

1. Approval of Amendment 16: The Council reviewed public comments and selected a proposed action for the measures in Amendment 16. Key elements of their decisions are:

a. Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) were adopted. Included in this decision was the adoption of a Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendation for modifying groundfish control rules. Actual ACLs will be set this fall, based on Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs) that will be set by the SSC in early August.

b. The Council adopted extensive revisions to policies applicable to sectors. In addition to clarifying administrative requirements for sectors (how they are formed, what reports are needed, enforcement provisions, etc.), the Council modified how the potential sector contribution (i.e. PSC or permit history) is calculated for each permit. For almost all stocks, PSC will be based on landings history alone for the years FY 96-2006. For permits committed to the two existing sectors, the GB cod PSC will be as allocated when the sectors formed (history alone, 96-01). Dockside and at-sea monitoring requirements were established. The levels of dockside monitoring required begin at 50 pct of trips in FY 2010 and declines to 20 pct of trips in future years. Less than 100 pct at-sea monitoring is proposed with details to be coordinated between sectors and NMFS (NERO and NEFSC). Sectors will be allowed to transfer their annual catch entitlement, or ACE. Sector members will also be granted universal exemptions from some of the rolling closures in the inshore Gulf of Maine (but not all).

c. Seventeen new sectors were authorized, and modifications were made to the two existing sectors.

d. For vessels not entering sectors, effort control option 3A was selected. This option counts days-at-sea in 24 hour increments, reduces allocated Category A DAS by 50 percent from FW 42 allocations, removes differential DAS counting areas, and increases trip limits for many stocks.

e. GOM cod and GOM haddock will be allocated to the commercial and recreational components of the groundfish fishery. The allocation will be based on years 2001-2006.

f. For rec fishermen, the prohibition on the retention of GOM cod will be extended to April 15, two weeks (this may be modified after PDT review). This was required even though the allocation is based on 2001-2006 because the SSC advice on ABC control rules almost doubles the mortality reduction needed for GOM cod that was targeted in the draft amendment. Fillets from legal-sized fish can be landed with skin-off (a small amount of skin is kept on for ID purposes), and the limit on hooks is removed.

g. Accountability measures (AMs) were adopted for the commercial fishery. For non-sector vessels, the differential DAS option will be used in FY 2010 and FY 2011, but will be replaced by the hard TAC option in FY 2012. For sector vessels, the AM is the hard TAC components of the sector policies.

h. AMs were adopted for the recreational fishery. NMFS NERO will consult with the Council when selecting AMs (this is Option 3 for those familiar with the draft amendment document).

i. Atlantic wolffish was added to the management unit.

j. For both commercial and recreational vessels, the minimum size for haddock is reduced to 18 inches; the minimum size for halibut is increased to 41 inches; and the retention of wolffish is prohibited.

There were numerous other decisions. I should emphasize that none of these decisions will change regulations until reviewed, approved, and implemented by NMFS. The expectation is that the draft amendment will be submitted later this summer, a proposed rule will be published in fall or winter, and a final rule will be published in time for implementation on May 1, 2010.

2. The Council received a report from the SSC on setting groundfish ABCs. The SSC will set ABCs based on 75 pct of  $F_{MSY}$  or  $F_{rebuild}$  (if lower than 75 pct of  $F_{MSY}$ ). The SSC also provided advice on setting

ABCs when these values are unknown or projections are not recommended. As noted above, this advice was incorporated into Amendment 16.

3. In another action that may be of interest to groundfish industry members, the Council directed the Interspecies Committee to draft a proposal to combine and consolidate, to the extent possible, all current FMPs.

Please contact me if you have any questions or corrections.