

**SKYMATE VMS INSTRUCTIONS
FOR AREA DECLARATION AND CATCH/DISCARD REPORTING
IN THE U.S./CANADA MANAGEMENT AREA**

Amendment 13 to the Northeast (NE) Multispecies Fishery Management Plan requires that all groundfish days-at-sea (DAS) vessels intending to fish within the U.S./Canada Management Area, including the Closed Area II (CA II) Yellowtail Flounder Special Access Program (SAP), possess and use a certified vessel monitoring system (VMS). In order to participate in these programs, groundfish DAS vessel owners or operators are required to submit specific information electronically via VMS.

There are currently two VMS vendors certified by the National Marine Fisheries Service: Boatracs and Skymate. A previous letter sent to you on April 21, 2004, provided instructions for declaring into the U.S./Canada Management Area using a Boatracs VMS unit. **This letter is intended to provide instructions on how to enter information required to participate within the U.S./Canada Management Area using a Skymate VMS unit.**

Groundfish DAS vessels fishing within the U.S./Canada Management Area are required to submit the following information via VMS:

- Declaration of the intent to fish within the U.S./Canada Management Area;
- Declaration of the area intended to be fished within the U.S./Canada Management Area, including the CA II Yellowtail Flounder SAP;
- Declaration of the category of DAS that will be used within the U.S./Canada Management Area or any associated SAPs within this area; and
- Daily electronic reporting of the amount of catch and any discard of cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder while fishing within the U.S./Canada Management Areas.

Declaration of Intent to Fish Within the U.S./Canada Management Area: Prior to leaving the dock on a fishing trip into the U.S./Canada Management Area and any associated SAP contained within this area, vessel operators are required to indicate their intent to fish within the U.S./Canada Management Area by selecting the U.S./Canada activity code from the VMS main menu.

Declaration of Area Intended to be Fished Within the U.S./Canada Management Area:

Vessels must specify which particular area they intend to fish in and what category of DAS they intend to use during their trip. For VMS declaration purposes only, the following areas within the U.S./Canada Management Area may be selected (see attached chart):

- | <u>Area</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|--------------------|--|
| 1 | <u>CA II Yellowtail Flounder SAP:</u> Category A, B Regular, or B Reserve DAS may be used. |
| 2 | <u>Eastern U.S./Canada Area Outside of CAII:</u> Only Category A DAS may be used. |
| 3 | <u>Both the Eastern U.S./Canada and the CAII Yellowtail Flounder SAP:</u> Only Category A DAS may be used. |
| 4 | <u>Western U.S./Canada Area Only:</u> Only Category A DAS may be used. |

To declare into the U.S./Canada Management Area using a Skymate VMS unit, follow these steps:

- **Open the Skymate program;**
- **Click on the NMFS-VMS icon** on the left side of the screen;
- **Click on “Activity”** to change your Days-at-Sea (DAS) Activity Code;
- **Select an activity code** by clicking on one of the options in the Activity Code drop down menu. A description of the activity code will appear to the right of the drop down menu. **Select “NMS-USC” for a trip into the U.S./Canada Management Area under a NE multispecies DAS;**
- **Select the area** you intend to fish in during your trip into the U.S./Canada Management Area by selecting one of the options from the Area drop down menu. For example, to fish in the Closed Area II (CA II) Yellowtail Flounder Special Access Program (SAP), Area 1, select Area 1 from the menu. A description of the area will appear to the right of the drop down menu.;
- **Select the DAS category** to be used. If you are fishing in the CA II Yellowtail Flounder SAP, you may select Category A or B DAS. Otherwise, you may only use Category A DAS; and
- **Click on Send** at the top of the screen to send the declaration.

Daily Catch Reporting:

Amendment 13 requires all vessels fishing within the U.S./Canada Management Area to report their catches of Georges Bank (GB) cod, GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder (including discards) through their VMS on a daily basis, depending on which area the vessel is fishing. These reports must be submitted in 24-hr intervals for each day beginning at 0000 hours and ending at 2400 hours. **The reports must be submitted by 0900 hours of the following day.**

- For vessels declaring into the Eastern U.S./Canada Area, the reports must include at least the following information: Total pounds of cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder caught and total pounds of cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder discarded.
- For vessels declaring into the Western U.S./Canada Area, the reports must include at least the following information: Total pounds of yellowtail flounder kept and total pounds of yellowtail flounder discarded.

To submit daily catch reports using a Skymate VMS unit, follow these steps:

- **Open the Skymate program;**
- **Click on the NMFS-VMS icon** on the left side of the screen;
- **Click on “Catch”** to send a catch report for the U.S./Canada Management Area;
- Enter the amount of cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder caught and discarded in the appropriate fields; and
- **Click on Send** at the top of the screen to send the declaration.

It is estimated that declaring into the U.S./Canada Management Area and selecting the appropriate DAS category will take approximately five minutes to complete, including the time to read the instructions and menu options, for each submission. Daily reporting of catch and discards is estimated to take approximately 15 minutes, including the time to read the instructions and menu options.

This information is required to track and monitor DAS usage, participation in SAPs, enforce possession and landings regulations, and to monitor the catch and discard rates for cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder within the U.S./Canada Management Area. It is anticipated that the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support publicly disseminated information. NOAA Fisheries will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information.

Eastern and Western U.S./Canada Areas, Including Fishing Areas Within the U.S./Canada Management Area for VMS Declaration Purposes Only

