



Northeast Region Bulletin

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Date Issued: 4/30/2013

GROUND FISH SECTOR AND EXEMPTION APPROVAL

Announcement of approved sector operations plans
Explanation of exemptions that have been granted
Effective Date: May 1, 2013

We have approved the following 17 sectors to operate in fishing year (FY) 2013 (May 1, 2013 through April 30, 2014):

- Georges Bank Cod Fixed Gear Sector (FGS)
- Maine Coast Community Sector (MCCS)
- Northeast Coastal Communities Sector (NCCS)
- Northeast Fishery Sectors (NEFS) II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, 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 multispecies 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 23 additional exemptions for 2013. However, 5 of these exemptions were made irrelevant by approval of measures in Frameworks 48 and 50, and are not included in this letter.

Frequently Asked Questions

Which exemptions apply to me?	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.
What about the other exemptions my sector asked for?	Only the exemptions listed on the table are approved. All other exemptions requested by sectors were denied.
Whom do I contact with questions about my sector’s exemptions?	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.

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, Northeast Region.

What do the exemptions mean?	Exemptions are briefly explained below:
The 120-day gillnet block out of the fishery	A gillnet vessel granted this exemption is not required to declare and take 120 days out of the gillnet fishery in 2013.
The 20-day spawning block	A vessel granted this exemption is not required to stop fishing for groundfish for a 20-day period between March 1 and May 31 of 2013.
The prohibition on hauling another vessel's gillnet gear	This exemption allows multiple vessels participating in the same sector to haul each other's gillnet gear. Each vessel using this exemption must tag each gillnet it intends to haul with one tag.
The number of gillnets that may be hauled on GB when fishing on a groundfish/monkfish DAS	This exemption allows a vessel issued both a groundfish permit and a monkfish permit to haul all of their gillnets on a single GB trip.
The number of hooks that may be fished	A vessel granted this exemption has no limit on the number of hooks they may fish within any of the Regulated Mesh Areas.
The DAS Leasing Program length and horsepower restrictions	Any sector vessel granted this exemption may lease DAS to any other sector vessel also granted this exemption, regardless of a vessel's leasing length and horsepower baseline restrictions.
The prohibition on discarding	A vessel granted this exemption <u>must</u> discard <u>all</u> legal-sized unmarketable fish at sea (not on selected trips), and cannot land unmarketable fish.
Daily catch reporting by sector managers for sectors vessels fishing in the Closed Area (CA) I Hook Gear Haddock Special Access Program (SAP)	This exemption is specific to sector managers, and not to sector 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.
Powering a VMS while at the dock	This exemption allows a sector vessel to 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.
Prohibition on fishing inside and outside the CA I Hook Gear Haddock SAP while on the same trip	A vessel may fish both inside and outside the CA I Hook Gear Haddock SAP on the same trip, but is prohibited from setting or hauling fixed gear across the border of the SAP. The vessel will be required to report via VMS catch 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 the CA I Hook Gear Haddock SAP. Vessels declared into the CA I Hook Gear Haddock SAP may possess only demersal longline gear or tub trawl gear on the vessel during the trip.
The 6.5-inch minimum mesh size requirement on targeted redfish trips	This exemption allows a vessel to use codends with mesh size as small as 4.5 inches to target redfish, provided an industry-funded monitor is onboard. Sectors wishing to use this exemption must develop an industry-funded monitoring program. NMFS will monitor monthly catch thresholds of 80-percent redfish and a 5-percent groundfish discard limit.
The prohibition on a vessel hauling another vessel's hook gear	This exemption allows multiple vessels participating in the same sector to haul each other's hook gear. Each vessel intending to haul the hook gear must tag the gear consistent with §§ 648.14(k)(6)(ii)(B) and 648.84(a).
The requirement to declare intent to fish in the Eastern U.S./Canada SAP and the CA II Yellowtail flounder/Haddock SAP	This exemption allows a sector vessel to declare its intent to fish in these SAPs while at sea using VMS.

The limits on the number of gillnets for Day gillnet vessels*	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 June: Blocks 132 and 133 Vessels granted this exemption must tag each gillnet with one gillnet tag.
Gear requirements in the U.S./Canada Management Area	This exemption allows for the use of any trawl gear in the U.S./Canada Management Area.
Seasonal restrictions for the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock SAP	This exemption allows a sector vessel to access the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock SAP from May 1 to December 31 with any gear approved for use in the Eastern U.S./Canada Area, including the standard otter trawl.
Seasonal restrictions for the CA II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP	This exemption allows a sector vessel to access the CA II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP from May 1 to January 31 when using selective gear approved for use in the SAP, or the standard otter trawl.
Sampling Exemption	A vessel participating in a sector granted this exemption may temporarily retain fish for sampling purposes.
Additional Sector Provisions	A sector may include additional provisions in its operations plan. Please consult your sector manager for information on any additional provisions.

*Please note that this exemption has been modified from previous years.