

**Fishery Conservation and Management**

**§ 648.89**

**§ 648.89 Recreational and charter/party vessel restrictions.**

(a) *Recreational gear restrictions.* Persons aboard charter/party vessels permitted under this part and not fishing under the DAS program or under the restrictions and conditions of an approved sector operations plan, as specified in §648.87(c), and recreational fishing vessels in the EEZ, are prohibited from fishing with more than one line per angler, and must stow all other fishing gear on board the vessel as specified in §648.23(b).

(b) *Recreational minimum fish sizes—(1) Minimum fish sizes.* Unless further restricted under of this section, persons aboard charter/party vessels permitted under this part and not fishing under the NE multispecies DAS program or under the restrictions and conditions of an approved sector operations plan, and recreational fishing vessels in or possessing fish from the EEZ, may not possess fish smaller than the minimum fish sizes, measured in total length (TL), as follows:

Species	Size (inches)
Cod .....	22 (55.9 cm)
Haddock .....	18 (45.7 cm)
Pollock .....	19 (48.3 cm)
Witch flounder (gray sole) .....	14 (35.6 cm)
Yellowtail flounder .....	13 (33.0 cm)
American plaice (dab) .....	14 (35.6 cm)
Atlantic halibut .....	41 (104.1 cm)
Winter flounder (blackback) .....	12 (30.5 cm)
Redfish .....	9 (22.9 cm)

(2) *Exception.* Vessels may possess fillets less than the minimum size specified, if the fillets are taken from legalized fish and are not offered or intended for sale, trade or barter.

(3) *GOM cod.* Private recreational vessels and charter party vessels described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section may not possess cod smaller than 24 inches (63.7 cm) in total length when fishing in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area specified under §648.80(a)(1).

(4) Fish fillets, or parts of fish, must have at least 2 square inches (5.1 square cm) of skin on while possessed on board a vessel and at the time of landing in order to meet minimum size requirements. The skin must be contiguous and must allow ready identification of the fish species.

(c) *Possession restrictions—(1) Recreational fishing vessels.* (i) Unless further restricted by the Seasonal GOM Cod Possession Prohibition specified under paragraph (c)(1)(v) of this section, each person on a private recreational vessel may possess no more than 10 cod per day in, or harvested from, the EEZ.

(ii) For purposes of counting fish, fillets will be converted to whole fish at the place of landing by dividing the number of fillets by two. If fish are filleted into a single (butterfly) fillet, such fillet shall be deemed to be from one whole fish.

(iii) Cod harvested by recreational fishing vessels in or from the EEZ with more than one person aboard may be pooled in one or more containers. Compliance with the possession limit will be determined by dividing the number of fish on board by the number of persons on board. If there is a violation of the possession limit on board a vessel carrying more than one person, the violation shall be deemed to have been committed by the owner or operator of the vessel.

(iv) Cod must be stored so as to be readily available for inspection.

(v) *Seasonal GOM cod possession prohibition.* Persons aboard private recreational fishing vessels fishing in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area specified in §648.80(a)(1) may not fish for or possess any cod from November 1 through April 15. Private recreational vessels in possession of cod caught outside the GOM Regulated Mesh Area may transit this area, provided all bait and hooks are removed from fishing rods and any cod on board has been gutted and stored.

(2) *Charter/party vessels.* Charter/party vessels fishing any part of a trip in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area, as defined in §648.80(a)(1), are subject to the following possession limit restrictions:

(i) Unless further restricted by the Seasonal GOM Cod Possession Prohibition, specified in paragraph (c)(2)(v) of this section, each person on a charter/party vessel may possess no more than 10 cod per day.

(ii) For purposes of counting fish, fillets will be converted to whole fish at the place of landing by dividing the number of fillets by two. If fish are

filleted into a single (butterfly) fillet, such fillet shall be deemed to be from one whole fish.

(iii) Cod harvested by charter/party vessels with more than one person aboard may be pooled in one or more containers. Compliance with the possession limits will be determined by dividing the number of fish on board by the number of persons on board. If there is a violation of the possession limits on board a vessel carrying more than one person, the violation shall be deemed to have been committed by the owner or operator of the vessel.

(iv) Cod must be stored so as to be readily available for inspection.

(v) *Seasonal GOM cod possession prohibition.* Persons aboard charter/party fishing vessels permitted under this part and not fishing under the NE multispecies DAS program or on a sector trip that are fishing in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area specified in § 648.80(a)(1) may not fish for, possess, or land any cod from November 1 through April 15. Charter/party vessels in possession of cod caught outside the GOM Regulated Mesh Area may transit this area, provided all bait and hooks are removed from fishing rods and any cod on board has been gutted and stored.

(3) *Atlantic halibut.* Charter and party vessels permitted under this part, and recreational fishing vessels fishing in the EEZ, may not possess, on board, more than one Atlantic halibut.

(4) *Accounting of daily trip limit.* For the purposes of determining the per day trip limit for cod for recreational fishing vessels and party/charter vessels, any trip in excess of 15 hours and covering 2 consecutive calendar days will be considered more than 1 day. Similarly, any trip in excess of 39 hours and covering 3 consecutive calendar days will be considered more than 2 days and, so on, in a similar fashion.

(5) *Atlantic wolffish.* Persons aboard charter/party vessels permitted under this part and not fishing under the NE multispecies DAS program, on a sector trip, under a Handgear A permit, under a Handgear B permit, or under a Small Vessel Category C permit, and private recreational fishing vessels in or pos-

sessing fish from the EEZ may not possess Atlantic wolffish.

(6) *Windowpane flounder.* Persons aboard charter/party vessels permitted under this part and not fishing under the NE multispecies DAS program, on a sector trip, under a Handgear A permit, under a Handgear B permit, or under a Small Vessel Category C permit, and private recreational fishing vessels in or possessing fish from the EEZ, may not possess windowpane flounder.

(7) *Ocean pout.* Persons aboard charter/party vessels permitted under this part and not fishing under the NE multispecies DAS program, on a sector trip, under a Handgear A permit, under a Handgear B permit, or under a Small Vessel Category C permit, and private recreational fishing vessels in or possessing fish from the EEZ may not possess ocean pout.

(d) *Restrictions on sale.* It is unlawful to sell, barter, trade, or otherwise transfer for a commercial purpose, or to attempt to sell, barter, trade, or otherwise transfer for a commercial purpose, NE multispecies caught in or landed from the EEZ by recreational, charter, or party vessels permitted under this part not fishing under a DAS, on a sector trip, or under a Handgear A permit, Handgear B permit, or Small Vessel Category C permit.

(e) *Charter/party vessel restrictions on fishing in GOM closed areas and the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area—(1) GOM Closed Areas.* Unless otherwise specified in this paragraph (e)(1), a vessel fishing under charter/party regulations may not fish in the GOM closed areas specified at § 648.81(d)(1) through (f)(1) during the time periods specified in those paragraphs, unless the vessel has on board a valid letter of authorization issued by the Regional Administrator pursuant to § 648.81(f)(2)(iii) and paragraph (e)(3) of this section. The conditions and restrictions of the letter of authorization must be complied with for a minimum of 3 months if the vessel fishes or intends to fish in the seasonal GOM closure areas; or for the rest of the fishing year, beginning with the start of the participation period of the letter of authorization, if the vessel fishes or intends to fish in the year-

round GOM closure areas. A vessel fishing under charter/party regulations may not fish in the GOM Cod Spawning Protection Area specified at § 648.81(n)(1) during the time period specified in that paragraph, unless the vessel complies with the requirements specified at § 648.81(n)(2)(iii).

(2) *Nantucket Lightship Closed Area.* A vessel fishing under charter/party regulations may not fish in the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area specified in § 648.81(c)(1) unless the vessel has on board a letter of authorization issued by the Regional Administrator pursuant to § 648.81(c)(2)(iii) and paragraph (e)(3) of this section.

(3) *Letters of authorization.* To obtain either of the letters of authorization specified in paragraphs (e)(1) and (2) of this section, a vessel owner must request a letter from the Northeast Regional Office of NMFS, either in writing or by phone (see Table 1 to 50 CFR 600.502). As a condition of these letters of authorization, the vessel owner must agree to the following:

(i) The letter of authorization must be carried on board the vessel during the period of participation;

(ii) Fish species managed by the NEFMC or MAFMC that are harvested or possessed by the vessel, are not sold or intended for trade, barter or sale, regardless of where the fish are caught;

(iii) The vessel has no gear other than rod and reel or handline gear on board; and

(iv) For the GOM charter/party closed area exemption only, the vessel may not fish on a sector trip, under a NE multispecies DAS, or under the provisions of the NE multispecies Small Vessel Category or Handgear A or Handgear B permit categories, as specified at § 648.82, during the period of participation.

(f) *Recreational fishery AM—(1) Catch evaluation.* As soon as recreational catch data are available for the entire previous fishing year, the Regional Administrator will evaluate whether recreational catches exceed any of the sub-ACLs specified for the recreational fishery pursuant to § 648.90(a)(4). When evaluating recreational catch, the components of recreational catch that are used shall be the same as those used in the most recent assessment for

that particular stock. To determine if the regulated species or ocean pout sub-ACL specified for the recreational fishery was exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall compare the 3-year average of recreational catch to the 3-year average of the recreational sub-ACL for each stock, as follows:

(i) For fishing year 2010, recreational catch shall be compared to the recreational sub-ACL for that stock for fishing year 2010.

(ii) For fishing year 2011, the average recreational catch for fishing years 2010 and 2011 shall be compared to the average recreational sub-ACLs for that stock during fishing years 2010 and 2012.

(iii) Starting in fishing year 2012, the 3-year average recreational catch shall be compared to the 3-year average of the recreational sub-ACLs for that stock.

(2) *Reactive AM adjustment.* If it is determined that any recreational sub-ACL was exceeded, as specified in paragraph (f)(1) of this section, the Regional Administrator, after consultation with the New England Fishery Management Council, shall develop measures necessary to prevent the recreational fishery from exceeding the appropriate sub-ACL in future years. Appropriate AMs for the recreational fishery, including adjustments to fishing season, minimum fish size, or possession limits, may be implemented in a manner consistent with the Administrative Procedure Act, with final measures published in the FEDERAL REGISTER no later than January when possible. Separate AMs shall be developed for the private and charter/party components of the recreational fishery.

(3) *Proactive AM adjustment.* When necessary, the Regional Administrator, after consultation with the New England Fishery Management Council, may adjust recreational measures to ensure the recreational fishery achieves, but does not exceed any recreational fishery sub-ACL in a future fishing year. Appropriate AMs for the recreational fishery, including adjustments to fishing season, minimum fish size, or possession limits, may be implemented in a manner consistent with the Administrative Procedure Act, with final measures published in the

FEDERAL REGISTER prior to the start of the fishing year where possible. In specifying these AMs, the Regional Administrator shall take into account the non-binding prioritization of possible measures recommended by the Council: for cod, first increases to minimum fish sizes, then adjustments to seasons, followed by changes to bag limits; and for haddock, first increases to minimum size limits, then changes to bag limits, and then adjustments to seasons.

[69 FR 22984, Apr. 27, 2004, as amended at 71 FR 62196, Oct. 23, 2006; 72 FR 73281, Dec. 27, 2007; 75 FR 18348, Apr. 9, 2010; 76 FR 23076, Apr. 25, 2011; 76 FR 42587, July 19, 2011; 77 FR 25630, May 1, 2012; 77 FR 26125, May 2, 2012; 78 FR 26164, 26208, May 3, 2013]

**§ 648.90 NE multispecies assessment, framework procedures and specifications, and flexible area action system.**

For the NE multispecies framework specification process described in this section, the regulated species and ocean pout biennial review is considered a separate process from the small-mesh species annual review, as described in paragraphs (a)(2) and (b)(1), respectively, of this section. In addition, the process for specifying ABCs and associated ACLs for regulated species and ocean pout, as described in paragraph (a)(4) of this section, is considered a separate process from the small-mesh species ABC and ACL process described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(a) *NE multispecies*. For the purpose of this paragraph (a), the term “NE multispecies fishery” is defined as common pool vessels, sector vessels, and private recreational and charter/party vessels, as defined in this part; the term “NE multispecies commercial fishery” is defined as vessels issued a limited access NE multispecies permit, or an open access NE multispecies Handgear B permit; and the term “NE multispecies recreational fishery” is defined as private recreational vessels and charter or party boats, as further defined in this part.

(1) *NE Multispecies annual SAFE Report*. The NE Multispecies Plan Development Team (PDT) shall prepare an annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the NE multispecies fishery. The SAFE Report

shall be the primary vehicle for the presentation of all updated biological and socio-economic information regarding the NE multispecies complex and its associated fisheries. The SAFE report shall provide source data for any adjustments to the management measures that may be needed to continue to meet the goals and objectives of the FMP.

(2) *Biennial review*. (i) The NE multispecies PDT shall meet on or before September 30 every other year, unless otherwise specified in paragraph (a)(3) of this section, under the conditions specified in that paragraph, to perform a review of the fishery, using the most current scientific information available provided primarily from the NEFSC. Data provided by states, ASMFC, the USCG, and other sources may also be considered by the PDT. Based on this review, the PDT will develop ACLs for the upcoming fishing year(s) as described in paragraph (a)(4) of this section and develop options for consideration by the Council if necessary, on any changes, adjustments, or additions to DAS allocations, closed areas, or other measures necessary to rebuild overfished stocks and achieve the FMP goals and objectives.

(ii) The PDT shall review available data pertaining to: Catch and landings, discards, DAS allocations, DAS use, sector operations, and other measures of fishing effort; survey results; stock status; current estimates of fishing mortality and overfishing levels; social and economic impacts; enforcement issues; and any other relevant information.

(iii) Based on this review, the PDT shall recommend ACLs and develop options necessary to achieve the FMP goals and objectives, which may include a preferred option. The PDT must demonstrate through analyses and documentation that the options they develop are expected to meet the FMP goals and objectives. The PDT may review the performance of different user groups or fleet sectors in developing options. The range of options developed by the PDT may include any of the management measures in the FMP, including, but not limited to: ACLs, which must be based on the