

Fact Sheet - NOAA Decision on Groundfish Fishery Disaster Claims

Background

- The Governors of Massachusetts, Maine and Rhode Island requested the Secretary of Commerce declare that a commercial fishery failure exists in the groundfish fishery due to a fishery resource disaster.
- Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Secretary cannot determine there has been a commercial fishery failure unless he finds that a commercial fishery has failed due to a fishery resource disaster resulting from:
 - Natural causes (such as flooding, hurricane or severe drought)
 - Man-made causes beyond the control of fishery managers (such as an oil spill) or regulatory restrictions imposed to protect human health or the marine environment, or
 - Undetermined causes

Findings

- The New England groundfish stocks are rebuilding. Most groundfish stocks are experiencing increases in the number of adult fish able to reproduce.
- Groundfish stocks, including cod, Georges Bank haddock and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder, have experienced an average 249 percent increase in adult fish able to reproduce and replenish the stock since 1994. Total cod is up 36 percent. Georges Bank haddock is up more than 500 percent and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder is up 209 percent in a decade. Only four of 18 groundfish stocks have not increased.
- While groundfish revenue declined between 15 and 25 percent in Massachusetts and Maine from 2005 to 2006, the groundfish fishery did not experience a commercial fishery failure. Groundfish revenue in Rhode Island ports increased by 73 percent from 2005 to 2006.
- Total revenue from all fish species landed in Massachusetts ports rose by \$10 million from 2005 to 2006, from \$426.9 million to \$437.5 million. Total revenue from fish landed in Maine ports declined from \$391.9 million to \$361.8 million in the same period. Revenue from species landed in Rhode Island ports rose from \$91 million to \$99 million during that period.
- Fishing ports in those states are among the nation's most lucrative. New Bedford, Mass. led the nation in fishing revenue in 2006, bringing in \$281 million. Gloucester, Mass., ranked number 11 with \$47.4 million in fishing revenue.

Conclusion

- After months of careful analysis, the NOAA Fisheries Service has determined no commercial fishery failure occurred in Massachusetts, Rhode Island or Maine in the 2005-2006 fishing season.