



Protecting a resource, a tradition, and a way of life.

AMENDMENT 16 OVERVIEW

Groundfish Management History: Since 1994, the groundfish fishery in New England has been managed under a system which restricts fishing effort by capping the available “days-at-sea” and by imposing strict limits on the amount of fish that can be landed in a single trip. The system attempts to indirectly manage the number of fish caught by reducing the efficiency of fishing businesses. However, these rules have also increased discarded fish, reduced profits for fishermen, and failed to end overfishing on many of the region’s once abundant groundfish stocks.

CCCHFA History: The Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen’s Association (Hook Association) has worked to align the protection of the oceans with the long-term economic interests of our historic fishing communities since it was founded by local fishermen in 1991. In 2004 the Hook Association successfully established the region’s first harvesting cooperative, or ‘Sector’ for fishermen using longline gear. A second Hook Association sponsored sector comprised of fishermen using fixed gear was approved in 2006. Sectors allow fishermen to manage their catch as a community while freeing them from the ineffective restrictions on fishing opportunities which have recently crippled the industry. In exchange, participating fishermen voluntarily accept additional monitoring and increased accountability while adhering to a strictly enforced annual catch limit.

Amendment 16: In recognition of the success of these two existing Sectors, fisheries managers are currently designing Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan which will expand sector management fishery-wide (through the approval of 17 new Sectors). The plan includes management measures for cod, haddock, and flounder, as well as numerous other ecologically and commercially important species. The Sector system sets an annual catch limit for each species, and includes penalties for exceeding those limits. By allocating each sector a certain amount of fish and allowing more flexibility in how those fish are harvested, implementing this model will help rebuild fish stocks while creating safer fishing trips, reduced fish waste and increased profits for fishermen. Additionally, this amendment will also address recent federal mandates under the Magnuson-Stevens Act by establishing annual catch limits and accountability measures to end overfishing.

Post Amendment 16 2010 system: Once Amendment 16 is adopted, it will allow fishermen in 2010 to join one of the approved sectors or remain in the ‘Common Pool’ which will fish under increasingly restrictive controls on fishing effort similar to those that currently exist (e.g. restrictions on the number of days one can fish and/or trip limits). Each Sector will receive an annual allocation for each species, which will represent some portion of the overall allowable catch for that species.

CHANGE ON THE HORIZON

After years of development, Amendment 16 provides the Hook Association with a critical opportunity to further our mission and provides the independent fishermen of Cape Cod a chance to transition to a more profitable and sustainable fishery. However, there are several critical components to the successful implementation of the new plan, including:

- **A hard total allowable catch (TAC) on the entire fishery** (Sectors and Common Pool): Despite a national trend towards catch-based management, the New England groundfish fishery has never been managed under a strictly enforced limit on total allowable catch. However, many of our fish stocks have been identified as being overfished and rebuilding targets will not be met unless the entire fishery operates under such a limitation. If fishermen in either the Common Pool or Sectors are not held to their identified catch limits, our fish stocks and the entire fishery will be jeopardized.
- **Robust monitoring and reporting:** Without a comprehensive catch-monitoring program, it's impossible to track the fishery as it approaches annual catch limits and, therefore, nearly impossible to end overfishing. A successful monitoring system must accurately quantify the number of fish that are landed as well as the number discarded (thrown overboard at sea). Without this type of robust monitoring program for all vessels (both Sectors and the Common Pool), our fisheries will continue to rely on data-poor projections rather than high-quality information.

The New England Fishery Management Council will vote on Amendment 16 during its May 23-25 meeting in Portland, Maine, and the measures will be implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service.