverage Target**

On February 20, 2024, NMFS announced a preliminary at-sea monitoring (ASM) coverage target of 100 percent of all sector groundfish trips for the 2024 fishing year. The preliminary coverage level was announced to facilitate preparations by industry members and monitoring companies ahead of the 2024 fishing year. To develop the 2024 ASM spend plan, NMFS is currently evaluating whether the preliminary coverage level target can be met given the level of 2024 appropriations funding for reimbursing sectors for the cost of monitoring. The final ASM coverage level will be announced when Congress approves the 2024 ASM spend plan. For additional information, please contact Liz Sullivan at (978) 282-8493 or [Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov](mailto:Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov).

## **Scallops**

### **Framework Adjustment 38 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan**

On March 22, 2024, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 20341) implementing Framework Adjustment 38 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan. Framework 38 sets scallop specifications and other measures for fishing years 2024 and 2025, including changes to the catch, effort, and quota allocations and adjustments to the rotational area management program for fishing year 2024, and default specifications for fishing year 2025. To better enforce the Scallop Rotational Area Management Program Framework 38 prohibits vessels on declared federal scallop trips from entering or transiting the Western Gulf of Maine Groundfish Closure Area and any scallop rotational area unless the vessel is on a declared trip into that area, and it increases the vessel monitoring system ping rate to once every 5 minutes for all declared federal scallop trips. For additional information, please contact Travis Ford at (978) 281-9233 or [Travis.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Travis.Ford@noaa.gov).

## **Herring**

### **Adjusted 2024 Herring Specifications**

On March 4, 2024, NMFS published a temporary rule in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 15482) adjusting the 2024 herring specifications to account for payback of catch overages and carryover of catch underages from 2022. We recently completed our final catch accounting for 2022 and determined that there were catch overages in Areas 1A, 1B, and 3 and a catch underage in Area 2. Total allowable overage deductions equal 48 mt and allowable carryover equals 114 mt. This temporary rule expires on December 31, 2024. For additional information, please contact Carrie Nordeen at (978) 281-9272 or [Carrie.Nordeen@noaa.gov](mailto:Carrie.Nordeen@noaa.gov).

## **Monkfish**

On February 9, 2024, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 9072) to implement specifications for the monkfish fishery for fishing year 2024. These specifications are unchanged from those which were announced for fishing year 2024 as part of Framework Adjustment 13 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan on August 11, 2023. We have reviewed available fishery information for fishing years 2022 and 2023; there have been no ACL overages, nor is there any new biological information that would require the alteration of 2024 specifications from those announced in Framework 13. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

## **Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab**

On February 8, 2024, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 8557) approving Atlantic deep-sea red crab specifications for fishing years 2024 through 2027 and implementing allowable harvest levels for fishing year 2024. This action maintained the fishing year 2020 through 2023 quota of 2,000 mt. For additional information, please contact Allison Murphy at (978) 281-9122 or [Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov](mailto:Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov).

## **Skate**

None at this time.

## **Other Actions**

### **Paperwork Reduction Act**

On April 2, 2024, NMFS published a 60-day notice in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 22676) for the extension of Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) requirements regarding gear-marking requirements for multiple fisheries and gear types. Interested persons are invited to submit written comments to Adrienne Thomas, NOAA PRA Officer, at [Adrienne.thomas@noaa.gov](mailto:Adrienne.thomas@noaa.gov). Please reference OMB Control Number 0648–0351 in the subject line of your comments. Comments will be accepted through June 3, 2024. For additional information, please contact Laura Deighan at (978) 281-9184 or [Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov).

## **Jonah Crab**

None at this time.

## **Industry Funded Monitoring Omnibus Amendment**

None at this time.

## **Lobster**

None at this time.

## **Habitat Actions**

On February 2, 2024, NMFS filed a final rule in the *Federal Register* that implements the New England Fishery Management Council's Framework Adjustment that identifies a Habitat Area of Particular Concern offshore of Southern New England. The action is intended to focus Essential Fish Habitat conservation recommendations on cod spawning habitats and complex benthic habitats that are known to serve important habitat functions to Council-managed fishery species. This rule is effective March 6, 2024. For additional information please contact Sabrina Pereira at (978) 675-2178 or [Sabrina.Pereira@noaa.gov](mailto:Sabrina.Pereira@noaa.gov).

## **Protected Resources Actions**

None at this time.

## **Research Permits and Acknowledgments - Applications Under Review**

On February 13, 2024, NMFS received an Exempted Fishing Permit application from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in support of their Study Fleet Program, which would allow industry partners to collect biological data and biological samples relevant to stock assessments and fish biology. For more information, please contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326 or email at [Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov](mailto:Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov).

On February 26, 2024, NMFS received an Exempted Fishing Permit application from the Massachusetts Department of Marine Fisheries to conduct their annual ventless lobster trap survey. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9815 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On March 14, 2024, NMFS received an Exempted Fishing Permit application from the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to conduct testing of early benthic phase lobster traps in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9815 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On March 21, 2024, NMFS received a Temporary Possession Letter of Authorization application from the Cornell Cooperative Extension in support of catch sampling activities associated with an experiment that is testing a turtle excluder device in the longfin squid trawl fishery. For more information, please contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326 or email at [Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov](mailto:Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov).

On April 2, 2024, NMFS received a Letter of Acknowledgement application from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute to conduct a Scallop Research-Set-Aside (RSA) project to study recruitment and growth dynamics of the Atlantic sea scallop. For more information, please contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326 or email at [Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov](mailto:Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov).

On April 2, 2024, NMFS received a Letter of Acknowledgement application from Monmouth University to continue an acoustic telemetry study in wind lease areas in the Mid-Atlantic. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9815 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

## **Research Permits and Acknowledgments – Application Review Completed**

On February 9, 2024, NMFS issued a Scientific Research Permit (SRP) to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) to conduct their annual Bottom Longline Survey, to gather improved data in structured bottom habitats in the Gulf of Maine that are not easily sampled with trawl gear. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On March 5, 2024, NMFS issued a Scientific Research Permit (SRP) to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) to conduct a Pilot Hook and Line Survey, to develop and test methodologies for a long-term hook and line survey to collect fish abundance and biological data and provide continuity as offshore wind energy development precludes traditional surveys in the Northeast region. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On March 8, 2024, NMFS issued a Letter of Authorization to the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation to conduct a Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) project to test a dredge bag modification to reduce small scallop and sand dollar catch in the scallop fishery. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On March 8, 2024, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement to Stony Brook University to conduct a midwater trawl survey of pelagic and forage fish species, using acoustic to identify where aggregations of fish are in the water column. The study will provide information on the status of the physical and biological ecosystem components, and develop a system of indicators of ecosystem health. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On March 21, 2024, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement to the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science in support of a black sea bass pot survey of Wind Lease Area OCS-A0490. For more information, please contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326 or email at [Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov](mailto:Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov).

On March 22, 2024, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement to the Commercial Fisheries

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Research Foundation to conduct an annual ventless trap survey for lobsters and crabs in offshore wind lease areas in Southern New England. The project will collect data on the abundance, size structure, and distribution of American lobster and Jonah crab, and oceanographic data collected will be used to characterize conditions in the wind farms and adjacent waters. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On March 27, 2024, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement to the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries to conduct winter flounder research in the Gulf of Maine to increase knowledge of winter flounder habitat use and spawning ecology. For more information, please contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326 or email at [Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov](mailto:Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov).

On March 27, 2024, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement to the Delaware Department of Fish and Wildlife to conduct a structure-oriented fish assessment program, collecting abundance and life history on structure-oriented fish in the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Delaware, focusing on black sea bass and tautog. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On March 27, 2024, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute to conduct a survey of Atlantic pollock and Atlantic cod near Casco Bay to determine if color variation is indicative of ecotype variation, and may help understand variations in thermal tolerance among and within gadid species. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On March 28, 2024, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement to the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, in support of a video trawl survey designed to improve abundance and spatial distribution estimates of yellowtail and windowpane flounder on Georges Bank. For more information, please contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326 or email at [Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov](mailto:Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov).

On March 29, 2024, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement to the University of New Hampshire in support of a project in coastal New Hampshire that is attempting to: 1) Characterize movements of Atlantic cod using acoustic telemetry; 2) using diet analyses, characterize Atlantic cod diet in two coastal ecosystems; and 3) determine how indicators of biodiversity vary with environmental changes. For more information, please contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326 or email at [Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov](mailto:Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov).