



Northeast Region Bulletin

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GULF OF MAINE COD ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS FOR FISHING YEAR 2012

Change in Cod Catch Regulations

Effective Date: May 1, 2012

We are implementing the following interim Gulf of Maine cod Annual Catch Limits (ACLs), commonly referred to as “quotas” for the 2012 fishing year (May 1, 2012 to April 30, 2013).

Total ACL	Gulf of Maine Cod Fishing Year 2012 Interim sub-ACLs in metric tons (mt)					
	Commercial Fishery			Recreational	State Waters	Other Sub-component
	Total	Sectors	Common Pool			
6,700	4,170	4,089 potential total 3,618 sub-ACL (471 as carryover)	81	2,215	253	62

For Sectors:

- Up to 471 m of catch above the potential sector catch total of 4,089 mt is allowed to cover carryover of unused fishing year 2011 Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE).
- Sectors and sector managers will be notified of preliminary GOM cod ACE calculated from the 3,618 mt sub-ACL in separate correspondence. ACE will also be obtainable through the Sector Information Management Module (SIMM) on or about May 1. See your sector manager for your individual harvest share.

For Common Pool:

- The Special Management Program incidental catch Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for GOM cod is 0.81 mt.
- All of this incidental catch TAC is allocated to the Regular B Days at-Sea (DAS) Program.
- Trimester TACs are:

Fishing Year 2012 Gulf of Maine Cod Trimester TACs (mt)		
Trimester 1 (May-August)	Trimester 2 (September-December)	Trimester 3 (January-April, 2013)
22	29	30

For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Region.

For both Sectors and Common Pool:

- When sector rosters are final on May 1, 2012, we will begin developing an adjustment rule, as needed, to modify the sector sub-ACL (including ACE) and common pool sub-ACL, incidental catch TAC, and trimester TACs. Changes might be necessary to account for any last-minute changes in the final sector rosters.

For recreational fishermen, and charter/party vessel captains:

- The GOM cod minimum fish size will decrease from 24 to 19 inches on May 1; the per-angler possession limit will decrease from 10 to 9 fish.
- The 2012 recreational management measures have been outlined in a separate, more detailed information bulletin.

<i>Frequently Asked Questions</i>	
Why are these changes being implemented?	These rules are designed to reduce the Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod catch in fishing year 2012 (May 1, 2012-April 30, 2013). A recent assessment of GOM cod indicates that catch must be lowered because the rate of removal of cod by fishing is too high. The GOM cod stock is now smaller than previously believed.
How were these ACLs developed?	We worked closely with the commercial and recreational fishing industry and the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) to develop these measures for fishing year 2012. These measures are designed to reduce the fishing mortality on the GOM cod stock.
I fish in the Common Pool. Trimester TACs are new. How will they work this fishing year?	Trimester TACs are new for the 2012 fishing year. They were developed in Amendment 16 to the NE multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Under trimester TACs, when 90 percent of the GOM cod trimester TAC is caught, the trimester area will be closed. The area closure will apply to all common pool vessels fishing with gear capable of catching the pertinent stock. Any overages or underages of the GOM cod trimester TAC in Trimester 1 or Trimester 2 will be applied to the next trimester. Any overage of the total GOM cod Common Pool sub-ACL will be deducted from the following fishing year's common pool sub-ACL. Uncaught portions of the Trimester 3 TAC will not be carried over into the following fishing year. You will be notified of any changes to the trimester TAC program.
Why is the Sector sub-ACL lowered from 4,089 mt to 3,618 mt?	To make use of the limited flexibility to reduce, but not end, overfishing, NMFS had to take steps to ensure the total 6,700 mt ACL would not be exceeded. Because Sectors indicated that the ability to carryover up to 10 percent of 2011 ACE was critical, we had to find a way to include this within the 6,700 mt to ensure the fishing mortality level would not increase. To do this, we shifted tonnage from the State Waters and Other Sub-component categories to increase the Commercial ACL; however, to account for a potential fishing year 2011 carry over of up to 471 mt, we also had to reduce the Sector sub-ACL by a small amount to make sure that the total of all sub-ACLs and the carry over would not exceed 6,700 mt.
Why hasn't NMFS ended overfishing immediately?	Limited flexibility in the Magnuson-Stevens Act allows overfishing to be reduced but not immediately ended under certain circumstances. These circumstances have been determined to exist for GOM cod so NMFS is able to reduce but not end overfishing for this year while the Council contemplates action for fishing year 2013. Had overfishing been ended for fishing year 2012, the total ACL would have been approximately 1,500 mt.
Where can I get more information on the GOM cod assessment?	The Northeast Fisheries Science Center's web page has detailed and summary information for the GOM cod assessment: http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/reports.html . The Northeast Regional Office has also established a special web page dealing just with GOM cod information and issues: http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/hotnews/gomcod/ . If you need more information, refer to the contact listed on this bulletin.