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CAPE COD COMMERCIAL HOOK FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION



## LOCAL FISHERMEN PREPARE FOR MONUMENTAL VOTE

**NORTH CHATHAM:** Local fishermen are gearing up for a monumental vote next week that could expand of a system of harvesting cooperatives pioneered by the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association. Fishermen hope new rules enacted by the New England Fishery Management Council will finally rebuild fish stocks, keep struggling local fishing businesses afloat, and increase the quality of local seafood.

"We're all nervously awaiting what could be the biggest change for the groundfish fleet in years," said Peter Taylor, Chatham hook fisherman and President of the Association's Board of Directors. "Sectors have helped local fishermen stay in business by allowing us more flexibility in how we harvest our annual allocation of fish."

The Fishermen's Association established two harvesting cooperatives - known as Sectors - starting in 2004 on Georges Bank. In exchange for exemption from ineffective restrictions on fishing opportunities, Sector fishermen fish under strictly enforced annual catch limits while voluntarily accepting additional catch monitoring and accountability.

On June 24 in Portland, Maine, the Council will decide whether to expand the Sector system across New England, including a Sector on Martha's Vineyard. But the success of the program could be at risk if the Council doesn't approve a fair and equitable system that holds all fishermen accountable for their catch, according to Taylor.

"With the future of fish and fishermen at stake, the entire groundfish fleet must be held to conservative catch limits and adhere to rigorous monitoring and reporting standards under the new plan," Taylor said. "It's time to make sure we know what fishermen are catching and discarding on the water so we don't we exceed our limits."

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