

Northeast Seafood Coalition Proposal

Review of the proposal submitted to shift the timing
and size of the Coastal Gulf of Maine Closure Area

Northeast
Regional
Office

November 27, 2012



Overview

- Harbor porpoise bycatch exceeded the target rate from September 2010 through May 2012
 - The Coastal Gulf of Maine Consequence Closure Area was triggered
- NMFS received, and initially denied, a petition to shift the timing of the closure
- After additional analyses were conducted, NMFS approved the shift for 1 year

Consequence Closure Announcement

- On August 15, 2011, NMFS sent a letter informing gillnet fishermen that preliminary data suggested harbor porpoise bycatch rates exceeded the target rate in the Gulf of Maine
- NMFS sent a letter in April 2012 informing gillnet fishermen that the Coastal Gulf of Maine Consequence Closure was triggered after monitoring 1 year of harbor porpoise bycatch data
 - Year 2 had not yet been completed
 - However, the two year average could not be reduced below the bycatch rate trigger
- NMFS convened a HPTRT and interested parties teleconference on April 26 to discuss these results

Northeast Seafood Coalition Proposal

- On August 10, 2012, the Northeast Seafood Coalition submitted a request to reduce the size of the CGOM closure area and shift the timing from Oct. & Nov. to February 15 through March 31 for 1 year
- The proposal requested that NMFS make the change under the authority of the following HPTRP provision:

(f) *Other special measures.* The Assistant Administrator may revise the requirements of this section through notification published in the Federal Register if:

- (1) NMFS determines that pinger operating effectiveness in the commercial gillnet fishery is inadequate to reduce bycatch below the stock's PBR level; or
- (2) NMFS determines that the boundary or timing of a closed area is inappropriate, or that gear modifications (including pingers) are not reducing bycatch to below the PBR level.

- This proposal was not submitted through the existing process for requesting exemptions to the Take Reduction Plans, which requires TRT approval

Northeast Seafood Coalition Proposal

- The NSC proposal contained two components:
 1. An analysis of the timing and location of observed harbor porpoise bycatch from September 2008 to February 2012 in October/November (24 takes) & February/March (37 takes)
 2. An economic analysis by Dr. Wiersma projecting an economic impact in excess of \$10 million resulting from the October/November closure

NMFS Response to NSC Proposal

- NMFS response and decision to deny the request was delivered to NSC on September 6
- We determined that the shift was not warranted:
 - Conservation benefit was neutral when examining takes from 2008-2012 after removing illegal closed area takes and takes in areas addressed by the 2010 HPTRP amendment
 - NSC economic impacts analysis did not analyze Feb/Mar, assumed no displacement, and included significant indirect shoreside impacts

NMFS Analysis of Revenue in CGOM Closure Periods

	February and March		October and November	
	Inside the closure area	Outside the closure area	Inside the closure area	Outside the closure area
2010-2012 Gloucester Average	\$903,203	\$136,690	\$859,365	\$95,866
2010-2012 Boston Region Average	\$292,521	\$526,953	\$305,737	\$602,059
2010-2012 New Hampshire Average	\$35,979	\$246,321	\$870,488	\$273,169
TOTAL	\$1,231,703	\$909,964	\$2,035,590	\$971,094

Listening Session in Portsmouth, NH

- On September 12, new Northeast Regional Administrator John Bullard held a pre-scheduled listening session in Portsmouth
- New Hampshire fishermen personally appealed regarding their concerns about the economic impact of the Oct/Nov CGOM closure area
- NMFS committed to analyzing the impacts of the closure on NH gillnetters and the Yankee Fisherman's Coop

NSC Meeting in Gloucester

- On September 21, John Bullard and NMFS staff met with NSC staff and members in Gloucester
- Topics discussed included the NSC proposal to shift the closure, the proposal's conservation benefits, and difficulties fishermen have had with ensuring that pingers are functioning
- NMFS committed to re-analyzing the potential conservation benefit of the shift by extrapolating bycatch based on past bycatch rates
- Fishermen committed to purchasing new LED pingers, using extra pingers, submitting to voluntary pinger inspections, and using pingers 1 month earlier than required in the Mass. Bay and Stellwagen Bank Management Areas

Results of Additional Analyses

- Following the meeting, NMFS estimated and compared the conservation benefit of each closure period based on past bycatch estimates, rather than number of takes, that occurred within the CGOM closure area boundaries
- The results indicated that shifting the closure to February/March will provide a slightly higher conservation benefit
- With this considered, NMFS announced on September 26 that the closure will be shifted
- NMFS shared these results with the HPTRT by teleconference and at the NEFMC meeting that day

Current Status of CGOM Closure Area

- The CGOM closure area will begin on February 1, 2013
- The size of the CGOM closure area has not been reduced
- NMFS used its authority under the "*Other Special Measures*" provision of the HPTRP
- All legal and other analyses were conducted in support of this action
- This shift is for 1 year only – the CGOM closure will be in effect for 4 months in 2013

Question?

