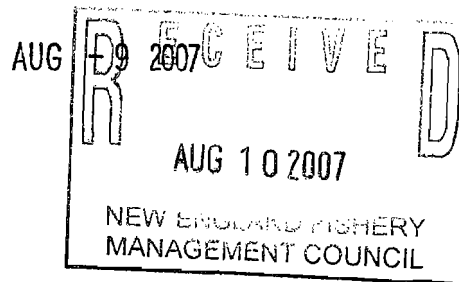




**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
 NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
 NORTHEAST REGION  
 One Blackburn Drive  
 Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

John Pappalardo, Chairman  
 New England Fishery Management Council  
 50 Water Street, Mill 2  
 Newburyport, MA 01950



Dear John:

This letter is to inform you that the Secretary of Commerce has implemented an emergency final rule that reduces the haddock minimum size requirement from 19 inches to 18 inches in both the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Georges Bank (GB) stock areas, except for charter/party and recreational vessels for which the haddock minimum size remains at 19 inches. This action will publish in the Federal Register on August 10, 2007, and will become effective upon publication.

This action responds to a June 25, 2007, New England Fishery Management Council (Council) request for emergency action to reduce the haddock minimum size requirement to 17 inches on GB due to recent information that indicates that there have been large amounts of regulatory discards of haddock. Despite the Council's recommendation of 17 inches, reducing the haddock minimum size to 18 inches will more than double the percentage of the GB haddock population available for harvest. Because both 18- and 19-inch fish are caught together, this action allows vessels to convert discards into landings without changing fishing practices or increasing fishing mortality on undersized fish. In addition, reducing the haddock minimum size in both the GOM and GB stock areas maintains a uniform size requirement across all areas and helps ensure meaningful and effective enforcement of the minimum size requirements.

The average size of haddock from the 2003 year class is anticipated to be 19 inches by the summer of 2008, which would make them legal to retain under the existing regulations. Therefore, the current discard situation will resolve itself over the long term. As a result, a temporary 18-inch minimum size limit will enable a larger fraction of the haddock catch to be landed, until a greater portion of the haddock population grows and reaches 19 inches. In the short-term, this action immediately reduces excessive discards in the fishery and provides greater opportunity for the fishery to achieve optimum yield.

The National Marine Fisheries Service will continue to monitor haddock landings and discards to determine whether an emergency situation still exists, and whether extension or modification of this action is necessary.

Sincerely,

*Patricia A. Kurkul*  
 Patricia A. Kurkul  
 Regional Administrator



