



New England Fishery Management Council

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John Pappalardo, *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 18, 2007
TO: Multispecies (Groundfish) Committee
FROM: Groundfish Plan Development Team
SUBJECT: SAP/CAT B Program Gear Standards

1. At present, vessels must use a haddock separator trawl when participating in the Eastern US/CA Haddock SAP. Trawl vessels using the Category B (regular) DAS program must also use this gear. Before NMFS can approve additional gear for either program, the Council must recommend a gear standard. Last August the Committee considered, but did not approve, two standards suggested by the PDT. The PDT is forwarding two alternatives for Committee consideration (see attached). If one of these standards can be approved by the Committee at its May meeting, the Council could consider and approve the standard in June. This may make it possible for NMFS to approve additional gear before the end of FY 2007.

2. The PDT recommends Alternative 1. When considering this proposal, the Committee should remember that both the SAP and the Cat B (regular) programs limit catches of stocks of concern with hard TACs. The gear standard helps maximize economic returns by reducing the incidental catch of stocks with small TACs. The standard also helps minimize discards of species that cannot be retained. The current gear performance standards (limiting landings of certain species) will also apply to any new gear that is approved.

3. In the future, the Committee should consider adopting a measure which allows NMFS to rescind approval of a gear if its performance in the commercial fishery is not consistent with experimental results. The only way to do this at present is through a management action, which means an ineffective gear could be used for several years after approval before authorization can be removed.

4. Tom Nies, Doug Christel, Paul Parker, Steve Correia, and Paul Nitschke participated in a conference call on April 18, 2007. Kohl Kanwit, Eric Thunberg, Dan Holland, and Tom Warren commented via email.

Proposed SAP/Cat B Gear Standards

Alternative 1 (PDT Recommended Alternative):

A. The Regional Administrator can authorize additional gear for use in the Eastern U.S./Canada Area Haddock SAP, or additional trawl gear for use in the Category B (regular) DAS Program, consistent with the Administrative Procedures Act. The new gear must demonstrate a statistically significant reduction in each regulated groundfish stock of concern of at least sixty-five percent (by weight, on a trip-by-trip basis), or the catch of each regulated groundfish stock of concern in the new gear must be less than five percent of the total catch of regulated groundfish (by weight, on a trip-by-trip basis). Comparisons will be made to an appropriately selected control gear.

B. These standards must be met in a completed experiment that has been reviewed according to the standards established by the Council's Research Policy before the gear can be considered and approved by the Regional Administrator.

C. Requests for the approval of additional gear may be made by either the New England Fishery Management Council or its Committee responsible for developing the multispecies FMP.

Alternative 2:

A. The Regional Administrator can authorize additional gear for use in the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock SAP, consistent with the Administrative Procedures Act. Such gear must reduce the catch of stocks of concern to an equivalent or greater degree than the haddock separator trawl experiments referenced in Framework Adjustment 42. This must be demonstrated in a completed experiment that has been reviewed according to the standards established by the Council's Research Policy before the gear can be considered and approved by the Regional Administrator.

B. Requests for the approval of additional gear may be made by either the New England Fishery Management Council or its Committee responsible for developing the multispecies FMP.