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Cape Cod Fishermen Urge Emergency Action on Herring Trawlers

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The group says the trawlers should be more strictly monitored while fishing in areas closed to groundfishermen.

A group of Cape Cod fishermen is urging federal regulators to take emergency action aimed at keeping a closer eye on industrial herring trawlers fishing in areas closed to groundfishing.

The National Marine Fishery Service published a new proposed rule today on the issue, but the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association says there isn't enough time for the rule to be implemented before the so-called midwater herring boats begin fishing in closed area on Georges Bank.

The Association is petitioning U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke to issue an emergency rule to require stricter monitoring of the vessels, which are allowed to fish in areas closed to groundfishermen.

The closures are intended to help restore depleted groundfish stocks. Herring trawler owners say netting herring doesn't disturb groundfish because they're found in different levels of the ocean. But groundfishermen say that's not true: They say the herring boats are catching haddock and other groundfish in the closed areas.

The Association says without strict controls, the herring trawlers are a threat to local populations of sea herring and other species such as river herring, cod, striped bass, whiting, dogfish, seals, whales and porpoises.

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