



Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

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GROUND FISH FISHERMEN

NOAA Fisheries Announces Temporary Gulf of Maine Cod and Haddock Management Measures

Effective Date: November 13, 2014, through May 12, 2015

Gulf of Maine Cod

We are implementing five temporary actions for cod in this action:

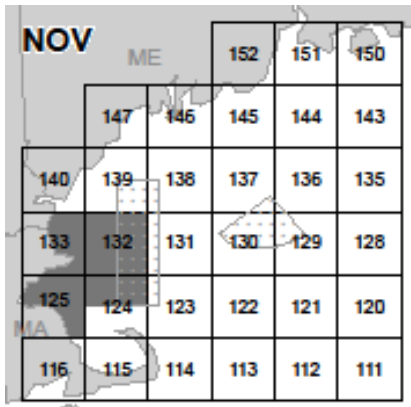
1. **Commercial and recreational fishery closure areas:** The existing Gulf of Maine (GOM) rolling closures for commercial common pool and sector vessels are replaced with several seasonal 30-minute grids in the GOM Broad Stock Area. Seasonal Interim Closure Areas are closed to vessels using certain commercial and recreational gear capable of catching cod (meaning gear other than "exempted gear," or, gear exempted from current groundfish closed areas, as specified in groundfish regulations). These areas are shown on the next page. Vessels that do not possess a Federal multispecies permit and that fish exclusively in state waters must comply with state measures.
2. **Commercial trip limits:** A 200-lb trip limit for GOM cod is implemented for all sector and common pool fishing trips taken in the open areas of the GOM Broad Stock Area.
3. **Zero recreational possession:** Federally permitted recreational vessels, including party and charter vessels, and any other recreational vessel in the Exclusive Economic Zone cannot possess or land recreationally caught GOM cod.
4. **Commercial fishery declaration change:** Limited access groundfish vessels that declare to fish in the GOM Broad Stock Area may only fish in that broad stock area for the duration of the declared trip, irrespective of whether an at-sea monitor or observer is onboard.
5. **Gillnet exemption change:** The fishing year 2014 sector exemption that allowed a higher number of gillnets that Day gillnet vessels fishing in the GOM can use is revoked. Vessels that have crossed the vessel monitoring system (VMS) demarcation line and are currently at sea on a groundfish trip may complete the trip under previous rules.

Commercial and recreational fishery closure areas

The seasonal interim closure areas, shown below, are closed to vessels using certain commercial and recreational gear capable of catching cod (meaning gear other than "exempted gear," or, gear exempted from current groundfish closed areas) in the times and areas indicated beginning when this rule is published in the *Federal Register*. These measures temporarily replace and expand on the existing GOM rolling closures. Implementation of these closure areas is effective when the rule publishes; however, we will provide a 2-week period for fixed gear retrieval. This time is intended to allow fixed gear (gillnets, longline) time to remove fishing gear from the November closure areas (i.e., 30-minute squares 132, 133, 125, and the northern half of 124). The portions of the year-round Western Gulf of Maine (WGOM) Closure Area not otherwise closed by the 30-minute squares that overlap the area in this action will continue to remain accessible for federally permitted party and charter vessels through a letter of authorization.

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.

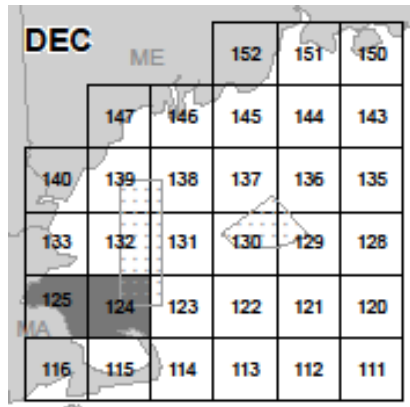
Interim Action Seasonal Commercial and Recreational Fishery Closure Areas, by Month.



POINT	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
NOV1	43°00'N	(1)
NOV2	43°00'N	70°00'W
NOV3	42°15'N	70°00'W
NOV4	42°15'N	70°30'W
NOV5	42°00'N	70°30'W
NOV6	42°00'N	(2)

¹ The intersection of 43°00' N latitude and the New Hampshire coastline.

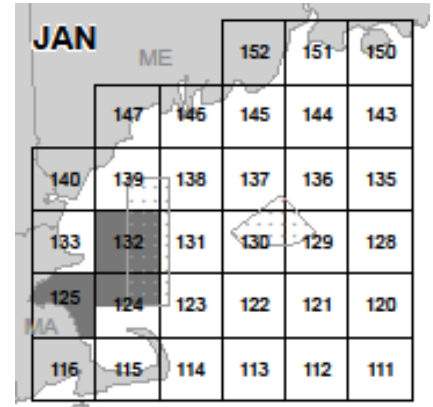
² The intersection of 42°00'N latitude and the Massachusetts coastline.



POINT	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
DEC1	42°30'N	(1)
DEC2	42°30'N	70°00'W
DEC3	42°00'N	70°00'W
DEC4	42°00'N	(2)

¹ The intersection of 42°30' N latitude and the Massachusetts coastline.

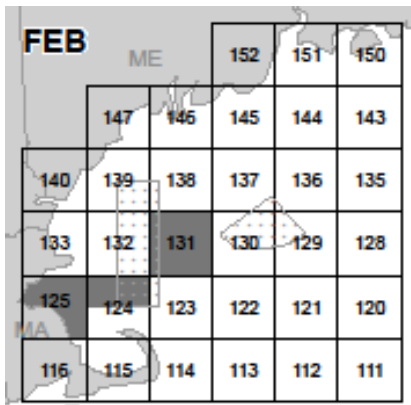
² The intersection of 42°00'N latitude and the Kingston, Massachusetts (mainland) coastline.



POINT	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
JAN1	42°30'N	(1)
JAN2	42°30'N	70°30'W
JAN3	43°00'N	70°30'W
JAN4	43°00'N	70°00'W
JAN5	42°15'N	70°00'W
JAN6	42°15'N	70°30'W
JAN7	42°00'N	70°30'W
JAN8	42°00'N	(2)

¹ The intersection of 42°30'N latitude and the Massachusetts coastline.

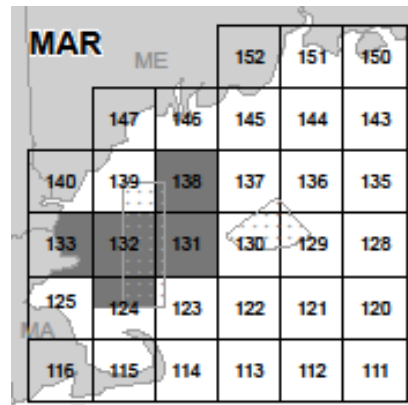
² The intersection of 42°00'N latitude and the Massachusetts coastline.



POINT	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
FEB1	42°30'N	(1)
FEB2	42°30'N	70°00'W
FEB3	43°00'N	70°00'W
FEB4	43°00'N	69°30'W
FEB5	42°30'N	69°30'W
FEB6	42°30'N	70°00'W
FEB7	42°15'N	70°00'W
FEB8	42°15'N	70°30'W
FEB9	42°00'N	70°30'W
FEB10	42°00'N	(2)

¹ The intersection of 42°30'N latitude and the Massachusetts coastline.

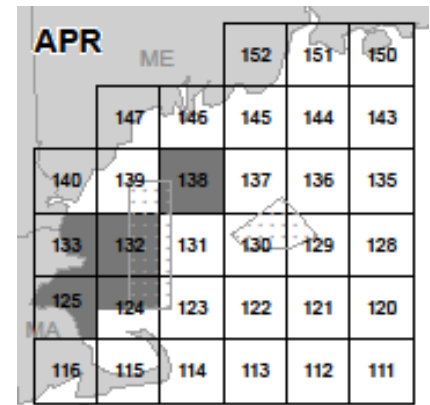
² The intersection of 42°00'N latitude and the Massachusetts coastline.



POINT	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
MAR1	43°00'N	(1)
MAR2	43°00'N	70°00'W
MAR3	43°30'N	70°00'W
MAR4	43°30'N	69°30'W
MAR5	42°30'N	69°30'W
MAR6	42°30'N	70°00'W
MAR7	42°15'N	70°00'W
MAR8	42°15'N	70°30'W
MAR9	42°30'N	70°30'W
MAR10	42°30'N	(2)

¹ The intersection of 43°00'N latitude and the New Hampshire coastline.

² The intersection of 42°30'N latitude and the Massachusetts coastline.



POINT	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
APR1	43°00'N	(1)
APR2	43°00'N	70°00'W
APR3	43°30'N	70°00'W
APR4	43°30'N	69°30'W
APR5	43°00'N	69°30'W
APR6	43°00'N	70°00'W
APR7	42°15'N	70°00'W
APR8	42°15'N	70°30'W
APR9	42°00'N	70°30'W
MAR10	42°0'N	(2)

¹ The intersection of 43°00'N latitude and the New Hampshire coastline.

² The intersection of 42°00'N latitude and the Massachusetts coastline.

Commercial trip limits

All commercial fishing vessels, regardless of common pool permit category or whether enrolled in sectors, may not possess or land more than 200 lb of cod per trip from the Gulf of Maine. Sector provisions that require all legal-sized cod to be landed are temporarily suspended; meaning vessels that catch more than 200 pounds of cod must discard any overage at sea. Sector Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE) for fishing year 2014 is unchanged by this action and remains in effect. It also remains constraining; once a sector exhausts available ACE, it must cease operations in the Broad Stock Area or secure additional ACE. Cod onboard must be separated from other species of fish and readily available for inspection. The GOM cod stock is in poor condition. For this reason, we strongly encourage fishermen to avoid catching cod to minimize fishing mortality and to avoid the need to discard catch beyond the 200-lb trip limit.

Recreational catch prohibition

Federally permitted recreational vessels, including federally permitted party and charter vessels, and any other recreational vessel in the Exclusive Economic Zone, may not possess or land GOM cod. We encourage recreational fishermen to practice good fish handling and release techniques to minimize post-release stress and mortality. Some preliminary studies indicate a higher survivability for fish taken on baited hooks, in large part because this type of set up more frequently results in mouth hooking. By contrast, jigging tends to hook fish more often in the head or body. Please consider using baited hooks in lieu of unbaited lures/jigs in areas where cod may be found.

Commercial fishery declaration change

Commercial fishing vessels declaring into the GOM Broad Stock Area may only fish within that area for the duration of the declared trip. You may still fish in any combination of the other broad stock areas (inshore Georges Bank, offshore Georges Bank, and/or Southern New England); however, you may not fish in one of these other areas then flex to the GOM Broad Stock Area.

Gillnet exemption change

Sector day gillnet vessels will be receiving a revised letter of authorization (LOA) revoking the exemption on the number and type of gillnets that may be fished within the GOM Broad Stock Area. Under the revised LOA, day gillnet vessels will be subject to the existing net restrictions in section 648.80: No more than 100 gillnets of 300 feet, or 50 fathoms, in length. Of these 100 gillnets, no more than 50 gillnets may be rigged for roundfish (i.e., gillnets that are constructed with floats on the float line and that have no tie-down twine between the float line and the lead line). Gillnets in the GOM regulated mesh area must be tagged with two tags per net.

Gulf of Maine Haddock

Following a recent GOM haddock assessment, and at the request of the New England Fishery Management Council, NOAA Fisheries has implemented an emergency action to increase GOM haddock catch limits for the duration of fishing year 2014. Table 1 below compares the previous fishing year 2014 catch limits with the revised catch limits. Tables 2 and 3 below show the revised sector and common pool catch limits. Because catch models suggest that the recreational fishery has likely already exceeded the revised catch limit of 173 mt this fishing year, we did not modify recreational management measures for GOM haddock in this action.

Table 1. Revised Fishing Year 2014 GOM Haddock Catch Limits

Catch Level	Previous Fishing Year 2014 Levels (mt)	Revised Fishing Year 2014 Levels (mt)
Overfishing Limit of Catch	440	1085
Acceptable Biological Catch	341	677
Total Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	323	641
Groundfish sub-ACL	307	610
Sector sub-ACL	218	432
Common Pool sub-ACL	2	4
Recreational sub-ACL	87	173
State Waters ACL subcomponent	5	10
Other ACL subcomponent	7	15
Mid-Water Trawl sub-ACL	3	6

Table 2. Preliminary GOM Haddock Annual Catch Entitlement by Sector for Fishing Year 2014 (lb)

Sector Name	Previous Fishing Year 2014 Allocation	Revised Allocation
Fixed Gear Sector	8,922.32	17,520.18
Maine Coast Community Sector	12,375.78	24,301.54
Maine Permit Bank	5,431.97	10,666.42
NEFS 1	12.03	23.63
NEFS 2	79,343.13	155,801.06
NEFS 3	45,030.20	88,422.95
NEFS 4	40,511.81	79,550.47
NEFS 5	1,406.55	2,761.95
NEFS 6	18,660.52	36,642.48
NEFS 7	2,275.42	4,468.11
NEFS 8	974.47	1,913.50
NEFS 9	23,256.90	45,668.10
NEFS 10	12,284.38	24,122.06
NEFS 11	15,567.10	30,568.12
NEFS 13	4,793.20	9,412.10
NCCS	1,744.68	3,425.92
New Hampshire Permit Bank	150.95	296.41
Sustainable Harvest Sector 1	207,161.20	406,789.26
Sustainable Harvest Sector 3	316.08	620.67
Sector Total	480,218.69	942,974.93
Common Pool	4,798.26	9,422.05

NEFS = Northeast Fishery Sector, NCCS = Northeast Coastal Communities Sector

Table 3. GOM Haddock Common Pool Trimester TACs for fishing year 2014 (mt)

Trimester	Trimester Allocations	Previous Fishing Year 2014 Allocation	Revised Allocation
Trimester 1	27%	.51	1.17
Trimester 2	26%	.49	1.12
Trimester 3	47%	.88	2.03

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I find additional information?	<p>Because there was a need to develop these actions, including this bulletin, quickly, an abbreviated FAQ is provided. More information can be found in the specific rules and analyses either on Regulations.gov or http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies/index.html. These documents provide detailed explanations of how the interim measures were derived and why they differ from many of the measures initially discussed by the New England Fishery Management Council. For information by telephone, call the Greater Atlantic Regional Office’s Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315.</p>
Can I still recreationally fish in the Western Gulf of Maine Closure (WGOM) Area under the interim measures?	<p>Yes; however, you may not fish in the WGOM Closure Areas that overlap the Seasonal Interim Closure Areas shown on page 2 of this bulletin. For party and charter vessels, a letter of authorization (LOA) is required to do so. Previously issued LOAs are being invalidated and revised LOAs will be sent from the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office to all federally permitted party and charter vessels. Contact the Permit Office at (978)281-9370 for more information. Note the Rolling Closure LOA is suspended for the duration of the interim action. This is because the rolling closures are temporarily replaced by the Seasonal Interim Closure Areas that prohibit recreational fishing with gear capable of catching cod.</p>
Do the closures and recreational prohibitions apply to state waters?	<p>Yes, if you are operating a federally permitted Northeast multispecies commercial, party, or charter vessel. Individual states may impose restrictions on vessels that are not federally permitted and/or private anglers. Please check with the marine fisheries management agency or agencies for individual states for more information.</p>
How will the single-stock area declaration work?	<p>If you declare multiple areas through your Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) you will be notified that you may only fish in the GOM or in other areas but not both GOM and other areas. This will split the Redfish Exemption Area for sector vessels, so it will be necessary for redfish fishermen to make either GOM or Georges Bank redfish trips. Should you ultimately fish in the GOM and another Broad Stock Area on a trip, you will be in violation and subject to enforcement action. This measure is intended to make sure that the attribution of catch to a stock area is improved while the interim action is in effect.</p>
Can I transit Closure Areas?	<p>Yes, transiting is allowed. The existing provision for area gear stowage and transiting closed areas remain in effect under the interim action. Gear must be stowed and unavailable for use.</p>
Won’t commercial trip limits and zero possession for recreational fishery cause fishermen to throw back cod, most of which will die anyway?	<p>The cod stock is in poor shape—the trip limit is intended to dissuade catch of cod. In instances where commercial fishermen catch more than 200 lb, they will have to discard fish and the mortality associated with most commercial gears is high. Recreationally caught fish have a higher survival rate and studies indicate this can be further improved by good handling and release techniques and making use of baited hooks that are more likely to hook cod in the mouth. We encourage fishermen to actively avoid cod whenever possible. Don’t catch it, and you won’t have to discard it. Possession of, or landing more than, 200 lb of cod on a trip will be subject to enforcement action.</p>
Does this action change existing Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Closure Areas?	<p>No. In many places there is overlap between the Interim Seasonal Closure Areas and the Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Areas, but the take reduction closures remain in full force and effect during the interim rule period. For more information on the Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Closure Areas visit: http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/porptrp/ or call the Greater Atlantic Region’s Take Reduction Plan Coordinator at (978) 282-8481.</p>