

## **NEFMC VOTES FOR RESTRICTIONS ON INDUSTRIAL TRAWLERS**

### **CAPE COD COMMERCIAL HOOK FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION CHAMPIONED INITIATIVE TO PROTECT GROUND FISH CLOSED AREAS**

**NORTH CHATHAM, MA-** The New England Fishery Management Council made a significant step forward toward more responsible herring management when it voted this week to enact long overdue accountability standards for the industrial midwater trawl fleet in Groundfish Closed Area I. The CCCHFA-backed measures will restrict midwater trawlers from dumping catch at sea and require them to carry federal observers when they access this protected area.

"This is a giant step towards understanding what and how much is actually caught and discarded by midwater trawlers," said Chatham fisherman Mike Anderson.

Midwater trawl vessels are large industrial ships which drag nets- the largest in the region - to catch herring, mackerel, and other baitfish. After closed areas were created to protect groundfish and important habitat, midwater trawlers were allowed continued access to these areas even after all other gear types were removed. The fleet was heavily scrutinized last October after lobstermen reported large quantities of haddock mixed in with the herring they purchased for use as bait. During this time, Federal Observer data showed that over 30,000 pounds of haddock were landed and processed with the herring. In November 2008, the Council voted for National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to investigate whether regulations were broken during the October incident, and NMFS presented findings that confirmed the violation of rules to the Council this week.

Other gear types now have access to closed areas - but only after participating in extensive research and following strict guidelines. Cape Cod hook fishermen, for example, fished nearly 150 observed trips over a three year span to prove that hook gear could be used to target healthy fish stocks while avoiding stocks of concern in closed areas.

The new rules for the midwater trawl fleet would require these vessels to have an observer on board all trips to Closed Area I and also prohibit any at-sea dumping of catch. NMFS's Regional Administrator Patricia Kurkul will now decide whether to implement the Council's suggested rules.

"We were pleased to see the council take action on this highly contentious issue by ensuring more accountability from midwater trawlers through increased observer coverage and prohibition of dumping in Closed Area I," said Susan Nickerson, Executive Director of CCCHFA. "The council's motion is a step in the right direction to enforce the regulations that currently exist."

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**Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association**

CCCHFA is a member based, non-profit organization actively campaigning for a healthy marine environment that supports a secure and viable future for sustainable commercial fisheries. We educate, support, and empower the fishing industry and the public to effect policy changes that integrate the environment, social, and economic issues.

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