



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 260423-0110; RTID 0648-XF532]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Multispecies Fishery; Allocation of 2026 Northeast Multispecies Annual Catch Entitlements and Notice of Default Specifications

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This final rule allocates Northeast multispecies annual catch entitlements (ACE) to approved groundfish sectors and permit banks for fishing year 2026 based on 2026 annual catch limits (ACL) set in Framework Adjustment 69 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) or default specifications and provides notice of specifications for 11 stocks that are set by default in accordance with existing regulations. This action is intended to allow limited access permit holders to continue to operate sectors, as authorized under the FMP.

DATES: Northeast multispecies annual catch entitlements for sectors are effective May 1, 2026, through April 30, 2027. Default catch limits are effective May 1, 2026, through October 31, 2026, unless replaced by another action before November 1, 2026. If a subsequent action is not implemented on or before October 31, 2026, sectors would be prohibited from fishing in the stock areas of stocks with expired default catch limits beginning November 1, 2026, unless and until replaced by catch limits for those stocks.

ADDRESSES: Copies of each sector's operations plan and contracts from fishing years 2025-2026; the Sector Operations Plan, Contract, and Environmental Assessment

Requirements guidance document for fishing years 2025-2026, as well as the environmental assessment and supplemental information report analyzing sector sub-annual catch limits; and other supporting documents are available from the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO). Copies of supporting documents are available from: Heather Nelson at Heather.Nelson@noaa.gov. These documents are also accessible via the GARFO website. These documents and the **Federal Register** documents referenced in this rule are also accessible via the internet at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/management-plan/northeast-multispecies-management-plan>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Heather Nelson, Fishery Policy Analyst, (978) 281-9334.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Northeast Multispecies FMP defines a sector as “a group of persons holding limited access Northeast multispecies permits who have voluntarily entered into a contract and agree to certain fishing restrictions for a specified period of time, and which has been granted a [total allowable catch] TAC(s) [*sic*] in order to achieve objectives consistent with applicable FMP goals and objectives.” (50 CFR 648.2 “Sector”). A sector must comprise at least three Northeast multispecies permits issued to at least three different persons, none of whom have any common ownership interest in the permits, vessels, or businesses associated with the permits issued to the other two or more persons in that sector. As long as at least three persons issued a Northeast multispecies permit meet these requirements, permit owners may have common ownership interests in other permits, vessels, or businesses associated with such permits. Sectors are self-selecting, meaning participation is voluntary, and each sector can choose its members. Between 2019 and 2023 sectors accounted for approximately 99 percent of landings and revenue

in the commercial groundfish fishery, which has an annual value of approximately \$40 million (ex-vessel revenue from the most recent complete fishing year).

The Northeast multispecies sector management system includes an annual allocation of available catch for portions of the Northeast multispecies stocks to each approved sector. These annual sector allocations are known as ACE and are based on the collective fishing history of the permits held by a sector's members. Sectors may receive allocations of large-mesh Northeast multispecies stocks with the exception of Atlantic halibut, windowpane flounder, Atlantic wolffish, and ocean pout, which are non-allocated species managed under separate effort controls. ACEs are portions of a stock's ACL available to commercial Northeast multispecies vessels enrolled in a sector. A sector determines how to harvest its ACE.

Because sectors elect to receive an allocation under a quota-based system, the FMP grants sector vessels several universal exemptions from the FMP's effort controls. These universal exemptions apply to trip limits on allocated stocks, portions of the Gulf of Maine (GOM) Cod Protection Closures, Northeast multispecies days-at-sea (DAS) restrictions, the requirement to use a 6.5-inch (16.5-centimeter (cm)) mesh codend when fishing with selective gear on Georges Bank (GB), and the minimum codend mesh size restrictions for trawl gear when fishing in compliance with the provisions of the Redfish Exemption Program. The FMP allows the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) to add universal exemptions using the framework adjustment process. Sectors may request additional exemptions annually as part of their sector operations plans to increase flexibility and fishing opportunities. The FMP prohibits sectors from requesting exemptions from permitting restrictions, gear restrictions designed to minimize habitat impacts, and most reporting requirements.

In addition to the sectors, there are several state-operated permit banks that each receive an allocation based on the fishing history of permits they hold. These allocations

may be leased to fishermen enrolled in sectors. State-operated permit banks are no longer approved through the sector approval process (77 FR 16942; March 23, 2012), but current state-operated permit banks contribute to the total allocation under the sector system.

NMFS approved 15 sectors to operate in fishing years 2025 and 2026 and also approved 18 requested exemptions for sectors through the implementation of an emergency rule (90 FR 18804; May 2, 2025), which expires on April 30, 2026, and Framework Adjustment (Framework) 69 (91 FR 11141, March 9, 2026), which replaced the emergency rule. Although new sectors can be established annually, and approved sectors can change operations plans annually, NMFS did not receive any new sector proposals or requests for substantive changes to the approved operations plans for fishing year 2026. Therefore, this final rule allocates 2026 ACE to the approved sectors and permit banks based on fishing year 2025 rosters and the fishing year 2026 catch limits set in Framework 69 to the FMP or default specifications.

Catch Limits for Fishing Year 2026

Catch Limits Effective May 1, 2026, through April 30, 2027

Framework 69 set or reaffirmed 2026 catch limits for nine groundfish stocks: GOM haddock, Georges Bank (GB) yellowtail flounder, American plaice, witch flounder, redfish, pollock, northern windowpane flounder, southern windowpane flounder, and Atlantic halibut. For these stocks, the sector and common pool allocations in this rule are based on the 2026 catch limits set in Framework 69 and fishing year 2025 sector rosters (table 1). Sector rosters for fishing year 2026 had not been submitted to NMFS at the time this rule was prepared.

Default Catch Limits Effective May 1, 2026, through October 31, 2026

The groundfish regulations implement default catch limits for any stock for which final specifications are not in place by the beginning of the fishing year on May 1. The

FMP's default specifications provision in the regulations at § 648.90(a)(3) sets catch limits at 75 percent of the previous year's (2025) catch limits, except in instances where 75 percent of the previous year's catch limit would exceed the Council's recommendation for the final specifications. This rule announces default specifications for 11 stocks that do not have specifications set for the 2026 fishing year.

The Council has recommended two actions, Amendment 25 and Framework 72 to the FMP, which together set catch limits for fishing year 2026 for the stocks that do not currently have 2026 catch limits specified. The final rules for Amendment 25 and Framework 72 may not be approved or implemented by May 1, 2026, the start of the fishing year. Therefore, to prevent disruption to the groundfish fishery while these rules are considered for approval, this final rule announces default catch limits for the stocks proposed in Amendment 25 and Framework 72 (table 1). Additionally, to provide information to vessels weighing the decision to fish in the Sectors program or to fish in the common pool, the common pool Trimester TACs that would result from default and previously established specifications are provided in table 2.

Amendment 25 to the FMP (91 FR 12993; March 18, 2026) proposes 2026 catch limits for four Atlantic cod stocks: GB cod, Eastern GOM cod, Western GOM cod, and Southern New England (SNE) cod. Because the FMP currently manages Atlantic cod as two stocks (GB and GOM cod), this rule uses default specifications for GB and GOM cod stocks to allocate ACE to sectors. If approved, the final rule for Amendment 25 would establish four stocks of cod (GB, Eastern GOM, Western GOM, and SNE cod) under the FMP, replace catch limits and sector allocations for GB and GOM cod with catch limits and sector allocations for the four new stocks, and specify a mid-year transition plan from the two Atlantic cod stocks to the four Atlantic cod stocks.

The Council has also submitted Framework 72, which includes catch limits for nine groundfish stocks for fishing year 2026: GB haddock, SNE/Mid-Atlantic (MA)

yellowtail flounder, Cape Cod (CC)/GOM yellowtail flounder, GB winter flounder, GOM winter flounder, SNE/MA winter flounder, white hake, ocean pout, and Atlantic wolffish. Framework 72, if approved, would also replace the fishing year 2026 GB yellowtail flounder and redfish specifications previously set in Framework 69 and the fishing year 2026 GB cod specifications set in Amendment 25, if approved.

All default catch limits in this rule are set at 75 percent of their respective 2025 catch limits, except for white hake. Seventy-five percent of the 2025 catch limits for white hake would exceed the specifications recommended by the Council in Framework 72. Therefore, according to the provisions set at § 648.90(a)(3), this rule sets default specifications for white hake equal to those recommended by the Council in Framework 72. The default catch limits are effective from May 1, 2026, through October 31, 2026, unless replaced by final rules for Framework 72 and Amendment 25 that are effective prior to November 1, 2026. Existing regulations set these default specifications at the beginning of a fishing year on May 1 to minimize impacts on the fishery that would occur if no catch limits are specified in a final rule by that date. If the final rules for Framework 72 and Amendment 25 are not approved and implemented on or before October 31, all fishing for these stocks specified in these rules would be prohibited beginning November 1, 2026. The prohibition would remain in effect for the remainder of the fishing year unless and until the NMFS approves and implements the catch limits in Framework 72 and Amendment 25.

Table 1 -- Northeast Multispecies Catch Limits for 2026 in metric tons (mt)

Stock	Total ACL	Groundfish sub-ACL	Final Sector sub-ACL	Final Common Pool sub-ACL	Recreational sub-ACL	Midwater Trawl Fishery	Scallop Fishery	Small-Mesh Fisheries	State Waters sub-component	Other sub-component
GB Cod*	140	105	101	3.6					12	23
GOM Cod*	245	223	127	5.2	90				23	0.0
GB Haddock#	1,553	1,514	1,480	35		30			0	8.2
GOM Haddock†	3,429	3,359	2,155	58	1,146	34			36	0.0
GB Yellowtail Flounder†	93	76	71	5.0			14.9	1.8	0.0	0.0
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder#	29	25	18	6.8			2.0		0.2	1.5
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder#	654	606	571	36					21	27
American Plaice†	6,632	6,597	6,393	204					0	35
Witch Flounder†	1,452	1,406	1,352	54					7.6	38
GB Winter Flounder#	1,084	1,073	1,020	53					0	11
GOM Winter Flounder#	579	455	385	70					115	9.1
SNE/MA Winter Flounder#	453	331	281	49					14	108
Redfish†	7,997	7,997	7,898	99					0	0
White Hake#	1,294	1,287	1,273	15					0	7
Pollock†	10,676	9,391	9,288	103					670	614
N. Windowpane Flounder†	127	94	na	94			27		0.0	6.8
S. Windowpane Flounder†	205	30	na	30			71		6.4	98
Ocean Pout#	63	37	na	37					0	25
Atlantic Halibut†	34	23	na	23					9.1	1.6
Atlantic Wolffish#	65	65	na	65					0	0

* These catch limits are based on default specifications and would be replaced when the final rule for Amendment 25 becomes effective, if approved. If the final rule for Amendment 25 is not approved or implemented on or before October 31, all fishing for these stocks would be prohibited beginning November 1.

† These catch limits are based on Framework 69. Framework 72, if approved, would replace the fishing year 2026 specifications for GB yellowtail flounder and redfish.

These catch limits are based on default specifications and would be replaced when the final rule for Framework 72 becomes effective, if approved. If Framework 72 is not approved or implemented on or before October 31, all fishing for these stocks would be prohibited beginning November 1.

Table 2 -- Common Pool Trimester Total Allowable Catches for Fishing Year 2026 (mt, live weight)

Stock	Trimester Total Allowable Catches		
	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3
GB Cod*	1.0	1.2	1.4
GOM Cod*	2.5	1.7	0.9
GB Haddock [#]	9.4	11.5	13.9
GOM Haddock [†]	15.7	15.1	27.3
GB Yellowtail Flounder [†]	1.0	1.5	2.6
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder [#]	1.4	1.9	3.4
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder [#]	20.3	9.3	6.1
American Plaice [†]	151.3	16.4	36.8
Witch Flounder [†]	29.6	10.8	13.5
GB Winter Flounder [#]	4.3	12.8	36.2
GOM Winter Flounder [#]	25.9	26.6	17.5
Redfish [†]	24.8	30.8	43.6
White Hake [#]	5.6	4.6	4.6
Pollock [†]	28.8	36.0	38.1

* These TACs are based on default specifications and would be replaced when the final rule for Amendment 25 becomes effective, if approved. If the final rule for Amendment 25 is not approved or implemented on or before October 31, all fishing for these stocks would be prohibited beginning November 1.

[†]These TACs are based on Framework 69. Framework 72, if approved, would replace the fishing year 2026 specifications for GB yellowtail flounder and redfish.

[#]These TACs are based on default specifications and would be replaced when the final rule for Framework 72 becomes effective, if approved. If Framework 72 is not approved or implemented on or before October 31, all fishing for these stocks would be prohibited beginning November 1.

Sector Allocations for Fishing Year 2026

This rule allocates ACE to sectors and permit banks based on the fishing year 2025 sector rosters and the 2026 catch limits established in Framework 69 or default specifications. Preliminary fishing year 2026 sector rosters had not been submitted to NMFS at the time this rule was prepared. All permit holders who join a sector for fishing year 2026 have until April 30, 2026, to withdraw and instead elect to fish in the common pool, although sectors may specify a more restrictive withdrawal date for their members. As a result, the total permits enrolled in sectors for fishing year 2026 could change from the current fishing year 2025 rosters, although such changes are expected to be minimal based on past fishing years.

NMFS calculates the sector's allocation for each stock by summing its members' potential sector contributions (PSC) for a stock and then multiplying that total percentage by the available commercial sub-ACL for that stock. Table 3 shows the preliminary projected total PSC for each sector, by stock, for fishing year 2026 based on fishing year 2025 sector rosters. Tables 4 and 5 show estimates of the preliminary allocations that each sector will be allocated, in pounds and metric tons, respectively, for fishing year 2026, based on their fishing year 2025 rosters and the 2026 catch limits established in Framework 69 or default specifications.

Instead of assigning separate PSCs for eastern GB cod or eastern GB haddock, a PSC is assigned to each permit for the GB cod stock and GB haddock stock. Each sector's GB cod and GB haddock allocations are then divided into an eastern ACE and a western ACE, based on each sector's percentage of the GB cod and GB haddock ACLs. For example, if a sector is allocated 4 percent of the GB cod ACL, the sector is allocated 4 percent of the commercial eastern GB cod TAC as its eastern GB cod ACE. The eastern GB haddock allocations are determined in the same way. These amounts are then

subtracted from the sector's overall GB cod and haddock allocations to determine its western GB cod and haddock ACEs. A sector may only harvest its eastern GB cod and haddock ACEs in the Eastern U.S./Canada Area. A sector may "convert," or transfer, its eastern GB cod or haddock allocation into western GB allocation and harvest that converted ACE outside the eastern GB geographic area.

Each sector is required to ensure that it does not exceed its ACE during the fishing year. Sector vessels are required to retain all legal-sized allocated Northeast multispecies stocks unless a sector is granted an exemption allowing its member vessels to discard legal-sized unmarketable fish at sea. Catch (defined as landings and dead discards) of all allocated Northeast multispecies stocks by a sector's vessels counts against the sector's allocation. Groundfish catch from a sector trip targeting non-groundfish species will be deducted from the sector's ACE because these trips use gear capable of catching groundfish. Groundfish catch from a non-sector trip in an exempted fishery does not count against a sector's allocation and is assigned to a separate ACL sub-component to account for any groundfish bycatch that occurs in non-groundfish fisheries.

To reduce or eliminate any fishing year 2025 overages, NMFS will allow sectors to trade fishing year 2025 ACE for 2 weeks after completion of the year-end catch accounting. If necessary, NMFS will reduce any sector's fishing year 2026 allocation to account for a remaining overage in fishing year 2025. Each year, NMFS notifies the Council and sector managers of this deadline in writing and announces its final ACE determination at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/northeast-multispecies>. As soon as practicable after the start of the 2026 fishing year, final allocations to the nearest pound are provided directly to each sector based on their final May 1 rosters. NMFS uses these final allocations, along with later adjustments including ACE transfers, reductions for overages, or increases for carryover from fishing year 2025, to monitor sector catch.

The common pool collectively may harvest an amount of a particular stock equal to the common pool sub-ACL, which is a portion of the commercial groundfish quota for that stock. The common pool sub-ACLs are also included in tables 4 and 5. The common pool sub-ACLs are managed separately from sectors and do not contribute to available ACE for leasing or harvest by sector vessels. The preliminary common pool sub-ACLs are included in tables 2 through 4 for comparison.

Table 3 -- Cumulative PSC (Percentage) Each Sector Would Receive by Stock for Fishing Year 2026*

Sector Name	MRI Count	GB Cod	GOM Cod	GB Haddock	GOM Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder	SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	Plaice	Witch Flounder	GB Winter Flounder	GOM Winter Flounder	SNE/MA Winter Flounder	Redfish	White Hake	Pollock
Fixed Gear Sector	58	10.24212320	0.62118283	1.30036807	0.17541380	0.00311474	0.18875828	1.56423147	0.44969368	1.08624360	0.01703982	1.76326285	0.94546461	0.48359712	0.98554309	2.63604599
Maine Coast Community Sector	107	2.14381876	16.04726033	3.28024954	12.19493668	1.94946572	2.52191670	6.27087271	15.57982971	12.35893454	0.80738762	7.70307452	2.23292260	9.19871852	13.83337888	12.70465517
Maine Permit Bank	11	0.13439158	1.16168961	0.04453277	1.12521597	0.01387770	0.03207071	0.31964833	1.16764302	0.72914243	0.00021875	0.42733162	0.01820836	0.82280629	1.65674426	1.69636752
Mooncusser Sector	51	11.75076850	7.21912792	3.63423596	3.80554950	0.85287050	0.71325693	3.90298129	0.95626703	2.17641454	0.06281761	3.89289999	1.81395127	4.76123074	10.82902490	10.91393118
NEFS 2	128	10.06043816	25.72844012	15.50795747	25.08012941	6.71533619	7.36598169	26.40703261	15.87508356	21.07064126	5.07183716	26.71999021	5.98070677	22.05072341	13.29452390	18.02512930
NEFS 4	58	8.63064256	11.18238598	6.05566788	8.86166344	2.17847227	2.28497979	6.42213790	9.43836833	8.82304185	0.69996268	7.42431328	1.03551783	6.69553103	8.27315447	7.26683531
NEFS 5	14	0.35472720	0.32881900	0.42498729	0.11063627	0.70255940	10.44623976	0.92544848	0.22763746	0.40210981	0.17313264	0.84381096	6.93905854	0.01320635	0.03510117	0.06575445
NEFS 6	3	0.53277963	0.16900617	0.55629310	0.15126005	0.06623359	0.00032970	0.02492228	0.88199052	0.47903712	0.08026315	0.07106409	0.01437646	1.11265148	0.52915152	0.31852137
NEFS 8	114	34.51388651	6.45087423	42.30010274	18.91885822	48.13967395	19.06150238	19.62941210	21.94659844	21.33080345	63.02944419	5.03318563	43.54807834	26.47961273	19.26726375	18.89354372
NEFS 10	20	0.17129915	1.67784253	0.10430337	0.71634962	0.00105439	0.56741495	3.07362115	0.30002267	0.59790479	0.01076827	5.69699804	0.43191024	0.01057169	0.02845311	0.07115414
NEFS 11	38	0.39824840	10.53615357	0.03378514	2.64634283	0.00088665	0.01017277	2.11441907	1.42997133	1.44683554	0.00097316	1.90333948	0.02232596	1.86077245	3.95170830	8.47767118
NEFS 12	25	0.87144678	3.84040388	0.79243704	1.41977269	1.33470334	1.55285130	9.57101150	1.86581763	2.04834200	0.39637667	12.41077504	0.72988422	0.58577546	0.92634941	1.40772701
NEFS 13	49	7.53239015	0.33857362	12.59623816	0.68350584	24.86780462	20.35771973	3.99132945	4.76528223	5.05798498	12.81770000	1.12900445	10.60284817	1.52348140	0.94824778	1.00456641
New Hampshire Permit Bank	4	0.00082696	1.15188056	0.00003421	0.03236754	0.00002041	0.00001803	0.02192453	0.02856511	0.00617883	0.00000326	0.06080509	0.00003694	0.01942370	0.08148030	0.11143814
Sustainable Harvest Sector 1	41	5.05343713	4.50212938	6.72957598	9.17479601	2.15655615	1.56139858	4.61957286	11.16236257	8.71237918	6.61130129	5.07805425	3.04571508	11.28978633	12.24469133	5.67281173
Sustainable Harvest Sector 2	14	1.29776006	1.13739128	1.99846045	4.03289027	0.70148248	1.99315808	2.13858024	2.09256157	2.33147501	0.36513799	2.03730190	2.22203502	4.16622848	2.83808242	2.72152125
Sustainable Harvest Sector 3	29	2.85517607	3.98021781	2.34273634	8.24985644	3.75909839	4.36586471	3.12368104	8.73405783	7.51949003	4.90221270	2.44199437	5.47302383	7.68590803	9.12453183	6.91687123
Common Pool	495	3.45583918	3.92662118	2.29803448	2.62045541	6.55678951	26.97636591	5.87917301	3.09824732	3.82304105	4.95342303	15.36279423	14.94393576	1.23997480	1.15256960	1.09545488
All Sectors	764	96.54	96.07	97.70	97.38	93.44	73.02	94.12	96.90	96.18	95.05	84.64	85.06	98.76	98.85	98.90

* The data in this table are based on sector rosters for fishing year 2025 and may change based on final 2026 sector enrollment.

Table 4 -- Estimated ACE (in 1,000 pounds), by Stock, for Each Sector for Fishing Year 2026**

Sector Name	GB Cod East	GB Cod West	GOM Cod	GB Haddock East	GB Haddock West	GOM Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder	SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	Plaice	Witch Flounder	GB Winter Flounder	GOM Winter Flounder	SNE/MA Winter Flounder	Redfish	White Hake	Pollock
FGS	19	5	2	43	0	9	0	0	21	65	34	0	18	7	85	28	546
MCCS	4	1	47	110	0	595	3	1	84	2,266	383	19	77	16	1,622	393	2,630
MPB	0	0	3	1	0	55	0	0	4	170	23	0	4	0	145	47	351
Mooncusser	21	6	21	121	0	186	1	0	52	139	67	1	39	13	839	307	2,260
NEFS 2	18	5	75	518	0	1,224	11	4	353	2,309	653	120	268	44	3,888	377	3,732
NEFS 4	16	4	33	202	0	432	4	1	86	1,373	274	17	75	8	1,180	235	1,505
NEFS 5	1	0	1	14	0	5	1	6	12	33	12	4	8	51	2	1	14
NEFS 6	1	0	0	19	0	7	0	0	0	128	15	2	1	0	196	15	66
NEFS 8	62	17	19	1,412	0	923	81	11	262	3,192	661	1,491	51	317	4,669	547	3,912
NEFS 10	0	0	5	3	0	35	0	0	41	44	19	0	57	3	2	1	15
NEFS 11	1	0	31	1	0	129	0	0	28	208	45	0	19	0	328	112	1,755
NEFS 12	2	0	11	26	0	69	2	1	128	271	64	9	125	5	103	26	291
NEFS 13	14	4	1	421	0	33	42	11	53	693	157	303	11	77	269	27	208
NHPB	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	3	2	23
SHS 1	9	3	13	225	0	448	4	1	62	1,623	270	156	51	22	1,990	348	1,175
SHS 2	2	1	3	67	0	197	1	1	29	304	72	9	20	16	735	81	563
SHS 3	5	1	12	78	0	403	6	2	42	1,270	233	116	25	40	1,355	259	1,432
Common Pool	6	2	11	77	0	128	11	15	79	451	119	117	154	109	219	33	227
Sector Total	175	49	280	3,262	0	4,751	157	40	1,258	14,093	2,982	2,249	850	620	17,412	2,806	20,477

* The data in this table are based on fishing year 2025 sector rosters, and represent the preliminary total allocations to each sector. Final allocations will be determined using final fishing year 2026 rosters. The data also includes ACEs based on default specifications that may change if the final rules for Amendment 25 and Framework 72 are approved.

Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand pounds. In some cases, this table shows an allocation of 0, but that sector may be allocated a small amount of that stock in tens or hundreds pounds.

Table 5 -- Estimated ACE (in metric tons), by Stock, for Each Sector for Fishing Year 2026**

Sector Name	GB Cod East	GB Cod West	GOM Cod	GB Haddock East	GB Haddock West	GOM Haddock	GB Yellowtail Flounder	SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	Plaice	Witch Flounder	GB Winter Flounder	GOM Winter Flounder	SNE/MA Winter Flounder	Redfish	White Hake	Pollock
FGS	8	2	1	20	0	4	0	0	9	30	15	0	8	3	39	13	248
MCCS	2	0	21	50	0	270	1	1	38	1,028	174	9	35	7	736	178	1,193
MPB	0	0	2	1	0	25	0	0	2	77	10	0	2	0	66	21	159
Mooncusser	10	3	10	55	0	84	1	0	24	63	31	1	18	6.0	381	139	1,025
NEFS 2	8	2	34	235	0	555	5	2	160	1,047	296	54	122	20	1,763	171	1,693
NEFS 4	7	2	15	92	0	196	2	1	39	623	124	8	34	3	535	107	682
NEFS 5	0	0	0	6	0	2	1	3	6	15	6	2	4	23	1	0	6
NEFS 6	0	0	0	8	0	3	0	0	0	58	7	1	0	0	89	7	30
NEFS 8	28	8	9	641	0	419	37	5	119	1,448	300	676	23	144	2,118	248	1,774
NEFS 10	0	0	2	2	0	16	0	0	19	20	8	0	26	1	1	0	7
NEFS 11	0	0	14	1	0	59	0	0	13	94	20	0	9	0	149	51	796
NEFS 12	1	0	5	12	0	31	1	0	58	123	29	4	57	2	47	12	132
NEFS 13	6	2	0	191	0	15	19	5	24	314	71	138	5	35	122	12	94
NHPB	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	10
SHS 1	4	1	6	102	0	203	2	0	28	736	123	71	23	10	903	158	533
SHS 2	1	0	2	30	0	89	1	0	13	138	33	4	9	7	333	37	256
SHS 3	2	1	5	35	0	183	3	1	19	576	106	53	11	18	615	117	650
Common Pool	3	1	5	35	0	58	5	7	36	204	54	53	70	49	99	15	103
Sector Total	79	22	127	1,480	0	2,155	71	18	571	6,393	1,352	1,020	385	281	7,898	1,273	9,288

* The data in this table are based on fishing year 2025 sector rosters and represent the preliminary total allocations to each sector. Final allocations will be determined using final fishing year 2026 rosters. The data also includes ACEs based on default specifications that may change if the final rules for Amendment 25 and Framework 72 are approved.

Numbers are rounded to the nearest metric ton, but allocations are made in pounds. In some cases, this table shows a sector allocation of 0 metric tons, but that sector may be allocated a small amount of that stock in pounds.

Sector Operations Plans and Contracts

Fifteen sectors are approved to operate in fishing year 2026. NMFS did not receive any new sector operations plans or substantive updates to existing operations plans for fishing year 2026. All 15 approved sectors were active in fishing year 2025. Approved operations plans contain the rules under which each sector will fish and the legal contract that binds each member to the sector for the length of the sector's operations plan. Each sector's operations plan, and each sector's members, must comply with the regulations governing sectors, found at § 648.87. In addition, each sector must conduct fishing activities as detailed in its approved operations plan.

Participating vessels are required to comply with all pertinent Federal fishing regulations, except as specifically exempted in the letter of authorization (LOA) issued by the Regional Administrator, which details any approved sector exemptions from the regulations. If, during the fishing year, a sector requests an exemption that NMFS already granted, or proposes a change to its administrative provisions, NMFS may amend that sector's operations plan. Should any such amendments require modifications to LOAs, NMFS will include these changes in updated LOAs and provide them to the appropriate sector(s).

NMFS may revoke exemptions in-season if it determines that the exemption jeopardizes management measures, FMP objectives, or rebuilding efforts; the exemption results in unforeseen negative impacts on other managed fish stocks, habitat, or protected resources; the exemption causes enforcement concerns; catch from trips using the exemption cannot be adequately monitored; or a sector is not meeting certain administrative or operational requirements. If it becomes necessary to revoke an exemption, NMFS will do so through a process consistent with the existing regulations or in a separate rulemaking action, as appropriate.

Sector Monitoring Programs

Sectors are responsible for developing and implementing a monitoring program that must be (1) approved by NMFS as both sufficient to monitor catch, discards, and use of ACE; and (2) consistent with the FMP's goals and objectives for the sector monitoring program.

For fishing year 2026, sector vessels may choose to use at-sea monitoring (ASM) or the audit model electronic monitoring (EM) program to meet monitoring requirements, provided that the sector has a corresponding monitoring program approved as part of its operations plan. On March 13, 2026, NMFS announced a preliminary ASM coverage target of 100 percent of all sector groundfish trips for the 2026 fishing year. The final ASM coverage level will be announced when Congress approves the 2026 ASM spend plan. Vessels that choose to use ASM to meet monitoring requirements will be assigned monitors based on the target coverage level set for all sector groundfish trips. Vessels that choose to use EM to meet monitoring coverage requirements must use cameras and adhere to catch handling protocols as described in their vessel monitoring plans for all groundfish trips.

All sectors that harvest fish included an ASM plan as part of their respective approved operations plans. Sectors that operate only as permit banks and explicitly prohibit fishing in their operations plans are not required to include provisions for an ASM program. Nine sectors use the NMFS-designed ASM program, and four sectors use a sector-designed ASM program previously approved by NMFS. Thirteen sectors also included an EM plan as part of their approved operations plans. All 13 of these sectors included the NMFS-designed audit model EM program in their operations plans. Eleven of these sectors also included the NMFS-designed maximized retention EM (MREM) program in their operations plans; however, this program has not been operated by NMFS

since 2023. Although it remains in these approved sector operations plans, NMFS will not approve vessel-specific monitoring plans to enroll in the MREM program in 2026.

Approved Exemptions Granted for Fishing Years 2026

For fishing year 2026, sectors did not request any novel exemptions. NMFS previously granted exemptions from the following requirements for fishing years 2025 and 2026, all of which were also requested and granted in previous years:

- (1) 120-day block out of the fishery required for Day gillnet vessels;
- (2) 20-day spawning block out of the fishery required for all vessels;
- (3) Limits on the number of gillnets for Day gillnet vessels outside the GOM;
- (4) Prohibition on a vessel hauling another vessel's gillnet gear;
- (5) Limits on the number of gillnets that may be hauled in the GB regulated mesh area when fishing under a Northeast multispecies/monkfish DAS;
- (6) Limits on the number of hooks that may be fished;
- (7) DAS Leasing Program length and horsepower restrictions;
- (8) Prohibition on discarding;
- (9) Trawl gear requirements in the Eastern U.S./Canada Management Area;
- (10) Prohibition on a vessel hauling another vessel's hook gear;
- (11) The requirement to declare an intent to fish in the Eastern U.S./Canada Special Access Program (SAP) and the Closed Area (CA) II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP prior to leaving the dock;
- (12) Seasonal restrictions for the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock SAP;
- (13) Seasonal restrictions for the CA II Yellowtail Flounder/Haddock SAP;
- (14) Sampling exemption;
- (15) Prohibition on combining small-mesh exempted fishery and sector trips in SNE;

(16) Extra-large mesh requirement to target dogfish on trips excluded from ASM in SNE and Inshore GB broad stock areas;

(17) Requirement that Handgear A vessels carry a Vessel Monitoring System unit when fishing in a single broad stock area; and

(18) Limits on the number of gillnets for Day gillnet vessels in the GOM.

These exemptions are more fully described in the proposed rule for Framework 69 (90 FR 56836, December 8, 2025).

Classification

NMFS is issuing this rule pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act because this action is necessary to carry out the Northeast Multispecies FMP in accordance with the FMP's implementing regulations. The NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that this rule is consistent with the Northeast Multispecies FMP, other provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries finds good cause to waive prior public notice and an opportunity for public comment because allowing time for notice and comment is impracticable, unnecessary, and contrary to the public interest. The allocations in this action are required by regulations that prescribe how they are determined. The public had a prior opportunity to comment on this process and the formula used for its calculation during the development of the rules implementing the Northeast Multispecies FMP and subsequent amendments and framework adjustments. In accordance with the existing regulations, NMFS calculates a sector's allocation for each stock by summing its members' PSC for a stock and then multiplying that total percentage by the available commercial sub-ACL for that stock. Thus, the ACE allocations are based on long-established fishing histories and are formulaic and administrative and involve no exercise of discretion. These formulas have been used and ACE allocated through these processes annually since the implementation of

Amendment 16 on May 1, 2010. The default specifications are set as a fraction of this fishing year's ACLs as required by regulations. This action provides notice of the specifications that are set by these existing regulations. Specifications and allocations must be in effect by May 1, 2026, for sectors to operate in fishing year 2026, and this action must publish as a final rule without notice and opportunity for comment to be implemented in a time for the beginning of the fishing year.

NMFS finds, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), that there is good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the date of effectiveness for this final rule. This action allocates ACE to groundfish sectors in the Northeast multispecies fishery for fishing year 2026. Sectors are prohibited from fishing without ACE allocations; as such, timely implementation is necessary to ensure that sectors may fish at the start of the 2026 fishing year on May 1, 2026. If sectors were prohibited from fishing while waiting for the rule to take effect, there would be significant disruption to the fishery along with negative economic impacts, thus undermining the intent of the rule. The allocation of ACE to groundfish sectors occurs annually. Industry members and other stakeholders are aware of and familiar with these proceedings and expect them to occur in a timely manner.

This final rule is exempt from review under Executive Orders 12866 and 14192.

This final rule contains no information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

NMFS has determined that this action would not have a substantial direct effect on one or more Indian Tribes, on the relationship between the Federal Government and Indian Tribes, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities between the Federal Government and Indian Tribes; therefore, consultation with Tribal officials under E.O. 13175 is not required, and the requirements of sections (5)(b) and (5)(c) of E.O. 13175 also do not apply. A Tribal summary impact statement under section (5)(b)(2)(B) and section (5)(c)(2) of E.O. 13175 is not required and has not been prepared.

Because prior notice and the opportunity for public comment are not required for this action by the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 551 *et seq.*), or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*, are inapplicable. Therefore, no final regulatory flexibility analysis is required and none has been prepared.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: April 23, 2026.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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