



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 August 10-13, 2020  
Meeting of the  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management  
Council

August 7, 2020

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## **New England Council Actions**

### **Small-Mesh Multispecies**

None at this time.

### **Groundfish**

#### **Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan**

At the request of the New England Fishery Management Council, the comment period for the draft environmental impact statement for Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan has been extended through August 31, 2020 (85 FR 39901; July 2, 2020).

#### **Framework Adjustment 59**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) approved Framework Adjustment 59 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan in a final rule, effective upon filing, on July 28, 2020 (85 FR 45794; July 30, 2020). Framework 59 set 2020-2022 catch limits for the groundfish stocks, and made minor changes to groundfish management measures. For additional information, please contact Liz Sullivan at (978) 282-8493 or email at [liz.sullivan@noaa.gov](mailto:liz.sullivan@noaa.gov).

#### **Removal of Regulations Implementing the Closed Area I Hook Gear Haddock Special Access Program**

On July 22, 2020, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (85 FR 44220) that removed regulations implementing the Closed Area I Hook Gear Haddock Special Access Program. The Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2 eliminated the year-round Closed Area I, rendering the Closed Area I Hook Gear Haddock Special Access Program unnecessary. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

### **Scallops**

None at this time.

### **Herring**

None at this time.

## **Monkfish**

### **Framework Adjustment 12**

On June 30, 2020, NMFS published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (85 FR 39157) to solicit comments on Framework Adjustment 12 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan. This rule would set 2020-2022 specifications for the northern and southern management areas and make minor corrections/clarifications to the regulations. The comment period closed on July 30, **2020**. The final rule is in development and is expected to publish in the fall. For additional information, please contact Allison Murphy at (978) 281-9122 or email at [Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov](mailto:Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov).

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

None at this time.

### **Skate**

None at this time.

### **Spiny Dogfish**

None at this time.

## **Mid-Atlantic Council Actions**

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

#### **Notice of Availability for Amendment 21 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan**

On July 29, 2020, NMFS published a Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* (85 FR 45571) for Amendment 21 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (the Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment). Amendment 21 proposes revisions to the summer flounder commercial state quota allocation percentages and the fishery management plan goals and objectives. The comment period for the notice of availability closes September 28, 2020. 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**

### **Revised 2020-2021 Specifications and Recreational Management Measures**

On June 29, 2020, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (85 FR 38794) to implement revised 2020 and projected 2021 specifications for the bluefish fishery. These specifications reduced catch limits and finalized recreational management measures to reflect the results of the 2019 operational stock assessment. Compared to the interim regulations, the commercial quota is reduced 64%, and the recreational harvest limit (RHL) is reduced 18%. The recreational bag limit remains changed from 15 to 3 fish for private anglers, and to 5 fish for for-hire (party/charter) vessels to constrain catch to the reduced RHL. These recreational bag limit changes were already implemented through interim measures on February 28, 2020 (85 FR 11863), but this action implements them beyond the temporary interim period. 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**

### **Amendment 21 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP (Chub Amendment)**

NMFS published a final rule on August 4, 2020 (85 FR 47103) implementing measures approved under Amendment 21 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP on May 4, 2020. This action integrates Atlantic chub mackerel into the FMP and implements long-term measures to replace temporary measures implemented under Amendment 18 in 2017. Specifically, it identifies goals and objectives for managing Atlantic chub mackerel; specifies status determination criteria; designates essential fish habitat; establishes a specifications process; sets annual catch limits for 2020-2022; and implements accountability measures, possession limits, permitting and reporting requirements, and other administrative measures for Atlantic chub mackerel caught from Maine through North Carolina. These measures become effective on September 3, 2020. For additional information, please contact Douglas Christel at (978) 281-9141, or [Douglas.Christel@noaa.gov](mailto:Douglas.Christel@noaa.gov).

### **2020 Illex Squid Specifications Adjustment**

NMFS published a temporary final rule on August 4, 2020 (85 FR 47102) to increase the 2020 Illex squid specifications from an acceptable biological catch limit of 26,000 mt to 30,000 mt. This rule was effective upon publication. For additional information, please contact Aly Pitts at (978) 281-9352 or by email at [alyson.pitts@noaa.gov](mailto:alyson.pitts@noaa.gov).

## **Tilefish**

### **Private Recreational Tilefish Permitting and Reporting**

On July 16, 2020, NMFS published a final rule to implement permitting and reporting requirements for private recreational tilefish vessels (85 FR 43149). Any vessel that intends to fish for golden and/or blue-line tilefish north of the Virginia/North Carolina line must obtain a Federal private recreational tilefish vessel permit before taking a trip through Fish Online. Private recreational tilefish vessels will also be required to submit electronic vessel trip reports for any trip targeting tilefish through a NMFS-approved electronic reporting system. Trip reports must be submitted within 24-hour of returning to port. The rule becomes effective **August 17, 2020**. For additional information, please contact Laura Hansen at (978) 281-9225, or email at [Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Hansen@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**

### **Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment**

On August 26, 2019, NMFS published a Notice of Availability for the Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment (84 FR 44596) to solicit public on the approval of the Amendment. On November 20, 2019, NMFS approved this action. The Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment will implement measures that reduce impacts of fishing gear on deep-sea corals in the Gulf of Maine and on the outer continental shelf. In doing so, this action will prohibit the use of mobile bottom-tending gear in two areas in the Gulf of Maine (Mount Desert Rock and Outer Schoodic Ridge), and it will prohibit the use of all bottom-tending gear (with an exception for red crab pots) along the outer continental shelf in waters no shallower than 600 meters. On January 3, 2020, NMFS

published a proposed rule for the Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment (85 FR 285) to solicit further public comment. The public comment period closed on February 18, 2020. NMFS is developing a final rule that will implement this action. For additional information, please contact Travis Ford at (978) 281-9233 or email at [Travis.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Travis.Ford@noaa.gov).

## **Protected Resources Actions**

None at this time.

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

On March 4, 2020, NMFS received an application from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and the Northeast Sector Service Network for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) amendment in support of an ongoing project to develop a maximized retention electronic monitoring (MREM) program to meet monitoring requirements for the Northeast multispecies fishery. This EFP would allow one MREM participant to conduct exploratory fishing for redfish, Gulf of Maine haddock, and pollock while using a cod end mesh as small as 4.5-inches, either diamond or square mesh, without a gear modifier in the former Redfish Exemption Area. The vessel would use electronic monitoring on 100 percent of sector trips and the video footage would be used to confirm that the vessel complied with retention requirements. Catch would be assessed via a dockside monitoring program. For additional information, please contact Mark Grant at (978) 281-9145 or email at [mark.grant@noaa.gov](mailto:mark.grant@noaa.gov).

On June 5, 2020, NMFS received a complete application from the Cape Cod Commercial Fisherman's Alliance for an EFP in support of an exploratory fishing project to facilitate catch of haddock in the Southern New England Regulated Mesh Area without increasing discards of sublegal flounder species. From September 1, 2020 through June 31, 2021, two trawl vessels participating in the Alliance's Audit Model Electronic Monitoring EFP would use 6-inch diamond mesh codends in the Southern New England Regulated Mesh Area. This would be the second year of this project, for which an EFP was issued last year on December 19, 2019. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

On June 2, 2020, and June 15, 2020, NMFS received two EFP applications from the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation. Both applications are requests for EFPs to conduct a ventless trap survey and a gillnet survey in the South Fork wind farm lease area. The ventless trap survey will focus on monitoring of scup, black sea bass, and tautog. Survey trips will take place seasonally once per month from April through October through the project period. This will result in three continuous survey periods, August 2020 through October 2020, April 2021 through October 2021, and April 2022 through July 2022. Each survey will consist of two one day trips. The gillnet survey will focus on monitoring of monkfish and winter skate. Survey trips will take place seasonally four times per month from April through June and again from October through December for each project year resulting in four sampling periods. 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 April 28, 2020, NMFS received an application from the University of Connecticut for an EFP to conduct an endocrine disruption study. This project would collect egg bearing female lobsters to examine the impact of endocrine disrupting chemicals on lobster larva development. The study would take place from June to September 2020. The EFP would authorize participating vessels to collect up to 18 undersized and 20 female egg-bearing lobsters from Lobster Conservation Management Areas 2 and 3. For additional information, please contact Laura Hansen at (978) 281-9225 or email at [Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov).

On June 24, 2020, NMFS issued a Scientific Research Letter of Acknowledgment (LOA) to the Maine Department of Marine Resources to support tagging research of Atlantic halibut in the Gulf of Maine. Up to 60 halibut would be captured, tagged, and released using bottom longline in the Gulf of Maine during the summer of 2020. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

On July 31, 2020, NMFS issued a Scientific Research Permit (SRP) to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in support of the fall Gulf of Maine bottom longline survey and supporting catchability research. Research would be conducted using bottom longline in the Gulf of Maine between August and November of 2020. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

On July 31, 2020, NMFS issued an EFP to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in support of an ongoing project to develop a maximized retention electronic monitoring program to meet monitoring requirements for the Northeast multispecies fishery. Under the EFP, participating vessels are required to retain all catch of allocated groundfish. Vessels are required to use electronic monitoring on 100 percent of sector trips and the video footage would be used to confirm that vessels complied with retention requirements. Catch for each trip is assessed shoreside via a dockside monitoring program. The EFP also exempts participating vessels from the following regulations: portions of Northeast multispecies closed areas; minimum fish sizes, minimum mesh sizes, and sector third-party monitoring requirements. 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).

On July 31, 2020, NMFS issued an EFP to the University of Connecticut to conduct a lobster growth study. Participating vessels will collect up to 18 undersized and 20 egg-bearing female lobsters. Exemptions allow the possession of undersize, v-notched, and egg-bearing lobsters and the sale of the lobsters retained for sampling to a research organization that does not hold a Federal dealer permit. The lobsters will be transported to the research to conduct tests on the impact of endocrine disrupting chemicals on lobster growth. For additional information, please contact Laura Hansen at (978) 281-9225, or email at [Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov).