



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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Fishery Council Approves Actions To Protect Declining Cod

NEWPORT, RI Responding to scientific information indicating that Gulf of Maine cod, an inshore stock of fish that has been harvested by local fishermen for generations, has declined to historic low levels, the New England Fishery Management Council (Council, NEFMC) this week voted on new fishing rules to remedy the problem.

While emergency measures put in place last week by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service will likely remain in effect at least until April 30, 2015, the Council's intent is to replace the agency's restrictions with those listed below beginning on May 1, 2015, the start of the next fishing year.

Each of the following proposals, pending NOAA Fisheries' review and final approval, will have direct economic impacts on fishermen, particularly the small, inshore day-boat fleet fishing primarily for traditional finfish species off the coasts of MA, NH and southern ME:

- An annual catch limit of just over 850,000 pounds for the 2015 groundfish (cod, haddock, pollock and flounders) fishing year, a level that represents a 75 percent drop in the amount of Gulf of Maine cod that will be allocated to both commercial and recreational fishermen; last year's limit of about 3.5 million pounds was considered extremely low by the fishing industry.
- Seasonal Gulf of Maine Cod Protection Areas that would apply to all commercial fishing boats that fish for of groundfish; when the stock size increases to a defined level (50% of the biomass needed to produce maximum sustainable yield), information reviewed by the Council would be used to determine if the closures should remain in effect. The blocks in the description below are areas used to regulate many fishing activities off the New England coast. Maps follow on the next page.

May: Blocks 132,133,138,139,140 and 125 North of 42° 20'

June: Blocks 132,139,140,146,147 and 125 North of 42° 20'

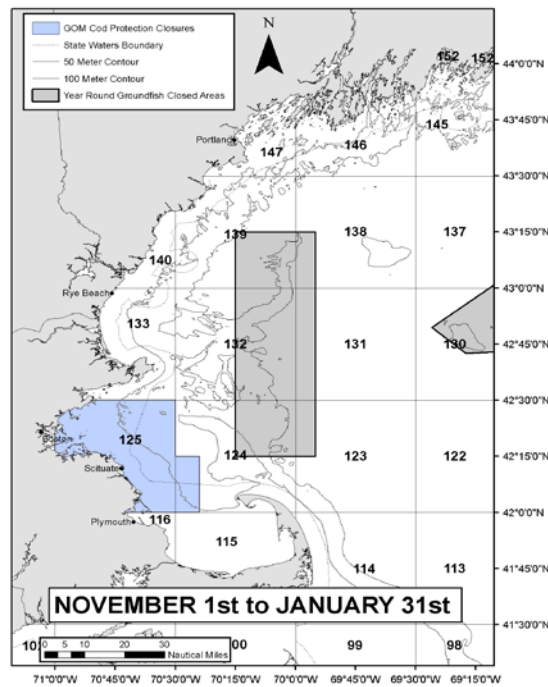
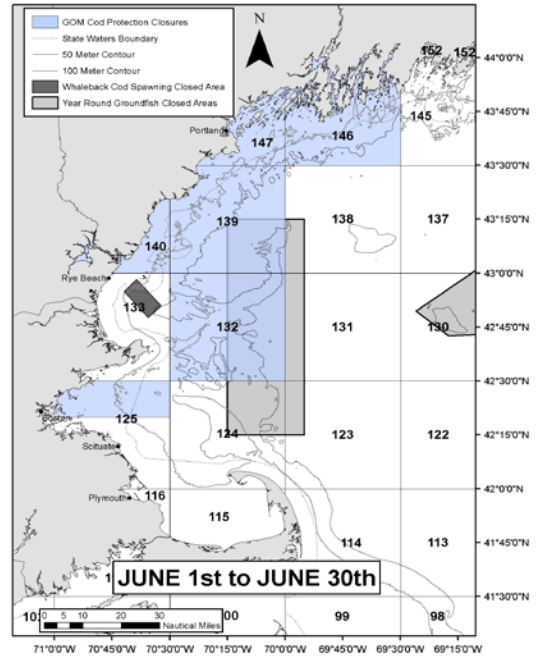
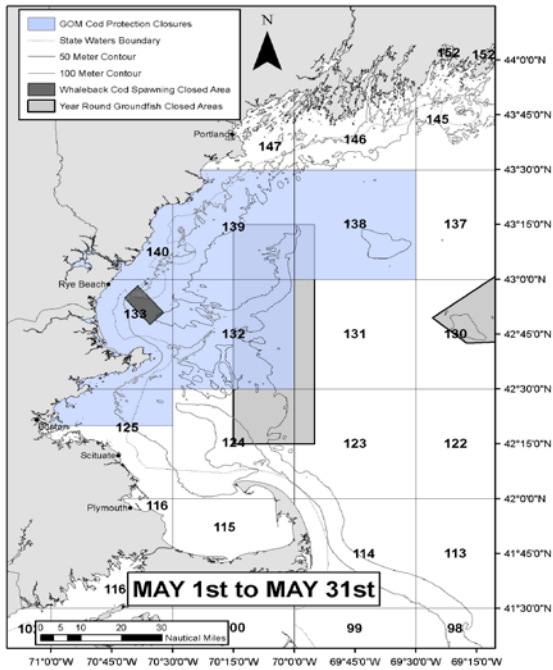
November – January: Block 125 and a portion of block 124;

(The Whaleback Area currently in place to protect spawning cod would remain closed).

The Council-approved configuration of closures would allow healthy groundfish stocks to be harvested, and do not close areas where cod spawning has been infrequent.

- The recreational fishery, including party and charter boats, would not be subject to the new closed areas, but also would not be able to catch and retain any Gulf of Maine cod when fishing there. This last measure is intended to allow that segment of that fishery continue to operate on stocks that are not overfished, such as haddock and other species.

Finally, based on a lack of scientific information, the need to coordinate with its fishery management partners --- the coastal New England states and the Atlantic States Maine Fisheries Commission as well as NOAA Fisheries --- the Council voted by a wide margin that lobster pots would not be eliminated from fishing in the cod protection areas.



The New England Council is one of eight organizations created by federal legislation in 1976 to conserve and manage fishery resources from three to 200 miles off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

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