



New England Fishery Management Council

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E.F. "Terry" Stockwell III, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

June 30, 2015

Mr. John Bullard
Regional Administrator
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

and

Dr. William Karp, Science and Research Director
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

Dear John and Bill:

At its June meeting, the Council passed several motions regarding at-sea monitoring in the groundfish fishery.

1. Evaluation of the ASM Program:

The Council seeks additional information from NMFS to assist in evaluating the performance of the ASM program in groundfish fishery management.

The Council passed the following motion:

That the Council requests that NMFS evaluate the ASM program for its effectiveness in support of stock assessments, its total costs to the groundfish fishery (e.g., returns to owner vs. ASM costs), data precision and accuracy, and whether it is actually ensuring catch accountability.

The motion carried 13/2/2/0.

The Council requests this information as soon as possible so that it can be considered in the context of the ASM framework action discussion.

2. Request for administrative action to adjust ASM in FY2015:

The Council also feels strongly that the industry needs immediate relief to remain economically viable. At the same meeting, the Council requested emergency action to suspend the ASM program (see letter June 25, 2015). However if in the event that that request is denied by NMFS, the Council passed a series of motions to provide suggestions to NMFS on how NMFS could use

its administrative authority in-season in FY 2015 to potentially alleviate the financial burden on the industry:

The Council requests that NMFS adjust the 2015 at-sea monitoring program (ASM) for multispecies sectors through administrative action. The intent of this request is to improve the efficiency of the program through application of logical administrative improvements that will reduce costs of the ASM program without compromising compliance with the Amendment 16 and Framework 48 CV standards/requirements. These modifications are requested for the current fishing year (FY 2015), which is based on existing analysis using FY 2013 data, as the council continues development of the ASM framework.

Based upon Table 1 (realized stock CVS) on page 15 of the "Summary of analyses conducted to determine at sea monitoring requirements for multispecies sectors FY 2015":

- 1. Recalculate the resulting CV for Southern New England (SNE) yellowtail flounder (ranked highest) with coverage for the entire monitoring program being set at the Georges bank yellowtail flounder rate (ranked second highest).*
- 2. Provide finer scale information on SNE yellowtail flounder strata contributing to the higher coverage requirement for that stock for the purpose of informing modifications to the program to meet the CV30 standard for that stock and specify the SNE yet coverages necessary to meet the CV standard in FY 2015.*
- 3. Provide a report as early as possible to the sectors so that they can begin to plan cost sharing methods to achieve equitable distribution of costs to offset differential coverage on SNE yellowtail flounder.*

The motion carried 10/2/3/0.

And:

To request that NMFS consider differentiating the strata for extra-large mesh trips through administrative action in FY 2015.

The motion carried 14/0/1/0.

The Council feels that effectively addressing ASM issues requires a multifaceted approach – as indicated through these motions. Thank you for considering these requests from the Council. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director