



April 30, 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR: AIS Observers

FROM: Amy Van Atten 
Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: NE Multispecies (Groundfish) Amendment 16 and Framework Adjustment 44 Update – May 1, 2010; Rope Trawl; Special Management Program cheatsheet

This memo is intended to inform NEFOP observers of the implementation of Amendment 16 and Framework Adjustment 44 (FW 44) starting May, 1, 2010 and the regulatory changes that will affect the Northeast groundfish vessels. Amendment 16 measures drastically change the system of management over the NE Multispecies fisheries, and Observers need to be aware of changes that will be seen in fishing effort, additional monitoring requirements, regulations, new gear requirements, and fishing behavior. This memo will also introduce the Rope Separator Trawl, a newly approved trawl gear that was designed to reduce the catch and mortality of Atlantic Cod and flounders. Accompanying this memo will be a new cheat sheet that provides details of the 2010 Groundfish Special Management programs and the associated approved trawl gears, for your reference.

Background

Amendment 16 was developed by the New England Fisheries Council to address further measures needed to protect overfished groundfish stocks in New England. Amendment 16 and FW 44 implement a new management system that establishes catch limits, restricted gear areas, Special Management Programs, and new accountability measures for the fish stocks managed by the Fishery Management Council. Amendment 16's intent is to end overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks, and mitigate the economic impacts of the latest stock assessment. Observers deployed on fishing vessels targeting groundfish will either be on a sector vessel, or a common pool vessel. A Sector is a group of 3 or more fishermen who have pooled together their permits and receive a portion of available groundfish catch based on their combined fishing history. Sectors are formed each year, and they are voluntary. Vessels fishing under a sector are exempt from many previous regulations based on their agreement to have a yearly total allowable catch. These exemptions include: groundfish trip limits, groundfish Days at Sea (DAS) requirements, Georges Bank seasonal closure areas, portions of Gulf of Maine rolling closure areas, and mesh requirements when using specific gear on Georges Bank. If a vessel opts not to join a sector they can continue to fish under the DAS regulations with a 32% reduction from the 2009 DAS

allocation. Frame Work 44 is a modification to Amendment 16 that specifies catch limits for fishing years 2010-2012, additional rules for FY 2010, and makes minor corrections to Amendment 16.

In addition to sectors, AM 16 has implemented new regulations that prohibited the catching or possessing of Window Pane Flounder, Southern New England Winter Flounder, Ocean Pout, and Wolfish on any commercial fishing vessel. Am 16 also alters the minimum fish size for kept Haddock from 19 inches to 18 inches, and increased the minimum legal size of Atlantic Halibut to 41 inches.

Due to the additional monitoring coverage fishermen will be subject to additional reporting requirements under Amendment 16. Observer notification has been changes to 48 hours from 72 hours, and is required for all groundfish vessels, with the option to report fishing intentions for a time period of 9 days if fishing operations last less than 48 hours. Sector fishermen will have to issue hailing reports when they begin fishing and a trip-end hail report 6 hours before they are expected to land to in order to facilitate dockside monitoring coverage, which is also a new requirement under Amendment 16.

Observers will be seeing additional monitoring efforts associated with sectors as well. At-Sea Monitors will be deployed on fishing vessels and will be collecting a catch data that will be provided within 48 hrs to the Northeast Regional Office for monitoring of Annual Catch Limits and Sector quotas (otherwise known as Annual Catch Entitlement or ACE). At-Sea Monitors are expected to cover around 30% of sector trips. In addition to At-Sea Monitors, Dockside Monitors will be present at 50% of offloads in 2010 to document and verify offloading of kept catch.

Amendment 16 also establishes restricted gear areas where vessels can fish using specific gear types. Starting May 1st, 2010, the US/CAN Management Area will open for the 2010 FY. A cheat sheet summarizing these management areas, times, and required gear will be provided to you with this memo. The Western US/CAN area will open for all gear types used by both sector and common pool vessels. The eastern US/CAN Area will be open for non-trawl gear types including longline, handline, and gillnet. Trawl fishing will open in the Eastern Area August 1st for sector and common pool trawl vessels with the requirement that the vessels use the Haddock Separator trawl, the Flounder trawl, or the Ruhle trawl. The Eastern US/CAN Haddock SAP will be open from Aug 1-Dec 31, 2010 for both sector and common pool vessels. Common pool vessels fishing trawl gear will be restricted to using either the Haddock Separator trawl or the Ruhle trawl, while sector vessels will be exempt from these restrictions. From May 1- Jan 31, 2011, the Closed Area 1 Hook Gear Haddock SAP will be open for both sector vessels and common pool vessels fishing hook gear. The Regular B DAS Program is open from May 1- April 30, 2011 for common pool vessels. Common pool vessels fishing Regular B DAS using trawl gear are required to use either the Haddock Separator trawl, or the Ruhle trawl. The Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/ Haddock SAP will be open for fishing Aug 1- Jan 31 for both common pool vessels and sector vessels. Approved gear for fishing in this SAP is the

Haddock Separator trawl, the Ruhle trawl, or hook gear. No Flounder trawl nets or gillnets are permitted.

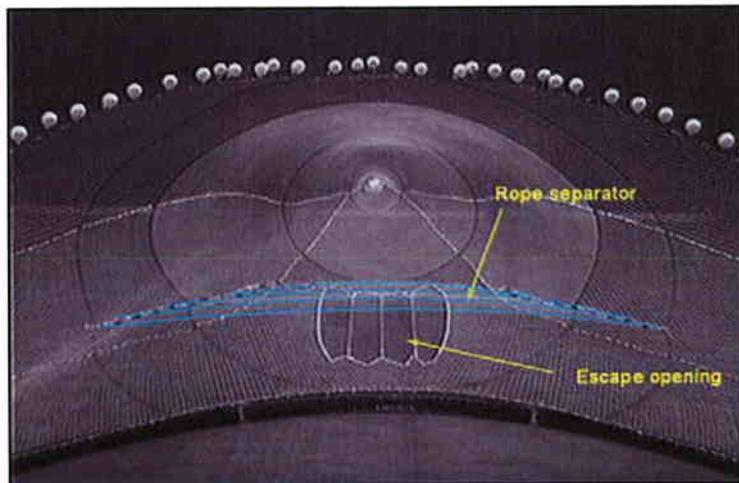
The Rope Separator Trawl

Many groundfish species in the Northeast have been shown to be at low stock levels due to commercial fishing, though some species have been recovering better than others. Some overfished stocks such as Atlantic Cod and Yellowtail Flounder have lower Total Allowable Catch (TAC) limits than other healthier species such as Haddock. These limiting TAC's can terminate fishing effort for all species without harvesting the maximum amount of Haddock quota. Several trawl nets have been developed to try and reduce the mortality of Atlantic Cod and other groundfish species while harvesting more abundant stocks of haddock in Northeast trawl fisheries.

The Rope Separator Trawl uses a series of parallel ropes attached to each of the side seams of a four seamed bottom trawl net. These ropes act as a horizontal plane that separate the upper and lower sections of the net. The ropes run across the net horizontally and terminate at the rear section of the belly of the net just above an escape outlet. The parallel separator ropes are made of 14 mm polyurethane ropes. The forward 2/3 of the separator ropes that make up the separator panel are to be spaced no further than 26 inches apart, with the last 1/3 of the ropes in the separator panes no further than 13 inches apart. The escape outlet located just below the separator panel is to be at least 18 meshes in both length and width. The minimum mesh size for the body and extensions of the net is to be 6-inch diamond, or 6.5-inch square mesh, and the meshes that comprise the belly of the net must be 13 inch diamond mesh. Minimum mesh size for the cod end of the net is 6-inch diamond mesh or 6.5-inch square mesh. Many studies of fish behavior show that haddock have the tendency to swim upwards when trying to escape trawl nets, while Atlantic Cod and other flounders will swim downwards to escape. The Rope Separator Trawl has an escape outlet located in the belly of the net directly under the last parallel separating rope that allows the escape of interested species before they enter the cod end. The escape outlet is square in shape and may have longitudinal lines in it to retain its shape as it is pulled through the water.

While the frequency of encountering this net is unknown, it is imperative for observers to recognize this gear type and properly document it in the Trawl Gear Characteristics Log. When vessels intend to fish in Restricted Gear Areas, they are required to use either the haddock separator trawl, Ruhle Trawl, or Rope Separator Trawl. While the Haddock separator Trawl and the Ruhle Trawl have been approved for the use in Eastern US/CA area, Eastern Area Haddock SAP, Regular BDAS program, Closed Area II Yellowtail Flounder/ Haddock SAP, and Restricted Gear Areas, the Rope Separator Trawl has only been approved for use in the Restricted Gear Areas.

Roper Separator Trawl Images



Above: A view of the Rope Separator Trawl looking into the opening of the net.



A view of the Rope Separator Trawl as it would look from the side during set out or haul back.

The Trawl Gear Characteristics Log

The two fields of the Trawl Gear Characteristics Log that need special attention are the Excluder/Separator Device and Escape outlet. There has been confusion on how to fill out these fields in the past and properly completing these fields is important when documenting this type of net. The Excluder/Separator Device is the part of the net that separates different species of fish and the Escape Outlet is used to provide a means of escape for certain species. The

Excluder/Separator Device needs only to be checked off to indicate whether the net has one or not. The Escape Outlet field required the mesh size, length and width of outlet in number of meshes, shape of outlet, and location. The Separator device on the Rope Separator Trawl is the parallel ropes, and the escape outlet would be rectangular.

Example: Rope Separator Trawl

Separator Device Used= Yes

Type=Other, Code 99. Record in comments "Parallel Rope Separator Panel"

Fish Outlet Used= Yes

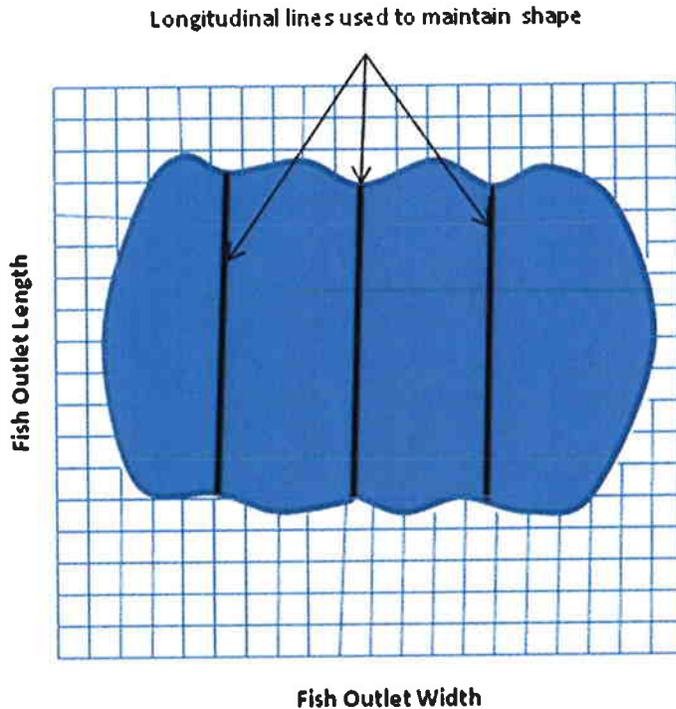
Type= Opening

Fish Outlet Length= Record in whole inches, the length of the fish outlet from the front to the back of the net by counting the number of meshes in the length and multiplying by the mesh size. You may ask the captain.

Fish Outlet Width = Record in whole inches, the width of the fish outlet from side to side of the net. This can be done by counting the number of meshes in the width of the escape outlet and multiplying that number by the mesh size.

Fish Outlet Shape Type code = Record the shape as square unless there are unequal numbers of meshes in the length and width.

Location = Record the location of the escape outlet as "bottom" as this is the most appropriate descriptive code for the proper location. The top of the opening should terminate just below the rope separators.



Note: Image is not to scale. Escape outlet is required
Have at least 18 meshes in both its length and width.

Comments must be made when encountering this gear type. Specific comments should include: How many longitudinal lines are located inside the escape outlet, what is the diameter of rope that make up the separator panel, how many ropes make up the separator panel, and any other unusual aspect of the gear you may notice.