



NOAA FISHERIES

National Marine
Fisheries Service

Northeast Fisheries
Science Center

Background

*The New England
Fishery Management
Council is charged
with developing
management plans
that meet the
requirements of the
Magnuson-Stevens
Fishery Conservation
and Management Act.*

*In 2010, most
participants in the
Northeast Multispecies
groundfish fishery
shifted to a system
referred to as
“sectors.” Each sector
receives an allocation
of fish it can harvest
for each allocated
groundfish stock.
Fishermen who do not
join a sector fish in the
“common pool.”*

Amendment 23

Amendment 23 Purpose

The purpose of Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan is to improve the reliability and accountability of catch reporting in the commercial groundfish fishery. Accurate catch data (landings and discards) are necessary to ensure catch limits are set at levels that prevent overfishing and to determine if catch limits are exceeded. Amendment 23 maintains the current goals and objectives of the groundfish monitoring program. The new measures will improve documentation of catch and catch accounting.

Amendment 23 allows additional sector monitoring tools by giving groundfish sector vessels the choice to carry a human at-sea monitor or use electronic monitoring to meet sector monitoring requirements—provided the sector has a corresponding approved monitoring plan and a contract with an approved service provider.

Catch reporting requirements should be fair for all commercial groundfish fishermen, while maximizing the value of collected catch data and minimizing costs for the fishing industry and NOAA Fisheries.

Monitoring Changes

The most significant change is a monitoring coverage target of up to 100 percent of eligible trips, provided federal funding can support agency and industry costs. This comprehensive monitoring should remove much of the uncertainty surrounding catch. As a result, Amendment 23 allows removal of the management uncertainty buffers for sectors for allocated groundfish stocks when the coverage target is 100 percent of trips. The additional quota that results may mitigate costs to industry associated with increased monitoring.





What Does the 80 Percent Coverage Target Mean?

The human at-sea monitoring coverage target for fishing year 2022 (through April 30, 2023) is 80 percent of sector groundfish trips. The coverage target for each fishing year is subject to Congressional appropriations.

- NOAA Fisheries will continue to reimburse 100 percent of sector at-sea monitoring costs, including electronic monitoring costs, for the remainder of fishing year 2022.
- The coverage target will be set to a minimum of 40 percent if federal funding cannot support all costs for higher coverage. Such years may require groundfish industry funding to achieve the minimum coverage of 40 percent.

Details on At-Sea Monitoring and Electronic Monitoring

Additional at-sea monitors are being hired and trained to meet the need to cover more trips. Vessels using human monitors are excluded from the monitoring requirement for certain trips, including:

- Fishing exclusively with 10-inch, or larger, gillnets in the inshore Georges Bank and/or Southern New England Broad Stock Areas.
- Fishing exclusively west of 71° 30' W. (NOTE: Vessels are still required to notify for trips in the pre-trip notification system (PTNS), make a vessel monitoring system (VMS) declaration, submit a trip start hail, and follow transiting requirements when east of 71° 30' W.)

All vessels must carry a Northeast Fishery Observer Program (NEFOP) observer when assigned one by NOAA Fisheries.

Amendment 23 approves two types of electronic monitoring:

- The audit model uses cameras to validate the groundfish discards reported on a vessel's electronic vessel trip report (eVTR) for use in catch accounting.
- The maximized retention model verifies compliance with catch retention requirements and collects shoreside information on sublegal allocated groundfish that would normally be collected at sea. Vessels retain and land all allocated groundfish, regardless of size, and dealers report the catch data. Dockside monitoring verifies the landings.

The Pre-Trip Notification System (PTNS)

The PTNS will be used by all groundfish vessels to notify for trips at least 48 hours in advance, but no more than 10 days in advance. The PTNS will be required for all vessels regardless of chosen monitoring option (electronic monitoring or at-sea monitors).



MORE INFORMATION:



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