



New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chair* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

November 14, 2022

Mr. Joseph Cimino
Division of Fish & Wildlife
NJ Marine Fisheries Administration
PO Box 418
Port Republic, NJ 08241

Dear Mr. Cimino:

As a follow-up to my letter dated April 21, 2022, NOAA Fisheries approved the Council's proposal in Framework Adjustment 63 (FW63) to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) fishery management plan for Georges Bank (GB) cod. FW63 adopts additional recreational fishery measures to promote cod stock rebuilding and reduce recreational mortality by 68% from recent levels. The Council set a recreational GB cod catch target of 75 mt for fishing year 2022 and the measures were designed to stay within that target. The action was effective July 15, 2022.

The recreational measures include:

- Slot Limit- The minimum size for GB cod is 22 inches (55.88 cm.) and the maximum size is 28 inches (71.12 cm) total length for the recreational fishery (private, party, and charter).
- Possession Limit- Party, charter, and private vessels in the recreational fishery are permitted to land 5 legal sized GB cod per angler, per day.
- Season- Party, charter, and private vessels in the recreational fishery are prohibited from retaining GB cod from May 1 to July 31. No possession is in place during this time.

A preliminary estimate from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, received this week by the Council, indicates recreational catches of GB cod are 83 mt for May through August (Waves 3 and 4), thus already exceeding the Council's catch target. Furthermore, this represents a 30% increase from the same time frame in 2021. Should this trend continue, the recreational fishery for GB cod is well on track to far exceed the Council's catch target of 75 mt.

The Council remains concerned that state regulations that are less restrictive than those in the federal plan can create enforcement challenges and reduce the effectiveness of the federal measures. I urge you to share this information with your membership for consideration. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director