



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

November 29, 2022

Eric Reid
Chairman
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Eric:

I am revising the groundfish sector at-sea monitoring (ASM) coverage target to 80 percent for the 2022 fishing year, based on available federal funding.

On December 14, 2021, I notified you of my determination that the ASM coverage target for Northeast multispecies sectors in fishing year 2022 would be 99 percent of all sector vessel trips subject to the groundfish sector monitoring program. I set the 99-percent ASM coverage target for fishing year 2022 to help address bias, support the collection of information and data that will help make future determinations of appropriate ASM coverage targets, and to prepare our ASM infrastructure for the transition to implement the measures proposed by the Council in Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan.

Beginning today, the ASM coverage target is 80 percent of all sector trips subject to the ASM program. This does not change the review rates for electronic monitoring (EM) video footage. The 80-percent ASM coverage target, in conjunction with EM, will continue to help address bias by collecting catch and other information that may be used for future determinations of appropriate ASM coverage targets and reliably estimating overall catch by sector vessels to the extent practicable. As of November 5, 2022, the average realized coverage for at-sea monitoring vessels is 57 percent, including at-sea monitoring and Northeast Fishery Observer Program coverage, but excluding vessels using electronic monitoring. On a sector level, achieved ASM coverage ranges between 39 and 85 percent. We expect realized ASM coverage to continue to increase throughout this fishing year as monitoring providers increase their ASM staff. Additionally, vessels using EM in place of ASM are monitored on 100 percent of trips.

Congress appropriated \$10.3 million to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in fiscal year 2022 to cover ASM costs for groundfish sectors, and Congress directed NMFS to use \$5.5 million of the appropriation for direct industry reimbursement. This limited the remaining portion of those funds that could be used to pay for NMFS' shoreside costs for the sector monitoring program, which constrained the level of coverage we could support. Before we can commit to a final allocation of those appropriated funds, we are required to get Congressional approval of our proposed spend plan. On November 14, 2022, Congress approved our spending plan designed to adjust to the funding direction. The spending plan includes sufficient funding



for us to administer an ASM coverage target of 80 percent of all sector vessel trips subject to the groundfish sector monitoring program. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will continue to reimburse 100 percent of sector ASM and EM costs using NMFS appropriated funds or a prior NMFS grant award. At this time, we anticipate having sufficient funding from prior years' ASM appropriations to continue to reimburse sectors for the costs of ASM and EM in fishing year 2023.

On April 12, 2022, we approved Amendment 23. Amendment 23 revises the groundfish sector monitoring program, including setting a fixed coverage target dependent on federal funding. We anticipate publishing a final rule to implement Amendment 23 prior to the end of this calendar year. Upon implementation of Amendment 23, the 80-percent ASM coverage target and current EM video review rates will continue through the end of fishing year 2022 on April 30, 2023.

Each year, we will evaluate all available federal funding, including any remaining funding from previous appropriations, and determine how much is available for the groundfish sector monitoring program. We will then consider other available information (e.g., recent monitoring costs, estimate of the number of vessels choosing EM) to calculate the ASM coverage target for the coming fishing year. We will announce the ASM coverage target at least 3 weeks before the annual sector enrollment deadline. If Congress has not approved a final budget for fiscal year 2023 at that time, then we will adjust the coverage target as necessary and appropriate based on final federal funding and appropriations to NMFS.

If you have further questions about the revised ASM coverage target for fishing year 2022, please contact Sarah Bland, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, at (978) 281-9257.

Sincerely,



Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator