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Herring regulations lauded by local fishermen's group

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By **Doreen Leggett**
The Cape Codd

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CHATHAM — The Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association is applauding new herring regulations.

Last week, the New England Fishery Management Council voted to approve Association-backed "accountability standards" for the industrial midwater trawl fleet in an area that is closed to groundfishing. (cod is a groundfish.) The measures will restrict midwater trawlers from dumping catch at sea and require them to carry federal observers when they access the protected area.

"This is a giant step towards understanding what and how much is actually caught and discarded by midwater

trawlers," Chatham fisherman Mike Anderson said in a statement.

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.

Regulators took another look last October after lobstermen reported large quantities of haddock mixed in with the herring they purchased for use as bait. During that time data showed that more than 30,000 pounds of haddock were landed and processed with the herring, so the fishery council decided to take action to protect haddock.

National Marine Fisheries Service's Regional Administrator Patricia Kurkul will now decide whether to implement the council's suggested rules.

Although the hook association is pleased with the new regulations, concern with the mid-water trawlers continues. Some believe the big boats are responsible for the local decline in tuna and the sea herring's cousin, the alewife.

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