



New England Fishery Management Council

News Brief

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 22, 2012

Patricia M. Fiorelli
978.465.0492, ext 106

What Happened at the Council Meeting This Week?

Major Actions Taken by the New England Fishery Management Council

June 19-21, 2012, Portland, Maine

Atlantic Herring The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) took several actions this week that will significantly affect two major fisheries operating out of ports in the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions. Atlantic herring fishermen saw new rules approved that would institute a comprehensive monitoring program including 100 percent observer coverage on the full-time fleet of 46 vessels. The Council excluded smaller vessels that catch only small amounts of herring, choosing instead to focus on those boats that land about 97 percent of the herring quota.

Also supported in the herring package were measures to encourage avoidance of depleted river herring species that can swim with Atlantic herring and are incidentally taken as bycatch. The two-phase avoidance approach is based on a pilot program developed in cooperation with the fishing industry, represented by the Sustainable Fisheries Coalition, working in partnership with Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries and UMASS Dartmouth School of Marine Science and Technology. Bycatch limits or caps were approved for consideration in a subsequent herring action.

Recent statistics indicate that about 143,666,000 pounds of Atlantic herring were sold by federally permitted dealers generating about \$17.9 million for the boats. This represents a 22 percent decrease in revenues from the 2009 fishing year, primarily because the Council approved fishery specifications for 2010-2012 which lowered the herring catch limits for 2010-2012 to ensure sustainability.

The U.S. Atlantic herring fishery occurs over the Mid-Atlantic shelf region from Cape Hatteras to Maine, including an active fishery in the inshore Gulf of Maine and seasonally on Georges Bank. The Atlantic herring resource is healthy and is classified as "not overfished." If the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the agency which acts on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce and is responsible for final approval of federal fishery rules, approves the Council's actions, most of the new measures will be in place by early 2013.

Groundfish and Sea Scallops The Council moved ahead to propose proactive measures yesterday to address the very low quota of Georges Bank yellowtail flounder that will be available to groundfish fishermen in 2012. The allowable catch has and will continue to severely constrain New England boats that harvest cod, haddock, flounders and other bottom-dwelling species.

A clear majority of the 18-member Council voted to request that NMFS take action to re-apportion the amount of Georges Bank yellowtail allocated to the scallop fishery by reducing it to 156.9 metric tons or to about 346,185 pounds while increasing the groundfish fisheries' allocation to 368.3 metric tons or 811,440 pounds. In addition, the Council asked the agency to approve a one-time measure through an emergency action that would allow the scallop fishery to continue its operations next year without any additional restrictions unless it exceeded its original yellowtail allocation of 307.5 metric tons (approximately 674,730 pounds).

#