



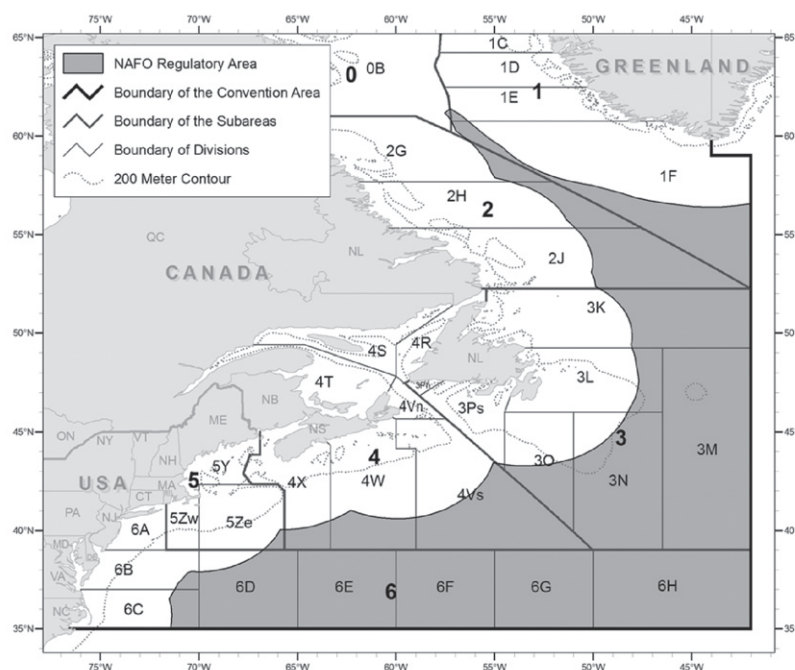
The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

NOAA Seeking Participation in Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization

The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) is a regional fisheries management organization that coordinates scientific study and cooperative management of the fisheries resources of the Northwest Atlantic Ocean, except for salmon, tunas/marlin, whales and sedentary species (e.g., shellfish). NAFO was established in 1979 and there are currently 12 contracting parties: The U.S.; Canada; France, in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon; the European Union; Denmark, in respect of Greenland and the Faroe Islands; Russian Federation; Japan; Cuba; Iceland; Norway; Republic of Korea; and Ukraine.

The United States signed on to the NAFO Convention in 1995 and has participated in NAFO proceedings since then. There are three U.S. commissioners—John Bullard, our Regional Administrator, is the head of the delegation; Dr. Michael Sissenwine represents the New England Fishery Management Council; and Maggie Raymond of the Associated Fisheries of Maine is the fishing industry representative.

The Commissioners advocate for U.S. interests on fishing access and conservation objectives at NAFO meetings. In addition, scientists from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center are active on the NAFO Science Council, including the current chair of Science Council,



Katherine Sosebee, who has led the main scientific body of the organization for two years. Staff from the NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, General Counsel Northeast and Enforcement and Litigation, International Affairs, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Coast Guard all support NAFO through a variety of committees and other tasks.

For the past several years, two U.S. fishing vessels have targeted yellowtail flounder and Atlantic halibut in NAFO waters. This year, three additional vessels were permitted to join the U.S. NAFO fleet. In addition to owners of active fishing vessels, the public can participate in NAFO as a member of the Consultative Committee. Membership on this Committee is open to representatives from the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the states represented on those Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the fishing industry, including seafood processors, and others knowledgeable or experienced in the conservation and management of fisheries in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean.

A *Federal Register* announcement soliciting nominations (including self-nominations) will be publishing soon. Information on how to apply for membership is detailed in the announcement. We are also planning an in-person Consultative Committee meeting at the end of August at the Regional Office in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Please contact Moira Kelly (978-281-9218; Moira.Kelly@noaa.gov) or Patrick Moran (301-427-8370; Pat.Moran@noaa.gov) for more information.

How to Groundfish and Lobster on the Same Trip

Vessels owners with federal groundfish permits recently asked us about fishing for groundfish and lobster on the same trip.

You can fish for lobster and groundfish on a single trip if:

You do not hold a federal groundfish permit and are fishing for groundfish exclusively in state waters. You may not possess groundfish caught in state waters while hauling your traps in federal waters.

You are fishing under a federal groundfish permit and a non-trap federal lobster permit. No lobster traps may be used. There is a limit of 100 lobsters per 24 hours, and a total limit of 500 lobsters. You may not harvest lobsters from Maine state waters or land lobsters in Maine per state regulations.

You are hauling lobster traps on a declared groundfish trip on a federally-permitted groundfish vessel (only Federal groundfish permit categories A, C, and E only), and are only using hook gear to target groundfish. You may not target groundfish with non-trap gear capable of catching lobster (for example trawl or gillnet gears). You cannot haul traps while fishing under a Handgear A, Handgear B, or Category D hook permit because you can only use/possess hook gear when targeting groundfish, and cannot use electric reels, winches, or haulers under a handgear permit.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I haul traps while fishing for groundfish with a handgear permit?

No. When fishing for groundfish under a federal Handgear A, Handgear B, or Category D hook permit, you may only use and/or possess hook gear onboard while fishing for groundfish. You are not allowed to haul traps. You may only have handgear onboard the vessel (rod/reel, tub trawl), and cannot use electric reels, winches, or haulers to fish under a handgear permit.

Q: Do I need to remove my trap hauler from my boat when fishing with my handgear permit?

No. You do not need to remove your trap hauler from your vessel. However, it is illegal to haul lobster gear when fishing for groundfish with a federal Handgear A, Handgear B, or Category D hook permit.

Q: What species are considered groundfish under federal regulations? What are the limits?

A vessel must have a federal groundfish permit to harvest the following species from federal waters: halibut, cod, haddock, pollock, redfish, white hake, winter flounder (blackback), witch flounder (gray

sole), yellowtail flounder, and American plaice (dabs).

Common pool vessels are subject to DAS and trip limits found at this link, <https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/regs/infodocs/multipossessionlimits.pdf>.

Sector vessels are not subject to trip limits for allocated groundfish stocks. However, sectors must have enough quota for all harvest by sector members. Sector fishermen should discuss their fishing plans with their sector manager.

Sector and common pool vessels can only possess 1 halibut per trip. A vessel must hold a federal groundfish permit to possess halibut in federal waters.

Q: How do I know what category of permit I have, or what gears are allowed under my permit?

If you are uncertain about your permit category or the regulations associated with your permits, contact NOAA Fisheries at 978-281-9315. You can also log into Fish OnLine to review your permit information (<https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/apps/login/login>).

If you have additional questions, contact our Sustainable Fisheries Division at 978-281-9315.

THIS SUPPLEMENT PROVIDED BY NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE'S GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE

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The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

Reminder: Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Gear Marking Requirements

Surface Buoy Marking

MARK SURFACE BUOYS WITH:

- the owner's boat registration number and/or US vessel documentation number; or
- Federal commercial fishing permit number; or
- Whatever positive identification is required by the vessel's home-port state.

When marking is not already required by state or federal regulations, the letters and numbers must meet the following requirements:

- At least 1-inch (2.5cm) in height;
- Block letters or Arabic numbers; and
- In a color that contrasts with the color of the buoy.

Buoy Line Marking

MARK BUOY LINES WITH:

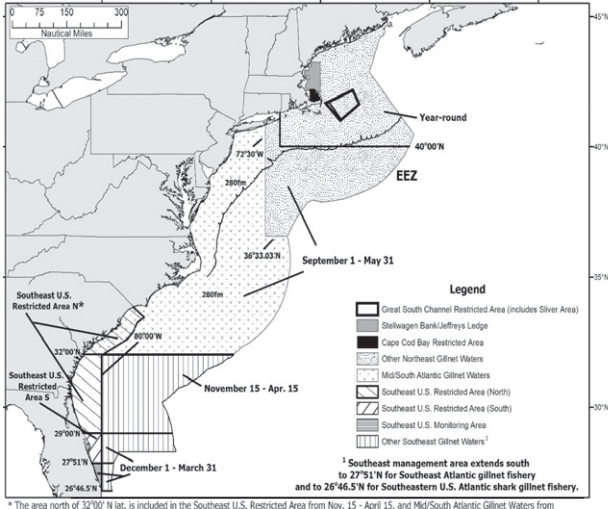
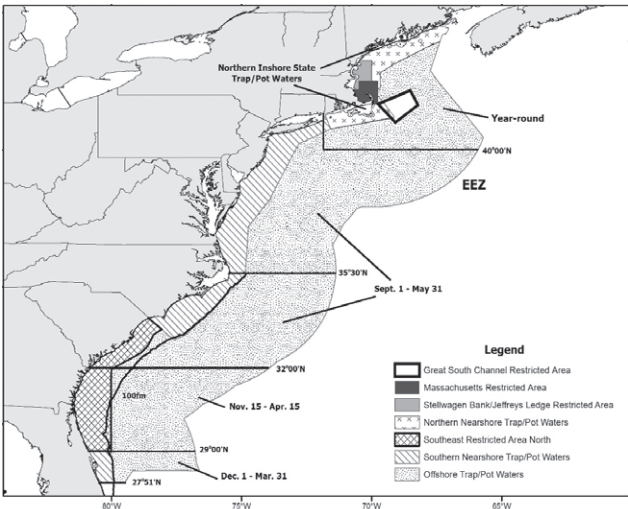
THREE 12 inch (30.48 cm) colored marks: one at the top of the buoy line, one midway along the buoy line, and one at the bottom of the buoy line.

If the mark consists of two colors, EACH COLOR mark may be 6-inches for a TOTAL MARK of 12-inches.

Each color code must be permanently affixed on or along the line, and each color code must be clearly visible when the gear is hauled or removed from the water.

For more information, visit www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/whaletrp.

Questions? Contact (in Northeast) John Higgins, 978-771-3669, John.Higgins@noaa.gov or (in Mid/South Atlantic) Glenn Salvador, 757-414-0128, Glenn.Salvador@noaa.gov.



WHY IS GEAR MARKING REQUIRED?

The Plan requires that you mark surface buoys and buoy lines to help us understand where and how whales become entangled in trap/pot and gillnet gear. Marks differ based on gear type and location fished. Be sure to use the correct marking for your area/gear type.

GEAR MARKING COLOR	APPLICABLE TRAP/POT MANAGEMENT AREA
RED	Massachusetts Restricted Area Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters Stellwagen Bank Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area Great South Channel Restricted Area overlapping Lobster Management Area (LMA) 2 and/or the Outer Cape (OC) LMA.
ORANGE	Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters.
BLACK	Offshore Trap/Pot Waters; Great South Channel Restricted Area overlapping with the LMA 2/3 Overlap and/or LMA 3
BLUE & ORANGE	Southeast Restricted Area North- state waters
GREEN & ORANGE	Southeast Restricted Area North- Federal waters
RED & BLUE	Min. trap per trawl exempt RI state waters (singles)
RED & WHITE	Min. trap per trawl exempt MA state waters in LMA 1 (singles)
RED & BLACK	Min. trap per trawl exempt MA state waters in LMA 2 (singles)
RED & YELLOW	Min. trap per trawl exempt MA waters in Outer Cape (singles)
RED & PURPLE	Jordan Basin (Trap/Pot) overlapping LMA 1
BLACK & PURPLE	Jordan Basin (Trap/Pot) overlapping Offshore Trap/Pot Waters
RED & ORANGE	Isle of Shoals group, Maine
RED & GREEN	Jeffreys Ledge (Trap/Pot)

GEAR MARKING COLOR	APPLICABLE GILLNET MANAGEMENT AREA
RED & GREEN	Jeffreys Ledge (Trap/Pot)
GREEN & BLACK	Jeffreys Ledge (Gillnet)
GREEN & YELLOW	Jordan Basin (Gillnet)
BLUE & ORANGE	Southeast Restricted Area North (state waters)
GREEN & ORANGE	Southeast Restricted Area North (Federal waters)
GREEN	Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Gillnet Area Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area Other Northeast Gillnet Waters (Northeast & Mid-Atlantic)
BLUE	Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters
YELLOW	Excluding Shark Gillnet: Southeast US Restricted Area South* Other Southeast Gillnet Waters*
GREEN & BLUE	Shark Gillnet (with webbing of 5" or greater) Southeast US Monitoring Area* Southeast US Restricted Area South* Other Southeast Gillnet Waters*

*Southeast gillnet management areas also require that each gillnet panel be marked along both the floatline and the leadline at least once every 100 yards, unless otherwise required.

It's OK to Eat Small Haddock!

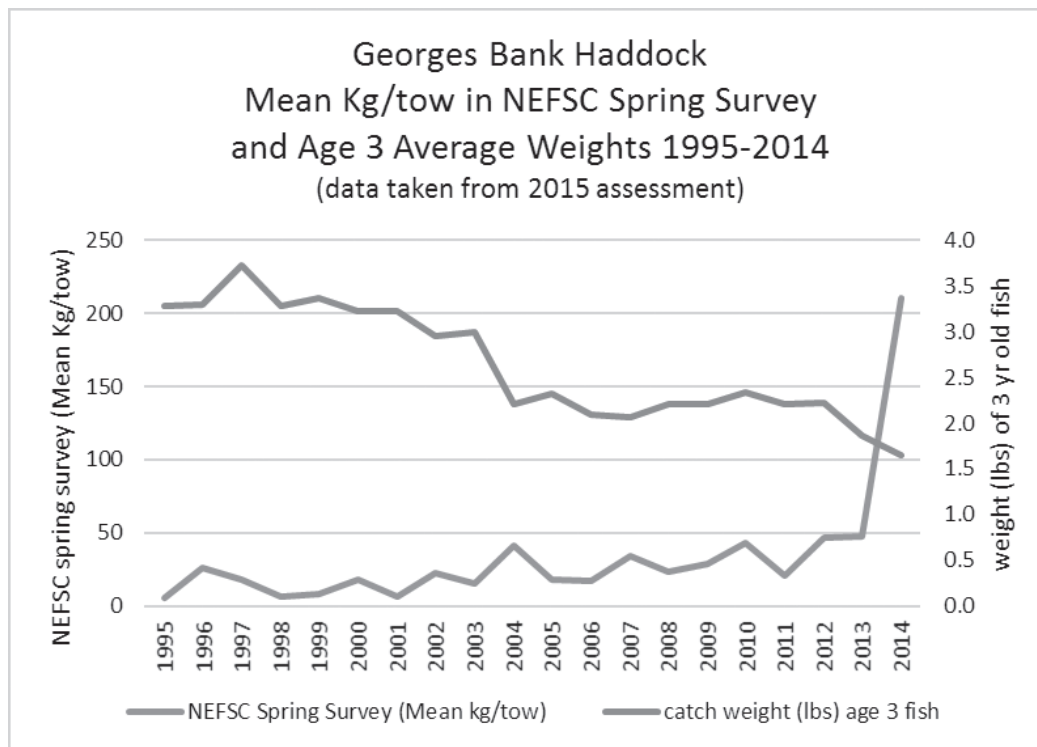
These days, much of the haddock caught on Georges Bank are fairly small, falling into the 'scrod' or 'snapper' market categories. However, small fish size isn't necessarily an indicator of poor stock health.

Since 1995, the average size of individual fish of all ages in the Georges haddock stock declined, while the population size increased (see figure).

Georges Bank haddock abundance relative to Age 3 fish weight. (Source: 2015 Georges Bank Haddock Assessment)

Some people believe the amount of small haddock currently being landed is unsustainable because those fish have not yet been able to reproduce. However, according to data from the most recent stock assessment in 2015, about 90% of Georges Bank haddock are mature at age 3. In recent years, the age of a 16-inch haddock, the current commercial minimum size, ranged from 2-5 years old. This means with most 16-inch fish, being about 4 years old, they likely already had one chance to spawn, maybe even two!

If the average size of a Georges Bank haddock has declined since 1995, how did the population size increase? This is because these fish are generally able to spawn before being harvested, contributing to the future size of the stock, and the health of the fishery.



Historically, this scenario has been seen before. A decline in the average size of Georges Bank haddock also happened in the mid-1960s when a large number of haddock were born in 1963 and grew into the population.

Today, the Georges Bank haddock stock is plentiful. But over the last several years, fishermen have caught only a small fraction of the annual quota.* In fact, they caught less than 9 percent of the Georges Bank haddock quota during fishing year 2016 (May 2016 - April 2017). The Gulf of Maine haddock stock is also healthy, but it is just a

fraction of the size of the Georges Bank haddock stock

If there are so many Georges Bank haddock out there, why aren't fishermen landing them? Fishermen looking to catch haddock face obstacles such as limited quotas for other groundfish species, like cod, which are caught with haddock. They also face uncertain market conditions. The good news is many people in the fishing industry are working hard to improve the market for New England haddock, including seeking markets for smaller fish.

So the next time you see a small haddock on the dock, or at your local grocery store or fish market, know this fish stock is healthy and being managed sustainably. Most importantly, it is OK to buy and eat! When you do this, you are supporting local fishermen and helping improve the market for haddock. More information about Georges Bank haddock and how we

manage fish stocks in the U.S. can be found on NOAA's FishWatch website at www.fishwatch.gov.

For more information, contact Caleb Gilbert, Stakeholder Engagement Division, at 978-281-9338 or email him at Caleb.Gilbert@noaa.gov.

*See detailed stock harvest rates and quota availability since 2010 on the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Quota Monitoring webpage for NE Multispecies: <https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/monitoring/nemultispecies.html>.

NEFOP Staff Visit Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic Ports, Speak with Vessel Captains and Industry About Observer Coverage

Some of our Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) staff recently visited ports from Massachusetts to Virginia as part of a continuing outreach program aimed at addressing industry concerns and questions about the NEFOP observer program and federally-funded observer coverage in the upcoming years.

Observer coverage is determined each year through a rigorous statistical analysis to best use federal funds towards informing the status of fish and protected species abundance. If the coverage schedule is not reached, it can negatively affect the confidence in future estimates of fish, crustaceans, turtles, and marine mammals.

"It was all about improving communication and increasing our visibility in Northeast and Mid-Atlantic ports, and building healthy relationships with the industry as we move forward," said Rob Johnston, fishery biologist with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Woods Hole Laboratory, where NEFOP is based. The NEFOP staff visited 21 ports from Massachusetts to Virginia and spoke with more than three dozen vessel captains from the gillnet, trawl, pot & trap, and scallop fleets.

Feedback from fishermen ranged from "too



much observer coverage" to positive comments such as, "I don't mind taking them, and they are welcome any time." A permit holder mailing detailing the annual number of observer days that would be needed in each state was sent in advance. Our port agents and staff from companies that provide observers had also helped spread the word about the outreach visits. As a result, many industry people were looking forward to the

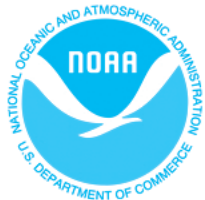
opportunity to discuss issues with the team, and learn more about observer coverage requirements and the method for determining seadays.

Discussion topics included observer coverage for the year, the method for determining seadays, and questions about selection letters, valise life rafts, U.S. Coast Guard vessel safety equipment requirements, and current uses of the observer data.

During the port visits, team members also met with staff at the Marine Resources Advisory Council in New York and with representatives from fishing companies and seafood dealers. One of the unexpected highlights was getting a tour of a new scallop vessel, the F/V *Madelyn*, by Mayor Kirk Larson of Barnegat Light, NJ.

"Some vessel captains are frustrated about having an extra person on board, but said it wasn't so bad once they get to know the observer

See NEFOP, page 4



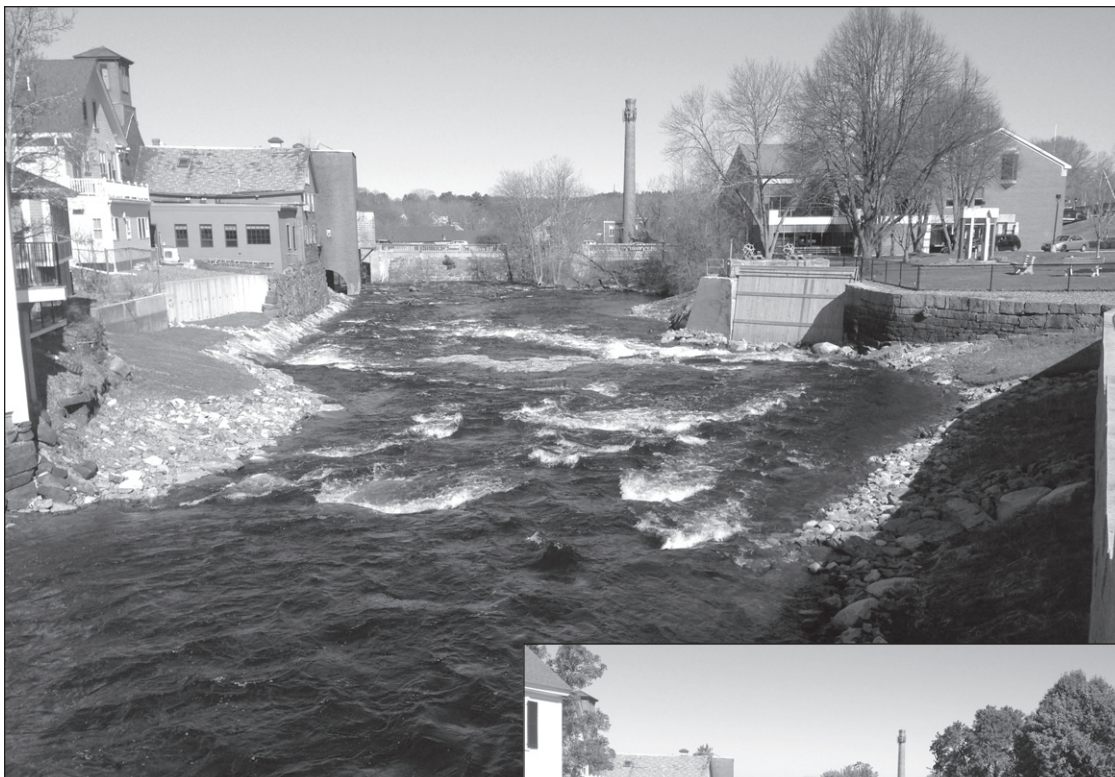
Dam Removal Enables Fish to Migrate Up the Exeter River

After nearly ten years of public meetings, fundraising, and permitting, the Exeter Great Dam in Exeter, New Hampshire was removed during the summer and fall of 2016. The dam was removed to eliminate a safety hazard and provide the right conditions for alewives, blueback herring, sea lamprey and American eels to migrate upstream to reach spawning and foraging habitat. The project restored almost 21 miles of the Exeter River to a free-flowing condition while also reducing water elevations in the downtown area of the Town of Exeter during flood events.

At one point, the dam had a fish ladder aimed at helping fish swim upstream past the dam, but it wasn't working as intended. Removing the dam and the ladder provided natural and unobstructed fish passage. As a result, the run of river herring is now expected to increase significantly in the Exeter River. River herring provide important forage in marine waters for a wide variety of commercially and recreationally valuable species such as striped bass, bluefish, bluefin tuna as well as marine mammals and sea birds.

Staff from NOAA Fisheries and New Hampshire Fish and Game's Coastal Program conducted site visits during peak fish migration in May. During these site visits, they documented successful migration over the ledge and falls at the location where the dam was removed. The project was funded by a variety of grant programs, including approximately \$651,000 from the NOAA Restoration Center and significant contributions from the Town of Exeter. The total project cost was just over \$1 million.

For more information, contact Eric Hutchins in our Habitat Conservation Division at 978-281-9313 or email him at Eric.Hutchins@noaa.gov.



Water levels at the Exeter Great Dam project before, at right, and after, above.

NOAA photos



Gulf of Maine Sea Scallop Surveys Planned

Initiated by NOAA Fisheries and the New England Fishery Management Council, at-sea surveys this summer will focus on sea scallops in the Gulf of Maine. The Council is seeking more information on updated scallop abundance from an area in the southern portion of the northern part of the Gulf of Maine scallop management area in order to support upcoming management decisions. In response, we added portions of the Northern Gulf of Maine Scallop Management Area to two existing surveys already planned in more southerly waters.

The additional work will be done under the Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program with funding from two current grants. The Coonamessett Farm Foundation will survey Stellwagen Bank and Jeffrey's Ledge with the Habcam optical imaging system, complemented by the deployment of a scallop survey dredge to collect biological samples. Also, the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology, will conduct a high-resolution drop-camera survey of Stellwagen Bank. Together, these data sets will inform upcoming decision-making by the Council.

Research set-aside programs are unique to federal fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region. No federal funds are provided to support the research. Instead, projects are awarded pounds of fish or sea scallops that have been "set aside" from the overall fishery allocation under the fishery management plan for this purpose. Successful applicants partner with the fishing industry to harvest their set-aside award to generate funds for the research. There are active research set-aside programs for Atlantic sea scallops, Atlantic herring, and monkfish.

Learn more about the Scallop RSA Program and previously funded research projects by visiting: https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/coopresearch/rsa_program.html.

For more information about these amended awards and the Scallop RSA Program, please contact Ryan Silva (ryan.silva@noaa.gov, 978-281-9326), Cheryl Corbett (cheryl.corbett@noaa.gov, 508-495-2070), or Jonathon Peros (jperos@nefmc.org, 978-465-0492).

NEFOP

Continued from page 3

and trust them on the vessel," said one team member. "We had a lot of questions from those who were willing to speak with us. We are optimistic about working together with the industry this year to achieve the days that have been determined to be needed.

The team spoke with vessel captains and owners in Hyannis Port, MA; Point Judith, RI; Montauk, Shinnecock and Mattituck on Long Island, NY; Belford, Barnegat Light, Cape May and Point Pleasant in NJ; Ocean City, MD; and Chincoteague, Wachapreague, Quinby, Davis Wharf, Oyster, Cape Charles, Virginia Beach, Newport News, and Hampton in VA. The NEFOP team plans to visit more Mid-Atlantic ports later in the year to continue the dialogue.

For more information, contact Rob Johnston, Fisheries Sampling Branch, at 508-495-2061 or email him at robert.johnston@noaa.gov.