



Northeast Fisheries Science Center Reference Document 17-07

**2017 Discard Estimation, Precision, and
Sample Size Analyses
for 14 Federally Managed Species Groups
in the Waters
off the Northeastern United States**

by SE Wigley and C Tholke

January 2017

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
Woods Hole, Massachusetts

February 2017

Northeast Fisheries Science Center Reference Documents

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Information Quality Act Compliance: In accordance with section 515 of Public Law 106-554, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center completed both technical and policy reviews for this report. These predissemination reviews are on file at the NEFSC Editorial Office.

This document may be cited as:

Wigley SE, Tholke C. 2017. 2017 discard estimation, precision, and sample size analyses for 14 federally managed species groups in the waters off the northeastern United States. US Dept Commer, Northeast Fish Sci Cent Ref Doc. 17-07; 170 p. Available from: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/>

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA = Access area
ASM = At-Sea Monitoring Program
ASMFC = Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
CV = coefficient of variation
d/k = discard/kept
FED = finfish excluder device
FMP = fishery management plan
GEN = General category
lg = large mesh
LIM = Limited access category
MA = Mid-Atlantic
MRIP = Marine Recreational Information Program
NE = New England
NEFOP = Northeast Fisheries Observer Program
NEFSC = Northeast Fisheries Science Center
NMFS = National Marine Fisheries Service
OPEN = Nonaccess area
SBRM = Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology
SE = standard error of the estimate
sm = small mesh
VTR = Vessel Trip Report
xlg = extra large mesh

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the analyses associated with the discard estimation of 14 federally managed fish and invertebrate species groups during the July 2015 through June 2016 time period and the expected coverage needed by at-sea observers for northeastern US fisheries for the April 2017 through March 2018 period using the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology.

An estimated 69,691 mt (153,643,333 lb) of federally regulated species were discarded during the July 2015 through June 2016 time period. The predominant species groups discarded were skates (Rajidae) and sea scallop (*Placopecten magellanicus*). Across all species groups examined, “no market” was the reason reported for the majority of discards. Analyses also revealed that for fleets with observer coverage, the coverage within a fleet corresponded with the spatial and temporal patterns of fishing activity in terms of kept weight of all species. The discards reported in this document may not necessarily correspond directly with the discard estimates derived for individual stock assessments because of differences in stratification and data. Hence, the discard estimates are not definitive, but indicative of where discarding occurred among commercial fleets and for which species groups.

The sea days needed to achieve a precision-based performance standard (30% coefficient of variation of the discard estimate) were estimated to be 12,278 sea days for the 14 fish and invertebrate species groups across 56 fleets. The sea day analyses used a standardized protocol to account for the importance of the discarded species relative to the amount of discards by each fleet and total fishing mortality.