

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Groundfish Fishery

This document provides general descriptive information about the northeast multispecies (groundfish) fishery. Information is summarized based on data from either the National Marine Fisheries Service “dealer weighout database” (landings information provided by federally-permitted seafood dealers) or fishing vessel trip reports/logbooks (information on catch and effort provided by fishermen) and is referenced accordingly.

When reviewing the information, please note:

- **Fishing Year (FY) = May 1 – April 30.** For example, FY2000 occurred from May 1, 2000 – April 30, 2001.
- **Calendar Year (CY) = January 1 – December 31.** For example, CY2000 occurred from January 1, 2000 – December 31, 2000.

### *Abbreviations:*

- **CC = Cape Cod**
- **DAS = Days-at-Sea**
- **FMP = Fishery Management Plan**
- **GB = Georges Bank**
- **GOM = Gulf of Maine**
- **MA = Mid-Atlantic**
- **MRFSS = Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey**
- **NEFMC = New England Fishery Management Council**
- **NMFS = National Marine Fisheries Service**
- **SNE = Southern New England**
- **VTR = Vessel Trip Report**
- **YT = Yellowtail**

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## HOW MANY SPECIES/STOCKS ARE MANAGED UNDER THE MULTISPECIES (GROUND FISH) FMP?

- In total, the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan manages **15 species and 24 stocks** of finfish. These species are generally separated into “large-mesh species” and “small-mesh species.”

### **“Large-Mesh Species” = 12 Species, 19 Stocks**

<b>Atlantic Cod:</b>	two stocks; GOM cod and GB cod
<b>Haddock:</b>	two stocks; GOM haddock and GB haddock
<b>Yellowtail Flounder:</b>	three stocks; GB YT, CC YT, and SNE YT
<b>Winter Flounder:</b>	three stocks; GOM winter, GB winter, and SNE/MA winter
<b>Windowpane Flounder:</b>	two stocks; GOM/GB windowpane and SNE/MA windowpane
<b>Witch Flounder:</b>	one stock; distributed primarily in the GOM and on GB
<b>American Plaice:</b>	one stock; distributed primarily in the GOM
<b>Redfish:</b>	one stock; distributed primarily in the GOM and southern GB
<b>Pollock:</b>	one stock; distributed in the GOM, GB, and SNE
<b>White Hake:</b>	one stock; distributed primarily in the GOM and southern GB
<b>Atlantic Halibut:</b>	one stock; distributed primarily in the GOM and on GB
<b>Ocean Pout:</b>	one stock; distributed throughout region

### **“Small-Mesh Species” = 3 Species, 5 Stocks**

<b>Silver Hake (Whiting):</b>	two stocks; GOM/northern GB whiting, and southern GB/SNE whiting
<b>Red Hake:</b>	two stocks; GOM/northern GB red hake, and southern GB/SNE red hake
<b>Offshore Hake:</b>	one stock; distributed primarily offshore in SNE and MA

## HOW MUCH FISH IS LANDED IN THE GROUND FISH FISHERY?

- In 2000, total landings in the groundfish fishery (large mesh and small mesh species combined) were about **120,300,000 pounds**. This is based on landings by groundfish permit holders as reported in NMFS' dealer weighout database.

**Large Mesh Species:** FY2000 Landings were 90,036,000 pounds  
**Small Mesh Species:** CY2000 Landings were 30,327,450 pounds

See Table 1 on page 2 of this document for more information about large-mesh groundfish landings.

## WHAT IS THE CURRENT VALUE OF THE GROUND FISH FISHERY?

- In 2000, the total value of the groundfish fishery (large mesh and small mesh species combined) was about **\$105,000,000**. This is based on revenues for fish sold to dealers and reported in NMFS' dealer weighout database.

**Large Mesh Species:** FY2000 Revenues were \$93,428,000 (adjusted for inflation)  
**Small Mesh Species:** CY2000 Revenues were \$12,269,300

See Table 1 below for more information about large-mesh groundfish revenues.

**Table 1 Summary of Large-Mesh Groundfish Landings and Revenues, FY1994-FY2000**

FISHING YEAR	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>Large Mesh Landings (Thousands of Pounds)</b>	75,383	67,846	72,514	72,935	71,793	71,100	90,036
<b>Large Mesh Revenues (Thousands of 1999 Dollars)</b>	\$93,813	\$85,127	\$82,020	\$82,628	\$87,594	\$86,719	\$93,428

*\*Data are reported from the NMFS dealer weighout database for multispecies permit holders. Revenues have been adjusted to 1999 dollars.*

## WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A COMPLETELY REBUILT GROUND FISH FISHERY?

Recently, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center reviewed and revised the reference points for the large-mesh groundfish species and recalculated long-term MSY estimates at these new reference points.

- Based on the long-term MSY estimates provided by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, a completely rebuilt groundfish complex (large-mesh species only) could support yields of about 425,271,700 pounds (192,900 metric tons). Assuming, on average, about \$1 per pound of groundfish landings, the value of a completely rebuilt large-mesh groundfish fishery is estimated to be **around \$425,000,000**.

## HOW MANY VESSELS HAVE GROUND FISH PERMITS?

- In FY2000, there were a total of **3,626 multispecies permits** issued. This includes active and inactive permits, as well as limited access and open access permits. Of the 3,626 groundfish permits issued in FY2000, 1,655 were limited access, and 1,971 were open access.

Open access permits include handgear, party/charter, scallop multispecies 300-pound possession limit, and non-regulated multispecies (small mesh multispecies and halibut) permits. Most full-time groundfish vessels hold limited access permits.

### **Below is a breakdown of the 3,626 multispecies permits issued in FY2000:**

- 134 Individual DAS (allocated an individual baseline of DAS in Amendment 5)
- 1,245 Fleet DAS (allocated a baseline of 166 DAS in Amendment 5, then reduced to 88)
- 14 Small Vessel Exemption (less than 30 feet)
- 186 Hook Gear Only
- 47 Combination Vessel (combination scallops and groundfish)
- 29 Large Mesh Individual and Fleet DAS (using mesh at least 2-inches bigger than minimum)
- 1,971 open access permits (hook, party/charter, non-regulated multispecies)

## **HOW MANY GROUNDFISH VESSELS ARE ACTIVE/LATENT?**

**Active vessels** are defined as those that landed any amount of fish in a given year, not just groundfish.

- In FY2000, there were a total of **1,888 active groundfish vessels**. This includes limited access and open access vessels. Of the 1,888 active groundfish vessels in FY2000, 1,194 held limited access permits, and 694 held open access permits.

**Below is a breakdown of the 1,888 active multispecies vessels in FY2000:**

- 130 Individual DAS
- 892 Fleet DAS
- 7 Small Vessel Exemption
- 95 Hook Gear Only
- 44 Combination Vessel
- 26 Large Mesh Individual and Fleet DAS
- 694 open access permits (hook, party/charter, non-regulated multispecies)

## **WHAT SIZE ARE MOST GROUNDFISH VESSELS?**

Based on information from FY2000:

- About 21% of the groundfish vessels are less than 30 feet in length
- About 52% of the groundfish vessels are 30-49 feet in length
- About 17% of the groundfish vessels are 50-74 feet in length
- About 10% of the groundfish vessels are 75 feet or greater in length

## WHAT KIND OF FISHING GEAR DO MOST GROUND FISH VESSELS USE?

The four primary gear types used to catch groundfish are the otter trawl, sink gillnet, hook and line, and bottom longline.

In terms of numbers of vessels, based on information from FY2000:

- About 971 groundfish vessels reported using **otter trawls** as their principal gear.
- About 379 groundfish vessels reported using **sink gillnets** as their principal gear.
- About 451 groundfish vessels reported using **hook and line** as their principal gear.
- About 150 groundfish vessels reported using **bottom longline** as their principal gear.
- About 282 groundfish vessels reported using **scallop dredges** as their principal gear.
- About 221 groundfish vessels reported using **lobster traps** as their principal gear.
- About 33 groundfish vessels reported using **midwater trawls** as their principal gear.
- All other groundfish vessels reported using **other gears** as their principal gear.

In terms of groundfish landings, based on information from FY2000:

- **Otter trawl vessels** landed about 73,166,000 pounds of groundfish (**81%** of total groundfish landings).
- **Gillnet vessels** landed about 12,653,000 pounds of groundfish (**14%** of total groundfish landings).
- **Hook and line vessels** landed about 1,418,000 pounds of groundfish (**1.6%** of total groundfish landings).
- **Bottom longline vessels** landed about 2,182,000 pounds of groundfish (**2.4%** of total groundfish landings).

## WHAT PORTS ARE CURRENTLY MOST ACTIVE IN THE GROUND FISH FISHERY?

- In FY2000, Portland ME, Gloucester MA, New Bedford MA, and Chatham/Harwichport MA were the most active ports of landing for groundfish. New Bedford landed the most groundfish in FY2000.

Table 2 below summarizes groundfish landings for the most active groundfish ports from the dealer weighout database during the 2000 fishing year.

**Table 2 Large-Mesh Groundfish Landings for Most Active Ports of Landing in FY2000**

PORT OF LANDING	Groundfish Landings (Thousands of Pounds)	Percent of Total Groundfish Landings for FY2000
<b>New Bedford/Fairhaven, MA</b>	31,010.7	34.4%
<b>Portland, ME</b>	15,588.9	17.3%
<b>Gloucester, MA</b>	14,302.4	15.9%
<b>Chatham/Harwichport, MA</b>	6,380.5	7.1%
<b>Boston, MA</b>	3,728.8	4.1%
<b>Point Judith, RI</b>	3,130	3.5%
<b>Portsmouth, NH</b>	2,492.1	2.8%
<b>Eastern Long Island, NY</b>	1,620.5	1.8%
<b>Provincetown, MA</b>	1,286.1	1.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79,540</b>	<b>88.3%</b>

*Source: NMFS Dealer Weighout Database*

## HOW MUCH AREA IS COVERED BY THE CURRENT GROUND FISH CLOSURES?

- The current year-round area closures in the Gulf of Maine and on Georges Bank cover about 8,282 square miles.
- Seasonal closures are primarily based on 30-minute squares (for example, Block 124 represents one 30-minute square). Although each 30-minute square varies somewhat in terms of area, a good general approximation of the area covered by each square is 850 square miles.

**Below is a breakdown of the area covered by the five current year-round closures:**

▪ Closed Area I:	1,520 sq. miles
▪ Closed Area II:	2,650 sq. miles
▪ Nantucket Lightship Closed Area:	2,412 sq. miles
▪ Western GOM Closed Area:	1,170 sq. miles
▪ Cashes Ledge Closed Area:	530 sq. miles

**Below is a breakdown of the additional area covered by the seasonal closures on a monthly basis. This includes both GOM and GB seasonal closures as well as additional 2003 closures implemented by Kessler's final decision.**

<b>January:</b>	No seasonal closures.
<b>February:</b>	No seasonal closures.
<b>March:</b>	3 blocks closed – 2,550 sq. miles
<b>April:</b>	10 blocks closed – 8,500 sq. miles
<b>May:</b>	25 blocks closed – 21,250 sq. miles
<b>June:</b>	10 blocks closed – 8,500 sq. miles
<b>July:</b>	No seasonal closures.
<b>August:</b>	No seasonal closures.
<b>September:</b>	No seasonal closures.
<b>October:</b>	2 blocks closed – 1,700 sq. miles
<b>November:</b>	2 blocks closed – 1,700 sq. miles
<b>December:</b>	No seasonal closures.

## WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF RECREATIONAL GROUND FISH ACTIVITY?

The recreational multispecies fishery focuses primarily on cod, haddock, pollock, and, to a lesser extent, winter flounder.

The most popular mode of recreational fishing for groundfish is on party/charter vessels, followed by private boat fishing and shore fishing. In FY2000, a total of **610** multispecies party/charter permits were issued. Of these 610 vessels, 562 reported taking passengers for hire on at least one trip in FY2000.

In general, the recreational groundfish fishery represents around 10-12% of the total catch of groundfish. Recreational groundfish catch declined from about 8 million fish in 1991 to 2.8 million fish in 1999, as reported by the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). Most of the recreational groundfish catch is of Atlantic cod. After converting the number of fish to pounds of fish, it appears that the recreational harvest of Atlantic cod represents about 9% of the total cod harvest (see Table 3 below).

**Table 3 Atlantic Cod Commercial Landings and Recreational Harvest, 1990-1997**

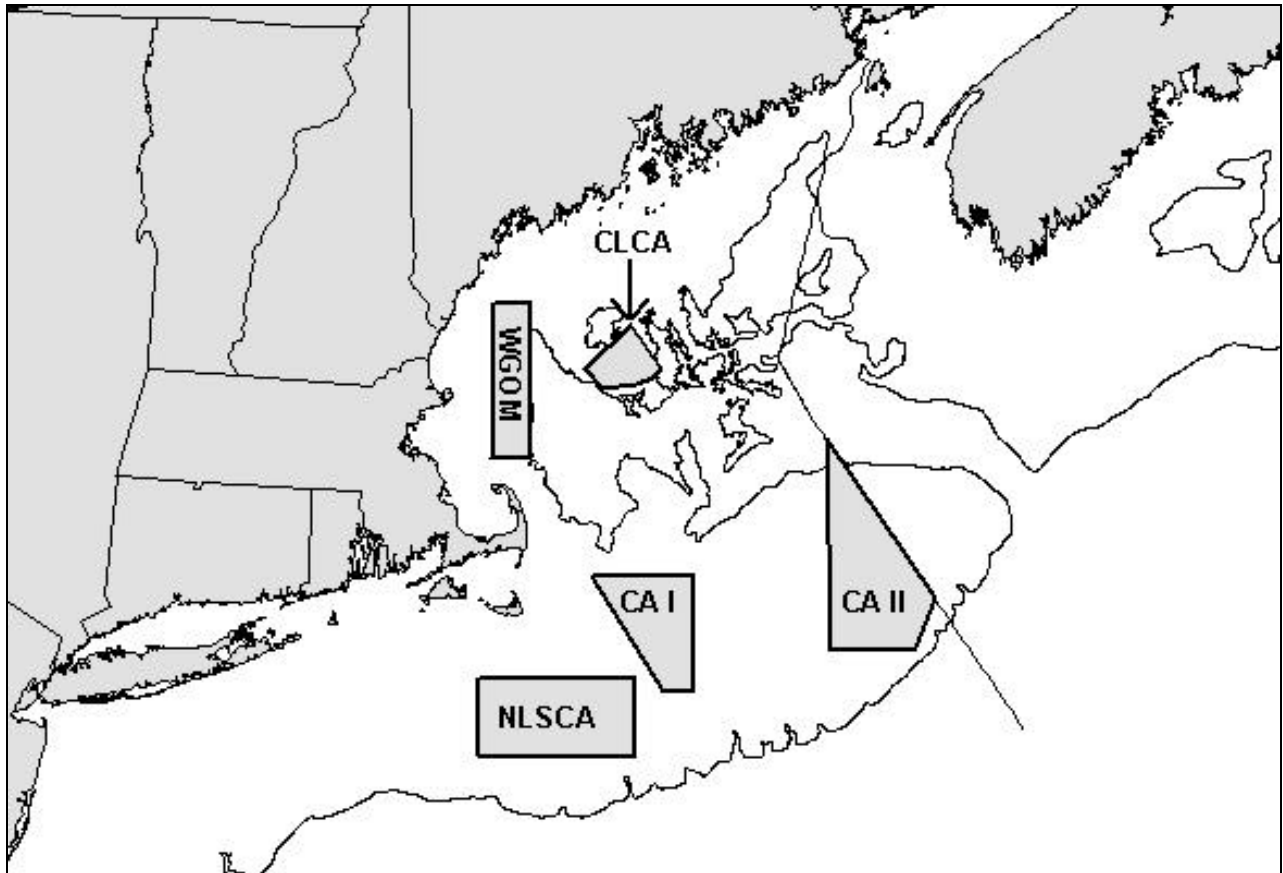
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Commercial (MT)</b>	43,585	42,170	27,920	22,956	17,790	13,658	14,267	13,030
<b>Recreational (MT)</b>	3,588	4,222	1,059	3,238	1,944	2,087	1,511	1,189
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47,173</b>	<b>46,391</b>	<b>28,979</b>	<b>26,194</b>	<b>19,734</b>	<b>15,745</b>	<b>15,778</b>	<b>14,219</b>
<b>% Commercial</b>	92.4	90.9	96.3	87.6	90.2	86.7	90.4	91.6
<b>% Recreational</b>	7.6	9.1	3.7	12.4	9.8	13.3	9.6	8.4

*\*Recreational harvest includes fish caught and released alive.*

*NOTE: Shaded values are associated with a proportional standard error (PSE) of 0.2 or less and should be considered more reliable than those values with higher PSEs.*

The recreational fishery is an important economic component of fisheries in the Northeast Region. A recent study estimated that \$4.5 billion was spent on recreational fishing and fishing equipment in 1998 throughout the North Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic regions (Steinback et al, 1999).

## GROUND FISH YEAR-ROUND CLOSED AREAS



WGOM = Western Gulf of Maine Closed Area

CLCA = Cashes Ledge Closed Area

NLSCA = Nantucket Lightship Closed Area

CA I = Closed Area I

CA II = Closed Area II