



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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New England Fishery Council Embarks on Sector Development

Newburyport, MA The New England Fishery Management Council met in an unusual one-day session yesterday to continue efforts to develop an alternative to its groundfish days-at-sea management program, a strategy that limits fishing for cod, haddock and many of the flounder stocks in coastal waters from Maine to New Jersey.

In place since 1994 and developed as a system that promotes flexibility, the current effort control program has recently come under fire because of the low level of fishing allowed per vessel and concerns over the wasteful discarding of fish. Despite very good progress to end overfishing ---- most stocks managed by the Council are experiencing increases --- restrictive management measures are still required for several of the 19 stocks in the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan to address overfishing and stock rebuilding.

As part of Amendment 16 to its Groundfish Plan, the Council is working on a more comprehensive sector management program, a system that would allow groups of fishermen to enter into contractual agreements and operate with a limited number of pounds available for harvest, referred to as a Total Allowable Catch (TAC). The Council would set each sector's TACs to ensure conservation goals were accomplished while allowing each sector to develop its own unique set of rules.

At yesterday's meeting, the Council identified how each fishing permit that is added to a sector would contribute to a sectors's overall TAC. Four alternatives were developed that account for, in various ways, the fishing permit's history of fish landed, the timeframe within which the fish was landed, vessel length and vessel horsepower.

The Council also adopted goals to be used in evaluating the potential sector "contribution" alternatives. These included the ability to address wasteful discards, simplify management, accord fishermen greater control over their livelihoods, provide a mechanism for economics to shape the fishing fleet rather than the regulations and prevent excessive consolidation of fishing businesses so that a day boat fishery might continue.

Whatever version of sector management is approved will be included in Amendment 16. Work on the plan will continue through November 2008. Information about the meeting is available on the Council's website --- www.nefmc.org. An audio file is provided as well as analyses of several, but not all of the sector contribution alternatives (at this writing).

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