

CURRENT STATUS OF THE GEORGES BANK AND GULF
OF MAINE HADDOCK STOCKS DECEMBER 1982

by

William J. Overholtz

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National Marine Fisheries Service
Northeast Fisheries Center
Woods Hole Laboratory
Woods Hole, Massachusetts 02543

Recent landings data, and results of the NEFC trawl survey conducted in the autumn of 1982, support the current assessment (Clark et al. 1982) indicating declines in abundance (numbers) and stock biomass for Georges Bank (NAFO Division 5Z) and Gulf of Maine (NAFO Division 5Y) haddock. Recruitment prospects for the foreseeable future appear poor. All available evidence is consistent with earlier projections for a continued declining trend.

Commercial Fishery

As of November 1, 1982 landings for Georges Bank were far behind those of 1981 for the same period (January-October). Preliminary estimates are 10,913 metric tons (mt) for this time period or 63% of 1981 landings of 17,327 mt. Provisional Canadian landings for 1982 indicate a total of 5,600 mt, similar to the 1981 level. This suggests that total Georges Bank landings for 1982 will be on the order of 18,000 mt or about 73% of the 1981 level. Landings by market category for 1982 from Boston show that the 1980 year class began recruiting to the fishery in June of 1982. Landings tapered off quickly however, and available data indicates that this year class is substantially weaker than average.

Commercial landings in the Gulf of Maine have ranged from 5,200-7,500 mt since 1978. Landings for the January to October, 1982 period were 4,761 mt, slightly ahead of 1981 figures for the same period, 4,369 mt.

Research Catch/Tow Indices

Relative abundance indices (stratified mean catch/tow in numbers and weight) from NEFC autumn bottom trawl surveys for Georges Bank have declined steadily since 1979. Catch per tow in numbers from the 1982 autumn survey was 3.47, or the fourth lowest index in the 1963-1982 time series. The corresponding index in weight (kg) was 4.17 or the third lowest on record. These values represent significant declines from the 1981 index for numbers (11.01) and weight (11.77).

NEFC autumn survey indices for 1982 from the Gulf of Maine also declined sharply compared to 1981. The autumn survey (numbers) index declined from 3.17 to 1.69, while the corresponding weight index declined from 7.83 to 2.74. These values were the second and third lowest recorded in the 1963-1982 autumn series.

Recruitment prospects for Georges Bank appear to be poor for the next several years. Based on research surveys from the spring and autumn of 1981 and 1982, the 1980 year class appears to be much smaller than our preliminary estimate from the 1980 survey had indicated. The 1981 year class appears to be very poor, and the young-of-year index for the 1982 year class was among the lowest on record. Thus, recruitment prospects for 1983 and 1984 are very poor and continued declines in abundance can be expected.

Recent data from spring and autumn surveys in the Gulf of Maine likewise indicates the 1980 year class to be much smaller than our initial estimate based on 1980 data, and the 1981 year

class also appears to be very weak. The 1982 young-of-year index was intermediate between the very low 1981 value, and those observed for the 1975 and 1976 year classes (the two strongest produced since 1963). Future surveys will provide additional data for evaluating the relative strength of the 1982 year class.

Literature Cited

Clark, S. H., R. K. Mayo, and A. Green. 1982. Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine Haddock Stock Status-1982. Woods Hole Laboratory Reference Document No. 82-32. Northeast Fisheries Center. Woods Hole, Massachusetts. 02543. 39pp.