



Northeast Region Bulletin

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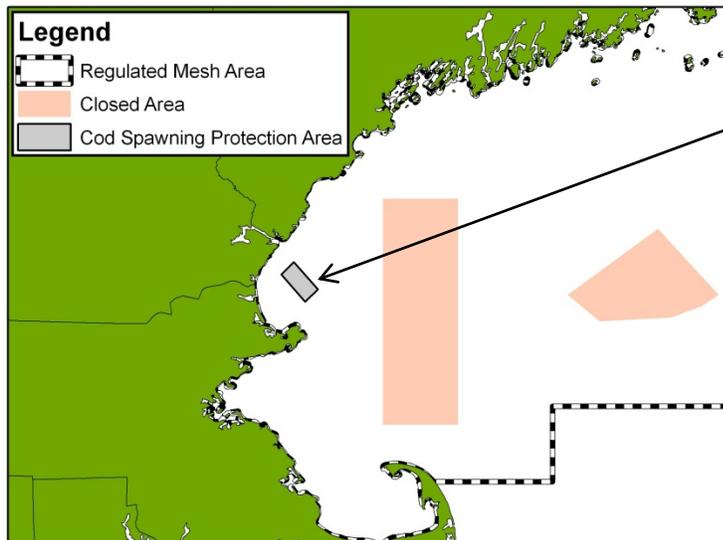
GULF OF MAINE RECREATIONAL COD FISHERMEN AND PARTY OR CHARTER VESSEL OPERATORS

Change to Cod Regulations

Effective Date: May 1, 2012

The following rules apply to recreational anglers on private, party, or charter vessels in the Federal waters of the Gulf of Maine area (see chart below) beginning on May 1 and will continue until further notice.

- The minimum cod fish size is **decreasing** from 24 to 19 inches, total length.
- The per-angler possession limit is **decreasing** from 10 to 9 fish.
- The fishing season **is not changing**, and remains April 16-October 31 (closed November 1-April 15).
- The Whaleback Closure Area (see chart below, gray box) **is not changing**, and remains closed April 1 through June 30.



Whaleback Closure Area		
Point	N. Latitude	W. Longitude
1	42° 50.95'	70° 32.22'
2	42° 47.65'	70° 35.64'
3	42° 54.91'	70° 41.88'
4	42° 58.27'	70° 38.64'

For more information on these or other recreational fishing measures, please use the contact information above.

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.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are these changes being implemented?	These rules are designed to reduce the Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod catch by recreational fishermen in fishing year 2012 (May 1, 2012-April 30, 2013). The need to reduce catch is a result of a lower recreational catch limit for the fishing year. The lower catch limit is needed because the GOM cod stock is now smaller than previously believed.
How were these rules developed?	Once it was known that catch needed to be reduced, the New England Fishery Management Council's Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) worked closely with us to discuss options. These measures were endorsed by the RAP which is composed of anglers and party/charter captains from throughout New England.
How will decreasing fish size reduce landings?	The current GOM assessment used for catch advice assumes that all cod discarded by recreational fishermen die. Many anglers disagree with this assumption, but it is in effect for now and is being re-examined by scientists for potential change in future actions. Reducing the minimum fish size will allow anglers to catch fewer fish to reach their 9 fish possession limits and the number of discarded fish (now assumed to all die) will be reduced. There is also a minor effect of smaller fish contributing a lower average weight to the total catch for the year.
When will the rules change again?	The recent assessment of GOM cod is being revisited over the 2012 summer months and it is possible that rules may need to be changed in the fall (for the spring 2013 fishery). At this point, it is too early to say if this will happen and, if so, if new rules will be more strict or not.
I've already caught 9 legal cod but catch a bigger one while haddock fishing, can I swap it for a smaller cod in my cooler?	<p>No, you can't. This practice of "high-grading," to keep larger fish seriously undermines the rules put in place for this year and is not in keeping with ethical fishing practices.</p> <p>The 9 fish limit is a possession restriction. If there are multiple anglers onboard a vessel, the total number of cod cannot exceed the sum of all the angler's possession limits. For example, if there are 6 anglers, the maximum possession for the vessel is 54 fish, irrespective of if each angler caught 9 legal-sized fish or one angler caught all 54 cod.</p>
But all the cod I catch while fishing for other species are considered dead, right?	Yes, they are. The model used to set these rules assumes that anglers will not high-grade. If they do, it is likely that catch will go up in 2012 and more restrictive measures might be needed in the spring or next fishing year.
I've heard the fishery will be closed next year. Is this true?	If nothing changes, the catch limit is expected to be very low and it is hard to say exactly how the fishery will look. The science is going to be re-examined this year to provide advice on what to catch next year. It is too early to say if this will change the potential catch for 2013.