



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 6-8, 2024  
Meeting of the  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

February 2, 2024

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## **New England Council Actions**

### **Small-Mesh Multispecies**

None at this time.

### **Groundfish**

#### **Inseason Action: Gulf of Maine Cod Possession and Trip Limit Adjustment and Trimester TAC Area Closure for the Common Pool Fishery**

On December 18, 2023, NMFS published a temporary rule (88 FR 87368) that prohibits the possession of Gulf of Maine cod by common pool vessels through the end of the fishing year, April 30, 2024. The rule additionally closed the Gulf of Maine (GOM) Cod Trimester Total Allowable Catch (TAC) Area for Trimester 3 of fishing year 2023, January 1 through April 30, 2024. Catch of GOM cod in Trimester 1 of the fishing year exceeded the TAC for that trimester, and had to be accounted for by deduction from the Trimester 3 TAC. The deduction resulted in a Trimester 3 TAC of zero. This action seeks to prevent further overages of the GOM cod 2023 sub-annual catch limit allocated to the common pool fishery. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

#### **Gulf of Maine Haddock Emergency Action Extension**

On January 9, 2024, we extended the Gulf of Maine haddock emergency action (89 FR 1036), maintaining the acceptable biological catch of 2,515 metric tons for the remainder of the 2023 fishing year, which ends April 30, 2024. Without the extension, the measures would have expired on February 14, 2024. 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**

#### **2024 Cape Cod Catch Cap Closure Area Possession Limit Adjustment**

On January 25, 2024, NMFS published a temporary rule (89 FR 4834) implementing a 2,000-lb herring possession limit for midwater trawl vessels fishing for herring in the Cape Cod Catch Cap Closure Area. Herring regulations require we implement this possession limit on the date that river herring and shad catch is projected to reach 95 percent of the Cape Cod Catch Cap. This temporary rule expires on December 31, 2024. For additional information, please contact Louis Forristall at (978) 281-9321 or email at [Louis.Forristall@noaa.gov](mailto:Louis.Forristall@noaa.gov).

### **Monkfish**

None at this time.

## **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**

#### **2024 and Projected 2025 Summer Flounder and Scup Specifications and 2024 Black Sea Bass Specifications**

On December 21, 2023, NMFS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* (88 FR 88266) approving 2024 specifications for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass, and projected 2025 specifications for summer flounder and scup. The specifications establish allowable harvest levels for these species that will prevent overfishing, consistent with the most recent scientific information. This rule also removed the January 1 - April 30, Federal recreational scup closure. The rule was effective January 1, 2024. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116 or [Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov).

### **Surfclam and Ocean Quahog**

None at this time

### **Atlantic Bluefish**

#### **2024-2025 Specifications**

On January 2, 2024, NMFS published final catch specifications in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 34) for the 2024 and 2025 bluefish fishery, based on the most recent scientific information. Recent research track (December 2022) and management track (June 2023) assessments for bluefish have determined that the stock is no longer overfished and overfishing is not occurring. However, the spawning stock biomass has not yet reached its target (the stock has not fully rebuilt), so the fishery remains under its rebuilding plan. These specifications decrease the 2024 acceptable biological catch (43 percent from 2023) to 17.48 million lb, the commercial quota (43 percent from 2023) to 2.42 million lb, and the recreational harvest limit (15 percent from 2023) to 11.96 million lb; based on Council recommendations, the assessments, and the rebuilding plan for

the stock. Although catch limits are decreasing, neither sector of the fishery is expected to be substantially impacted by this action. Harvest in both sectors has been decreasing in recent years; coastwide commercial landings have not exceeded 2.2 million lb in the last three years, and recreational harvest averaged 11.54 million lb, both lower than the future limits. There are no changes to any recreational management measures, such as bag limit. The final rule was effective on January 1, 2024. For additional information, please contact Laura Hansen at (978) 281-9225 or email at [Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Hansen@noaa.gov).

## **Quota Transfers**

In December and January, NMFS published notices in the *Federal Register* of seven summer flounder quota transfers through mutual agreements of the states. Two transfers were made to repay landings made by out-of-state vessels under safe harbor agreements (88 FR 86837; 88 FR 88834). The remainder of the transfers were requested to ensure Virginia (88 FR 88540), New York (89 FR 34), New Jersey (88 FR 88540), Rhode Island (89 FR 34), and Connecticut (89 FR 891) would not exceed their 2023 state quotas. For additional information, please contact Laura Deighan at (978) 281-9184 or [Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov](mailto:Laura.Deighan@noaa.gov).

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

None at this time.

## **Tilefish**

None at this time.

## **Other Actions**

### **Paperwork Reduction Act**

On January 31, 2024, NMFS published a 60-day notice (89 FR 6096) for the extension of Paperwork Reduction Act requirements regarding Northeast Region Observer Providers Requirements. 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 0648-0546 in the subject line of your comments. Comments will be accepted through **April 1, 2024**. For additional information, please contact Travis Ford at (978) 281-9233 or email at [Travis.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Travis.Ford@noaa.gov).

## **Jonah Crab**

None at this time.

## **Industry Funded Monitoring Omnibus Amendment**

None at this time.

## **Lobster**

### **Industry Outreach and Support for Harvester Reporting Transition**

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. To assist the fishing industry with the transition to electronic reporting NMFS developed an outreach strategy. The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) port agents will be offering targeted outreach to the lobster industry throughout the region and we will be posting several materials and instructions on the GARFO website. For additional information please contact Allison Murphy at (978) 281-9122 or email at [Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov](mailto:Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov). For questions about the lobster industry outreach please contact Luis Leandro at (508) 495-4753 or email at [luis.leandro@noaa.gov](mailto:luis.leandro@noaa.gov).

## **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 email at [Sabrina.Pereira@noaa.gov](mailto:Sabrina.Pereira@noaa.gov).

## **Protected Resources Actions**

None at this time.

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

On November 29, 2023, NMFS received an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application from the Maine Department of Marine Resources (MDMR), to test various acoustic on-demand fishing technologies to help minimize the risk of large whale entanglements in trap/pot and gillnet fishing gear in the Gulf of Maine. A revised application was received on January 17, 2024. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9815 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

On December 11, 2023, NMFS received an EFP application from Phillip Lynch, to evaluate the efficacy of 6-inch mesh gillnet for haddock without increasing the catch of cod and sublegal sized haddock. For more information, please contact Elise Scholl at (978) 281-9189 or email at

[Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov](mailto:Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov).

On January 4, 2024, NMFS received a Letter of Authorization application from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science to conduct the North East Area Monitoring and Assessment Program Near Shore Trawl Survey for Southern New England and the Mid-Atlantic. For additional information, please contact Elise Scholl at (978) 281-9189 or email at [Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov](mailto:Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov).

On January 8, 2024, NMFS received a Scientific Research Permit (SRP) application from 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 January 22, 2024, NMFS received an EFP application from the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance Inc. to incorporate fishermen's knowledge into a standardized catch per unit effort index for the commercial monkfish gillnet fishery. For additional information, please contact Elise Scholl at (978) 281-9189 or email at [Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov](mailto:Elise.Scholl@noaa.gov).

On January 29, 2024, NMFS received an EFP application from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) to continue testing on-demand fishing systems in fixed-gear fisheries. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).

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

On January 29, 2024, NMFS issued a SRP to the NEFSC to conduct their annual Core Research Surveys, consisting of bottom trawl, ecosystem, sea scallop, surf clam and ocean quahog, and deep sea coral surveys. For more information, please contact Christine Ford at (978) 281-9185 or email at [Christine.Ford@noaa.gov](mailto:Christine.Ford@noaa.gov).