



At-Sea Monitoring FAQs

Q: Why is my vessel getting selected for observer coverage at rates greater than 38% (sector) or 30% (common pool)?

A: The at-sea monitor selection process works on a stratum level, not a vessel level. A stratum is the combination of the sector, the stock area, and the gear used (and, if the gear used is gillnet, the mesh size). Therefore, the coverage rate is randomly applied to all vessels fishing within each stratum, which could result in some vessels being selected more often than others. As the fishing year progresses, the random effects will diminish and coverage will become more even.

Q: How should observers be estimating the catch weights of discarded species?

A: At-sea monitors use handheld scales on as many tows as possible to weigh fish. While actual weights are preferred, for large volumes of catch, observers subsample a random 20% of the catch and weigh each species. This information is used to help estimate weights by species for the rest of the catch. Discards of non-groundfish species are not used in the calculation of groundfish discards.

Q: What is the Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist (PTVSC)?

A: Monitors and observers are required to complete this checklist prior to the start of an observed fishing trip. Typically it involves a vessel walk through to ensure that all required safety equipment is onboard and functioning. In total, the PTVSC should take about 15 minutes to complete

and is required on every trip that carries an observer.

Q: Can information from the U.S. Coast Guard Safety Inspection be used to complete the PTVSC?

A: Yes. For instance, if the expiration date of the Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) is included in the Coast Guard report, this can be shared with the monitor/observer to complete the PTVSC.

Q: Should monitors/observers be handling EPIRBs to complete their PTVSC?

A: No. If the EPIRB expiration date cannot be derived from the CG inspection paperwork, then an inspection of the EPIRB is necessary. However, only the captain can handle the EPIRB. The observer/monitor then issues an EPIRB Visual Inspection card, which is valid for three months.

Q: What happens if an observer arrives late for a fishing trip?

A: If the observer fails to arrive at the scheduled sail time and/or place, the vessel captain should call the appropriate program manager (listed in the box on this page) to ensure that they have received the proper trip information. If the observer cannot be reached, the captain can call the Pre-Trip Notification System (PTNS) Coordinator. During business hours, the number is 508-495-2309, and the after hours cell phone is 508-681-9104.

Q: Do fishermen have access to at-sea monitor data?

A: Electronic data can be accessed at Fish-On-Line at www.nero.noaa.gov/NMFSlogin. For a hard copy of the monitor data, captains should fill out a Data Release Form provided and submitted by the at-sea monitor. These data will be sent out within a week upon receipt of the release form.

Q: How can fishermen provide feedback?

A: Captains can also submit feedback on monitors via Fishermen's Comment Cards, which they can obtain from the monitor.

Observer Service Provider Companies:

AIS (ASM) – 508-742-5510

AIS (NEFOP) – 774-200-1504

EWTS (ASM) – 860-223-5165

MRAG Americas (ASM) – 877-768-7121

For more information on at-sea monitoring, go to: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fishsamp/fsb/>

At-sea Monitoring Pre-trip Notification System Updates

On August 16, several new updates to the at-sea monitoring Pre-trip Notification System (PTNS) were implemented. An autofill feature will now make it easier and faster to complete on-line forms by automatically filling in some of the required information.

Also, trips on which gillnet gear is only being set out and not hauled can now be declared through the PTNS and will automatically receive a waiver for observer coverage.

Occasionally, captains will cancel a trip that was selected to be monitored. Another change to the PTNS enables these vessels to remain selected for monitoring until they carry an observer.

New web links were also added to the PTNS to provide additional information on how to use the system. The PTNS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet and User's Manual are both available on the PTNS homepage. In addition, there is a link on the New Trip page to a map that defines the PTNS fishing areas to assist users who may be unsure as to which region to declare into.

For more information on the PTNS, go to: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fishsamp/fsb/>

State of Maine Permit Bank

The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is currently seeking bids for the sale of federal northeast multispecies permits. The fishing rights associated with these permits will be distributed to eligible Maine fishermen to help restore and preserve access in small rural ports.

DMR recently released a revised Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Maine Groundfish Permit Banking Program to enable a wider range of benefits to be distributed to eligible Maine fishermen.

If you would like more information on the program, please contact Togue Brawn at (207) 624-6558, or togue.brawn@maine.gov

Sector Vessel Groundfish Discard Requirements

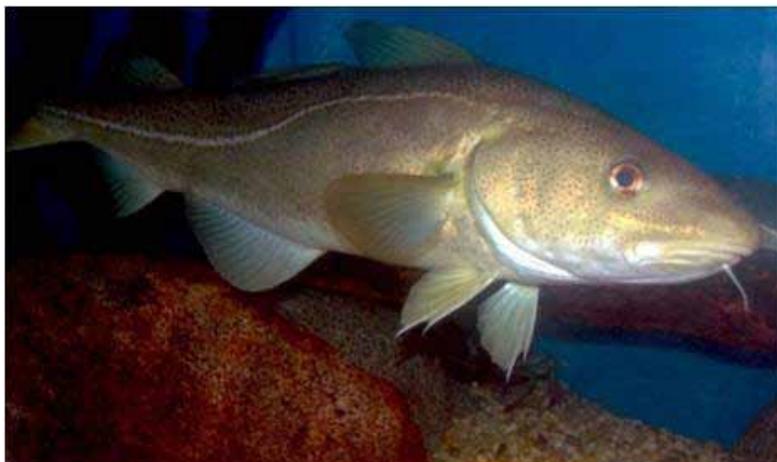
In order to reduce discarding of fish, sector vessels are required to retain all legal-sized fish of the groundfish stocks they are allowed to harvest. In addition, they are prohibited from keeping certain stocks such as ocean pout, windowpane flounder, Atlantic wolffish, or Southern New England/ Mid-Atlantic winter flounder. There is a one-fish per trip limit on Atlantic halibut as well.

On board, sector vessel captains are responsible for determining legal fish sizes. NOAA Fisheries observers are responsible for recording information about the catch, including the disposition (reason for retention or discarding) of the fish as determined by the captains.

For more information about these requirements, contact NOAA Fisheries Service staff at (978) 281-9135 or your sector manager.

Current Federal Minimum Fish Sizes for Commercial Vessels

Cod	22 in	55.9 cm	Amer. plaice	14 in	35.6 cm
Haddock	18 in	45.7 cm	Atl. halibut	41 in	04.1 cm
Pollock	19 in	48.3 cm	Redfish	9 in	22.9 cm
Witch flndr	14 in	35.6 cm	Winter flndr	12 in	30.5 cm
Yt flndr	13 in	33.0 cm	(blackback)		
White hake	No min. size				



DMR RFP Submission Schedule

Written questions
Response to written questions
Proposal

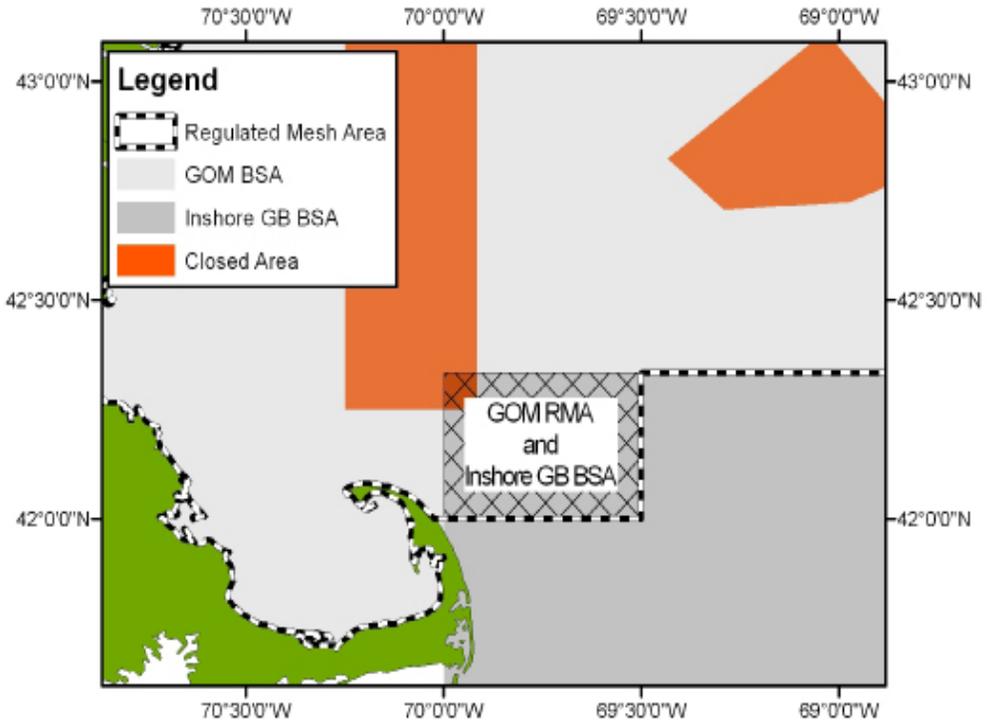
Due Date

September 14
September 21
September 28



Overlap of GOM Regulated Mesh Area and GB Broad Stock Area

The Gulf of Maine (GOM) Regulated Mesh Area (RMA) and the Georges Bank (GB) RMA are separated by the black and white dashed line. Sector vessels are eligible to use 6 inch cod ends in the GB RMA only with a haddock separator trawl or Ruhle trawl, but must use 6.5 inch cod ends in the GOM RMA. Common pool vessels must use a 6.5 inch cod end in all areas, unless fishing in the Regular B Days-at-Sea Program in the GB RMA. With the implementation of Amendment 16, four broad stock areas (BSA) were created to help NOAA Fisheries Service attribute catch to stocks prior to receipt of VTRs: GOM BSA, Inshore GB BSA, Off-shore GB BSA, and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic BSA. In the chart, the area indicated by cross-hatching shows the overlap between the GOM RMA and the Inshore GB BSA. Given that this area is part of the GOM RMA, vessels fishing in this area must comply with applicable GOM RMA gear restrictions; however, because this area is also part of the Inshore GB BSA, fish caught here will be attributed to the Inshore GB BSA.



Schedule for FY 2011 Sector Submissions

NOAA Fisheries is preparing to receive sector operation plan submissions for fishing year (FY) 2011. Due to a delay in distributing updated potential sector contribution letters to permit holders, NOAA Fisheries is extending the September 1 deadline to September 10 for sectors to submit certain portions of their FY 2011 operating plans. These include rosters and roster-dependent portions of the operations plan (permit information, rule of three, etc.), contracts (signatures, etc.) and EAs. This extension is intended to provide permit holders with additional time to make a decision of whether to join a sector for FY 2011 or to fish in the common pool.

Submission	Due Date
FY 2011 operations plan, exemption justifications	9/1/2010
FY 2011 final roster and EA plan	9/10/2010

Multispecies Fishery Bulletin (formerly Sector News) is a monthly publication providing updates on groundfish management in the Northeast. Suggestions for how we can make it better? Contact: Olivia. Rugo@noaa.gov or call 978-675-2167.