



National Marine Fisheries Service
Northeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
<http://www.nero.nmfs.gov>



Status Report of Northeast Region Actions

Prepared for the January 28-30, 2014
Meeting of the
New England Fishery Management Council

January 27, 2014

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New England Council Actions

Groundfish

Interim Final Rule Allowing Sector Vessels into the Nantucket Lightship Year-Round Closed Area

On December 16, 2013, we published an interim final rule in the Federal Register (78 FR 76077) that allowed sector vessels to fish in portions of the Nantucket Lightship Year-Round Closed Area with selective gear for the duration of fishing year 2013. Sector vessels can fish in the Eastern and Western Exemption Areas of the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area under standard groundfish at-sea monitoring requirements. Sector vessels interested in utilizing this exemption must notify us prior to fishing in these areas, and will need a revised Letter of Authorization (LOA) from their sector manager. When fishing in the Eastern or Western Exemption Areas, gillnet vessels must fish with extra-large mesh gillnets (10" or greater). Pingers must be attached to gillnets when fishing in the Western Exemption Area. Trawl vessels must fish with selective trawl gear, such as the Ruhle or haddock separator trawl. Standard otter trawls and flounder nets are prohibited in these areas.

Because we originally proposed 100% industry-funded at-sea monitoring in the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area, we solicited public comment on our modified coverage level until January 15, 2014. For additional information, please contact William Whitmore at (978) 281-9182 or email at William.Whitmore@noaa.gov

Trimester Total Allowable Catch Area Closed to Common Pool Vessels

On December 19, 2013, NMFS published a temporary rule in the Federal Register (78 FR 76759) announcing a closure to the Gulf of Maine haddock Trimester Total Allowable Catch Area for common pool vessels using trawl, sink gillnet, and longline/hook gear. This was due to a large overage of the Trimester 1 quota, which left Trimester 3 with no quota. The action was effective January 1, 2014, and remains in effect until April 30, 2014. For more information, please contact Liz Sullivan at (978) 282-8493 or email at Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov

Scallops

None at this time

Monkfish

None at this time

Herring

None at this time

Skate

None at this time

Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab

None at this time

Mid-Atlantic Council Actions

Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass

Final Rule for the 2014 Commercial Summer Flounder State Quotas

NMFS published a final rule in the Federal Register on December 27, 2013 (78 FR 78786), which became effective January 1, 2014. This action specified initial state quotas, as well as state quotas adjusted for RSA or any overages through October 31, 2013, from the previous fishing year. For additional information, please contact Moira Kelly at 978-281-9218 or email at Moira.Kelly@noaa.gov

Atlantic Bluefish

None at this time

Spiny Dogfish

None at this time

Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish (MSB)

Proposed Rule for 2014 Specification for the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fisheries

NMFS published a proposed rule in the Federal Register on January 10, 2014 (79 FR 1813), proposing 2014 specifications for butterfish. The comment period closes on February 10, 2014. Specifications for longfin squid and *Illex* squid were set for 3 years in 2012 (2012-2014). Similarly, specifications for Atlantic mackerel were set for 3 years in 2013 (2013-2015). Therefore, specifications for these species will not be included in this year's specification rulemaking. The proposed action would: (1) Increase the 2014 butterfish ABC by 8 percent (from 8,400 mt to 9,100 mt) and the 2014 butterfish landings limit by 24 percent (from 2,570 mt to 3,200 mt) compared to 2013; (2) set a 236 mt cap on river herring and shad catch in the mackerel fishery; (3) raise the post-closure possession limit for longfin squid to 10,000 lb for vessels targeting *Illex* squid after a Trimester II longfin squid closure; and (4) change the butterfish Phase 3 trip limit to 600 lb (from 500 lb) for longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit holders to make it consistent with the incidental butterfish trip limit. For additional information, please contact Aja Szumylo at 978-281-9195 or email at aja.szumylo@noaa.gov

Tilefish

None at this time.

Surfclam and Ocean Quahog

Extension and Expansion of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) Closed Area

NMFS has renewed the temporary PSP closure of Federal waters, which has been in effect since 2005. The renewed closure became effective January 1, 2014, and will remain closed through

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December 31, 2014. The Northern Temporary PSP Closure Area is closed to the harvest of all bivalve molluscan shellfish. The Southern PSP Closure Area is closed just to the harvest of whole and/or roe-on scallops. The closure remains in place at the request of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

In addition, the list of species prohibited for harvest under the closure has been expanded to also include gastropods. Gastropods include carnivorous snails, whelks, and conchs that feed on bivalves. The bivalves, if contaminated with the toxin that causes PSP, transfer the toxins on to the gastropod when ingested. The comment period closed on this action on January 27, 2014. For additional information, please contact Jason Berthiaume at (978) 281-9177 or email at jason.berthiaume@noaa.gov

Other Actions

Lobster

NOAA Fisheries published an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) on January 27, 2014 (79 FR 4319), at the request of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission). This action announces a control date of January 27, 2014, which may be used in limiting the number of permits or traps in Area 3 of the American lobster fishery. Area 3 lays entirely within Federal waters, and extends from Maine to Cape Hatteras, NC. With the advent of the Commission's trap transfer program, members of the lobster industry, as well as the Commission, have become concerned about fishing power consolidating in Area 3 among relatively few permit holders. The ANPR may be obtained at www.nero.noaa/sfd/lobster. For additional information, please contact Carly Bari at (978) 978-281-9224 or email at carly.bari@noaa.gov

Paperwork Reduction Act Request for Comments

On December 6, 2013, NMFS published a notice in the Federal Register (78 FR 73499) soliciting comment on a renewal of collection of information requirements for the scallop fishery. This collection of information covers a wide range of scallop fishery reporting requirements including: VMS; access area; cost recovery; vessel replacement; IFQ transfers; as well as a number of other administrative requirements. NMFS is seeking comments regarding the accuracy of the burden and cost estimates associated with these requirements, whether the collections are necessary, and ways to minimize burden and improve the data collection. The comment period ends on February 4, 2014. For additional information contact Emily Gilbert at (978) 281-9244 or at Emily.Gilbert@noaa.gov. The full Federal Register notice is also available online at:

www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-12-06/pdf/2013-29104.pdf

Experimental Fishery Actions

Research Document Applications under Review

No new research applications at this time.