



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 June 8-10, 2021  
Meeting of the  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

June 7, 2021

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## **New England Council Actions**

### **Small-Mesh Multispecies**

None at this time.

### **Groundfish**

#### **Final Rule to Approve Groundfish Sectors for the Northeast Multispecies Fishery**

On Friday, April 30, 2021, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a final rule (86 FR 22898) approving fishing years 2021-22 operations plans and contracts, including regulatory exemptions, for 16 groundfish sectors. The final rule also allocated fishing year 2021 annual catch entitlements based on Framework Adjustment 59 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP); announced default specifications for seven groundfish stocks; and amended the regulations to administer electronic monitoring. NMFS announced our determination that the electronic monitoring audit model is sufficient for use instead of at-sea monitors to meet sector monitoring requirements in the proposed rule. 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).

#### **Inseason Action: Northeast Multispecies Measures for Fishing Year 2021**

On April 26, 2021, NMFS published a temporary rule in the *Federal Register* (86 FR 21961) that implemented several measures for the Northeast multispecies common pool fishery for the 2021 fishing year. These include possession and trip limits, the allocation of zero trips into the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program for common pool vessels to target yellowtail flounder, and the closure of the Regular B Days-at-Sea Program. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

### **Scallops**

#### **Interim Final Rule to Implement Framework Adjustment 33 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan**

On May 19, 2021, NMFS published an interim final rule in the *Federal Register* (86 FR 27042) for Framework 33 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP. This framework sets scallop specifications for fishing years 2021 and 2022 and implements measures to protect small scallops and reduce bycatch of flatfish. For additional information, please contact Travis Ford at (978) 281-9233 or email at [Travis.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Travis.Ford@noaa.gov).

## **Herring**

None at this time.

## **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**

On May 4, 2021, NMFS published a final rule (86 FR 23633) 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. These specifications increase the 2021 acceptable biological catch (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 is also 27 percent higher than the commercial quota for fishing year 2020. The specifications for fishing year 2022 are projected to be unchanged from the revised 2021 specifications. All other management measures, including the 6,000-lb Federal trip limit, remain unchanged. The comment period for this proposed rule ended on March 19, 2021 and one comment was received from the public, with no changes necessary as a result of the comment. This final rule filed on April 29, 2021 and was effective on May 1, 2021, in time for the start of the 2021 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**

None at this time.

## **Surfclam and Ocean Quahog**

### **Final Rule for 2021-2026 Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Specifications**

On May 13, 2021, NMFS published a final rule (86 FR 26186) for status quo 2021 and projected 2022-2026 specifications for the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries. This rule sets specifications at 5.36 million bushels (bu) for the ocean quahog fishery, 3.40 million bu for the Atlantic surfclam fishery, and 100,000 Maine bu for the Maine ocean quahog fishery and suspends the minimum size limit for surfclams for 2021. The final rule is effective June 14, 2021. For additional information, please contact Laura Hansen at (978) 281-9225 or email at [Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov).

### **Surfclam/Ocean Quahog Cost Recovery**

On June 7, 2021, NMFS announced the 2020 tag fees for the surfclam and ocean quahog Individual Transferrable Quota cost recovery. The fees are \$0.62 per surfclam tag and \$0.36 per ocean quahog tag. Quota shareholders should soon receive bills based on these tag fees and the number of their tags that were used to land clams during 2020. Both tag fees are lower than they were in 2019 (\$0.92 for surfclam and \$0.55 for ocean quahog). The announcement of 2020 tag fees was significantly delayed due to staff turnover as well as work interruptions associated with the pandemic. NMFS will soon issue a separate announcement of the 2021 tag fees. For additional information, please contact Douglas Potts at (978)-281-9341, or email at [douglas.potts@noaa.gov](mailto:douglas.potts@noaa.gov).

## **Atlantic Bluefish**

None at this time.

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

### **2021-2021 Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Specifications**

On May 26, 2021, NMFS published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (86 FR 28323) to solicit public comment on 2021-2022 butterfish and mackerel specifications and 2021-2023 specifications for longfin squid, Ilex squid, and mackerel. This action proposes new butterfish specifications, but maintains existing specifications for longfin squid, Ilex squid, and mackerel. This action would also adjust the dealer reporting requirement and closure threshold for the Illex squid fishery to avoid overages. The comment period closes on June 10, 2021. For additional information, please contact Alyson Pitts at (987) 281-9352, or email at [Alyson.Pitts@noaa.gov](mailto:Alyson.Pitts@noaa.gov).

## **Tilefish**

### **Blueline Tilefish 2021 Specifications**

On May 26, 2021, NMFS published a rule (86 FR 28292) to finalize the 2021 blueline tilefish

specifications. At the Council's request, NMFS consulted with General Counsel to explore whether the regulations allow for any flexibility in the accountability measure for commercial overages. NMFS determined that the Regional Administrator does not have any flexibility in the application of a pound-for-pound payback. As a result, NMFS was required to deduct the 2020 commercial landings overage (1,965 lb) from this year's commercial annual catch limit. This overage deduction is outlined in the final rule. For additional information, please contact Douglas Potts at (978)-281-9341, or email at [douglas.potts@noaa.gov](mailto:douglas.potts@noaa.gov).

### **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 shareholders to carryover unharvested 2020 quota pounds, up to five percent of their initial allocation. Allocation adjustments, both carryover and regular overage deductions, were issued on May 12, 2021. The emergency measures are due to expire on June 19, 2021. NMFS intends to publish a rule extending the emergency measures through the end of the fishing year. 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**

None at this time.

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

On April 22, 2021, the Maine Department of Marine Resources submitted a Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA) application to support ongoing halibut tagging research. Vessels will target halibut using longline gear in inshore waters of the Gulf of Maine and tag halibut with data storage and acoustic tags before release. Activities will occur during the summer and early fall. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

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

On April 23, 2021, NMFS issued the Northeast Fisheries Science Center a Scientific Research Permit for spring and fall bottom longline surveys using commercial vessel research platforms during 2021. Vessels will sample high complexity bottom habitats in the Gulf of Maine using bottom longline gear with a focus on species like cod, haddock, halibut, and thorny skates. Activities will occur in the spring and fall. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

On April 23, 2021, NMFS issued an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to the Coonamessett Farm Foundation to continue their black sea bass tagging study. The EFP allows one commercial vessel to temporarily possess a greater number of black sea bass than the recreational limit, including undersize black sea bass, while conducting tagging procedures and biological sampling at sea. All fishing for this project will be conducted using rod and reel gear in state and Federal waters off the coasts of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. For additional information, please contact Laura Hansen at (978) 281-9225, or email at [Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov).

On May 6, 2021, NMFS issued an EFP to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in support of the 2021 Study Fleet Program. The Center established the Study Fleet Program in 2002 to more fully characterize commercial fishing operations and provide sampling opportunities to augment NMFS' data collection programs. As part of the program, the Center contracts commercial fishing vessels to collect biological data and fish specimens to use in research relevant to stock assessments and fish biology. The EFP allows participating vessels to possess and land fish that the regulations would otherwise prohibit, for research purposes. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

On May 25, 2021, NMFS issued a LOA to the University of Maine for an LOA in support of the 2021 Eastern Gulf of Maine Sentinel Survey. Chartered vessels are conducting a random stratified survey with hook and gillnet gear to better understand the groundfish stock in the region, gather fine-scale groundfish catch data, identify predator/prey relationships as they inform

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fishery management, and to verify local ecological knowledge pertaining to cod spawning in the Eastern Gulf of Maine. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

On May 28, NMFS issued an Exempted Educational Activity Authorization to the University of New Hampshire in support of academic programs offered at the Shoals Marine Laboratory. During the period from June 1 to June 14, 2021, a single participating vessel will take one day trip to demonstrate the operation of a bottom trawl as part of a sustainable fisheries course. A maximum of 3 hours of towing would occur. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).