



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 February 10-11, 2021  
Meeting of the  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

February 9, 2021

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## **New England Council Actions**

### **Small-Mesh Multispecies**

None at this time.

### **Groundfish**

#### **Temporary Rule for an Emergency Action to Increase Fishing Year 2019 Carryover**

On December 31, 2020, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a temporary rule in the *Federal Register* (85 FR 86849) for an emergency action intended to mitigate economic harm to the Northeast Multispecies fishery participants as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This action revises carryover regulations to allow groundfish sectors to carry over more than 10 percent of their unused fishing year 2019 Annual Catch Entitlement into fishing year 2020 for Gulf of Maine haddock, Georges Bank haddock and American plaice. It also allows common pool vessels to carry over unused leased-in Days-at-Sea from fishing year 2019 into fishing year 2020. The comment period for this action closed on February 1, 2021. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

#### **Approval of Groundfish At-Sea and Electronic Monitoring Service Providers**

On February 3, 2021, NMFS announced approval of six at-sea and/or electronic monitoring companies for fishing years 2021 and 2022 in the *Federal Register*. Four of the six companies, AIS, Inc., East West Technical Services, Fathom Resources, LLC, and Saltwater, Inc., are approved to provide at-sea and electronic monitoring services. The two remaining companies, Flywire Cameras and Teem Fish, are approved to provide electronic monitoring services. Sectors may contract with any of these approved providers to meet their monitoring requirements. NMFS is still considering electronic monitoring applications submitted by two additional provider companies. If these companies are approved to provide services, NMFS will publish a notice in the *Federal Register*. For additional information, please contact Claire Fitz-Gerald at (978) 281-9255 or email at [Claire.Fitz-Gerald@noaa.gov](mailto:Claire.Fitz-Gerald@noaa.gov).

### **Scallops**

None at this time.

## Herring

### **Final Rule to Implement Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan**

On January 11, 2021, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (86 FR 1810) for Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan. This amendment establishes an acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rule, intended to account for herring's role in the ecosystem and meet specific criteria identified by the Council, and prohibits the use of midwater trawl gear inshore of 12 nautical miles from Canada to the Rhode Island/Connecticut border and inshore of 20 nautical miles off Cape Cod. Measures will be effective on February 10, 2021. For additional information, please contact Carrie Nordeen at (978) 281-9272 or email at [Carrie.Nordeen@noaa.gov](mailto:Carrie.Nordeen@noaa.gov).

## Monkfish

None at this time.

## Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab

None at this time.

## Skate

None at this time.

## Spiny Dogfish

### **Revised 2021-2022 Specifications**

A proposed rule is under development to implement revised 2021 and projected 2022 specifications for the spiny dogfish fishery, based on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's updated Risk Policy. The proposed specifications would increase the 2021 ABC from 35.4 million lb to 38.6 million pounds, and the resulting 2021 coastwide commercial quota from 27.4 million lb to 29.6 million lb. This would also be 27 percent higher than the current commercial quota in fishing year 2020. Fishing year 2022 specifications are projected to be status quo to the revised 2021 specifications. All other management measures, including the 6,000-lb Federal trip limit, would remain unchanged. The proposed rule is anticipated to publish in February or March 2021, with the final rule effective in time for the May 1, 2021 start of the fishing year. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Ferrio at (978) 281-9180 or email at [Cynthia.Ferrio@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Ferrio@noaa.gov).

## **Mid-Atlantic Council Actions**

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

#### **Final Rule for the 2021 Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Specifications**

On December 21, 2020, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (85 FR 82946) that revised the 2021 summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass specifications. These revisions are primarily based on recent changes to the Mid-Atlantic Council's risk policy, which defines the acceptable risk of overfishing associated with an acceptable biological catch limit. This rule was effective on January 1, 2021. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978)281-9116 or email at [Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov).

### **Surfclam and Ocean Quahog**

None at this time.

### **Atlantic Bluefish**

#### **2021 Specifications**

On December 16, 2020, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (85 FR 81421) to implement 2021 bluefish fishery specifications. These specifications are unchanged from the 2020 catch limits, except for a reduction in the recreational harvest limit (RHL) from 9.48 million pounds to 8.34 million pounds to account for higher 2019 recreational discards than initially projected. The recreational fishery is projected to fully harvest this RHL, therefore no quota was transferred to the commercial fishery in 2021. There are no changes to the recreational management measures for the 2021 fishing year. Although this rule published in December, these specifications were not effective until the beginning of the 2021 fishing year on January 1, 2021. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Ferrio at (978) 281-9180 or email at [Cynthia.Ferrio@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Ferrio@noaa.gov).

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

None at this time.

### **Tilefish**

#### **2021-2022 Golden Tilefish Specifications and Emergency Action**

On December 21, 2020, NMFS published a final rule (85 FR 82944) implementing 2021-2022 golden tilefish specifications and emergency measures to allow tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) shareholders to carry over unharvested 2020 quota pounds, up to five percent of their initial

allocation. A proposed rule was published on November 13, 2020 (85 FR 72616), with a public comment period through November 30, 2020. We will send tilefish IFQ quota shareholders a revised allocation letter reflecting any applicable carryover. For additional information, please contact Douglas Potts at (978)-281-9341, or email at [douglas.potts@noaa.gov](mailto:douglas.potts@noaa.gov).

## **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**

None at this time.

## **Habitat Actions**

None at this time.

## **Protected Resources Actions**

### **Proposed Rule to Mofify the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan**

On December 31, 2020, NMFS published a proposed rule for modifications to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (85 FR 86878) and released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The proposed rule measures would reduce the risk of serious injury and mortality of right whales in commercial northeast lobster and Jonah crab fisheries through a combination of:

- weakened ropes,
- fewer buoy lines achieved by increasing the minimum number of traps per trawl, based on distance from shore, and
- the addition of up to two new seasonal restricted areas and modifications of existing restricted areas to allow ropeless fishing under exempted fishing permits.

The 60- day comment period for this rule ends March 1, 2021. Four remote public informational meetings were held to orient stakeholders and answer clarifying questions. Over 300 attendees participated, including about 213 individuals, with lots of good questions, and some comments

submitted. For more information please contact Colleen Coogan at (978) 281-9181 or email at [Colleen.Coogan@noaa.gov](mailto:Colleen.Coogan@noaa.gov).

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

On December 3, 2020, NMFS received an application for a scientific Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA) from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's School for Marine Science and Technology in support of a video trawl survey on Georges Bank. Survey work would occur during an 8-day research cruise and will use video technology to study abundance, spatial distribution, size structure, and length-weight relationships of flatfish in the study area. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

On December 22, 2020, NMFS received an application for an LOA from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science in support of the North East Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) Near Shore Trawl Survey in Southern New England and the Mid-Atlantic. The survey would sample fish and select invertebrates from Cape Hatteras, NC to Montauk, NY during two research cruises, one each in the spring and fall. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

On January 4, 2021, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center submitted Scientific Research Permit (SRP) applications for activities to be conducted on board Center-controlled research vessels during 2021. Planned research cruises include general ecosystem monitoring surveys and surveys to evaluate and monitor particular species. Fishing gear, when used, will include various types of trawl and dredge gear. For additional information, please contact Maria Fenton at (978) 281-9196 or email at [Maria.Fenton@noaa.gov](mailto:Maria.Fenton@noaa.gov).

On December 16, 2020, NMFS received a complete application from Sea Watch International for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), to explore the potential to expand the open area for at-sea certified Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) vessels into the Closed Area II Access area in statistical area 552. This EFP would allow four at-sea certified vessels to take two trips per week in the expanded area for a total of 100 trips per vessel per year. The catch from these trips would be landed, tested, and sold using the current PSP protocols in place for the harvest of clams on Georges Banks. For additional information, please contact Laura Hansen at (978) 281-9225 or email at [Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov).

On January 4, 2020, NMFS received a request for an LOA from Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries to test an industry-standard Southern New England whiting trawl design with and without a large-mesh belly panel modification to determine if the experimental nets reduce bycatch of red hake. Two, six-day fieldwork trips would be conducted between April 1-May 31, 2021 with a maximum of 128 hours of tow time in statistical areas 525 and 562. For additional information, please contact Laura Hansen at (978) 281-9225 or email at [Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov).

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

On December 4, 2020, NMFS issued an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries that exempts participating vessels from the gear requirements of the Open Access Multispecies Handgear B Permit. These vessels are opportunistically deploying handgear on commercial lobster trips in the eastern Gulf of Maine to collect samples of adult cod greater than 24 inches in length. The project is intended to support research started in response to the findings of the Atlantic Cod Stock Structure Working Group. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

On December 17, 2020, NMFS issued an LOA to the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) in support of its 2021 Gulf of Maine video trawl survey. The purpose of this survey is to investigate the use of video technology to improve estimates of abundance, spatial distribution, size structure, and length-weight relationships of Gulf of Maine cod. SMAST will partner with one commercial fishing vessel to conduct two survey cruises: One in January 2021, and one in April 2021. For more information, please contact Maria Fenton at (978) 291-9196 or email at [Maria.Fenton@noaa.gov](mailto:Maria.Fenton@noaa.gov).