



# Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

NOAA Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

For Information Contact:

<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/>

Sustainable Fisheries Division

(978) 281-9315

Date Issued: 4/30/2018

## **NORTHEAST MULTISPECIES (GROUND FISH)** **FISHING YEAR 2018 REGULATIONS**

*Effective Date: May 1, 2018*

We approved Framework Adjustment 57 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan and are announcing fishing year 2018 management measures for the groundfish fishery. To see which regulations apply to you, this Bulletin is divided into three sections:

**Framework 57 Measures** – page 1

**Common Pool Measures for 2018** – page 8

**Sector Measures for 2018** – page 12.

### **Framework Adjustment 57**

This letter briefly summarizes the Framework 57 measures that become effective on May 1, 2018. More detailed information can be found in the Framework 57 final rule at: [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) and on our [Multispecies page](#).

### **Fishing Year 2018 Catch Limits**

We set fishing year 2018 annual catch limits (ACL) for all 20 groundfish stocks based on 2017 operational groundfish assessments. The 2018 catch limits are listed in **Table 1**. Framework 57 increases quotas for 11 stocks compared to 2017, including: Georges Bank cod (139%), Gulf of Maine cod (41%), and Gulf of Maine haddock (190%). Quotas are decreasing for 9 stocks, including Southern New England yellowtail flounder (-75%) and Gulf of Maine winter flounder (-45%). The U.S./Canada quotas are shown in **Table 2**.

Because vessels may drop from sector rosters and join the common pool through April 30, 2018, the sector and common pool allocations included in this Bulletin may change. Also, after we finalize fishing year 2017 catch information, we will subtract any sector or common pool overages. Potential adjustments to the 2018 catch limits will be made in a future management action as close to May 1 as possible.

**Table 1. Fishing Year 2018 Catch Limits (mt, live weight)**

Stock	Total ACL	Groundfish sub-ACL	Preliminary Sector sub-ACL <sup>1</sup>	Preliminary Common Pool sub-ACL <sup>1</sup>	Recreational sub-ACL	Midwater Trawl Fishery	Scallop Fishery	Small-Mesh Fisheries	State Waters sub-component	Other sub-component
GB Cod	1,519	1,360	1,335	25					16	143
GOM Cod	666	610	377	13	220				47	9
GB Haddock	46,312	44,659	44,348	311		680			487	487
GOM Haddock	12,409	12,097	8,643	95	3,358	122			95	95
GB Yellowtail Flounder	206	169	167	3			33.1	4.0	0	0
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	66	42	34	8			4		2	17
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	490	398	381	18					51	41
American Plaice	1,649	1,580	1,550	29					35	35
Witch Flounder	948	849	830	19					40	60
GB Winter Flounder	787	731	725	6					0	57
GOM Winter Flounder	428	357	339	18					67	4
SNE/MA Winter Flounder	700	518	456	62					73	109
Redfish	10,986	10,755	10,696	59					116	116
White Hake	2,794	2,735	2,713	22					29	29
Pollock	38,204	37,400	37,163	237					402	402
N. Windowpane Flounder	86	63	na	63			18		2	3
S. Windowpane Flounder	457	53	na	53			158		28	218
Ocean Pout	120	94	na	94					3	23
Atlantic Halibut	100	77	na	77					21	2
Atlantic Wolffish	84	82	na	82					1	1

<sup>1</sup>Updated catch limits based on final sector rosters and 2017 catch information will be announced as soon as possible in the 2018 fishing year. GB = Georges Bank, GOM = Gulf of Maine, SNE/MA = southern New England/mid-Atlantic, CC/GOM = Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine, N = northern, S = southern.

**Table 2. 2018 Fishing Year U.S./Canada Quotas (mt, live weight) and Percent of Quota Allocated to Each Country**

Quota	Eastern GB Cod	Eastern GB Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder
Total Shared	951	40,000	300
U.S.	257 (27%)	15,600 (39%)	213 (71%)
Canada	694 (73%)	24,400 (61%)	87 (29%)

Adjustments Due to Fishing Year 2016 Overages

In fishing year 2016, the ACLs were exceeded for witch flounder, Georges Bank cod, and Gulf of Maine cod. A combination of catch from recreational vessels and state commercial vessels contributed to the overages for Georges Bank cod and Gulf of Maine cod. Catch from state commercial vessels contributed to the overage of witch flounder. The overage amounts for these stocks are shown in **Table 3**. The recreational fishery does not payback overages on a pound-for-pound basis, but recreational management measures were revised to address the overage. Revised 2018 commercial allocations, incorporating these payback amounts, are shown in **Table 4**. These revised allocations are the quotas set for 2018 as shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 3. 2016 Overage Amounts (mt, live weight)**

Stock	Total	Sector	Common Pool	Recreational
GB Cod	402.1	162.57	3.40	n/a
GOM Cod	160.7	21.05	0.00	16.61
Witch Flounder	19.3	19.15	0.05	n/a

**Note:** "n/a" indicates that the stock is not allocated to that sub-component of the fishery. A value of 0.00 indicates that no payback is required.

**Table 4. Revised 2018 Allocations (mt, live weight)**

Stock	Initial Preliminary Sector sub-ACL	Revised Preliminary Sector sub-ACL	Initial Preliminary Common Pool sub-ACL	Revised Preliminary Common Pool sub-ACL
GB Cod	1,335.17	1,172.61	25.13	21.73
GOM Cod	376.92	355.87	12.73	<i>unchanged</i>
Witch Flounder	830.09	810.94	18.93	18.88

### Revisions to Common Pool Trimester Allocations

Framework 57 adjusts the way common pool quotas are split among the trimesters for stocks that have had early closures in either Trimester 1 or Trimester 2. The Trimester 1 portion of the quota for each of these stocks is increased, with the exception of southern New England/mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder, which remains unchanged. The Trimester 2 portion of the quota for each of these stocks is reduced. The Trimester 3 portion of the quota is unchanged for Georges Band cod; increased for southern New England yellowtail flounder; and decreased for Gulf of Maine cod, Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine yellowtail flounder, American plaice, and witch flounder. The new trimester quota percentages for these stocks are shown in **Table 5** and were used to calculate the trimester quotas for 2018 (see **Table 8** on page 9).

**Table 5. Revised Trimester Quota Percentages**

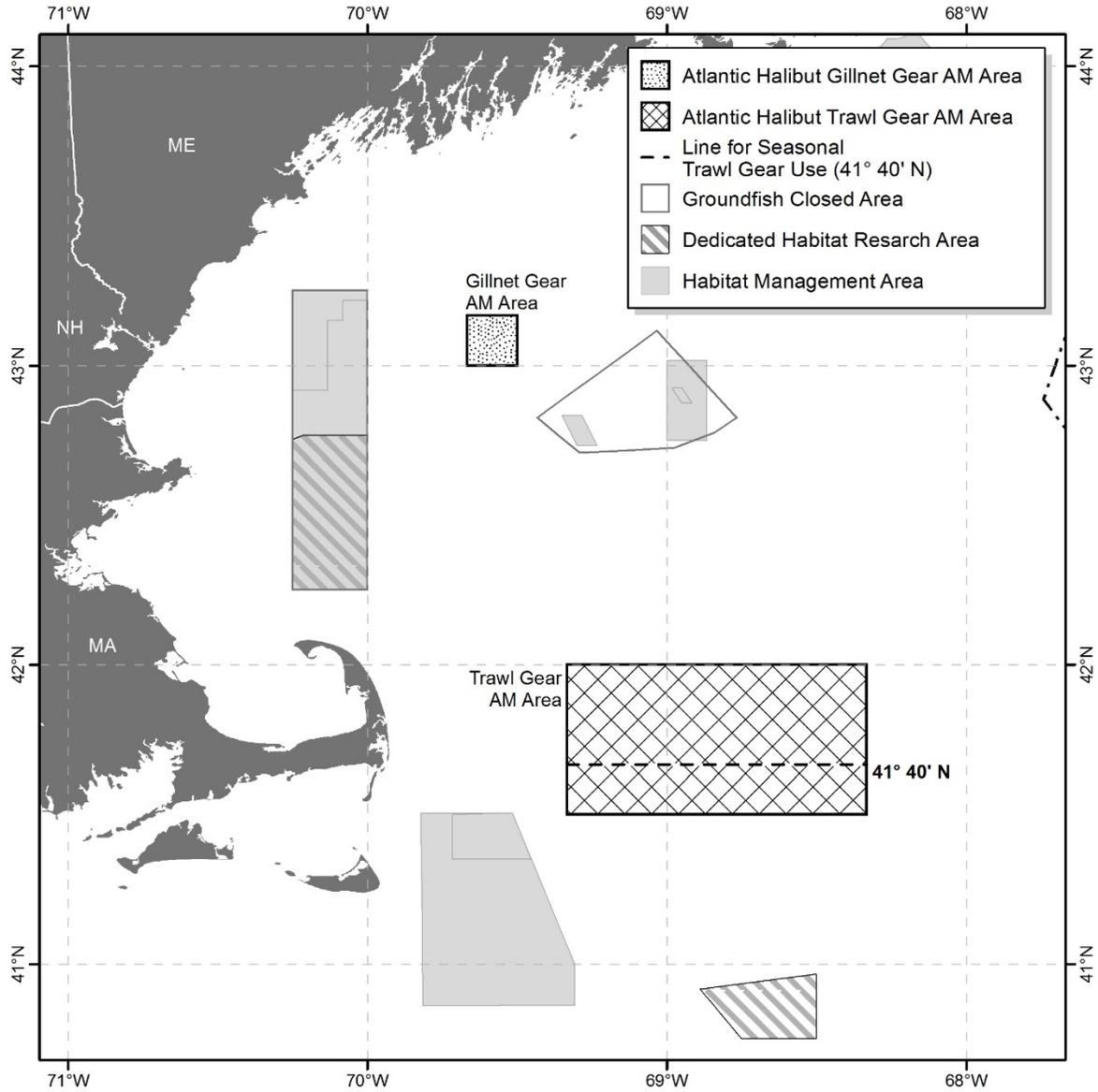
<b>Stock</b>	<b>Trimester 1</b>	<b>Trimester 2</b>	<b>Trimester 3</b>
GB Cod	28%	34%	38%
GOM Cod	49%	33%	18%
SNE/MA Yellowtail	21%	28%	51%
CC/GOM Yellowtail	57%	26%	17%
American Plaice	74%	8%	18%
Witch Flounder	55%	20%	25%

### Revisions to Atlantic Halibut Accountability Measures

**No Atlantic halibut accountability measures (AM) are in effect for 2018.** However, Framework 57 revises the AMs that would be in place if they are triggered in the future. First, the zero-possession AM will apply to all Federal permit holders (including federally-permitted scallop, lobster, and highly migratory species general category vessels). Vessels issued only a charter/party permit for any species, an Atlantic highly migratory species angling permit, and/or an Atlantic highly migratory species charter/headboat permit are exempt from the zero-possession AM. For example, a vessel issued a northeast multispecies charter/party permit and a bluefish charter/party permit would be exempt from the AM, but a vessel issued a northeast multispecies charter/party permit and a commercial bluefish permit would not be exempt from the AM. The intent of expanding the AM is to facilitate enforcement of Federal fishery limits and reduce the catch of halibut by federally permitted vessels not currently subject to the AM.

Second, Framework 57 also modifies the gear-restricted AM areas for Federal groundfish vessels. Based on an updated evaluation of Atlantic halibut encounter rates, the existing AM areas have been changed to allow groundfish trawl and fixed gear vessels additional flexibility while continuing to reduce catch of halibut when the AMs are triggered (see Figure 1). This action eliminates the Fixed Gear AM Area 1 on Stellwagen Bank; exempts longline gear from Fixed Gear AM Area 2 (renamed Gillnet Gear AM Area) on Platts Bank; allows gillnet gear in Fixed Gear AM Area 2 from November through February; and allows standard trawl gear in the Trawl Gear AM Area between 41 degrees 40 minutes N. latitude and 42 degrees N. latitude from April through July (see dashed line in Figure 1). These modifications are expected to continue to protect the Atlantic halibut stock due to the low encounter rates and low catch rates in the seasons and areas accessible for fishing, and will preserve fishing opportunities for vessels targeting other species.

**Figure 1. Revised Atlantic Halibut AM Areas.**



*Note: For information on the groundfish closed areas, dedicated habitat research areas, and habitat management areas above please visit:  
[https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/nr/2018/April/180405\\_oa2\\_final\\_rule\\_phl\\_corrected.pdf](https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/nr/2018/April/180405_oa2_final_rule_phl_corrected.pdf).*

## Revisions to Southern Windowpane Flounder Accountability Measures for Non-Groundfish Trawl Vessels

**No southern windowpane flounder AMs are in effect for 2018.** However, Framework 57 revises the AMs that would be in place, if they are triggered in the future, for non-groundfish vessels fishing with trawl gear with codend mesh size of 5 inches or greater.

### *Reducing the Size of the AM*

Similar to the reduction in AM size allowed for groundfish vessels, Framework 57 will scale the size of the AM areas based on the condition of the stock and catch in the year after the overage. Similar to the AM for the groundfish fishery, when the stock is rebuilt and the specified biomass criterion is greater than the fishing year catch, the small AM areas may be implemented in place of the large AM areas. This change is expected to minimize the economic impacts of the AM for a rebuilt stock, while still correcting for operational issues contributing to the overage and mitigating potential biological consequences.

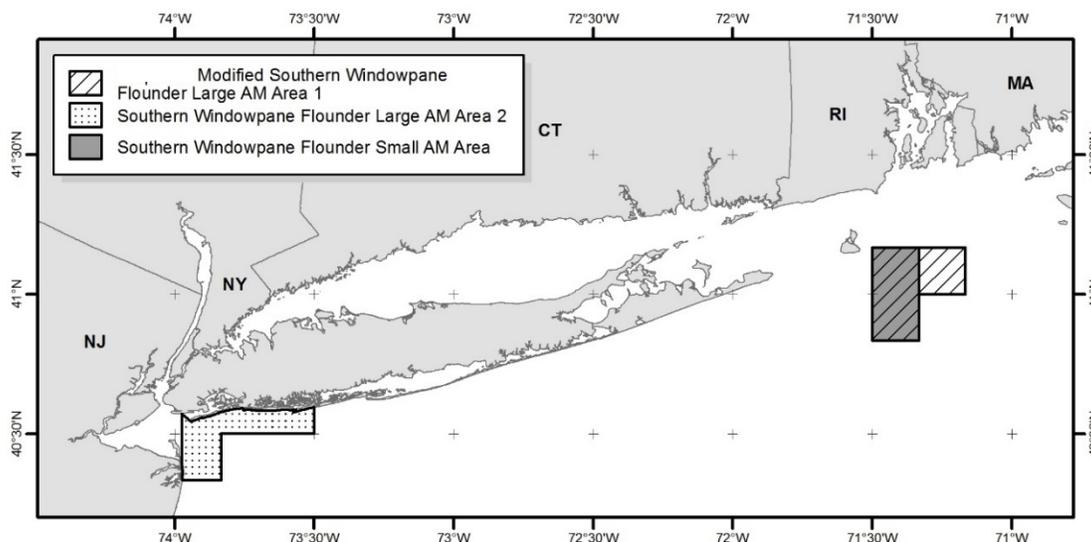
### *Reducing the Duration of the AM*

Framework 57 grants the Regional Administrator authority to remove the southern windowpane flounder AM early for non-groundfish trawl vessels if certain criteria are met. If an overage in year 1 triggers the AM for year 3, and we determine that the applicable windowpane flounder ACL was not exceeded in year 2, then the Regional Administrator would be authorized to remove the AM on or after September 1. This provision is already in place for groundfish vessels, Framework 57 extends it to non-groundfish vessels.

### *Modification of the Gear-Restricted Areas*

Framework 57 revises the area and season of the AM areas for non-groundfish trawl vessels based on recent data (see Figure 2). The geographic area of the small AM area remains unchanged, but the AM will be in effect from September through April, rather than the entire fishing year. The large AM area south of Long Island also remains unchanged, but the large AM area east of Long Island is reduced to a smaller geographic area made up of the small AM area and the eastern most 10-minute square of the current large AM area. Both large AM areas will be closed year-round when triggered. The revised areas are intended to provide additional opportunities for the non-groundfish fleet to pursue target stocks, while still maintaining the necessary conservation benefits of the AMs.

**Figure 2. Revised Southern Windowpane AM Areas for Large Mesh Non-Groundfish Fisheries**



Revisions to the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Yellowtail Flounder Accountability Measures for Scallop Vessels

**No groundfish AMs for the scallop fishery are in effect for 2018.** The scallop fishery is allocated quotas for four stocks: Georges Bank yellowtail flounder; southern New England/mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder; northern windowpane flounder; and southern windowpane flounder. If the scallop fishery exceeds its quotas for these stocks, it is subject to AMs that restrict the scallop fishery. In 2017, Framework 56 changed the AM triggers for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and northern windowpane flounder for the 2017 and 2018 fishing years. This action expands that change to apply to the southern New England/mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder stock for the 2018 fishing year. For fishing year 2018, the AM for the scallop fishery’s quota will be triggered only if the scallop fishery’s quota *and* the overall ACL for the stock is exceeded. This change is intended to provide flexibility for the scallop fishery to better achieve optimal yield, despite a reduction in the ACL, while continuing to prevent overfishing.

Authority to Adjust Recreational Measures for Georges Bank Cod

In response to increasing recreational catch in recent years, and an unusually high recreational catch estimate in 2016 that contributed to an ACL overage, the New England Fishery Management Council set an annual recreational catch target for Georges Bank cod of 138 mt for 2018-2020. To facilitate preventing future overages of the Georges Bank cod ACL, Framework 57 gives the Regional Administrator authority to set recreational measures for fishing years 2018 and 2019 to prevent the recreational catch target from being exceeded.

New recreational measures for 2018 are discussed in a separate bulletin. For information about recreational measures for 2018 please see our website:

<https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/recfishing/regs/index.html>.

### Common Pool Measures and Trip Limits

**Tables 6 and 7** show the trip limits that will apply to common pool vessels beginning on May 1, 2018. We may increase or decrease these limits during the fishing year to ensure that the common pool catch limits are fully used, but not exceeded. We will announce any necessary changes in a future management action.

Any landings prior to midnight on April 30, 2018, are subject to the fishing year 2017 landing limits. All landings after 0001 hours on May 1, 2018, are restricted to the fishing year 2018 limits in this Bulletin.

**Table 6. Initial Fishing Year 2018 Common Pool Possession and Trip Limits**

<b>Stock</b>	<b>2018 Trip Limit</b>
Georges Bank Cod (outside Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	100 lb per DAS, up to 200 lb per trip
Georges Bank Cod (inside Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	100 lb per DAS, up to 500 lb per trip
Gulf of Maine Cod	50 lb per DAS, up to 100 lb per trip
Georges Bank Haddock	100,000 lb per trip
Gulf of Maine Haddock	1,000 lb per DAS, up to 2,000 lb per trip
Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder	100 lb per trip
Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Yellowtail Flounder	100 lb per DAS, up to 200 lb per trip
Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine Yellowtail Flounder	750 lb per DAS, up to 1,500 l per trip
American plaice	750 lb per DAS, up to 1,500 lb per trip
Witch Flounder	400 lb per trip
Georges Bank Winter Flounder	250 lb per trip
Gulf of Maine Winter Flounder	1,000 lb per trip
Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder	2,000 lb per DAS, up to 4,000 lb per trip
Redfish	Unlimited
White hake	1,500 lb per trip
Pollock	Unlimited
Atlantic Halibut	1 fish per trip
Windowpane Flounder	Possession Prohibited
Ocean Pout	Possession Prohibited
Atlantic Wolffish	Possession Prohibited

DAS = day-at-sea

**Table 7. Initial Fishing Year 2018 Trip Limits for Handgear and Small Vessel Category Permits**

<b>Permit</b>	<b>2018 Trip Limit</b>
Handgear A Gulf of Maine Cod	50 lb per trip
Handgear A Georges Bank Cod	100 lb per trip
Handgear B Gulf of Maine Cod	25 lb per trip
Handgear B Georges Bank Cod	25 lb per trip
Small Vessel Category	300 lb of cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder combined; additionally, vessels may not possess more than the common pool possession limit for one DAS.

### Common Pool Trimester Total Allowable Catches

The common pool catch limit for each stock is divided into trimester total allowable catches (TACs): Trimester 1 (May 1-August 31); Trimester 2 (September 1-December 31); and Trimester 3 (January 1-April 30). Fishing Year 2018 trimester TACs, as revised by Framework 57, are listed in **Table 8** below.

**Table 8. FY 2016 Trimester TACs (mt)**

Stock	2018		
	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3
GB Cod	7.0	8.5	9.6
GOM Cod	6.2	4.2	2.3
GB Haddock	84.0	102.6	124.4
GOM Haddock	25.6	24.7	44.6
GB Yellowtail Flounder	0.5	0.8	1.3
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	1.7	2.3	4.2
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	10.0	4.6	3.0
American Plaice	21.8	2.4	5.3
Witch Flounder	10.4	3.8	4.7
GB Winter Flounder	0.5	1.4	4.1
GOM Winter Flounder	6.5	6.7	4.4
Redfish	14.8	18.4	26.1
White Hake	8.3	6.8	6.8
Pollock	66.4	83.0	87.7

\* SNE Winter Flounder is not managed under a trimester quota

### Area Closures

Once we project that 90 percent of a trimester TAC for a stock is caught, we will close that Trimester TAC Area to common pool vessels fishing with gears capable of catching that stock. The area will remain closed until the end of that trimester and will re-open at the start of the next trimester. The areas that will close for each stock, and the gears that the closure will apply to, are listed in **Table 9** on page 10.

During the fishing year, we will post weekly quota monitoring reports here:

<https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/monitoring/nemultispecies.html>.

**Table 9. Common Pool Trimester TAC Area Closures**

<b>Stock</b>	<b>Statistical Area</b>	<b>Gear</b>
GOM cod	513, 514	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
GB cod	521, 522, 525, 561	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
GOM haddock	513, 514, 515	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
GB haddock	521, 522, 525, 561, 562	Trawl, gillnet, longline/hook
CC/GOM yellowtail flounder	514, 521	Trawl, gillnet
GB yellowtail flounder	522, 525, 561, 562	Trawl, gillnet
SNE/MA yellowtail flounder	537, 539, 538, 613	Trawl, gillnet
GOM winter flounder	514	Trawl, gillnet
GB winter flounder	522, 525, 561, 562	Trawl
Witch flounder	512, 513, 514, 515, 521, 522, 525	Trawl
American plaice	512, 513, 514, 515, 521, 522, 525	Trawl
Pollock	513, 514, 515, 521, 522	Gillnet, trawl, longline/hook
Redfish	513, 514, 515, 521, 522	Trawl
White hake	513, 514, 515, 521, 522	Gillnet, trawl

**Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program**

Common pool vessels may not target yellowtail flounder within the Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program (SAP) in fishing year 2018. Vessels are not allowed to fish in this SAP using flounder trawl nets.

Common pool vessels may fish in this SAP in 2018 to target haddock, but they must fish with a haddock separator trawl, a Ruhle trawl, or hook gear. This SAP is open from August 1, 2018, through January 31, 2019.

**Eastern U.S./Canada Area**

Starting on May 1, 2018, common pool vessels using trawl gear may fish in the Eastern U.S./Canada Area. Common pool vessels must use a haddock separator trawl, a Ruhle trawl, or a flounder trawl in this area.

## Sector Measures

### Approved Sectors

All approved sectors receive “universal” exemptions from trip limits for allocated stocks, the Georges Bank Seasonal Closure Area, and the requirement to use groundfish 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 Georges Bank. We previously approved 20 additional exemptions for fishing years 2017 and 2018. Additional information on these previously approved sector exemptions can be found in the [sector operations plan final rule](#) .

### New Sector Exemption

We have also approved a new sector exemption that allows vessels to fish up to 150 gillnets in the Gulf of Maine regulated mesh area if at least 50 nets are 10-inch or larger mesh and those nets are fished east of 70 degrees West longitude. The intent of the exemption is to increase opportunities for sector vessels to harvest monkfish, a healthy non-groundfish stock, while fishing on a groundfish trip.

This new exemption is a variation of an exemption we formerly approved for day gillnet vessels fishing in the Gulf of Maine, which allowed the use of 150 gillnets. This exemption is more restrictive than previously approved and requires the use of larger mesh nets in a smaller geographic area. These restrictions of this exemption are intended to reduce additional catch and discards of Gulf of Maine cod.

We will grant this exemption to any sectors that modify their operations plans to include this exemption. Any sector may submit a written request to amend its approved operations plan to the Regional Administrator.