



New England Fishery Management Council

May 23, 2012

Statement by Acting NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, Samuel Rauch, and New England Fishery Management Council Chairman, C.M. "Rip" Cunningham

Fishermen, scientists, managers and interested members of the public met today in New England's largest fishing port to explore options that could mitigate the low catch limits that now constrain catches of yellowtail flounder on Georges Bank.

"We formed a joint NOAA Fisheries Service and the New England Fishery Management Council working group and scheduled this meeting in New Bedford, MA, to proactively engage scallop and groundfish fishermen and others in discussions to identify potential solutions to the problem," said Samuel Rauch, acting assistant administrator, NOAA Fisheries Service. "Only by working together can we find workable solutions that we can all live with."

To get everyone on the same page, presenters shared information on how stock status is determined and how the joint U.S./Canada management body makes catch allocations for this shared stock. Other information was presented about existing efforts that are underway to reduce yellowtail bycatch in the scallop fishery via gear modifications and real-time communications among vessels so they can avoid high concentrations of yellowtail flounder.

Suggestions included updating scientific information, possibly expediting transfers of yellowtail flounder from the scallop fishery to the groundfish fishery, exploring the feasibility of setting a zero possession limit for yellowtail and other options.

"We need to take a hard look at many of the good ideas aired here today and advance workable solutions as quickly as possible," said C.M. "Rip" Cunningham, chair, New England Fishery Management Council.