



## Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO COMMERCIAL HARVESTING LEVELS FOR ATLANTIC POLLOCK



**NORTH CHATHAM, MA:** Commercial fishermen throughout New England will now be able to catch a total of just over 16,000 metric tons of pollock this fishing year - nearly five times the current allotment. The new catch limit, which was announced by the National Marine Fisheries Service today and is expected to go into effect in July, has been updated to reflect the most recent scientific data available and will provide additional opportunities for local fishermen this season.

Atlantic pollock have been a cause for concern for fishermen because these fish often swim with more abundant species like cod and haddock and are frequently caught with those fish. Low allowable catch levels for pollock would have severely limited the fleet's ability to target healthier fish populations.

Wholesale changes to fisheries management adopted in May made this issue one of critical importance. The new system is comprised of 17 voluntary harvesting cooperatives, or "sectors," which are allocated a certain amount of each of the 20 managed groundfish populations in New England. The sectors are responsible for managing their harvest to avoid exceeding any of their allocations and must stop fishing if the limit on any one of them is reached.

Hook staffers and Chatham fishermen traveled to Washington, D.C., in March to urge Congressmen to support changes in the management of pollock and skate. With the backing of Congressman Bill Delahunt and the New England delegation, a letter was sent to Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke to push for changes to the allocations.

"Our whole fleet depends on how we can manage our 'choke stocks' like pollock," said Jim Nash, a member of the Georges Bank Fixed Gear Sector, which is housed at the Hook Association. "The pollock assessment showed there was more pollock to be caught, and I'm glad NMFS realized that waiting a full year to change the rules wasn't an option. NMFS got this one right."

NMFS also this week announced changes to the allotment of skate, a species that is still managed under the days-at-sea system. At the start of the 2010 fishing season, NMFS was preparing to reduce the catch limit for skate by 80 percent, from 10,000 pounds per trip to 1,900. At the urging of the Hook Association and other industry advocates, the federal agency adopted the New England Fishery Management Council's recommendation of 5,000 pounds of skate wings per trip, a move

that will not negatively impact the skate species, according to the most up-to-date scientific information.

"The most recent science tells us that the skate stocks are much better than the agency thought," said Dave Murdoch, one of Chatham's youngest commercial captains, who traveled to Washington to raise awareness about the issue. "NMFS made the right move by changing the limit. The 1,900-pound trip limit would have put me and plenty of other guys here out of business."

While still a substantial reduction, the revised limit will benefit local skate fishermen through an increase in market prices stemming from a decrease in product. The change will go into effect on July 16, 2010.

- [READ MORE](#) about the new skate limits

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## CAPE COD COMMERCIAL HOOK FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

The Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association is a nationally recognized, non-profit organization that aligns protection of the oceans with the interests of our historic fishing community. We support stewardship of coastal ecosystems through education, research, and policy programs. Started in 1991 by the local fishing fleet, the Hook Association is now the leading community fisheries organization in the region. We are taking action now to make sure there are fish for future generations.

~ Protecting a Resource, a Tradition, and a Way of Life ~  
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