



# Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

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## GROUND FISH SECTOR AND EXEMPTION APPROVAL

Announcement of approved sector operations plans and  
Explanation of exemptions that have been granted

*Effective Date: May 1, 2014*

We have approved 17 sectors to operate in fishing year (FY) 2014 (May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015):

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

All approved sectors receive “universal” exemptions from trip limits for allocated stocks, the Georges Bank (GB) Seasonal Closure Area, and the requirement to use groundfish days-at-sea (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 Gulf of Maine (GOM) Rolling Closure Areas. In addition to these universal exemptions, we approved 20 additional exemptions for 2014.

### *FY 2014 Sector Exemptions*

<b>Which exemptions apply to me?</b>	All vessels in sectors receive the universal exemptions described above. To find the additional exemptions that apply to your sector, please contact your sector manager. The unique exemptions that apply to you and your sector will also be in the Letter of Authorization granted to your vessel.
<b>What about the other exemptions my sector asked for?</b>	Only the exemptions listed below were approved. The exemption to access Closed Areas I and II is being considered later in the year. All other exemptions requested by sectors were denied.
<b>Who do I contact with questions about my sector’s exemptions?</b>	Please contact your sector manager with any additional questions. If you are unable to reach your manager, you may contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at 978-281-9315.
<b>What does each exemption allow a vessel to do?</b>	<b>A vessel can only use an exemption if it is granted to its sector. Each of the possible exemptions available to sectors is explained below:</b>
<b>1) The 120-day gillnet block out of the fishery</b>	A gillnet vessel is not required to declare and take 120 days out of the gillnet fishery in 2014.
<b>2) The 20-day spawning block</b>	A vessel is not required to stop fishing for groundfish for a 20-day period from May 1 through May 31, 2014, and from March 1 through April 30, 2015.
<b>3) The prohibition on hauling another vessel’s gillnet gear</b>	This allows multiple vessels participating in the same sector to haul each other’s gillnet gear. Each vessel must tag each gillnet it intends to haul with one tag.
<b>4) The number of gillnets that may be hauled on GB when fishing on a groundfish/monkfish DAS</b>	A vessel issued both a groundfish permit and a monkfish permit can haul all of its gillnets on a single GB trip.
<b>5) The number of hooks that may be fished</b>	A vessel has no limit on the number of hooks it may fish within any of the Regulated Mesh Areas.

*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.*

<b>6) The DAS Leasing Program length and horsepower restrictions</b>	A sector vessel may lease DAS to another sector vessel also granted the exemption, regardless of DAS leasing length/horsepower baseline restrictions.
<b>7) The prohibition on discarding</b>	A vessel <u>must</u> discard <u>all</u> legal-sized unmarketable fish at sea (not on selected trips), and cannot land unmarketable fish.
<b>8) Daily reporting by sector managers for vessels fishing in the Closed Area (CA) I Hook Gear Haddock Special Access Program (SAP)</b>	This is specific to sector managers, and not to vessels. A sector vessel fishing in the CA I Hook Gear Haddock SAP must complete a daily vessel monitoring system (VMS) catch report and submit it directly to us.
<b>9) Powering a VMS while at the dock</b>	A sector vessel can power down its VMS unit at the dock, after sending a power-down code to us. A vessel with multiple permits requiring VMS (i.e., monkfish, scallop, etc.) must continue to comply with reporting requirements for other fisheries, and may not be able to take advantage of this exemption.
<b>10) Prohibition on fishing inside and outside the CA I Hook Gear Haddock SAP while on the same trip</b>	A vessel may fish inside and outside this SAP on the same trip, but is prohibited from setting or hauling fixed gear across the border of the SAP. The vessel is required to report catch via VMS from inside the SAP daily, either to the sector manager or to us, if the sector manager is also exempt from daily reporting requirements for this SAP. Vessels declared into the SAP may possess only demersal longline gear or tub trawl gear on the vessel during the trip.
<b>11) The prohibition on a vessel hauling another vessel's hook gear</b>	Multiple vessels participating in the same sector can haul each other's hook gear. Each vessel must tag the gear consistent with §§ 648.14(k)(6)(ii)(B) and 648.84(a).
<b>12) Requirement to declare the Eastern U.S./Canada SAP or the CA II Yellowtail flounder/Haddock SAP from the dock</b>	A sector vessel can declare its intent to fish in these SAPs while at sea.
<b>13) The limits on the number of gillnets for Day gillnet vessels</b>	A sector Day gillnet vessel is allowed to fish up to a maximum of 150 nets (any combination of flatfish or roundfish nets), except in May (Blocks 124 and 125) and June (Blocks 132 and 133). Vessels must tag each gillnet with one tag.
<b>14) Gear requirements in the U.S./Canada Management Area</b>	A vessel can use any approved trawl gear in the U.S./Canada Management Area.
<b>15) Seasonal restrictions for the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock SAP</b>	A sector vessel can access this SAP from May 1 to December 31 with any gear approved for use in the Eastern Area, including a standard otter trawl.
<b>16) Seasonal restrictions for the CA II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP</b>	A sector vessel can access this SAP from May 1 to January 31 when using selective gear approved for use in the SAP, or the standard otter trawl.
<b>17) Sampling Exemption</b>	A vessel granted this exemption may temporarily retain fish for sampling purposes.
<b>18) The 6.5-inch minimum mesh size requirement on targeted redfish trips</b>	A vessel can use codends with mesh size as small as 6.0 inches to target redfish. A vessel must declare a "redfish" trip via VMS in a Trip Start Hail. We will monitor monthly catch thresholds of 80% redfish and a 5% groundfish discard limit, for vessels declaring the exemption.
<b>19) Prohibition on commercially groundfish fishing in the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area (NLCA)</b>	A vessel can fish inside the western or eastern portion of the NLCA with gillnets greater than 10 inches, or with hooks. Trawl vessels in the eastern portion must use selective trawl gear and are prohibited from using flounder nets. Trawl vessels in the western portion can use all legal trawl gear. A vessel must declare a "closed area" trip via VMS in a Trip Start Hail before it leaves port.
<b>20A) How do I combine a large-mesh sector trip with a small-mesh exempted fishery trip in Southern New England (SNE)?</b>	A vessel must fish with large mesh first, then use small mesh using trawl gear modifications in one of two specific areas in SNE. A vessel must declare a "small mesh" trip via VMS in a Trip Start Hail before it leaves port, and also send a Catch Report via VMS before it begins small-mesh fishing.
<b>20B) What small-mesh fisheries am I able to participate in when using this exemption?</b>	The exemption applies to sector trips only, and is intended to allow a vessel to catch some small-mesh species, after targeting groundfish. A vessel could land whiting, longfin squid, mackerel, herring and other small-mesh species, provided the vessel still meets the requirements of those fisheries. Because of the requirements in other fisheries, a vessel may not be able to target groundfish and catch more than incidental amounts of small-mesh species.
<b>20C) What are some of the incidental amounts of small-mesh fisheries that could trigger other requirements?</b>	<u>Herring</u> -A vessel with an All Areas Open Access Herring Permit (Category D) can possess up to 6,600 lb of herring without having additional observer and VMS notification requirements. Vessels with any other herring permit are not allowed to possess herring unless they are on a declared herring trip. <u>Mackerel</u> -A vessel can possess up to 20,000 lb of mackerel without notifying the observer program.

<b>20C) Continued</b>	<u>Longfin squid</u> -A vessel can possess up to 2,500 lb of longfin squid, without notifying the observer program. <u>Silver hake (whiting) and red hake</u> -A vessel does not have to notify the observer program, or make a VMS declaration, to land these species, regardless of what the possession limit is.
<b>20D) What if I want to catch more than the incidental amount of these small-mesh fisheries?</b>	If you intend to target any of these small-mesh fisheries that have additional observer or VMS requirements, then you must adhere to those requirements. In that case, you would not be able to participate in the sector exemption as it is currently approved, and you would not be on a groundfish sector trip.
<b>Additional Sector Provisions</b>	A sector may include additional provisions in its operations plan. Please consult your sector manager for information on any additional provisions.

### Accountability Measures Due to Windowpane Flounder Overage

For FY 2014, common pool vessels fishing on a groundfish trip with trawl gear are required to use selective trawl gear when fishing in the windowpane flounder accountability measure (AM) areas. Approved selective trawl gears include the: 1) Haddock separator trawl; 2) Ruhle trawl; 3) mini-Ruhle trawl; and 4) rope separator trawl. These gear restrictions will apply in the large AM areas for both northern and southern windowpane flounder (see **Figure 1** for a map of these restricted gear areas). Coordinates for these areas are included on page 6 of this bulletin. There are no restrictions on longline or gillnet gear in these areas.

These AMs are being implemented due to recent overages of the total catch limit for both northern and southern windowpane flounder, and the necessary gear restrictions apply to all commercial groundfish trawl vessels (common pool and sector). More information on the AMs and the recent overages can be found here: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/regs/infodocs/windowpaneaminfosheet.pdf>.

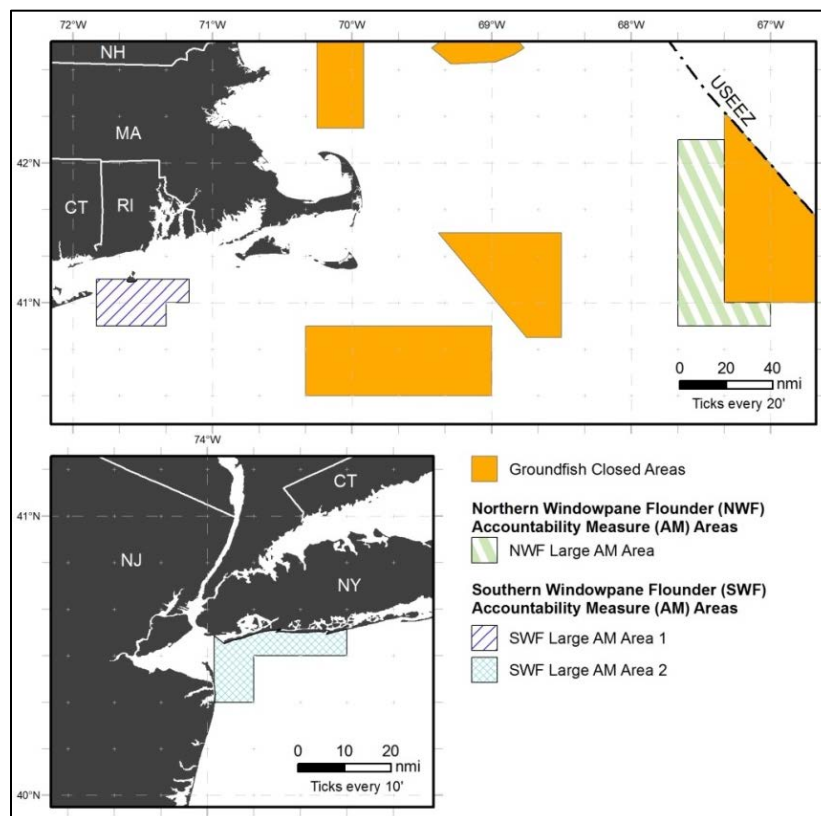


Figure 1. FY 2014 Northern and Southern Windowpane Flounder AM Areas

**Windowpane Flounder AM Area Coordinates**

Northern Windowpane Flounder Large AM Area		
<i>Point</i>	<i>N. Latitude</i>	<i>W. Longitude</i>
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'

Southern Windowpane Flounder Large AM Area 1		
<i>Point</i>	<i>N. Latitude</i>	<i>W. Longitude</i>
1	41°10'	71°50'
2	41°10'	71°10'
3	41°00'	71°10'
4	41°00'	71°20'
5	40°50'	71°20'
6	40°50'	71°50'
1	41°10'	71°50'

Southern Windowpane Flounder Large AM Area 2		
<i>Point</i>	<i>N. Latitude</i>	<i>W. Longitude</i>
1	( <sup>1</sup> )	73°30'
2	40°30'	73°30'
3	40°30'	73°50'
4	40°20'	73°50'
5	40°20'	( <sup>2</sup> )
6	( <sup>3</sup> )	73°58.5'
7	( <sup>4</sup> )	73°58.5'
8	40°32.6' ( <sup>5</sup> )	73°56.4' ( <sup>5</sup> )
1	( <sup>1</sup> )	73°30'

(<sup>1</sup>) The southern-most coastline of Long Island, NY, at 73°30' W. longitude.  
 (<sup>2</sup>) The eastern-most coastline of NJ at 40°20' N. latitude, then northward along the NJ coastline to Point 6.  
 (<sup>3</sup>) The northern-most coastline of NJ at 73°58.5' W. longitude.  
 (<sup>4</sup>) The southern-most coastline of Long Island, NY, at 73°58.5' W. longitude.  
 (<sup>5</sup>) The approximate location of the southwest corner of the Rockaway Peninsula, Queens, NY, then eastward along the southern-most coastline of Long Island, NY (excluding South Oyster Bay), back to Point 1.

**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 FY 2014 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, 2015.

## Eastern U.S./Canada Area

Starting on May 1, 2014, sector vessels fishing with trawl gear may access the Eastern U.S./Canada Area.

### Framework Adjustment 51

We partially approved Framework 51 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, and approved measures become effective on May 1, 2014. Below is a brief summary of the approved measures, and more detailed information can be found in the Framework 51 final rule here:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/sfdmulti.html>. Approved measures include:

1. Eastern Georges Bank haddock conversion—Sectors may now convert their eastern GB haddock allocation into western GB haddock allocation. This measure follows a similar process to the one used for processing sector trades. Any conversion of eastern GB haddock allocation into western GB haddock allocation may only be made within a sector or permit bank, and not between sectors or permit banks. In addition, once a portion of eastern GB haddock allocation is converted to western GB haddock allocation, that portion of allocation remains western GB haddock for the remainder of the fishing year. Please see your sector manager for more details on this measure.
2. FY 2014 catch limits—These catch limits are shown in **Tables 1 and 2**. Because there may be changes to sector rosters through April 30, 2014, it is possible that the sector and common pool allocations in this bulletin may change. Please contact your sector manager for initial FY 2014 annual catch entitlements (ACEs). We will send out updated sector ACEs after sector rosters are finalized for FY 2014, and after FY 2013 catch information is compiled, similar to past years.

Accountability measures for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder for the small-mesh fisheries— If the small-mesh fisheries (squid/whiting) exceed their GB yellowtail flounder catch limit, small-mesh trawl vessels (codend mesh size less than 5 inches) will be required to use selective gear when fishing in the GB yellowtail flounder stock area. The gear restrictions would only be implemented at the start of the fishing year (May 1), either in the year immediately following an overage, or 2 years after the overage, depending on how soon we can determine that an overage occurred. For example, if we determine after the end of FY 2013 (after May 1, 2014) that the small-mesh fisheries exceeded their allocation, we would implement the required gear restrictions at the start of FY 2015, beginning on May 1, 2015. We would send a bulletin to permit holders and notify sectors, if there was an overage and accountability measures were triggered.

3. Rebuilding programs for Gulf of Maine cod and American plaice— We approved a new 10-year rebuilding programs for both of these stocks. The new rebuilding plans are scheduled to rebuild the stocks by 2024.

Table 1—FY 2014 U.S./Canada Quotas (mt, live weight) and Percent of Quota Allocated to Each Country, in parentheses

Quota	Eastern GB Cod	Eastern GB Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared Quota	700	27,000	400
U.S. Quota	154 (22%)	10,530 (39%)	328 (82%)
Canada Quota	546 (78%)	16,470 (61%)	72 (18%)

Table 2. FY 2014 Total Annual Catch Limits and Fishery Allocations (mt)

Stock	Total Annual Catch Limit	Groundfish Fishery	Preliminary Sector	Preliminary Common Pool	Recreational Groundfish	Midwater Trawl Fishery	Scallop Fishery	Small-Mesh Fisheries	State Waters sub-component	Other sub-component
GB Cod	1,867	1,769	1,738	31					20	78
GOM Cod	1,470	1,316	812	18	486				103	51
GB Haddock	18,312	17,171	17,116	56		179			192	769
GOM Haddock	323	307	218	2	87	3			5	7
GB Yellowtail Flounder	318.1	254.5	251.5	3.1			50.9	6.1	na	6.6
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	665	564	469	95			66		7	28
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	523	479	466	13					33	11
American Plaice	1,442	1,382	1,357	24					30	30
Witch Flounder	751	610	599	11					23	117
GB Winter Flounder	3,493	3,385	3,364	21					na	108
GOM Winter Flounder	1,040	715	688	26					272	54
SNE/MA Winter Flounder	1,612	1,210	1,074	136					235	168
Redfish	10,909	10,565	10,523	42					115	229
White Hake	4,417	4,278	4,247	30					46	93
Pollock	15,304	13,224	13,131	93					960	1,120
Northern Windowpane Flounder	144	98		98					2	44
Southern Windowpane Flounder	527	102		102			183		55	186
Ocean Pout	220	197		197					2	21
Atlantic Halibut	106	57		57					44	5
Atlantic Wolffish	65	62		62					1	3