



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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New England Fishery Council Revises Timeline for Groundfish Action

Newburyport, MA At its meeting in Portland, ME yesterday the New England Fishery Management Council revised its schedule for the development of new rules that will control fishing for the region's 19 groundfish stocks. Reacting to updated but not yet final scientific information concerning the status and condition of a number of stocks, the Council will continue work on several elements of Amendment 16 to its Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, but agreed it is essential to have final numbers for stock size as well as fishing mortality, or the rate at which fish are removed, before completing measures that control fishing levels.

The preliminary results of the Groundfish Assessment Review Meeting (GARM), a regional peer-review process which allows the Council to gauge its progress toward rebuilding fish stocks, indicated that many flounder stocks would require much more of a management focus than previously assumed by the Council. Of equal concern was information pointing to a reduction in the overall productivity of the ecosystem, a finding that will affect the Council's rebuilding programs in ways that are not yet clear. In the interest of producing a document for the public that accurately reflects this news, the Council will wait to receive the final GARM results in September and at that time will design management measures accordingly.

The revised Amendment 16 schedule is as follows:

- **June/July 2008: Groundfish Committee meeting(s) to work on sector monitoring, other reporting issues; revisit recreational/commercial allocation decisions; and other issues**
- ***August 4: GARM III final assessment meeting***
- **Mid-late August: Plan Development Team (PDT) review preliminary GARM III results and impact on rebuilding plans**
- **Early September: Council meeting to receive GARM III report, Groundfish Advisory Panel (AP) reports, PDT reports, begin development of measures**
- **Early September: Groundfish AP and Recreational AP meetings**
- **Mid-September: Groundfish Committee meeting to develop measures**
- **October 7-9: Council approves measures for Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)**
- **October: PDT completes DEIS**
- **November: Council approves DEIS for public hearing**
- **January 2009: Public hearings held**
- **February 2009: Council final decision on Amendment 16**
- **March/April 2009: Submit document to the National Marine Fisheries Service**
- **September-December 2009 (est.) Implementation of new rules**

The specifics about future meetings will be posted on the Council's website --- www.nefmc.org -- as they become available.

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