

NORTHEAST SEAFOOD COALITION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NSC APPLAUDS NOAA FOR GB YELLOWTAIL MID-SEASON ADJUSTMENT

July 13, 2012—Gloucester, Mass. The Northeast Seafood Coalition (“NSC”)—a membership organization that represents 254 small-business entities with 514 permits that operate in the commercial groundfish fishery from Maine to New Jersey—supports today’s announcement from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service (“NMFS”) to initiate a transfer of approximately 332,016 pounds Georges Bank yellowtail flounder to the commercial groundfish fishery. This action will help to alleviate the severe economic hardship being faced by many NSC members that need yellowtail in order to fish on Georges Bank.

NSC board member and multiple vessel owner Thomas Williams praises the NMFS for recognizing the need for immediate action. “I think it saved the hides of a lot of people. Had [this action] not been made, I don't know that many fishermen could have survived. We know there's an abundance of yellowtail out there, so many that we wouldn't have been able to fish for winter flounder or any flat fish without catching yellowtail. I'm very happy they made this decision. It's critical to our operation,” Williams said.

Based on results of a NEFMC requested Georges Bank Yellowtail Working Group and a joint Groundfish and Scallop Committee meeting held in June, it was recommended by the New England Fishery Management Council (“NEFMC”) that NMFS utilize existing authority provided in groundfish management plan Framework 47 to immediately transfer 156.9 metric tons (“MT”) or 90 percent of the 174.3 MT of GB YT from the Atlantic scallop fishery sub-annual catch limit (ACL) to the groundfish sub-ACL based on revised projections of 2012 GB YT bycatch by the Atlantic scallop fleet. Furthermore, any unused GB YT should be transferred to the groundfish fleet by January 15, as outlined in the existing regulations and based on actual catch from the scallop fleet in fishing year 2012.

The NEFMC motion addressed the oversight made in Framework 47 where the updated projection of GB YT bycatch by the Atlantic scallop fleet did not make it into the final number approved by the Council for the current fishing year 2012.

Furthermore, the Council’s motion also requested NMFS initiate an Emergency Action to temporarily relieve the Atlantic scallop fishery from any AM triggered by catch less than 307 MT of yellowtail flounder catch by the scallop fishery that under the current scallop regulations would be required if the sub-ACL is exceeded in 2012. Instead, the pound-for-pound repayment provision of the U.S./Canada agreement could be utilized should the total allowable catch be exceeded for FY 2012.

The NSC appreciates the leadership provided by Council and NOAA leadership to address this crisis. NSC strongly thanks NMFS for their quick action, which will enable groundfish fishermen to make reasonable plans for how to make the best use of what is an extremely small overall ACL for the United States fishery in 2012.

On two separate occasions, in September 2011 and May 2012, the Northeast Seafood Coalition wrote to the NEFMC and NOAA Fisheries Service respectively, urging the reevaluation of estimated Georges Bank yellowtail flounder by-catch in the Atlantic scallop fishery and to adjust sub-allocations of the scallop and groundfish fleets accordingly. NSC staff and leadership have been heavily focused on this critical issue with participation on the Georges Bank Yellowtail Working Group and exchanges with NOAA leadership and the NEFMC to assist in the drafting of the transfer mechanism in FW 47 utilized today.

4 Parker Street Gloucester, MA 01930 Tel: (978) 283-9992
62 Hassey Street New Bedford, MA 02740
www.northeastseafoodcoalition.org

About the Northeast Seafood Coalition

The Northeast Seafood Coalition is a non-profit organization that represents individual members of the Northeast Fishery Sectors on political and policy issues affecting their interests as participants in the groundfish fishery and the Sector program in the Northeast multispecies groundfish fishery. NSC members are small, independent, entrepreneurial businesses that fish for – and support fishing for – cod, haddock, flounders, and other groundfish species along the northeast coast. NSC’s fishing business members’ fish from small and large ports all along the northeast coast. They fish small, medium, and large vessels, and they employ, among them, all groundfish gear types (trawl, longline, gillnet, and others).

NSC’s mission is to work for the long term health of fishery resources, fishing communities, and the fishing industry throughout the northeast. Since 2002, NSC has worked in the policy process in efforts to help develop rules to rebuild the northeast groundfish fishery. NSC works for rules that embody real solutions to complex fishery problems.

Background information

According to NOAA Fisheries service, in August and September 2011, as a result of lower than expected recruitment and continued poor stock conditions, a joint U.S./Canada management body made up of managers and fishermen and known as the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee, recommended reduced catch limits for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder for fishermen in both countries in 2012. The NEFMC adopted these total allowable catches at its September 2011 meeting and incorporated them into its latest revision to the groundfish fishery management plan (“Framework 47”). NOAA Fisheries Service approved and implemented the new catch limits on May 1.

#

Contact:

Nick Brancaleone

Tel: (978) 283-9992

Mobile: (978) 905-1118

E-mail: nsc.communications@gmail.com