



Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

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NORTHEAST MULTISPECIES (GROUND FISH) **FISHING YEAR 2015 REGULATIONS**

Effective Date: May 1, 2015

We have approved Framework Adjustment 53 to the groundfish plan and are announcing fishing year 2015 management measures for the groundfish fishery. These changes begin on May 1, 2015. To see which regulations apply to you, this Bulletin is divided into five sections:

- Framework 53: Measures For All Vessels** – page 1
- Windowpane Flounder Accountability Measure** – page 5
- Sector Measures** – page 6
- Common Pool Measures** – page 6
- Recreational Fishery Measures** – page 9.
- Reminder on Transiting Provisions** – see attached bulletin

Framework Adjustment 53

Below is a brief summary of the approved Framework 53 measures that become effective on May 1, 2015. More detailed information can be found in the Framework 53 final rule at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies/>. The measures approved include:

Fishing Year 2015 Catch Limits The fishing year 2015 catch limits for most groundfish stocks are the same as in 2014, but there are large reductions in catch limits for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod (-75%), Georges Bank (GB) winter flounder (-44%), and GOM winter flounder (-53%). The US/Canada quotas are detailed in Table 1. ***Fishing year 2015 catch limits are shown in Table 2 on page 4.*** Because there may be changes to sector rosters through April 30, 2015, it is possible that the sector and common pool allocations included in this Bulletin may change. After we finalize fishing year 2014 catch information, we will subtract any sector sub-ACL or common pool overages from the respective fishing year 2015 sector or common pool catch limits and make any necessary adjustments to the catch limits in a future management action as close to May 1 as possible.

GOM Cod Protection Measures Framework 53 modifies the existing GOM rolling closures for the commercial groundfish fishery to help protect GOM cod. This action adds closures in the winter while opening other areas in the spring to provide increased fishing opportunities on healthy groundfish stocks like haddock. Recreational vessels may fish in these closure areas. ***These changes are shown in Figure 1 on page 3.***

Table 1. Fishing Year 2015 U.S./Canada Quotas (mt, live weight) and Percent of Quota Allocated to Each Country

Quota	Eastern GB Cod	Eastern GB Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared Quota	650	37,000	354
U.S. Quota	124 (19%)	17,760 (48%)	248 (70%)
Canada Quota	526 (81%)	19,240 (52%)	106 (30%)

Recreational Vessels Prohibited from Keeping GOM Cod Framework 53 prohibits possession of GOM cod by the recreational fishery to help reduce the incentive to target the stock. Additional measures to reduce GOM cod catch by recreational vessels are described on page 9.

Sector Carryover This action finalizes a change to the sector carryover provision. Sectors may carryover up to 10% of their allocation, or an amount that would not exceed the allowable biological catch (ABC) for the next fishing year, whichever is less.

Daily Reporting Requirements Commercial vessels that declare their intent to fish inside and outside of the GOM broad stock area on the same trip are required to complete and submit a Multispecies Catch Report daily via Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). Please be aware that the instructions on the Multispecies Catch Report may not reflect this new requirement until the summer of 2015. Despite the instructions on the form, commercial vessels that declare their intent to fish inside and outside of the Gulf of Maine broad stock area on the same trip must complete and submit a Multispecies Catch Report on a daily basis beginning on May 1, 2015.

The daily VMS reporting requirement is being implemented to prevent vessels from catching cod in the GOM broad stock area and claiming it was caught in another broad stock area. Misreporting is a high priority for the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, and they will be monitoring reporting requirements closely during the 2015 fishing year. Penalties for misreporting can be significant, particularly for members of a sector, who may be penalized when another sector member misreports catch. Sector managers are reminded to discuss the importance of complying with all reporting requirements with sector members.

Other Measures This action also implements a number of administrative measures, including a mechanism for setting default catch limits, in the event a future management action is delayed.

Figure 1

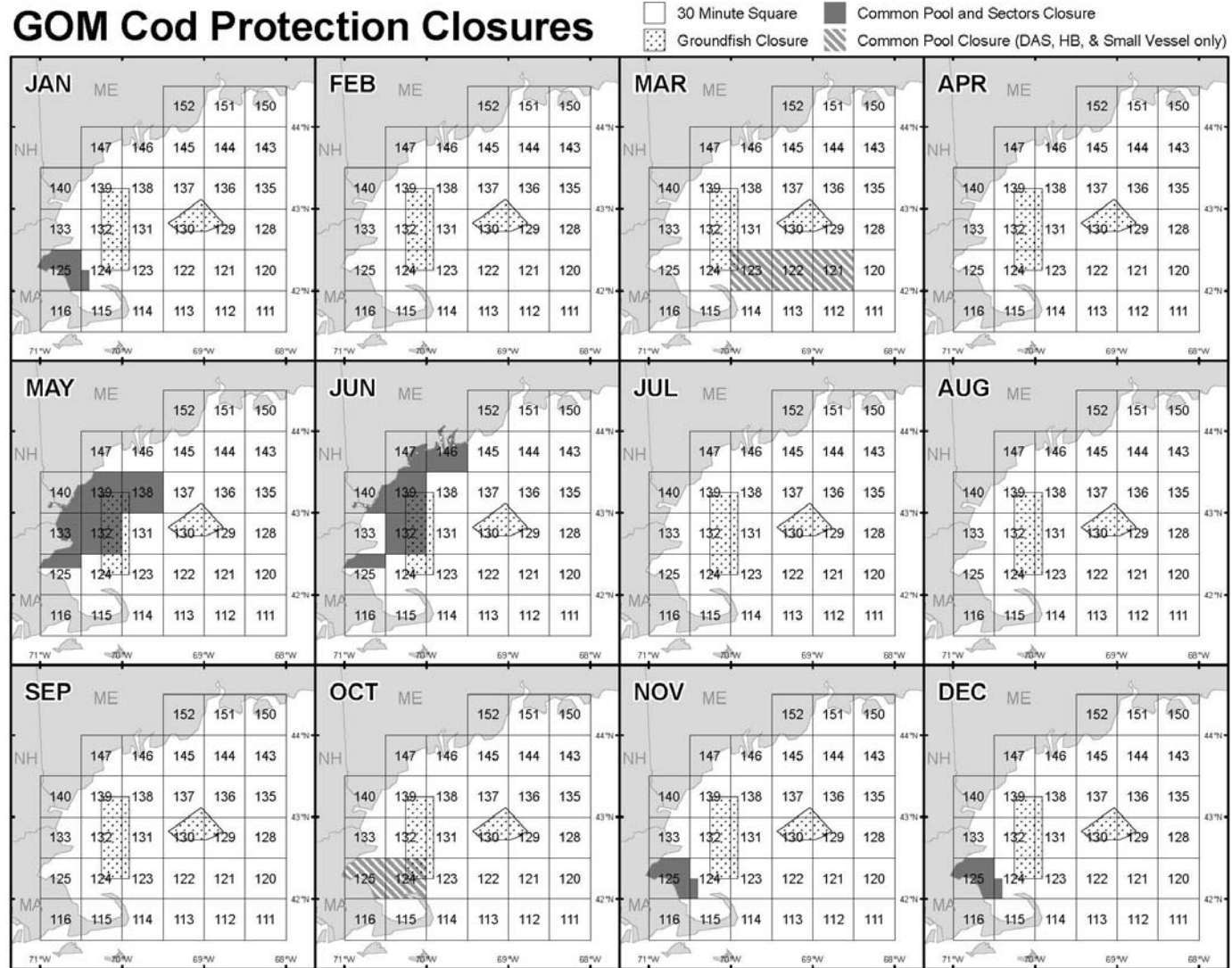


Table 2. Fishing Year 2015 Catch Limits (mt, live weight)

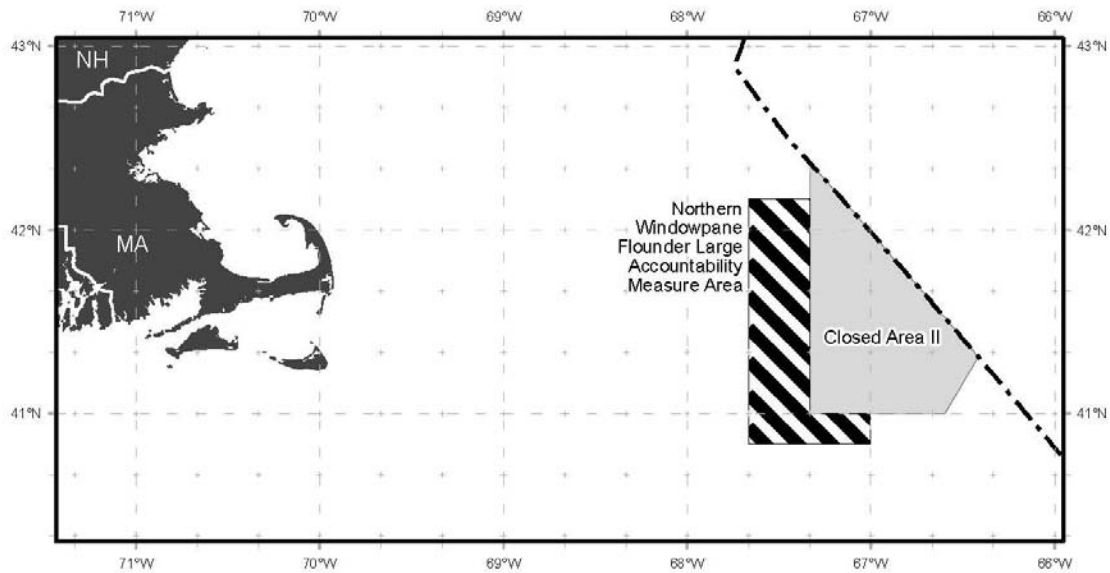
Stock	Total ACL	Total Groundfish Fishery	Preliminary Sector	Preliminary Common Pool	Recreational Fishery	Midwater Trawl Fishery	Scallop Fishery	Small-Mesh Fisheries	State Waters sub-component	Other sub-component
GB Cod	1,886	1,787	1,753	34					20	79
GOM Cod	366	328	202	5	121				26	13
GB Haddock	23,204	21,759	21,603	156		227			244	975
GOM Haddock	1,375	1,329	949	9	372	14			11	21
GB Yellowtail Flounder	240	195	192	3			38	5	na	2
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	666	557	457	102			66		14	28
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	524	458	442	16					38	27
American Plaice	1,470	1,408	1,381	27					31	31
Witch Flounder	751	610	598	12					23	117
GB Winter Flounder	1,952	1,891	1,876	15					na	60
GOM Winter Flounder	489	392	375	18					87	10
SNE/MA Winter Flounder	1,607	1,306	1,149	157					117	184
Redfish	11,393	11,034	10,974	60					120	239
White Hake	4,484	4,343	4,311	32					47	94
Pollock	15,878	13,720	13,628	92					996	1,162
N. Windowpane Flounder	144	98	na	98					2	44
S. Windowpane Flounder	527	102	na	102			183		55	186
Ocean Pout	220	195	na	195					2	24
Atlantic Halibut	97	64	na	64					30	3
Atlantic Wolffish	65	62	na	62					1	3

Accountability Measures Due to Windowpane Flounder Overage

For fishing year 2015, commercial groundfish vessels fishing on a groundfish trip with trawl gear are required to use selective trawl gear when fishing in the large northern windowpane flounder accountability measure (AM) area (see Figure 2 for a map of this restricted gear area). Approved selective trawl gears include the: 1) Haddock separator trawl; 2) Ruhle trawl; 3) mini-Ruhle trawl; or 4) rope separator trawl. Coordinates for this area are included below. There are no restrictions on longline or gillnet gear in this area.

This AM is being implemented due to a recent overage of the total catch limit for northern windowpane flounder. More information on windowpane flounder AMs can be found here: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/regis/infodocs/windowpaneaminfosheet.pdf>.

Figure 2. FY 2015 Northern Windowpane Flounder Gear Restricted Area



N. Windowpane Flounder Large AM Area		
Point	N. Latitude	W. Longitude
1	42°10'	67°40'
2	42°10'	67°20'
3	41°00'	67°20'
4	41°00'	67°00'
5	40°50'	67°00'
6	40°50'	67°40'
1	42°10'	67°40'

Sector Measures

We have approved 17 sectors to operate in fishing years 2015 and 2016 (May 1, 2015, through April 30, 2017):

- Georges Bank Cod Fixed Gear Sector
- Maine Coast Community Sector
- Northeast Coastal Communities Sector
- Northeast Fishery Sectors I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, and XIII
- Sustainable Harvest Sectors 1 and 3

All approved sectors receive “universal” exemptions from trip limits for allocated stocks, the GB Seasonal Closure Area, and the requirement to use groundfish DAS to land groundfish. All sector vessels may use a 6-inch mesh codend on haddock separator trawls, rope trawls, and Ruhle trawls when fishing on GB. Sector vessels are also exempt from portions of the GOM Cod Protection Areas (see months March and October in **Figure 1** on page 3). Sector vessels fishing on a monkfish DAS in the Southern New England Broad Stock Area with extra-large mesh gillnets are exempt from the at-sea monitoring coverage rate. Along with these universal exemptions, we approved 19 additional exemptions for fishing years 2015 and 2016. Additional information on the approved sector exemptions can be found in the sector operations plan final rule at <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies/>.

Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program

No trips are allocated to the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program (SAP) for fishing year 2015 for the purposes of targeting yellowtail flounder. Vessels may still fish in this area to catch haddock when using a haddock separator trawl, a Ruhle trawl, or hook gear. Vessels may not fish in this access program using flounder nets. The SAP will close on January 31, 2016.

Eastern U.S./Canada Area

Starting on May 1, 2015, sector vessels fishing with trawl gear may access the Eastern U.S./Canada Area.

Common Pool Measures and Trip Limits

Tables 3-6 show the trip limits that will apply to common pool vessels beginning on May 1, 2015. We may increase or decrease these limits during the fishing year to ensure that the common pool catch limits are fully caught, but not exceeded. We will announce any necessary changes in a future management action.

Any landings prior to midnight on April 30, 2015, are subject to the fishing year 2014 landing limits. All landings after 0001 hours on May 1, 2015, are restricted to the fishing year 2015 limits announced in this Bulletin.

Common Pool Trimester Total Allowable Catches

The common pool catch limit for each stock is divided into trimester total allowable catches (TACs): Trimester 1 (May 1-August 31); Trimester 2 (September 1-December 31); and Trimester 3 (January 1-April 30). *Fishing Year 2015 trimester TACs are listed in Table 3 on page 7.*

Area closures

Once we project that 90 percent of a trimester TAC for a stock is caught, we will close the respective Trimester TAC Area to common pool vessels fishing with gears capable of catching the respective stock. The area will remain closed until the end of that trimester, and will re-open at the start of the next trimester. The areas that will close for each stock, and the gears that the closure will apply to, are listed below in **Table 4**.

During the fishing year, we will post weekly quota monitoring reports here:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/MultiMonReports.htm>.

Table 3. FY 2015 Trimester TACs (mt)

Stock	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3
GB Cod	8.6	12.7	13.1
GOM Cod	1.3	1.7	1.8
GB Haddock	42.0	51.3	62.2
GOM Haddock	2.56	2.47	4.46
GB Yellowtail Flounder	0.6	0.9	1.6
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	21.4	37.7	42.8
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	5.5	5.5	4.7
American Plaice	6.6	9.9	11.0
Witch Flounder	3.4	3.8	5.2
GB Winter Flounder	1.2	3.5	10.1
GOM Winter Flounder	6.5	6.6	4.4
Redfish	14.9	18.5	26.2
White Hake	12.0	9.8	9.8
Pollock	25.7	32.1	33.9

* SNE Winter Flounder is not managed under a trimester quota

Table 4. Common Pool Trimester TAC Area Closures

Stock	Statistical Area	Gear
GOM cod	513, 514	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
GB cod	521, 522, 525, 561	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
GOM haddock	513, 514, 515	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
GB haddock	521, 522, 525, 561, 562	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
CC/GOM yellowtail flounder	514, 521	Trawl, gillnet
GB yellowtail flounder	522, 525, 561, 562	Trawl, gillnet
SNE/MA yellowtail flounder	537, 539, 538, 613	Trawl, gillnet
GOM winter flounder	514	Trawl, gillnet
GB winter flounder	522, 525, 561, 562	Trawl
Witch flounder	512, 513, 514, 515, 521, 522, 525	Trawl
American plaice	512, 513, 514, 515, 521, 522, 525	Trawl
Pollock	513, 514, 515, 521, 522	Gillnet, trawl, longline/hook
Redfish	513, 514, 515, 521, 522	Trawl
White hake	513, 514, 515, 521, 522	Gillnet, trawl

Table 5. Initial Fishing Year 2015 Common Pool Possession and Trip Limits

Stock	Possession and Trip Limits
GB Cod (outside Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	2,000 lb/DAS, up to 20,000 lb/trip
GB Cod (inside Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	100 lb/DAS, up to 500 lb/trip
GOM Cod	50 lb/DAS, up to 200 lb/trip
GB Haddock	25,000 lb/trip
GOM Haddock	50 lb/DAS, up to 200 lb/trip
GB Yellowtail Flounder	100 lb/trip
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	2,000 lb/DAS, up to 6,000 lb/trip
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	1,500 lb/DAS up to 3,000 lb/trip
American plaice	Unlimited
Witch Flounder	1,000 lb/trip
GB Winter Flounder	1,000 lb/trip
GOM Winter Flounder	1,000 lb/trip
SNE/MA Winter Flounder	3,000 lb/DAS, up to 6,000 lb/trip
Redfish	Unlimited
White hake	1,500 lb/trip
Pollock	10,000 lb/trip
Atlantic Halibut	1 fish/trip
Windowpane Flounder	Possession Prohibited
Ocean Pout	Possession Prohibited
Atlantic Wolffish	Possession Prohibited

Table 6. Fishing Year 2015 Trip Limits for Handgear and Small Vessel Category Permits

Permit	Initial FY 2015 GOM Cod Possession/Trip Limit	Initial FY 2015 GB Cod Possession/Trip Limit
Handgear A	50 lb per trip	300 lb per trip
Handgear B	25 lb per trip	75 lb per trip
Small Vessel Category	300 lb of cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder combined; Maximum of 50 lb of GOM cod and 50 lb per trip of GOM haddock within the 300-lb combined possession limit	

Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program

Starting on August 1, 2015, common pool vessels can fish in the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program (SAP) to target haddock using a haddock separator trawl, a Ruhle trawl, or hook gear. Vessels may not fish in this SAP using flounder nets. The SAP will close on January 31, 2016.

Eastern U.S./Canada Area

Starting on May 1, 2015, common pool vessels using trawl gear may fish in the Eastern U.S./Canada Area. Common pool vessels must use a haddock separator trawl, a Ruhle trawl, or a flounder trawl in this area.

GOM Cod Trip Limit Exemption VMS Form for DAS Vessels

We have removed the VMS form that allows common pool vessels to retain the higher possession limit of GB cod and transit through the GOM where the possession limit is lower. Instead, if you would like to land a higher possession limit of cod, you must declare BSA's outside of the GOM, fish only in those BSAs, and then transit through the GOM back to port without fishing.

For vessels that would like the higher possession limit of cod, but do not have a VMS unit, you must still get an LOA that allows you to fish on GB and transit through the GOM with a higher possession limit of cod.

Recreational Fishery Measures

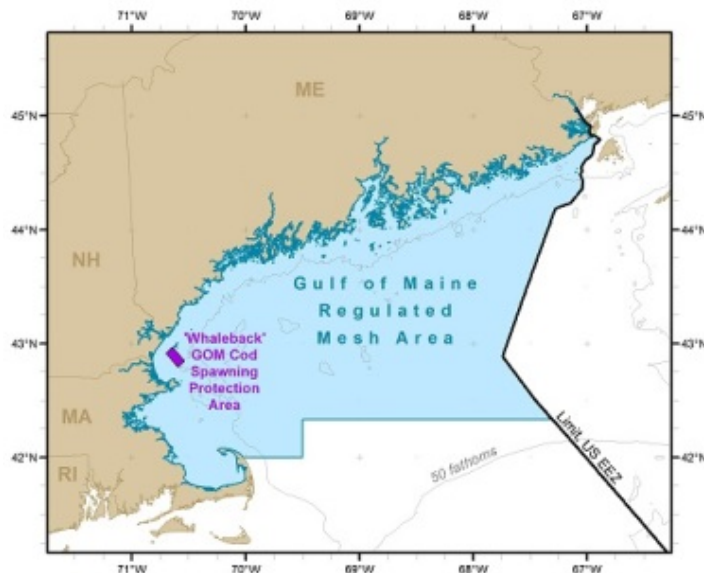
We are implementing the following recreational measures for cod and haddock in the Gulf of Maine (GOM), including minimum fish sizes, per angler daily possession (bag) limits, and closed seasons when retention is prohibited. The measures are applicable for the GOM regulated mesh area and for the 2015 fishing year (May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2016). If measures are changed at a later date, an additional Bulletin will be issued and widely distributed. Additional information on the fishing year 2015 recreational measures can be found at:

<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies/>. Recreational measures for cod and haddock outside the GOM Regulated Mesh Area remain unchanged.

Table 7. Fishing Year 2015 Recreational Fishing Measures for GOM cod and haddock

Species	Daily Bag Limit (fish per angler)	Minimum Fish Size (in Inches)	Retention Prohibited (closure periods)
Cod	Zero Retention	N/A	May 1, 2015, - April 30, 2016
Haddock	3	17	September 1 – October 31, 2015 and March 1 – April 30, 2016

Figure 3. GOM Regulated Mesh Area



GOM Cod Protection Measures Framework 53 modifies the existing GOM rolling closures for the commercial groundfish fishery to help protect GOM cod. This action adds closures in the winter while removing other areas in the spring to provide increased fishing opportunities on healthy groundfish stocks like haddock. Recreational vessels may fish in these closure areas. Federally-permitted charter/party vessels must have a letter of authorization to fish in these areas.

Cod

- When in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area, people aboard recreational fishing vessels may not fish for or possess any cod.
- Unlawfully possessing a single GOM cod in the recreational fishery will subject violators to a \$750 fine. More information on fines and penalties is available here. <http://www.gc.noaa.gov/enforce-office3.html>
 - Exception: Recreational vessels with cod caught outside the GOM Regulated Mesh Area may transit this area, provided all bait and hooks are removed from fishing rods and any cod on board has been gutted and stored.

Haddock

- When in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area, each person on a recreational fishing vessel may possess up to 3 haddock per day.
 - Exception: Recreational vessels in possession of haddock caught outside the GOM Regulated Mesh Area may transit this area, provided all bait and hooks are removed from fishing rods and any haddock on board has been gutted and stored.
- Haddock must be stored so as to be readily available for inspection.
- Haddock on recreational fishing vessels with more than one person aboard may be pooled in one or more containers. Compliance with the possession limit will be determined by dividing the number of fish on board by the number of people on board.
- For purposes of counting fish, fillets will be converted to whole fish at the place of landing by dividing the number of fillets by two. If fish are filleted into a single (butterfly) fillet, such fillet shall be deemed to be from one whole fish.



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NORTHEAST MULTISPECES (GROUND FISH)

TRANSITING REGULATIONS

Reminder

This reminder clarifies that a vessel may not enter or be in a closed area, even if its gear is stowed, in order to wait for the area to open for purposes of fishing. The groundfish regulations allow a vessel to transit a closed area with its gear stowed provided it does not engage in fishing activities in the area. Transiting means traveling from a point outside the closed area to another open area, or to port, or from port to an area outside the closed area. Transiting does not include a vessel being in the closed area waiting for the area to open, even if its gear is stowed, because such activity is considered to be fishing.

Example

A vessel docked in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on May 31, 2015, wants to begin a fishing trip and fish in Ipswich Bay (inside block 133) after it opens on June 1, 2015. (See Gulf of Maine Cod Protection Closure maps on reverse.)

That vessel must either:

1. Wait until 12:00 am on June 1, 2015, to depart the dock and fish in Ipswich Bay; or
2. Depart the dock on May 31, 2015, steam from port to an open area outside of the May Cod Protection Closure, where it may fish, and then reenter block 133 after 12:00 am on June 1.

A vessel may not depart the dock in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on May 31, 2015, steam to Ipswich Bay, wait until 12:00 am June 1, 2015, and begin fishing in the newly opened area.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why were the transiting provisions created?	The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) first developed transiting provisions for closed areas to increase safety and decrease fuel costs in Framework Adjustment 9 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. We implemented those measures in 1995. Subsequent Council frameworks also included transiting provisions based on the original transiting provision implemented as part of Framework 9.
Why can't a vessel enter a closed area and wait for it to reopen?	The transiting provision was created by the Council specifically to address concerns about the safety and economic efficiency of requiring vessels to steam around a closed area to fish in open areas. A vessel waiting in the closed area for the area to open, even if its gear is stowed, is considered to be fishing. Allowing this practice would undermine the enforceability of the closure.

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, Greater Atlantic Region.

GOM Cod Protection Closures

- 30 Minute Square
- Common Pool and Sectors Closure
- Groundfish Closure
- Common Pool Closure (DAS, HB, & Small Vessel only)

