



New England Fishery Management Council

Groundfish Facts

5/26/2010

The following information was drawn from a report titled *Assessment of 19 Northeast Groundfish Stocks through 2007*. Published in 2008, the report updated the available information on groundfish stocks managed under the New England Fishery Management Council's Northeast Multispecies or Groundfish Plan and was used to develop Amendment 16. The amendment was implemented on May 1, 2010 and has allowed the formation of 17 new groundfish "sectors" or harvesting cooperatives in the Northeast.

Also known as the *Report of the Groundfish Assessment Review Meetings*, or GARM III, the results were compiled by state, federal and independent scientists. A brief summary of its contents may promote a better understanding of why fishermen have observed increases in fish stocks, while at the same time rules that govern fishing activities remain restrictive for some species.

Recent Information

- ✓ Redfish, American plaice, and both Georges Bank haddock and Gulf of Maine haddock are not overfished, nor is overfishing occurring.
- ✓ The Gulf of Maine cod spawning stock biomass is at least as high, or higher, than it has been in 30 years; and while overfishing is still occurring, this stock is no longer overfished.
- ✓ Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine yellowtail flounder has shown some rebounding in the last several years. The Georges Bank yellowtail stock is at the highest level seen in 30 years. (Increase not shown on chart.)
- ✓ The GARM III report confirmed that Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic winter flounder are at very low biomass levels.
- ✓ The condition of the Gulf of Maine winter flounder stock is uncertain; all of the winter flounder stocks will be assessed in 2011.
- ✓ While southern windowpane flounder has experienced increases, the status of northern windowpane and witch flounder, as well as ocean pout, has deteriorated.
- ✓ Pollock will be the subject of a new stock assessment in June 2010 .

The Tally

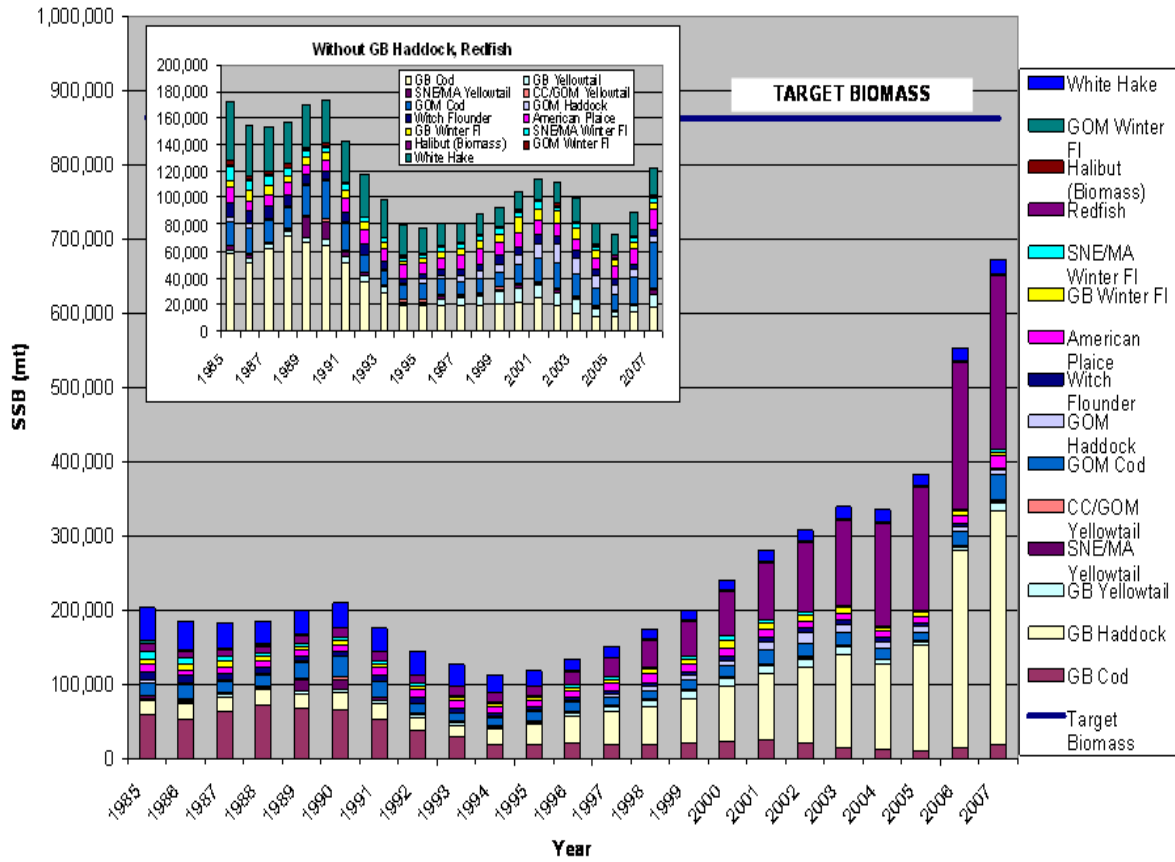
- Four stocks were classified as not overfished and not experiencing overfishing.
- Thirteen stocks were overfished and six were not.
- Eleven groundfish stocks were both overfished and experiencing overfishing.

Definitions

- An **overfished stock or stock complex** is one whose size is sufficiently small that a change in management rules is required in order to achieve an appropriate level and rate of rebuilding. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act currently mandates that overfished stocks be rebuilt as soon as possible and within a timeframe not longer than 10 years.
- **Overfishing** relates to the rate at which a stock of fish is harvested and occurs when that rate exceeds an acceptable level, eventually resulting in the stock becoming overfished.

Despite some positive outcomes since the 2004 implementation of Amendment 13 to the Groundfish Plan, Council members have remained concerned about the condition of many of the stocks described above. They adopted sector management as an alternative to the much derided days-at-sea program, to provide fishermen with greater operating flexibility as stocks rebuild and to promote greater self-regulation.

Spawning Stock Biomass of 15 Groundfish Stocks, 1985-2007



2007 Groundfish Stock Status

