



# Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

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Sustainable Fisheries Division

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## **NORTHEAST MULTISPECIES (GROUND FISH) FISHING YEAR 2019 REGULATIONS**

*Effective Date: May 1, 2019*

We are announcing groundfish management measures that will be effective May 1, 2019, and providing updates on other management measures. To see which regulations apply to you, this Bulletin is divided into three sections:

**Measures that Apply to all Northeast Multispecies Vessels** – page 1

**Sector Measures for 2019** – page 8

**Common Pool Measures for 2019** – page 9.

### **Update on Framework Adjustment 58 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan**

Due to the 35-day partial Federal government shutdown resulting from a lapse in appropriations, there was a delay in the rulemaking process for Framework 58. On April 19, 2019, we published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* seeking comment on the proposed Framework 58 measures. The public comment period is open through May 6, 2019. As explained in more detail below, if approved, Framework 58 would change several management measures for the 2019 fishing year, including catch limits for several stocks.

### **Initial Fishing Year 2019 Catch Limits**

Last year, Framework 57 set catch limits for all groundfish stocks except Eastern Georges Bank (EGB) cod for fishing years 2018 – 2020. These quotas will be in effect on May 1, 2019. The U.S./Canada quotas are shown in **Table 1** and the quotas for all groundfish stocks are shown in **Table 2** below. The EGB cod catch limit will be set at 35 percent of the 2018 catch limit from May 1 through July 31, unless replaced by the catch limit proposed in Framework 58. If Framework 58 is approved, the 2019 catch limits for Georges Bank (GB) cod, Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod<sup>1</sup>, GB haddock, GB yellowtail flounder, witch flounder, GB winter flounder, GOM winter flounder, and Atlantic halibut will change. Catch limits for GB cod, GB haddock, witch flounder, and GB winter flounder will increase, and catch limits for GOM cod, GB yellowtail flounder, GOM winter flounder, and Atlantic halibut will decrease. There will be no changes for the remaining 12 stocks.

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<sup>1</sup> The GOM cod ACL was exceeded in fishing year 2017 and Framework 58 implements the pound-for-pound reduction required for sectors and the common pool to pay back this overage.

Because vessels may drop from sector rosters and join the common pool through April 30, 2019, the sector and common pool allocations included in this bulletin may change. Also, after we finalize fishing year 2018 catch information, we will subtract any sector or common pool overages. Any necessary adjustments to the 2019 catch limits will be made in a future management action as close to May 1 as possible.

**Table 1. Initial 2019 Fishing Year U.S./Canada Groundfish Total Allowable Catches (TACs)**

<b>Stock</b>	<b>TAC (mt)</b>
<b>Eastern GB Cod</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Eastern GB Haddock</b>	<b>15,600</b>
<b>GB Yellowtail Flounder</b>	<b>291</b>

Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program

The Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock Special Access Program (SAP) is closed to targeting yellowtail flounder in fishing year 2019. Vessels are not allowed to fish in this SAP using flounder trawl nets. Northeast multispecies vessels may fish in this SAP in 2019 to target haddock, but must fish with a haddock separator trawl, a Ruhle trawl, or hook gear. For common pool vessels, this SAP is open from August 1, 2019, through January 31, 2020. For sector vessels, this SAP is open from May 1, 2019, through January 31, 2020.

**Table 2. Fishing Year 2019 Catch Limits (mt, live weight)**

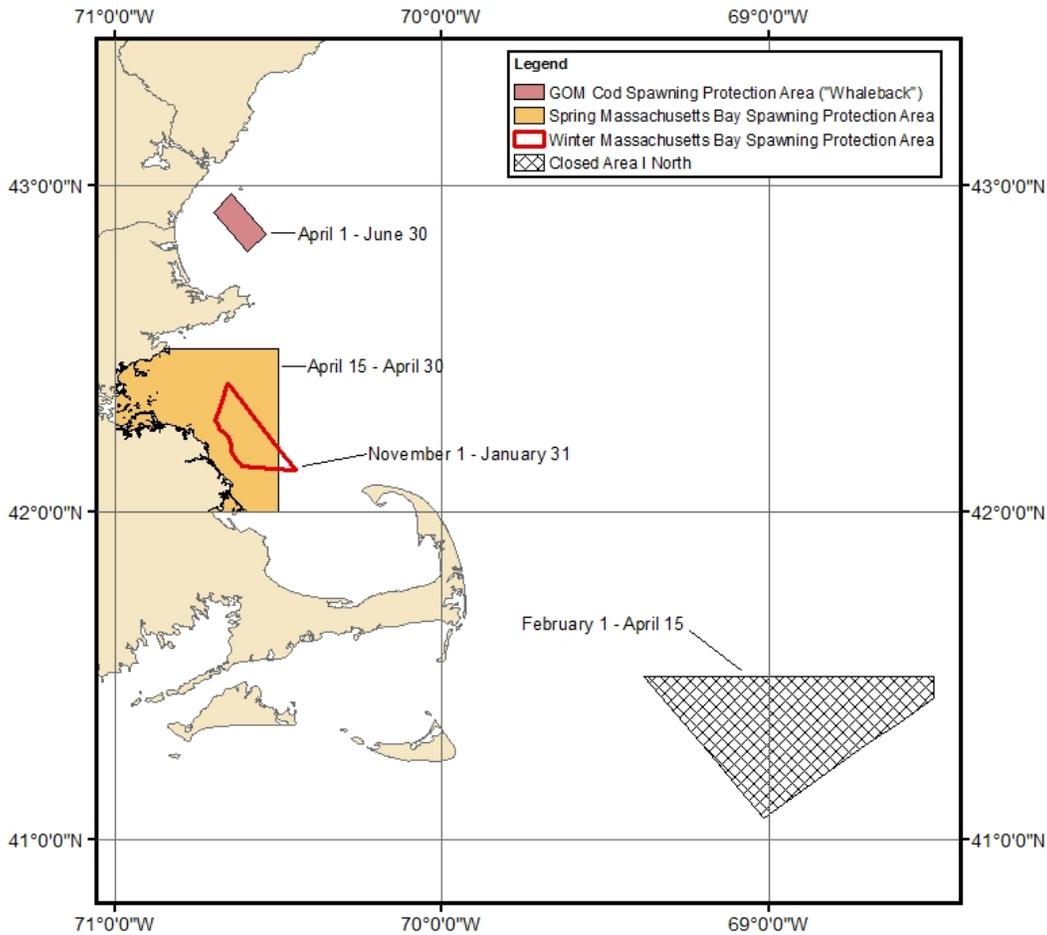
Stock	Total ACL	Groundfish sub-ACL	Preliminary Sector sub-ACL	Preliminary Common Pool sub-ACL	Recreational sub-ACL	Midwater Trawl Fishery	Scallop Fishery	Small-Mesh Fisheries	State Waters sub-component	Other sub-component
GB Cod	1,519	1,360	1,316	44					16	143
GOM Cod	666	610	379	11	220				47	9
GB Haddock	46,312	44,659	43,996	663		680			487	487
GOM Haddock	11,803	11,506	8,218	94	3,194	116			91	91
GB Yellowtail Flounder	291	239	232	7			47	6	0	0
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	66	32	26	6			15		2	17
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	490	398	378	20					51	41
American Plaice	1,532	1,467	1,437	31					32	32
Witch Flounder	948	849	831	18					40	60
GB Winter Flounder	787	731	701	30					0	57
GOM Winter Flounder	428	357	339	17					67	4
SNE/MA Winter Flounder	700	518	447	71					73	109
Redfish	11,208	10,972	10,918	53					118	118
White Hake	2,794	2,735	2,715	20					29	29
Pollock	38,204	37,400	37,159	242					402	402
N. Windowpane Flounder	86	63		63			18		2	3
S. Windowpane Flounder	457	53		53			158		28	218
Ocean Pout	120	94		94					3	23
Atlantic Halibut	100	77		77					21	2
Atlantic Wolffish	84	82		82					1	1

<sup>1</sup>Updated catch limits based on final sector rosters and 2018 catch information will be announced as soon as possible in the 2019 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.

## Seasonal Closed Areas

Commercial vessels remain subject to groundfish year-round and seasonal closed areas. As a reminder, seasonal closed areas are shown in Figure 1, below. The GOM Cod Protection Closures are shown in Figure 2 below. More information on groundfish closed areas can be found in the Closed Area Regulations Northeast Multispecies Information Sheet at <https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/reg/infodocs/multsclosedareas.pdf>.

**Figure 1. Seasonal Closed Areas**



### GOM Cod Spawning Protection Area "Whaleback"

The GOM Cod Spawning Protection Area is closed from April 1 through June 30 to all fishing vessels with the following exceptions: charter and party or recreational vessels, provided that pelagic hook and line gear is used, and there is no retention of regulated Northeast multispecies or ocean pout; and vessels fishing with exempted gears (spears, rakes, diving gear, cast nets,

tongs, harpoons, weirs, dip nets, stop nets, pound nets, pots and traps, purse seines, surf clam/quahog dredge gear, pelagic hook and line, pelagic longlines, single pelagic gillnets, shrimp trawls (with properly configured grates)).

Recreational and commercial vessels are allowed to transit the GOM Cod Spawning Protection Area, provided all gear is stowed in accordance with the regulations as described in 50 CFR 648.2.

#### Spring Massachusetts Bay Spawning Protection Area

The Spring Massachusetts Bay Spawning Protection Area depicted above is closed from April 15 through April 30 to all fishing vessels, with the exception of charter/party, private recreational vessels, and vessels fishing with exempted gear. Additionally, vessels participating in the purse seine exempted fishery may fish in the Spring Massachusetts Bay Spawning Protection Area.

Charter and party vessels fishing in the Spring Massachusetts Bay Spawning Protection Area with gear capable of catching Northeast multispecies must have a Letter of Authorization (LOA) from the Regional Administrator to enter or fish in these areas (additional requirements also apply). An LOA may be obtained by calling the Permit Office at 978-281-9370.

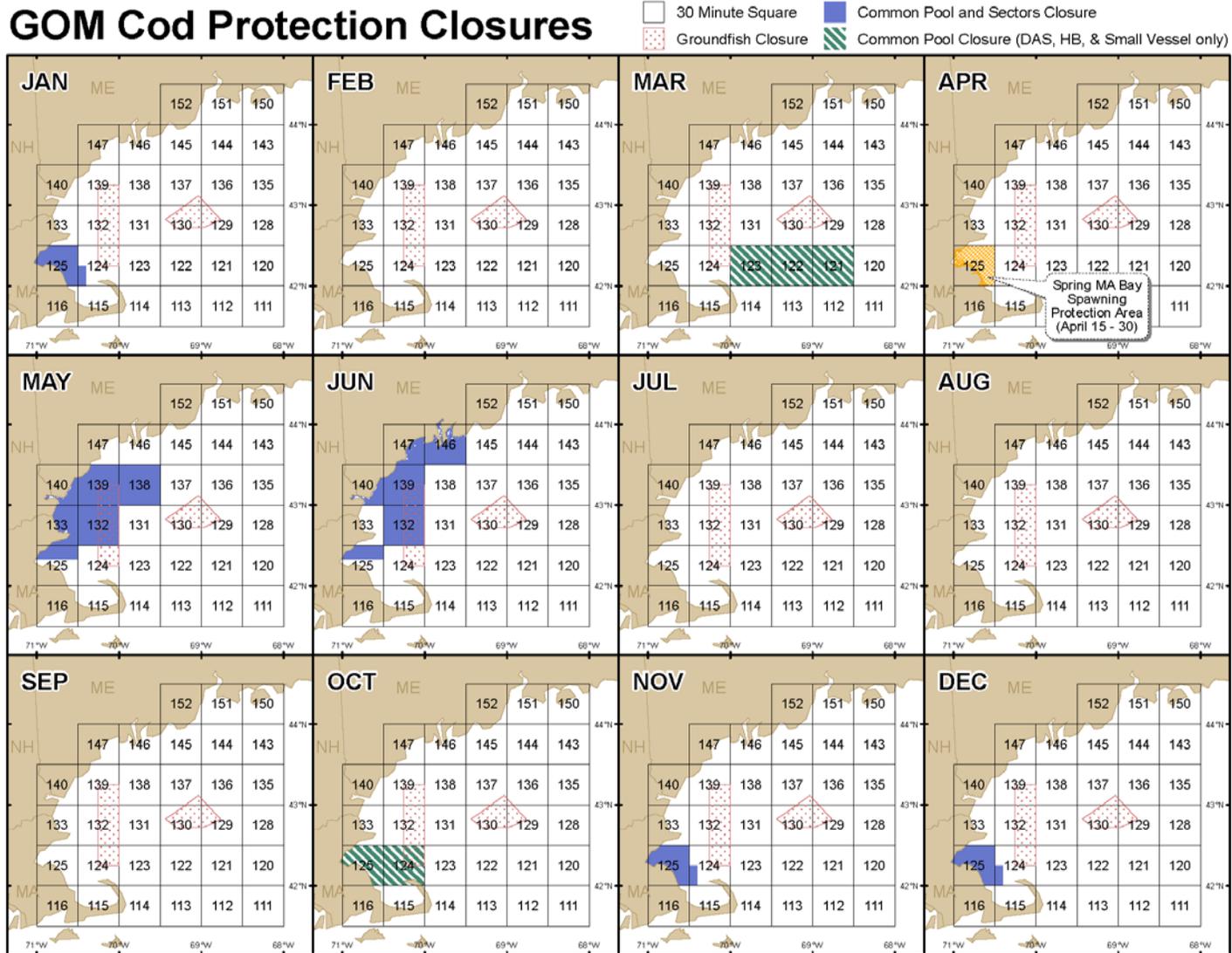
#### Winter Massachusetts Bay Spawning Protection Area

The Winter Massachusetts Bay Spawning Protection Area depicted above is closed from November 1 through January 31 to all fishing vessels, with the following exceptions: charter and party or recreational vessels, provided that pelagic hook and line gear is used, and there is no retention of regulated Northeast multispecies or ocean pout; and vessels fishing with exempted gears.

#### Closed Area I North Seasonal Closure

The Closed Area I North Seasonal Closure depicted above is closed from February 1 to April 15 to all fishing vessels, with the following exemptions: vessels fishing with exempted gears; vessels participating in the mid-water trawl exempted fishery; and vessels using sea scallop dredge gear when under a scallop day-at-sea (DAS), or vessels lawfully in a scallop dredge exemption area.

Figure 2. Gulf of Maine Cod Protection Closures



## GOM Cod Protection Closures

The GOM Cod Protection Closures depicted above are closed to all fishing vessels with the following exemptions: charter and party vessels; private recreational vessels; vessels fishing on a sector trip or under a handgear A permit within GOM Cod Protection Closures during March and October; vessels fishing with exempted gears; vessels participating in the mid-water trawl exempted fishery; vessels using sea scallop dredge gear when under a scallop DAS, or vessels lawfully in a scallop dredge exemption area; and vessels participating in the Raised Footrope Trawl Exempted Whiting Fishery.

Charter and party vessels fishing in the GOM Cod Protection Closures must have a LOA from the Regional Administrator to enter or fish in these areas (additional requirements also apply). An LOA may be obtained by calling the Permit Office at 978-281-9370.

## Sector Measures

### Approved Sectors

We have approved 16 sectors to operate in fishing years 2019 and 2020 (May 1, 2019, through April 30, 2021).

- Georges Bank Cod Fixed Gear Sector
- Maine Coast Community Sector
- Mooncusser Sector
- Northeast Fishery Sectors II, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, X, XI, XII, and XIII
- Sustainable Harvest Sectors 1, 2 and 3.

All approved sectors receive “universal” exemptions from trip limits for allocated stocks, Northeast multispecies DAS restrictions; the requirement to use a 6.5-inch (16.5-cm) mesh codend when fishing with selective gear on GB; and portions of the GOM Cod Protection Closures. Additionally, sector vessels fishing exclusively in the SNE and Inshore GB Broad Stock Areas with extra-large mesh gillnets (10-inch [25.4-cm] or greater) are excluded from the at-sea monitoring (ASM) coverage requirement. We have approved 19 additional exemptions for fishing years 2019 and 2020, all of which were approved for fishing year 2018. Further details on approved sector exemptions can be found on our website (<https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies/>) and in your sector operations plan. Sector vessels are required to carry a copy of their sector operations plan and LOA on board at all times.

### At-Sea Monitoring

The total target ASM coverage level for fishing year 2019 is 31 percent, a 16-percent increase from the ASM coverage level for fishing year 2018. Any federally funded observer coverage provided by the Northeast Fishery Observer Program to meet Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology requirements would partially satisfy the coverage requirement. We will reimburse 100 percent of industry’s ASM costs in fishing year 2019.

### Common Pool Measures and Trip Limits

Common pool possession and trip limits are set at the levels summarized in the tables below for the start of the 2019 fishing year. These possession and trip limits, effective at 0001 hours on May 1, 2019, are set through an inseason action that can be found in the *Federal Register*. These possession and trip limits were developed based on the common pool sub-Annual Catch Limits (sub-ACL) set by Framework 57 that will be in effect on May 1, 2019. We also considered preliminary 2019 sector rosters, expected common pool participation, and common pool fishing activity in previous fishing years. Any landings prior to midnight on April 30, 2019, are subject to the fishing year 2018 landing limits. All landings after 0001 hours on May 1, 2019, are restricted to the fishing year 2019 limits in this bulletin.

**Table 3. 2019 Fishing Year Common Pool Possession and Trip Limits**

Stock	2019 Trip Limit
GB Cod (outside Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	250 lb per DAS, up to 500 lb per trip
GB Cod (inside Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	
GB Cod [Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP (for targeting haddock)]	500 lb per trip
GOM Cod	50 lb per DAS, up to 100 lb per trip
GB Haddock	100,000 lb per trip
GOM Haddock	500 lb per DAS, up to 1,000 lb per trip
GB Yellowtail Flounder	100 lb per trip
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	100 lb per DAS, up to 200 lb per trip
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	750 lb per DAS, up to 1,500 lb per trip
American plaice	750 lb per DAS, up to 1,500 lb per trip
Witch Flounder	600 lb per trip
GB Winter Flounder	250 lb per trip
GOM Winter Flounder	2,000 lb per trip
SNE/MA 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	
Atlantic Wolffish	

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 4. 2019 Fishing Year Cod Trip Limits for Handgear A, Handgear B, and Small Vessel Category Permits**

Permit	Initial 2019 Trip Limit
Handgear A GOM Cod	50 lb per trip
Handgear A GB Cod	250 lb per trip
Handgear B GOM Cod	25 lb per trip
Handgear B GB Cod	25 lb per trip
Small Vessel Category	300 lb of cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder combined; additionally, vessels are limited to the common pool DAS limit for all stocks.

We will continue to monitor common pool catch relative to quotas, and could further adjust possession and trip limits if necessary to prevent an overage. Up-to-date quota monitoring reports can be found on the internet at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/>.

Common Pool Trimester Total Allowable Catches

The common pool catch limit for each stock is divided into trimester TACs: Trimester 1 (May 1-August 31); Trimester 2 (September 1-December 31); and Trimester 3 (January 1-April 30). If the fishing year 2019 common pool quota is exceeded for any stock, the amount of the overage will be deducted from the common pool’s quota next year (i.e., fishing year 2020). We will announce any overage adjustments as close to May 1, 2020, as possible.

*Fishing Year 2019 trimester TACs are listed in Table 5 below.* If approved, Framework Adjustment 58 would make minor changes to fishing year 2019 catch limits and thus the fishing year 2019 trimester TACs.

Additionally, these trimester TACs are based on preliminary sector rosters. However, individual permit holders have until the end of the 2018 fishing year (April 30, 2019) to drop out of a sector and fish in the common pool fishery for the 2019 fishing year. Therefore, it is possible that the sector and common pool catch limits, including the trimester TACs, may change due to changes in sector rosters. Updated catch limits will be announced as soon as possible in the 2019 fishing year to reflect the final sector rosters as of May 1, 2019.

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 6** on page 11.

Please note that the Trimester TAC Areas are made up of one or more Statistical Areas, and are different from the GOM Cod Protection Closures. If a Trimester TAC Area is open while a GOM

Cod Protection Closure is in effect, fishing may still occur within Trimester TAC Area, but not within the GOM Cod Protection Closure.

**Table 5. Common Pool Trimester Total Allowable Catches for Fishing Year 2019 (mt, live weight)**

Stock	Trimester Total Allowable Catches (mt)		
	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3
GB Cod	11.1	13.5	15.1
GOM Cod	5.8	3.9	2.1
GB Haddock	86.1	105.2	127.5
GOM Haddock	25.1	24.1	43.6
GB Yellowtail Flounder	0.7	1.1	1.8
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	1.3	1.7	3.2
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	9.7	4.4	2.9
American Plaice	19.2	2.1	4.7
Witch Flounder	10.1	3.7	4.6
GB Winter Flounder	0.5	1.4	4.1
GOM Winter Flounder	6.5	6.7	4.4
Redfish	12.8	15.9	22.5
White Hake	7.8	6.4	6.4
Pollock	64.4	80.5	85.1

**Table 6. Common Pool Trimester TAC Area Closures**

Stock	Statistical Area	Gear
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