

FOREWORD

The Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) process has three parts: preparation of stock assessments by the SAW Working Groups and/or by ASMFC Technical Committees / Assessment Committees; peer review of the assessments by a panel of outside experts who judge the adequacy of the assessment as a basis for providing scientific advice to managers; and a presentation of the results and reports to the Region's fishery management bodies. Starting with SAW-39 (June 2004), the process was revised in two fundamental ways. First, the Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) became smaller panel with panelists provided by the Independent System for Peer Review (Center of Independent Experts, CIE). Second, the SARC provides little management advice. Instead, Council and Commission teams (e.g., Plan Development Teams, Monitoring and Technical Committees, Science and Statistical Committee) formulate management advice, after an assessment has been accepted by the SARC. Starting with SAW-45 (June 2007) the SARC chairs were from external agencies, but not from the CIE. Starting with SAW-48 (June 2009), SARC chairs are from the Fishery Management Council's Science and Statistical Committee (SSC), and not from the CIE. Also at this time, some assessment Terms of Reference were revised to provide additional science support to the SSCs, as the SSC's are required to make annual ABC recommendations to the fishery management councils.

Reports that are produced following SAW/SARC meetings include: An *Assessment Summary Report* - a summary of the assessment results in a format useful to managers; an *Assessment Report* – a detailed

account of the assessments for each stock; and the SARC panelist reports – a summary of the reviewer's opinions and recommendations as well as individual reports from each panelist. SAW/SARC assessment reports are available online at

<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/nefsc/publications/series/crdlist.htm>. The CIE review reports and assessment reports can be found at <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/nefsc/saw/>?

The 62nd SARC was convened in Woods Hole at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, November 29 – December 2, 2016 to review benchmark stock assessments of black sea bass and witch flounder. CIE reviews for SARC62 were based on detailed reports produced by NEFSC Assessment Working Groups. This Introduction contains a brief summary of the SARC comments, a list of SARC panelists, the meeting agenda, and a list of attendees (Tables 1 – 3). Maps of the Atlantic coast of the USA and Canada are also provided (Figures 1 - 5).

Outcome of Stock Assessment Review Meeting:

Text in this section is based on SARC-62 Review Panel reports (available at <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/nefsc/saw/> under the heading “SARC-62 Panelist Reports”).

The **black sea bass** assessment was accepted by the SARC-62 panel. It was effective in determining stock status, biological reference points (BRPs) and proxies, and in projecting probable short-term trends. The black sea bass stock north of Cape Hatteras, NC is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. An assessment

model (ASAP) by north and south spatial sub-units is accepted as the best scientific information available for determining stock status. $F_{40\%}$ is still recommended as the proxy for F_{MSY} (the overfishing threshold). Although the two-area model had a major retrospective pattern in each area sub-unit, it provided reasonable estimates considering sensitivity runs and other models. Even though projections are conducted for each sub-unit, the combined projections should only be used, because of the major retrospective issues seen within each sub-unit.

The **witch flounder** age-structured assessment model, while scientifically well thought out, had major retrospective patterns in the estimates. Those model results are not recommended for management purposes. The status of the witch flounder stock is currently unknown relative to biological reference points. The panel believes that the previously accepted VPA model is not an acceptable alternative to the rejected ASAP

application because it exhibits a similar major retrospective pattern. An empirical swept area approach may be useful for setting catch advice, although the Panel did not have time to fully review it in the context of the ToR of the meeting. As an F_{MSY} proxy, the Panel supports using a relative exploitation rate derived from the average exploitation (recent catch divided by recent swept area exploitable biomass estimates) in the near term, where other alternatives are unavailable. The spring and autumn NEFSC surveys are regarded as providing the best available fishery independent indices for this species and they show broadly similar patterns of a decline from the early 1960s to record low levels in the late 1980s and early 1990s, an increase to early 2000s followed by a declining trend. The empirical area swept method does not provide a biomass threshold, but does indicate that the stock is at low historical levels.

Table 1. 62nd Stock Assessment Review Committee Panel

SARC Chairman (MAFMC SSC):

Dr. Patrick Sullivan
Cornell University
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SARC Panelists (CIE):

Dr. Anders Nielsen
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Dept. of Marine Fisheries
Charlottenlund Slot
DK-2920 Charlottenlund
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Dr. Neil Klaer
Luggara
PO Box 441
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Nanoose Bay, BC
Canada V9P 9C1
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Table 2. Agenda, 62nd Stock Assessment Review Committee Meeting

Nov. 29 – Dec. 2, 2016

Stephen H. Clark Conference Room – Northeast Fisheries Science Center
Woods Hole, Massachusetts

DRAFT AGENDA* (version: Nov. 22, 2016)

TOPIC	PRESENTER(S)	SARC LEADER	RAPPORTEUR
<u>Tuesday, Nov. 29</u>			
10 – 10:45 AM	Welcome/Description of Review Process	James Weinberg , SAW Chair	
	Introductions/Agenda	Pat Sullivan , SARC Chair	
	Conduct of Meeting		
10:45 – 12:45 PM	Assessment Presentation (A. Black sea bass)	Gary Shepherd	K. Curti
12:45 – 1:45 PM	Lunch		
1:45 – 3:45 PM	Assessment Presentation (A. Black sea bass)	Gary Shepherd	K. Curti
3:45 – 4 PM	Break		
4 – 5:45 PM	SARC Discussion w/ Presenters (A. Black sea bass)	Pat Sullivan , SARC Chair	K. Curti
5:45 – 6 PM	Public Comments		
<u>Wednesday, Nov. 30</u>			
8:30 – 10:30 AM	Assessment Presentation (B. Witch flounder)	Susan Wigley	T. Wood
10:30 – 10:45 AM	Break		
10:45 – 12:30 PM	Assessment Presentation (B. Witch flounder)	Susan Wigley	T. Wood
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch		
1:30 – 3:30 PM	SARC Discussion w/presenters (B. Witch flounder)	Pat Sullivan , SARC Chair	T. Wood
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3:30 – 3:45 PM	Public Comments	
3:45 -4 PM	Break	
4 – 6 PM	Revisit with Presenters (A. Black sea bass) Pat Sullivan, SARC Chair	K. Curti
7 PM	(Social Gathering)	

Thursday, Dec. 1

8:30 – 10:30	Revisit with Presenters (B. Witch flounder) Pat Sullivan, SARC Chair	T. Wood
10:30 – 10:45	Break	
10:45 – 12:15	Review/Edit Assessment Summary Report (A. Black sea bass) Pat Sullivan, SARC Chair	TBD
12:15 – 1:15 PM	Lunch	
1:15 – 2:45 PM	(cont.) Edit Assessment Summary Report (A. Black sea bass) Pat Sullivan, SARC Chair	TBD
2:45 – 3 PM	Break	
3 – 6 PM	Review/edit Assessment Summary Report (B. Witch flounder) Pat Sullivan, SARC Chair	TBD

Friday, Dec. 2

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM	SARC Report writing **
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*All times are approximate, and may be changed at the discretion of the SARC chair. The meeting is open to the public.

**During the SARC Report writing stage, the public should not engage in discussion with the SARC.

Table 3. 62nd SAW/SARC, List of Attendees, NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 2, 2016

James Weinberg	NEFSC
Russ Brown	NEFSC
Gary Shepherd	NEFSC
Mark Terceiro	NEFSC
Susan Wigley	NEFSC
Tony Wood	NEFSC
Kiersten Curti	NEFSC
Sheena Steiner	NEFSC
Chris Legault	NEFSC
Sarah Gaichas	NEFSC
Alicia Miller	NEFSC
Paul Nitzschke	NEFSC
Chuck Adams	NEFSC
Loretta O'Brien	NEFSC
John Maniscalco	NYDEC
Jamie Cournane	NEFMC
Kiley Dancy	MAFMC
Patricia Perez	NEFOP
Steve Cadrin	SMAST
Vivian Haist	Centre for Independent Experts (Reviewer)
Anders Nielsen	Centre for Independent Experts (Reviewer)
Neil Klaer	Centre for Independent Experts (Reviewer)
Pat Sullivan	NEFMC (SARC Chair)
Kirby Rootes-Murdy	ASMFC
Rich McBride	NEFSC
Nichola Meserve	MA DMF
Ashley Weston	SMAST
Greg Power	GARFO
Liz Daskey	Cornell Univ
Bob Glenn	MA DMF
Larry Alade	NEFSC
Mike Radziszewski	NEFOP
Brandon Muffley	MAFMC
Katherine Sosebee	NEFSC
Heath Cook	NEFSC
Tim Miller	NEFSC
Gavin Fay	UMASS Dartmouth
Greg DeCelles	MA DMF
Jackie Odell	NSC
Vito Giacalone	NSC
Liz Brooks	NEFSC
Brooke Wright	SMAST
Aja Szumylo	GARFO
Dave Richardson	NEFSC
Harvey Walsh	NEFSC
Amanda Hart	UMASS Dartmouth
Hannah Goodale	GARFO
Jessica Blaylock	NEFSC
Melanie Griffin	

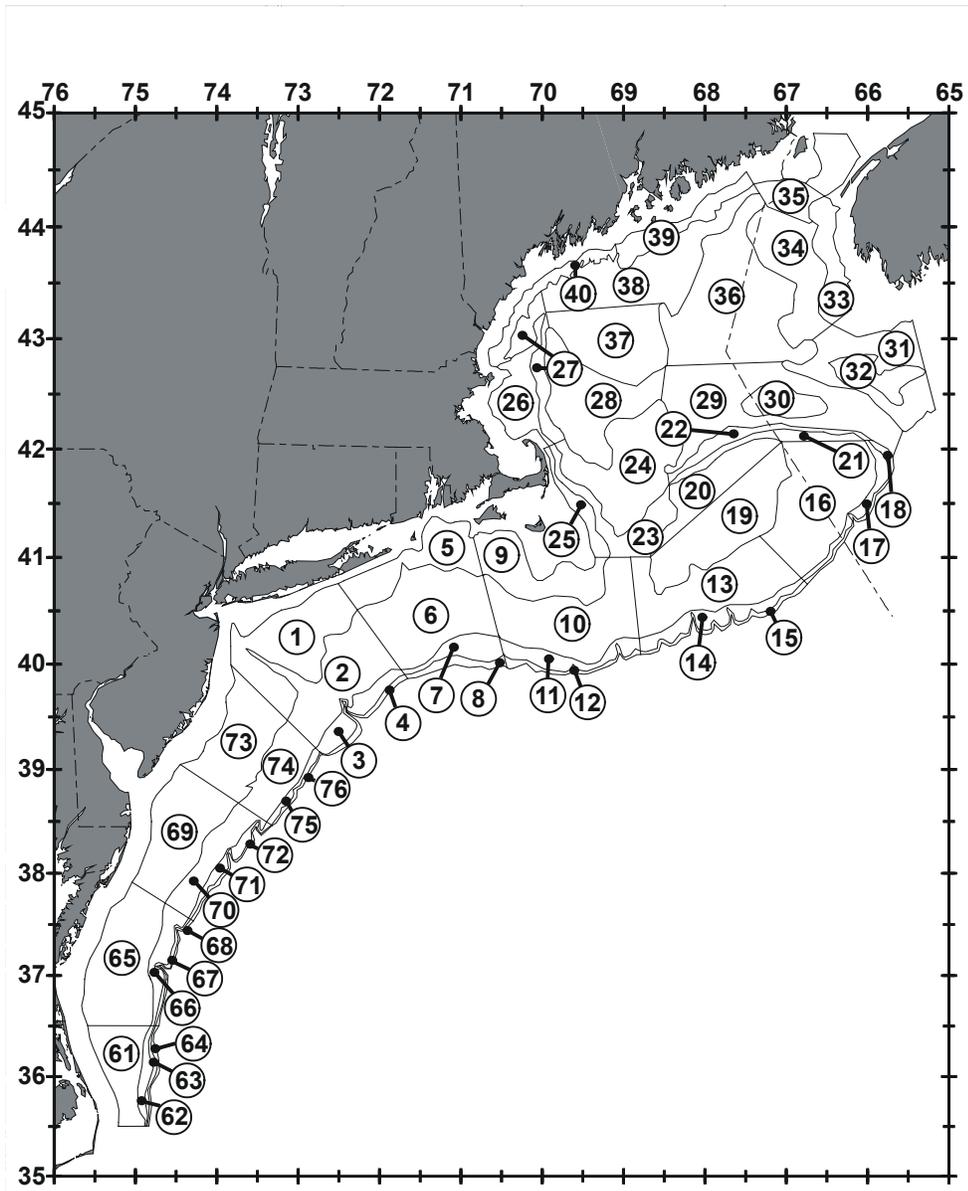


Figure 1. Offshore depth strata that have been sampled during Northeast Fisheries Science Center bottom trawl research surveys. Some of these may not be sampled presently.

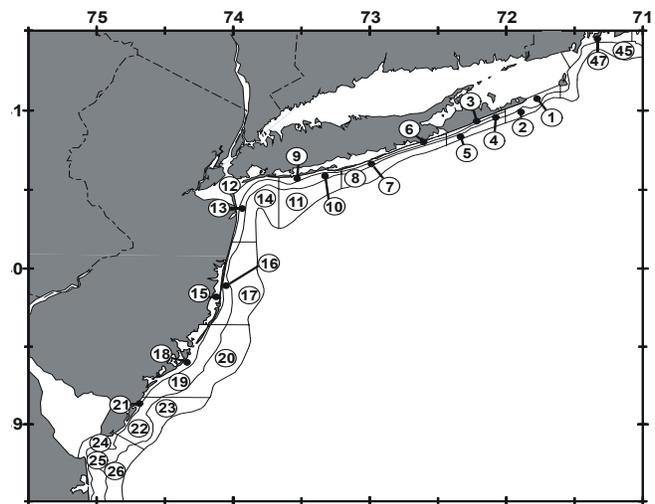
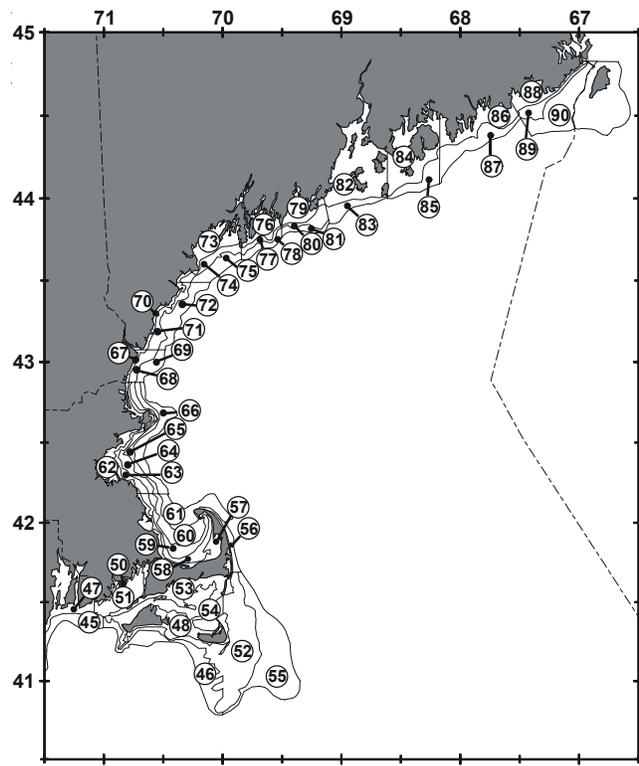
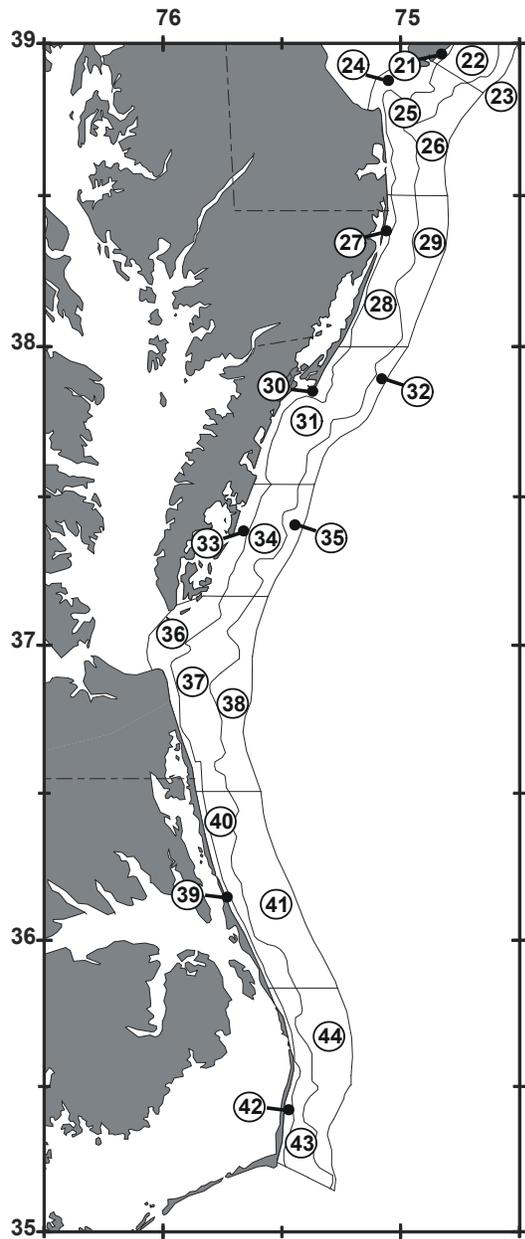


Figure 2. Inshore depth strata that have been sampled during Northeast Fisheries Science Center bottom trawl research surveys. Some of these may not be sampled presently.

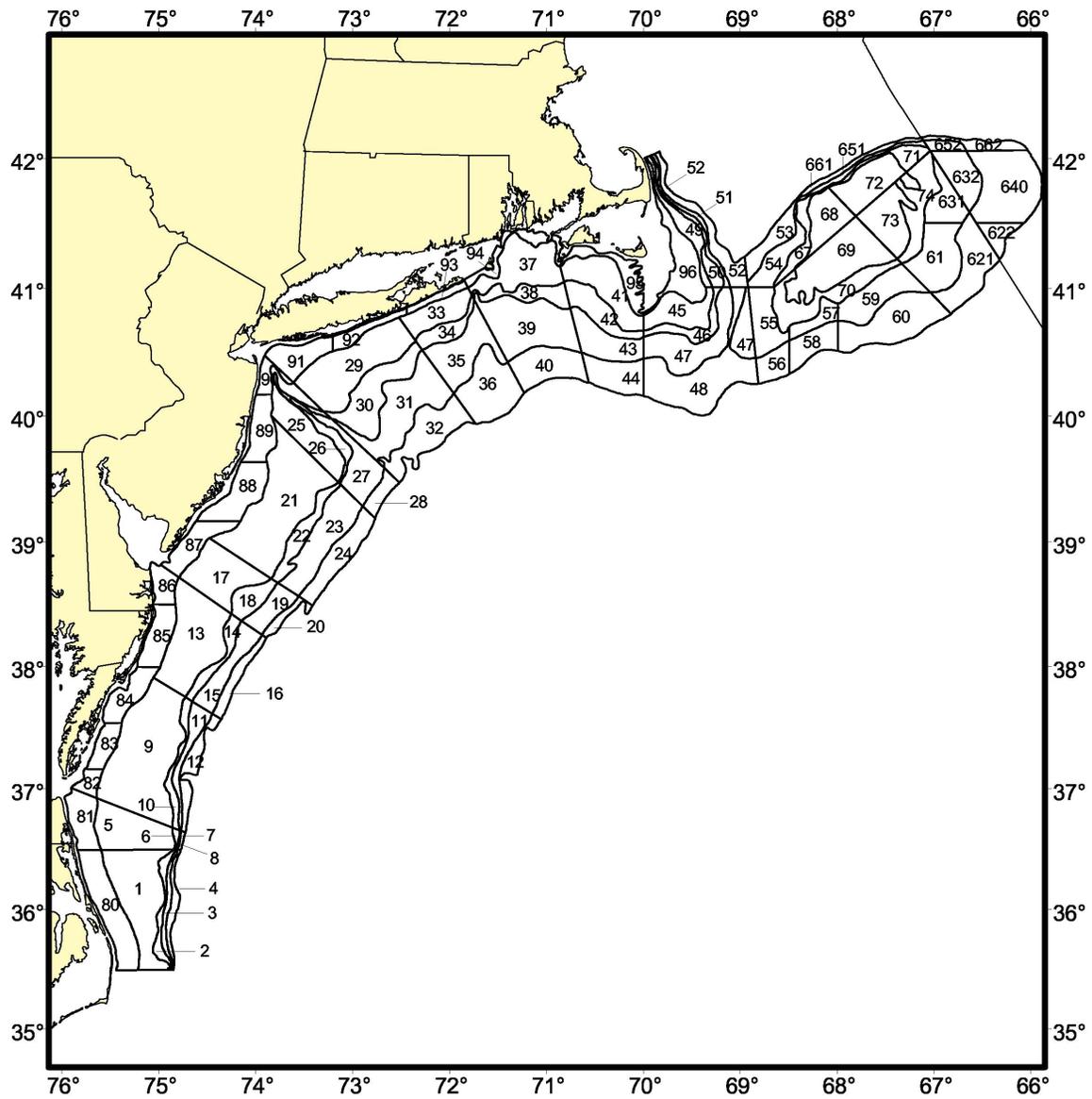


Figure 3. Depth strata sampled during Northeast Fisheries Science Center clam dredge research surveys.

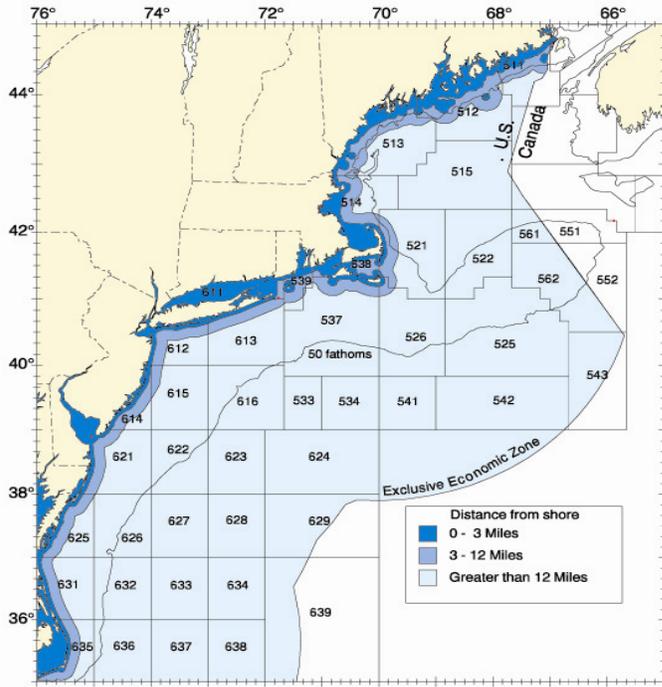


Figure 3. Statistical areas used for reporting commercial catches.

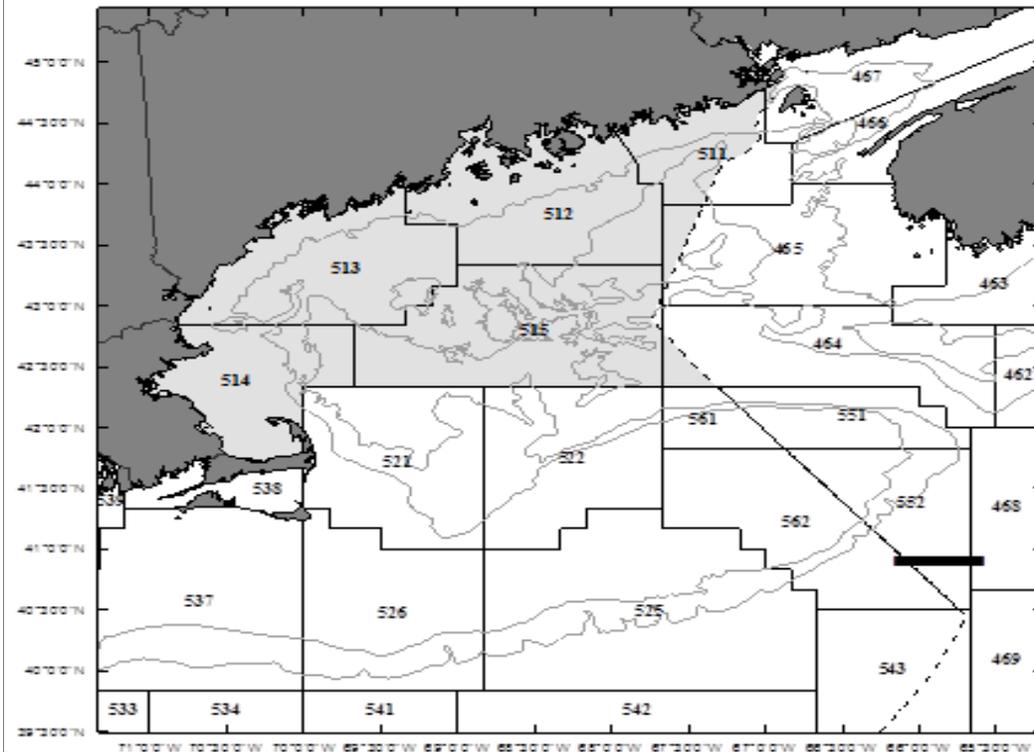


Figure 4. Statistical areas used for reporting commercial catches.

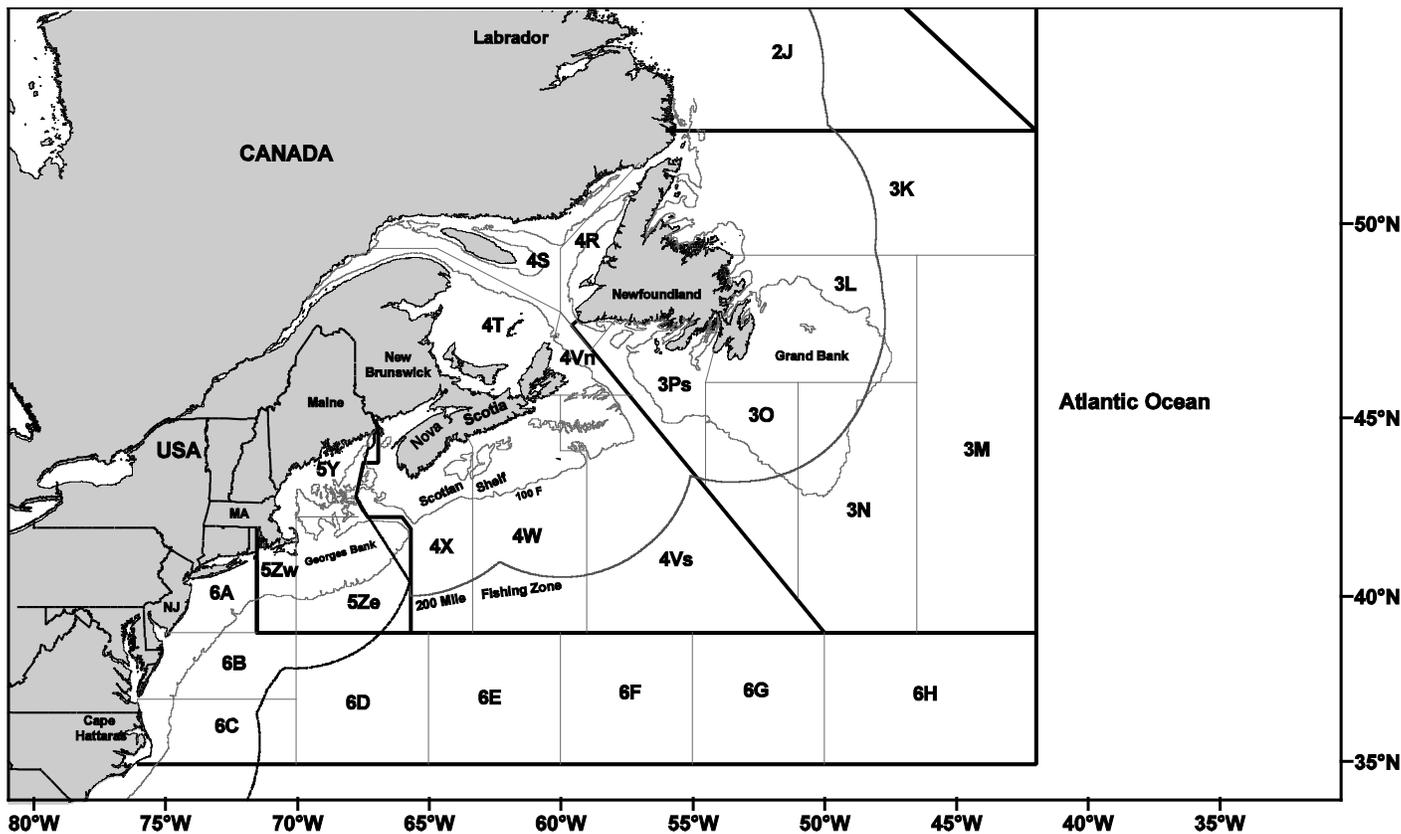


Figure 5. Catch reporting areas of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) for Subareas 3-6.