

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 April 18-20, 2017  
Meeting of the  
New England Fishery Management Council

April 17, 2017

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## New England Council Actions

### Small-Mesh Multispecies

None at this time

### Groundfish

#### **Amendment 18 to the Multispecies FMP**

On March 6, 2017, NOAA Fisheries approved Amendment 18 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Amendment 18 establishes accumulation limits for limited access groundfish permits and removes several limited access handgear vessel restrictions. A final rule implementing the Amendment should be publishing soon.

#### **Inseason Action to Increase the Common Pool Possession and Trip Limit of Gulf of Maine Cod and Haddock**

On March 16, 2017, NMFS filed a temporary rule in the Federal Register increasing the possession and trip limit for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock through April 30, 2017. NMFS took these actions because catch data indicated that the common pool was not expected to fully harvest its annual quota for these stocks at the trip limit already in place. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov)

#### **Final Adjustment to the Yellowtail Flounder Allocations for the Groundfish and Scallop Fisheries**

On March 13, 2017, NMFS filed a temporary rule in the Federal Register that transferred unused quota of Georges Bank and Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder from the scallop fishery to the commercial groundfish fishery for the 2016 fishing year, through April 30, 2017. NMFS transferred 40 metric tons of Georges Bank yellowtail flounder, and 15 metric tons of Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder, to the groundfish fishery (sector and common pool vessels). For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978)281-9116 or [Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov).

#### **Reimbursement of Sector At-Sea Monitoring Costs**

For the 2016 fishing year, NMFS has been able to fully fund our SBRM monitoring program and is using remaining funds to offset some of industry's costs for the groundfish at-sea monitoring program through a cooperative agreement with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The ASMFC has been reimbursing sectors for 85 percent of their ASM and electronic monitoring costs for sector trips beginning on or after July 1, 2016. To date, all 14 sectors actively fishing have submitted invoices and been reimbursed for ASM trips, on a total of 1,114 days, that occurred from July through March, including applicable EM trips. We are actively monitoring and evaluating the spend-down of available funds consistent with projected effort for the remainder of the fishing year. For additional information, please contact Liz Sullivan at [\(978\) 282-8493](tel:(978)282-8493) or email at [Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov](mailto:Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov).

## Scallops

### **Final Rule for Framework 28**

NMFS published a final rule approving and implementing Framework 28 in the Federal Register on March 27, 2017 (82 FR 15155). Framework 28: sets specifications for the scallop fishery for fishing year 2017; revises the way we allocate catch to the limited access general category individual fishing quota fleet to reflect spatial management of the scallop fishery; and implements a 50-bushel shell stock possession limit for limited access vessels inshore of the days-at-sea demarcation line north of 42° 20' N. lat. For additional information, please contact Travis Ford at (978) 281-9233 or email at [travis.ford@noaa.gov](mailto:travis.ford@noaa.gov).

### **2017 Closure of the Northern Gulf of Maine Scallop Management Area**

On March 23, 2017, NMFS announced that the Northern Gulf of Maine Scallop Management Area will close for the remainder of the 2017 fishing year (82 FR 15164). The closure ensures that the scallop fleet will not overharvest the 2017 total allowable catch set for the management area. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at [Shannah.jaburek@noaa.gov](mailto:Shannah.jaburek@noaa.gov).

## Monkfish

None at this time

## Herring

None at this time

## Skate

### **Commercial Skate Wing and Skate Bait Possession Limit Increase**

NMFS published a temporary rule in the Federal Register on March 14, 2017, (82 FR 13564) which increased the skate wing possession limit from 500 lb to 4,100 lb of skate wings per trip, and increased the skate bait possession limit from 1,135 lb to 9,307 lb per trip, effective March 15, 2017, through April 30, 2017. Adjusting these possession limits were necessary to allow fishermen the opportunity to fully harvest the remaining skate wing and skate bait annual commercial quota. For additional information, please contact Reid Lichwell at (978) 281-9112 or email at [Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov](mailto:Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov).

## Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab

### **Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab Specifications for Fishing Years 2017-2019**

NMFS published a final rule in the Federal Register on February 22, 2017, (82 FR 11322) approving the 2017 Atlantic deep-sea red crab quota and projecting quotas for 2018-2019. Based on the recommendation from the New England Fishery Management Council, we are continuing the existing red crab fishery quota of 1,775 metric tons for fishing years 2017. This action is necessary to establish allowable red crab harvest levels that will prevent overfishing and allow harvesting of optimum yield. Because the final rule did not publish before the start of the 2017 fishing year (March 1, 2017), rollover specifications were in effect and were replaced when the final rule became effective on March, 24, 2017. For additional information, please contact Allison Murphy at (978) 281-9122 or email at [Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov](mailto:Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov).

## Mid-Atlantic Council Actions

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

#### **Revised Black Sea Bass Specifications for 2017 and 2018**

NMFS published a proposed rule in the Federal Register (82 FR 17964) on April 14, 2017, that proposes revised black sea bass specifications for the 2017 and 2018 fishing years, as well as the removal of a previously implemented accountability measure. Updated scientific information from the 2016 stock assessment indicates that higher catch limits should be implemented to obtain optimum yield, and that the accountability measure to account for commercial sector overages in 2015 is no longer necessary or appropriate. The revised specifications represent a 53-percent increase in the 2017 commercial black sea bass quota established in 2015, and a 52-percent increase in the 2017 recreational harvest limit. The Council will revisit its decision on the 2018 specifications following the SSC's review next summer, and if no changes are necessary, this action will remain unchanged. The comment period ends on May 1, 2017. The 2017 black sea bass recreational measures are currently in development, and will be published in a separate rule later this Spring. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

#### **Commercial Summer Flounder Quota Transfer – North Carolina to Virginia**

NMFS published a temporary rule in the Federal Register on February 22, 2017, (82 FR 11321) allowing a transfer of 11,030 lb of commercial summer flounder quota from North Carolina to Virginia. The revised summer flounder quotas for calendar year 2017 are: North Carolina, 1,542,203 lb; Virginia, 1,217,402 lb. This transfer was requested by North Carolina to repay landings by a North Carolina-permitted vessel that landed in Virginia under a safe harbor agreement. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

## Atlantic Bluefish

### **2017 Atlantic Bluefish Sector Quota Transfer Adjustment**

NMFS published a rule in the Federal Register on March 13, 2017, (82 FR 13402) that revises the sector quota transfer amount from the recreational to the commercial bluefish fishery to account for 2016 harvest information. As a result of the updated harvest information, we have increased the sector quota transfer by 2,471,354 lb; resulting in a revised recreational harvest limit of 9,653,715 lb, and a revised commercial quota of 8,542,221 lb. The individual state quota allocations have been updated to reflect the sector transfer, and the recreational season and daily possession limits for 2017 remain unchanged. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

## Spiny Dogfish

None at this time

## Surfclam and Ocean Quahog

### **Surfclam and Ocean Quahog ITQ Cost Recovery**

The 2017 fishing year marks the start of the new cost recovery program for the surfclam and ocean quahog individual transferable quota (ITQ) fisheries. At the end of 2017, ITQ shareholders will be responsible for a fee based on how many of their 2017 cage tags are used to land surfclams or ocean quahogs throughout the year. The fee to the ITQ shareholder will be based on the cage tag numbers initial allocated to each shareholder, even if some or all of those tags are leased or otherwise transferred to another individual who uses them to land clams. We will announce the new fees per tag shortly, and will issue bills in March 2018, based on all of the cage tags used in 2017. Details about the new cost recovery program were published in the Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Amendment 17 final rule (81 FR 38969; June 15, 2016). For additional information, please contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341 or [Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov](mailto:Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov).

## Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish

### **Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for Chub Mackerel**

NMFS published a notice of intent in the Federal Register on March 22, 2017, (82 FR 14694) documenting the Mid-Atlantic Council's intent to prepare an environmental impact statement to support integrating Atlantic chub mackerel into the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan. This action would consider implementing annual catch limits, accountability measures, essential fish habitat designations, and a definition of the management unit for this species. The Council may also consider other measures such as permit requirements, annual catch targets, possession limits, minimum fish size restrictions, gear restrictions and reporting requirements. The comment period on the notice of intent closes on May 31, 2017. For additional information, please contact Douglas Christel at (978) 281-9141, or email at [douglas.christel@noaa.gov](mailto:douglas.christel@noaa.gov).

## **Tilefish**

None at this Time

## **Other Actions**

### **Paperwork Reduction Act**

#### **Comment Period for New Unmanaged Forage Fish Omnibus Amendment Data Collections**

NMFS expects to publish a proposed rule for the Unmanaged Forage Fish Omnibus Amendment in the Federal Register soon, requesting comments on new collection of information requirements associated with this action. The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 requires the Department of Commerce to attempt to reduce paperwork and respondent burden on proposed and continuing data collections. Comments are invited on the necessity of the collections, the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden, ways to enhance the collection, and ways to minimize the burden on respondents. Direct all written comments to [OIRA\\_Submission@omb.eop.gov](mailto:OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov), or fax to (202) 395-5806. For additional information, please contact Douglas Christel at (978) 281-9141 or email at [douglas.christel@noaa.gov](mailto:douglas.christel@noaa.gov).

#### **Comment Period for Renewal of Atlantic Sea Scallop Northeast Region Observer Providers**

**Requirements Data Collections:** We published a notice in the Federal Register on April 17, 2017, (82 FR 18119) requesting comments under the Paperwork Reduction Act to renew the collection of information requirements associated with Atlantic Sea Scallop Northeast Region Observer Providers Requirements. Comments are invited on the necessity of the collections, the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden, ways to enhance the collection, and ways to minimize the burden on respondents. The comment period for the information collection is open through June 16, 2017. Direct all written comments to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at [JJessup@doc.gov](mailto:JJessup@doc.gov)). For additional information, please contact Alyson Pitts at (978) 281-9352, or email at [Alyson.Pitts@noaa.gov](mailto:Alyson.Pitts@noaa.gov).

## **Forage Species**

#### **Notice of Availability for the Unmanaged Forage Fish Omnibus Amendment**

NMFS published a notice of availability for the Unmanaged Forage Fish Omnibus Amendment in the Federal Register on March 28, 2017 (82 FR 15311). The Forage Fish Amendment would: Set a 1,700 lb/trip cumulative possession limit for certain previously unmanaged forage species in Mid-Atlantic Federal waters; establish a 2.86 million lb annual landing limit for Atlantic chub mackerel and a 40,000 lb incidental trip limit once the annual landing limit is reached; require a Federal commercial vessel, operator, and dealer permit to fish for, possess, land, and purchase forage species or Atlantic chub mackerel in or from Mid-Atlantic Federal waters; require vessel operators and dealers to report catch and landings of forage species and chub mackerel on logbooks and dealer reports, respectively; allow vessels to transit Mid-Atlantic waters with forage species and chub mackerel caught outside of the Mid-Atlantic Federal waters; and specify certain measures that can be revised through a future framework action. The comment period on the notice of availability closes on May 30, 2017. A proposed rule is expected to publish soon. For additional information, please contact Douglas Christel at (978) 281-9141, or email at [douglas.christel@noaa.gov](mailto:douglas.christel@noaa.gov).

**Proposed Rule for the Unmanaged Forage Fish Omnibus Amendment**

NMFS expects to publish a proposed rule for the Unmanaged Forage Fish Omnibus Amendment in the Federal Register soon. This amendment would implement measures to prevent the expansion of existing commercial fisheries for certain previously unmanaged forage species and Atlantic chub mackerel. As detailed above, proposed measures include possession limits, an annual landing limit for chub mackerel, permit and reporting requirements, a transiting provision, and a list of allowable framework measures. For additional information, please contact Douglas Christel at (978) 281-9141 or email at [douglas.christel@noaa.gov](mailto:douglas.christel@noaa.gov).

**Lobster**

None at this time

**Jonah Crab**

None at this time

**Blueline Tilefish**

None at this time

**Industry Funded Monitoring Omnibus Amendment**

None at this time

**Protected Resources Actions**

None at this time

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

On March 28, 2017, NMFS published a notice and request for comments in the Federal Register (82 FR 15329) for an application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) submitted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). The EFP application under consideration would support the NEFSC Study Fleet Program. It would exempt participating vessels from several fisheries regulations, including: Minimum fish size restrictions; fish possession limit; gear specific fish possession restrictions for the purpose of at-sea sampling; and retaining and landing of prohibited fish species. The comment period for this notice closed on April 12, 2017. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov)

On March 31, 2017, NMFS received a request for a letter of acknowledgement (LOA) from the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) in support of a tagging study of adult halibut. The participating commercial fishing vessels would conduct halibut for tagging using longline gear in the Gulf of Maine in June and July, 2017. For additional information, please contact Kyle



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Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

On April 14, 2017, NMFS published a notice and request for comments in the Federal Register (82 FR 17972) for an application for an EFP submitted by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The EFP would be a renewal of last year's project to allow TNC and its partners to further develop electronic monitoring (EM) for the groundfish fishery. The 2017 EFP would allow vessels an exemption from their sector's monitoring plan to use EM in lieu of an at-sea monitor (ASM) when selected for ASM coverage. The comment period for this notice closes on May 1, 2017. For additional information, please contact Brett Alger at (978) 675-2153 or email at [Brett.Alger@noaa.gov](mailto:Brett.Alger@noaa.gov)

On April 3, 2017, NMFS received an EFP request from the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance and several partners to further develop EM. The request proposes access to groundfish closed areas and exemptions from certain gear requirements, and would require vessels to utilize EM on all sector trips (i.e., 100-percent monitoring). For additional information, please contact Brett Alger at (978) 675-2153 or email at [Brett.Alger@noaa.gov](mailto:Brett.Alger@noaa.gov).

On February 27, 2017, NMFS received an EFP request from the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) to explore the maximized retention model for EM. Since that time, they have added additional participation and exemptions to their request. On April 17, 2017, EDF resubmitted their request that proposes access to groundfish closed areas, exemptions from certain gear requirements, and exemptions from minimum fish sizes, and would require vessels to utilize EM on all sector trips (i.e., 100-percent monitoring). For additional information, please contact Brett Alger at (978) 675-2153 or email at [Brett.Alger@noaa.gov](mailto:Brett.Alger@noaa.gov).

On March 30, 2017, NMFS received a request for a Scientific Research Permit (SRP) from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) in support of NOAA's Gulf of Maine Bottom Longline Survey. The chartered commercial fishing vessels would conduct survey work using longline gear in the Gulf of Maine in Spring and Fall of 2017. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

On March 20, 2017, NMFS received an EFP request from commercial fisherman, Jim Ford. The request proposes to test the viability of using hook gear to selectively target pollock and haddock, while avoiding catch of cod. Mr. Ford proposes to conduct his research in the Western Gulf of Maine and Cashes Ledge Closure Areas (excluding the Cashes Ledge Habitat Closure Area), as it is believed that these areas contain high levels of haddock and pollock. If issued, Mr. Ford would carry 100 percent observer coverage on EFP trips to collect data on catch composition; Mr. Ford would also collect dealer data to explore market viability for his product. The proposal requests a total of 40 trips, with an average duration of 24 hours or less. 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 March 20, 2017, NMFS received an EFP request from commercial fisherman, Tim Rider. The request proposes to test the viability of using hook gear to selectively target pollock and haddock, while avoiding catch of cod. Additionally, the request proposes to examine differences in catch composition inside and outside closed areas. Mr. Rider proposes to conduct his research in the Western Gulf of Maine and Cashes Ledge Closure Areas (excluding the Cashes Ledge Habitat Closure Area). If issued, Mr. Rider would carry 100 percent observer coverage on EFP trips to collect data on catch composition; Mr. Rider would also sell his catch through his business, New England Fishmongers, and collect market data to assess the viability of distributing to New Hampshire-based restaurants. The proposal requests a total of 60 trips, with an average duration of 24 hours or less. For additional information, please contact Claire Fitz-Gerald at (978) 281-

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9255 or email at [claire.fitz-gerald@noaa.gov](mailto:claire.fitz-gerald@noaa.gov).

On March 24, 2017, NMFS received an EFP request from commercial fisherman, Richard Burgess. The request proposes to test the viability of using hook gear to selectively target pollock and haddock, while avoiding catch of cod. Additionally, the request proposes to use specialized handling protocols in an effort to access sashimi markets. Mr. Burgess proposes to conduct his research in the Western Gulf of Maine Closure Area, as it is believed that this area contains high levels of haddock and pollock. If issued, Mr. Burgess would carry 100 percent observer coverage on EFP trips to collect data on catch composition; Mr. Burgess would also collect dealer data to evaluate the viability of the sashimi market against traditional markets. The proposal requests 15 trips per month from June through December, with an average duration of 24 hours or less. 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 November 29, 2016, NMFS received a request for an EFP from William G. Brown in support of a study investigating the economic viability of electronic jigging machines to target pollock. The participating commercial fishing vessel would conduct sampling using electronic jigging machines in the Western Gulf of Maine Closure Area between June and August of 2017. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov)

On March 29, 2017, NMFS received a request from Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) to conduct a 2-year scientific study with experimental gear and lobster possession and landing that would otherwise be restricted under the Federal lobster regulations. The purpose of the survey is to provide fishery-independent data on lobster growth and abundance within the Massachusetts state waters of stat. area 514, and state and Federal waters of stat. areas 537 and 538. Funding is provided by MA DMF through their commercial and recreational lobster license fees. This survey has been conducted since 2006 in MA state waters, and an EFP has been issued for the survey since 2014. The EFP would allow five federally permitted lobster vessels to set, haul, and retain on-board lobster traps without escape vents during setting and sampling activity. The vessels would also be exempt from trap limits, trap tag requirements, size requirements, and V-notch and berried female possession requirements for research purposes only. Sampling will occur from June through October of 2017 and 2018. The Federal Register notice published on April 17, 2017, (82 FR 18117) and the public comment period ends on May 2, 2017. For additional information, please contact Carrie Wein at (978) 978-281-9225 or email at [Carrie.Wein@noaa.gov](mailto:Carrie.Wein@noaa.gov).

On March 28, 2017, we received a request from University of New England to grant an extension to the existing EFP for one year beyond the originally proposed project period after receiving a no cost extension of the grant funding this study. The original EFP was issued on April 29, 2016. This study will assess the injuries of cod captured in lobster traps while fishing for lobster, and was designed to obtain information for fisheries managers to more accurately predict cod discard mortality in the GOM lobster fishery. The Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program funds this project. For additional information, please contact Carrie Wein at (978) 978-281-9225 or email at [Carrie.Wein@noaa.gov](mailto:Carrie.Wein@noaa.gov).

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GMRI submitted an initial application for an EFP on April 10, 2017, in support of research associated with a 2016 Saltonstall-Kennedy Program (SK) Project titled “Complementary testing of off-bottom trawls to target Georges Bank haddock”. The overall goal of this project is to test the efficacy of an off-bottom trawl to access healthy groundfish stocks using a trawl that is highly-selective, fuel-efficient, and reduces environmental impacts. One vessel, the F/V *Teresa Marie IV*, would test the off-bottom trawl with two different codends; a 4.5-inch diamond mesh codend used when targeting redfish, and a 5.1-inch square mesh codend when targeting haddock. The proposed off-bottom trawl would require an exemption from the Northeast Multispecies minimum mesh size requirements at 50 CFR 648.80(a)(3)(ii). For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978)-281-9116 or email at [emily.keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:emily.keiley@noaa.gov).

Northeastern University submitted a complete application for an LOA on April 3, 2017. The proposed study will examine fine-scale population structure of Gulf of Maine cod by identifying genetic loci that affect growth and migratory behavior. The study will also test if spatial management is inadvertently selecting for resident genotypes. To achieve the goals of this study 220 cod, ranging from 20 to 90 cm in length, will be collected across five geographic areas in collaboration with commercial fisherman. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978)-281-9116 or email at [emily.keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:emily.keiley@noaa.gov).

On March 29, 2017, NMFS received a complete application from Coonamessett Farm Foundation for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) for a project titled: “Optimizing the Georges Bank Scallop Fishery by Maximizing Meat Yield and Minimizing Bycatch” to be considered for the 2017 Scallop Research Set-Aside program. The application being considered would conduct a seasonal survey using scallop dredges to collect data on the distribution of bycatch species and examine scallop meat quality; in addition to conducting biological sampling of American lobsters. The EFP would exempt participating vessels from several fisheries regulations, including: Atlantic sea scallop days-at-sea, crew size, observer program requirements, gear restrictions, possession and size limits, and access to restricted areas on Georges Bank. For additional information, please contact Alyson Pitts at (978) 281-9352 or email at [Alyson.Pitts@noaa.gov](mailto:Alyson.Pitts@noaa.gov).

On April 3, 2017, NMFS received a complete application from Coonamessett Farm Foundation for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) for a project titled: “Development of an Extended Link Apron: A Broad Range Tool for Bycatch Reduction” to be considered for the 2017 Scallop Research Set-Aside program. The application being considered would determine the efficacy of an extended link apron at reducing the capture of yellowtail and windowpane flounder using a commercial scallop dredge. The EFP would exempt participating vessels from several fisheries regulations, including: Atlantic sea scallop days-at-sea, crew size, observer program requirements, possession and size limits, and access to restricted areas on Georges Bank and southern New England. For additional information, please contact Alyson Pitts at (978) 281-9352 or email at [Alyson.Pitts@noaa.gov](mailto:Alyson.Pitts@noaa.gov).

On February 6, 2017, the University of Rhode Island submitted a complete EFP application for a project to conduct gear research to reduce flatfish bycatch in the scallop dredge. The project has been funded through a grant as part of the 2016 Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program. The project would need exemptions from the scallop fishery observer program requirements, along with minimum fish sizes and possession limits for sampling purposes only. All research would be conducted on limited access general category individual fishing quota (IFQ) vessels under normal commercial fishing conditions. All catch within regulatory limits will be kept, sold, and counted towards the vessel’s yearly IFQ allocation. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at [Shannah.jaburek@noaa.gov](mailto:Shannah.jaburek@noaa.gov).

## Research Permits and Acknowledgments - Application Review Completed

On February 23, 2017, NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA) to the Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program to conduct an evaluation of new conservation gear technology designed to reduce black sea bass bycatch in the small-mesh longfin squid fishery. Seven research days are planned from May through September, and the participating vessel will conduct six to eight hour-long tows per day out of Point Judith, RI, comparing both experimental and control (standard squid fishery) nets. Longfin squid and black sea bass catch from this study may be retained for sale. All other catch will be discarded as soon as possible. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

On March 2, 2017, NMFS issued a revision to the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) "American Lobster Ventless Trap Study" Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) issued on August 24, 2015, to allow three additional vessels to join the survey fleet full time, and nine additional ventless traps to be deployed in Area 3 for the remainder of this project. The study period, sampling protocol, requested Federal exemptions, and overall project remain the same. Increased survey coverage in Area 3 is in response to reports of recruitment failure in the Southern New England lobster stock, and the need for more information on population abundance in offshore regions (such as Area 3). For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

On March 27, 2017, NMFS issued an LOA to Rutgers University to conduct a trap survey of black sea bass, tautog, and lobster on two artificial reefs (Sea Girt and Little Egg Inlet) off the coast of New Jersey. For three phases from April through November, 22 ventless fish traps will be deployed at each site for 4-5 weeks per phase; and hauled and sampled every 5-9 days during research phases. Over the course of the year's research, a random sample of 150 black sea bass, 150 tautog, and 100 lobsters will be retained for further sampling, and everything else will be promptly returned to the sea. No fish from this project will be landed for sale. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

An EFP extension was issued on April 7, 2017, to the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology (SMASST) extending their 2016 Monkfish Research Set-Aside Program until April 30, 2018. This project will allow vessels to conduct compensation fishing to support funding for monkfish research. The EFP exempts vessels from monkfish DAS possession limits in the Northern and Southern Monkfish Fishery Management Areas. Fishing activity will otherwise be conducted under normal monkfish commercial fishing practices. Extending the EFP will allow flexibility for the industry and will assist in harvesting the entire set-aside awarded. Vessels that are collectively operating under this EFP could use up to 250 monkfish RSA DAS or catch 888,000 lb of whole monkfish, whichever occurs first. For additional information, contact Reid Lichwell at (978)-281-9112, or e-mail at [Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov](mailto:Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov).

On March 28, 2017, NMFS received a request for an LOA from Normandeau Associates Inc. (NAI) in support of an ongoing winter flounder assessment survey in Western Cape Cod Bay. The participating commercial fishing vessel would conduct sampling using trawl gear in areas off Plymouth Bay, Massachusetts in April and May of 2017. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov)

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On January 15, 2017, NMFS received a request for an LOA from UMass Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) in support of conservation engineering project testing the use of a “Sort-X grid” to reduce catch of juvenile groundfish in the Georges Bank haddock fishery. The participating commercial fishing vessel would conduct sampling using modified trawl gear on Georges Bank on two trips between March and October of 2017. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

An EFP extension was issued on April 7, 2017, to Cornell University extending their 2016 Monkfish Research Set-Aside Program until April 30, 2018. This project will allow vessels to conduct compensation fishing to support funding for monkfish research. The EFP exempts vessels from monkfish DAS possession limits in the Northern and Southern Monkfish Fishery Management Areas. Fishing activity will otherwise be conducted under normal monkfish commercial fishing practices. Extending the EFP will allow flexibility for the industry and will assist in harvesting the entire set-aside awarded. Vessels that are collectively operating under this EFP could use up to 250 monkfish RSA DAS or catch 888,000 lb of whole monkfish, whichever occurs first. For additional information, contact Reid Lichwell at (978)-281-9112, or e-mail at [Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov](mailto:Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov).

On March 30, 2017, NMFS issued an LOA to the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) to conduct an industry-based survey (IBS) on Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod. This LOA authorizes MA DMF to contract one fishing vessel to conduct monthly cruises from April through July, and from October through January. Each cruise will be approximately 10 days, with an average of 5 30-minute tows each day. All cruises will be accompanied by at least one chief scientist and trained contracted sampler, or a MA DMF staff member. Prohibited species will be returned to the water as quickly as possible. Commercially valuable species will be sampled and sold; proceeds from the sale will be used to support this research. 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).