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Fish Stocks in ICNAF Subarea 4

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Introduction

At the meeting of the ICNAF Standing Committee on Regulatory Measures in February 1968, a number of questions were posed concerning the distribution and status of fish stocks in the ICNAF area. This document attempts to answer some of those questions for Subarea 4, by presenting distributions of the commercially important marine species. The species dealt with here include cod, haddock, redfish, halibut, silver hake, plaice, witch, yellowtail, winter flounder, wolffish, pollock, white hake, cusk, herring, and mackerel. In addition to these, there are five species in Subarea 4 that are abundant at present but only lightly exploited commercially. These are sand launce, argentines, sculpins, anglers, and skates. Comprehensive distribution charts for these latter species are not yet available for Subarea 4, but research is going on at present into the biology of some of them.

Figures 2 to 16 on distribution were made by stippling areas in which the species considered are found in significant quantities. Fishing distribution is shown by larger dote in either 500- or 100-metric ton average landings for 1962 to 1966. A chart of Subarea 4 outlining ICNAF Divisions is shown in Fig. 1.

Stock Distribution and Fishing

Cod

Cod are to be found, sometimes seasonally, in all of ICNAF Subarea 4. Figure 2 shows the general distribution of this species and also the pattern of fishing. There

appear to be four major divisions of the cod stock in Subarca 4. The most northerly stock is north of the Laurentian Channel in Div. 4R and 4S, and may be composed of two groups. The southern Gulf of St. Lawrence stock is resident south of the Channel in Div. 4T and migrates annually into Div. 4Vn during the winter. Divisions 4W and 4Vs cod may be separated during the year, although there is some movement of fish to spawning areas in the Western Bank-Emerald region (4W) in the spring. The most southerly stock of cod in Subarea 4 is resident in Div. 4X, with the concentration in the Browns Bank area.

Figure 2 shows fishing of the cod stocks to be concentrated in a number of areas. These are along the west coast of Newfoundland, off the Gaspé in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, off northern Cape Breton, in the Western Bank-Emerald Bank area, and in the Browns Bank area. The variety of fishing gears used to catch cod include otter trawl, pair trawl, longline, Danish seine, gillnet, handline, and traps. Handlines, traps, and gillnets are mainly restricted to inshore waters. Otter trawling, pair trawling, longlining, and Danish seining are carried out on the offshore banks.

Pure cod trips by Canadian trawlers are rare. In general, the proportion of cod to other species in a trip is high in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, moderate on the Nova Scotia banks, and low in the Bay of Fundy. Many of the commercial species are caught in varying amounts along with cod. It would be difficult to fish cod on the Nova Scotia banks and in the Bay of Fundy area without catching considerable quantities of haddock as well.

Haddock

The distribution and fishing of haddock in Subarea 4 are shown in Fig. 3. Haddock are found in the area from northern Cape Breton, southward on the fishing banks and west to the Bay of Fundy. However, there are

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only light seasonal concentrations of haddock in Div. 4Vn and 4Vs. Only spring and occasional summer concentrations are found regularly in Div. 4W. In Div. 4X the main stocks of haddock are to be found in the Browns Bank area and also in the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. In the area as a whole, we would separate the stocks into two, divided by the deep-water Scotian Gulf which lies near the border of Div. 4V and 4W.

About 95% of the haddock landings **now taken** from Subarea 4 are fished by otter trawl. Longlines and Danish seines pick up some catches as do traps and gillnets inshore, but these landings are relatively small.

Practically all of the Canadian haddock landings are from mixed species landings, cod being the principal species taken in conjunction with haddock.

Redfish

The distribution of redfish in Subarea 4 is shown in Fig. 4. In general, this species is found in relatively deep water on fishing grounds 100 fathoms deep and over. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the redfish is commonly found in Div. 4R and 4S, north of the Laurentian Channel, and along the southerly edge of the Laurentian Channel in Div. 4T. The distribution follows the deep water both inshore and on the offshore edge of the Nova Scotia banks, and the species can be found around into the mouth of the Bay of Fundy (4X). On the basis of limited knowledge, we would separate the stocks of Div. 4R and 4S from those in 4T, and we would probably divide again somewhere in the shallowwater area of Western Bank, Middle Ground, and Scatari Bank (4Vs, 4W) where there appears to be a natural shallowwater division. Although redfish appear to be fairly common from surveys along the outer edges of the Nova Scotia banks, there is little fishing in these areas.

Practically 100% of the redfish landed in Subarea 4 are caught by otter trawl. In these catches, considerable

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quantities of silver hake and argentines could be caught by a vessel fishing for redfish, but no Canadian figures are available on this since the latter species are not retained by our vessels. Minor quantities of witch are also caught and landed along with redfish.

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Halibut

lalibut are distributed throughout the fishing grounds in Subarea 4. Figure 5 shows their distribution in Div. 4R and 4S, where they are found around Anticosti Island, along the south coast of Quebec-Labrador, and along the west coast of Newfoundland. South of the Laurentian Channel they are found occasionally along the Channel edge in Div. 4T. On the Nova Scotia banks they may be found all the way from the east to the west along the 100-fathom edge. Main concentrations appear to be seasonal and occur in the Sable Island gully, and along the deep-water areas in Div. 4V, 4W, and 4X.

Stock divisions are difficult to make for halibut because of the migratory habits of the species. A major tagging effort in the Sable Island-Banquereau gully showed that many fish move to the Grand Banks area. Earlier taggings in Div. 4X and 4W showed other extensive movements.

The main Canadian fishery for halibut is carried out by longline although handline landings are made each year. Occasionally, concentrations of halibut are fished by otter trawlers when the opportunity affords itself. Hake, cusk, and cod are taken incidentally and sometimes in fair quantities by halibut longliners.

Practically all of the halibut landings from Subarea 4 are by Canadians and about two thirds of this catch is taken on longlines.

Silver Hake

Our present knowledge of the distribution of silver hake in Subarea 4 is shown in Fig. 6. Areas of

distribution are limited mainly to the outer edge of the Nova Scotia banks in Div. 4Vs, 4W, and 4X, and the area of Sable Island Bank and Middle Ground in Div. 4W. They are also found in the deep-water area between Div. 4W and 4X. Silver hake are normally found in deep water but apparently. when the water warms up during mid summer over the banks, they move into shoaler water occasionally, particularly in the area around Sable Island.

All of the catches landed are made by otter trawl at present. Any incidental catches made by Canadian otter trawlers are discarded at sea. The landings shown for the ICNAF area are made by the USSR and the USA, with the majority by the former. It is not known if any other species are caught in abundance incidentally to silver hake catches; however, from the areas of fishing concentration shown in Fig. 6, it is likely that haddock would be caught along with silver hake.

Plaice

Plaice have a wide distribution in Subarea 4 and are found in all Divisions as shown in Fig. 7. Concentrations are indicated in Div. 4T and 4Vn, as shown by the plot of landings. However, most of these landings are taken incidentally to other species. The exception to this is the Danish seiner and small otter trawler fishery where the main species sought may be plaice.

Witch

The distribution of witch in Subarea 4 is shown in Fig. 8. In general, this species is found in depths of 80 fathoms or more. The Figure shows that, in the northern Gulf of St. Lawrence, the main area of concentration is along the deep water off the west coast of Newfoundland in Div. 4R. South of the Laurentian Channel, witch is found along the edge of the Channel in Div. 4T and 4Vn, and in the deep-water areas of 4Vs and the Scotian Gulf (4W-X). They also occur along the outer edge of the Nova Scotia banks.

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Landings indicate that areas of fishing concentration are mainly along the southern edge of the Laurentian Channel and in the deep-water areas of Div. 4V. Otter trawlers capture fair amounts of witch while fishing for redfish or for cod in the deep water. At certain times of the year, Canadian Danish seiners fish specifically for witch in the eastern Nova Scotia region (eastern 4W, 4V). Other landings of this species are taken by otter trawl.

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Yellowtail

The distribution of yellowtail in Subarea 4 is shown in Fig. 9. Although this flounder may be found occasionally in almost all the shoal-water areas in Subarea 4, the main concentrations are in Div. 4Vs on Banquereau and in Div. 4W on Western Bank and around Sable Island. Although some yellowtail are landed incidentally in landings of other species, the main landings shown in the statistics are for the effort directed specifically towards catching yellowtail. Divisions of populations are not clear at present.

Winter Flounder

Winter flounder distribution and fishing in Subarea 4 are shown in Fig. 10. The species has an inshore distribution and, as bhown in the Figure, is found from Chaleur Bay in Div. 4T around to the eastern end of Prince Edward Island. The distribution inshore in the Nova Scotia banks area extends from the tip of Cape Breton in 4Vn through 4W and 4X around to the Bay of Fundy in the inshore areas. Landings are mainly from the inshore ground by small otter trawlers and, in the last 6 years, have been concentrated in the western part of Div. 4T. An area between Cape Breton and P.E.I. also supports some landings in Div. 4T. There is also a fishery for winter flounder in the St. Mary Bay region, ^(Div.4X) sizes generally predominate in areas along the outer Nova Scotia coast.

Tagging in the St. Mary Bay area indicates that stocks are mainly local along the coast.

Wolffish

Wolffish distribution and fishing are shown in Fig. 11. This species is found scattered over the fishing banks in Div. 4V, 4W, and 4X. Most of the landings in recent years have been incidental to other species and mainly by otter trawl and longline. Occasionally wolffish have been found to concentrate and move inshore during the months of May and June, particularly in the southwestern Nova Scotia area (Div. 4X). This concentration resulted in small draggers and longliners fishing seasonally for the species in inshore areas.

Pollock

Pollock distribution in Subarea 4 is shown in Fig. 12. The main areas of distribution are the Nova Scotia banks and the Bay of Fundy, drom Div. 4V to Div. 4X. Areas of concentration are found to be from Western Bank in Div. 4W, westward.

Canadian fishermen account for about 90% of the total pollock landings from Subarea 4. The fish are taken inshore in summer by handline, trap, purse-seine, and longline, and are taken offshore in all seasons by otter trawl. When pollock are taken incidentally to other species, they are usually taken with either cod or haddock by otter trawl. However, when they are the species sought, they are quite often segregated and fished independently of other species. This occurs particularly in Div. 4W and 4X.

Studies of pollock distribution indicated that there are three groups of pollock in the Gulf of Maine and adjoining regions. These stocks are the Bay of Fundy, southwestern Nova Scotia, and southern Gulf of Maine stocks. Tagging studies have shown little mixing of the Bay of Fundy fish with those of southwestern Nova Scotia.

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White Hake

The distribution and fishing of white hake are shown in Fig. 13. This species is found south of the Laurentian Channel in Subarea 4 (Div. 4T, 4V, 4W, and 4 λ). No particular areas of depth distribution are evident for this species as it may be found at the edge of the banks or on top of the banks in the south. Studies have not yet progressed far enough to show separation of stocks. However, tagging carried out in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1967 may help to solve this problem. The main fisheries for white hake are by gillnet, line, and otter trawl in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence; a line fishery off Digby Neck; and incidental line and otter trawl catches off southwestern Nova Scotia. Many of the Div. 4X-4W landings are incidental, whereas the fishery in the southeastern part of Div. 4T is specifically for hake.

Cusk

Cusk distribution in Subarea 4 is shown in Fig. 14. The main area of known distribution is in Div. 4X and in the western part of Div. 4W. Over 95% of the cusk landings from Subarea 4 are from longline catches, and over 80% of these are from Div. 4X. Landings by otter trawl are incidental to other species. Cusk is the main species in some longline catches, but a considerable quantity is taken by halibut longliners also.

Nothing is known of stock divisions of **sus**k at present.

lierring

Distribution of herring stocks and landings is shown in Fig. 15. The Figure shows eight stock divisions known at present. These are in the north of Div. 4S, on the west coast of Newfoundland in Div. 4R, in the Gaspé area in Div. 4T, in the mouth of the St. Lawrence River in

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Div. 4T, in the Magdalens area in Div. 4T, in the Cape Dreton area in Div. 4Vn, in the coastal Nova Scotia region in Div. 4W and 4Xy, and in the Bay of Fundy area, Div. 4 λ . Herring are fished inshore by traps or weirs, scines, and purse-seines. Recently, the purse-seine fishery in Subarea 4 has increased, and during the last year, mid-water trawling for herring has become important.

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Mackerel

Mackerel distribution and fishing areas are shown in Fig. 16. It is assumed that there is a single population of mackerel that migrates to the Canadian coastal region (Subarea 4) in the late spring and retreats southward in the autumn. The fishery usually starts in southwest Nova Scotia (Div. 4X) in late May and extends along the Nova Scotia coast (Div. 4W and 4V) and into the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Div. 4T, 4S, and 4R) in June. Very few mackerel are caught after the middle of October. ,The area of distribution extends throughout the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but fishing is restricted chiefly to the southern part (Div. 4T). Mackerel are fished inshore chiefly with gillnets and traps, although some purse-seining is carried on in Div. 4T. The fishery has shown steady growth since 1959, and landings during that period have increased from 4000 to 11,000 tons annually.

Total Annual Yields from Subarea 4

Table I shows the total marine fish landings from Subarea 4, in metric tons, for species that are currently commercially exploited in the Subarea. Total landings by species, by division, for the years 1962 to 1966 are given. Averages for this period have also been calculated. On the average, over the 5 years summarized, relative importance of marine fish in terms of weight landed is as follows: cod, herring, redfish, haddock, silver hake, pollock, plaice, white hake, witch, mackerel, yellowtail, winter flounder,

cusk, and halibut. Areas of importance for particular species by division can be seen both in Table I and in the Figures.

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Total sustainable yields for most of these stocks and species are not known.

Sampling for Year-Class Strengths in Subarea 4

Sampling for ages of fish in the commercial catch is carried out by Canada and by other countries fishing in Subarea 4. Examples of what has been taken in samples of Canadian commercial landings from Subarea 4 are shown in Table II. The Table contains a summary of commercial sampling for 1965 to 1967 by division and by species.

It will be noted that sampling for ages is significant only for cod, haddock, and herring, and for these three species only in certain divisions. For cod, the best sampling is in Div. 4T, followed by Div. 4X, 4Vn, and 4W. For haddock, by far the best sampling for these 5 years has been in Div. 4X, while significant numbers of samples have also been taken from Div. 4W. Herring have been well sampled in Div. 4T and 4X.

Other species shown in the Table are sampled irregularly. These include hake, plaice, yellowtail, witch, winter flounder, and mackerel, which are sampled for age and length. Commercial samples of pollock and redfish are also taken for lengths.

Research-vessel samples for age and length in Subarea 4 are available for cod, haddock, some of the flounder species, and recently, for silver hake and argentines. Main areas of concentration of researchvessel sampling have been Div. 4T for cod and plaice in September, and Div. 4W and 4X for haddock, silver hake, and argentines in the spring, summer, and fall months. Yearly continuity in these samplings is broken in most cases.

Table 111 shows Subarea 4 samples from countries other than Canada (Maritimes) for the years 1964 to 1965. These were summarized from the Sampling Yearbook.

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For 1964, there was significant sampling for cod in 4Vn by Spain and Newfoundland, for haddock in 4X by the USA, and for silver hake in 4W by the USSR. In 1965, there was significant sampling for cod in 4V by Poland, for cod in 4W by Poland, for haddock in 4W by Poland, for haddock in 4X by USA, and for silver hake in 4W by USSR. All these samples were from otter-trawl catches except for five trap samples which are indicated in the Table.

Tables II and III indicate that, for many of the species resident in Subarea 4, information on year-class strengths is either poor or non-existent. In addition, ageing techniques for many of these species have yet to be verified. Consequently, growth, recruitment, and mortality estimates for the majority of stocks are not available for Subarea 4 at present.

Acknowledgments

Assistance in assembling the data presented in this document was provided by S.N. Tibbo and D.N. Fitzgerald.

Table I. Marine fish landings from Subarea 4 (in metric tons, round fresh).

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Table I (continued). Marine fish landings from Subarea 4 (in metric tons, round fresh).

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1966 No. of fish Measured	Herring 18,655 4,197 500	Mackerel 2,178 383 - 1,265
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TABLE II (continued)

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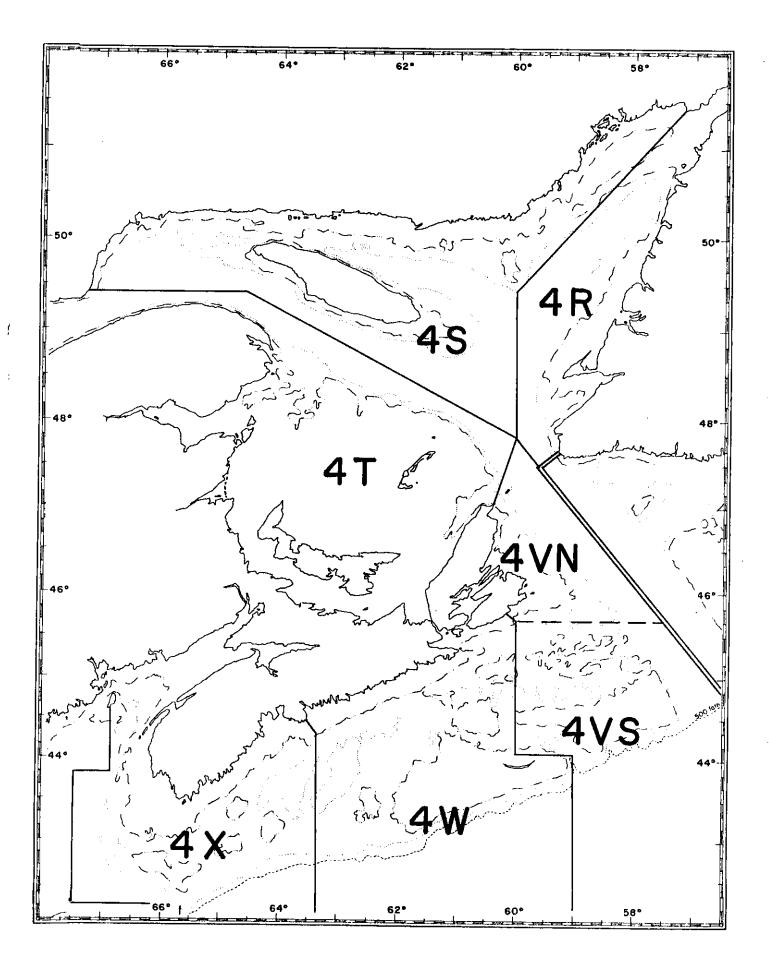
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		<u>1964</u>	• • • •		
Species	Area	No. of Samples	No. of fish <u>Measured</u>	Ages	Country
Cod	4R 4Vn 4Vs	1 (trap) 11 3	130 3,028 654	? ? ?	Nfld. Spain and Nfld. Spain
Haddock	4X	42	· 4,144	Yes	U.S.A.
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Silver hake	4W 4W	55 *14	20,615 791	? Yes	U.S.S.R. U.S.S.R.
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Cod	4R 4R 4Vn 4Vs 4V 4Ω 4Ω 4₩	4 (trap) 1 5 1 2 ? (research ? (research		? ? ? Yes Yes Yes	Nfld. Nfld. Nfld. U.K. Portugal Poland Poland
Haddock	4R 4Vs 4W 4X	2 ? (research ? (research 63		? Yes Yes Yes	Nfld. Poland Poland U.S.A.
Redfish	4R 4RST 4Vn 4Vs 4V 4W 4W 4W	3 22 1 3 6 (research 12 1 (research 27	1,200	???????????????????????????????????????	Nfld. U.S.A. Nfld. U.S.A. and Nfld. Poland U.S.A. Poland U.S.A.
Silver hake	4₩ 4₩	58 *6	20,498 610	? Yes	U.S.S.R. U.S.S.R.

Table III.	Subarea 4	samples	from	countries	other	than	Canada
	<u>(Maritimes</u>	<u>and Quebe</u>	<u>) () (</u>				

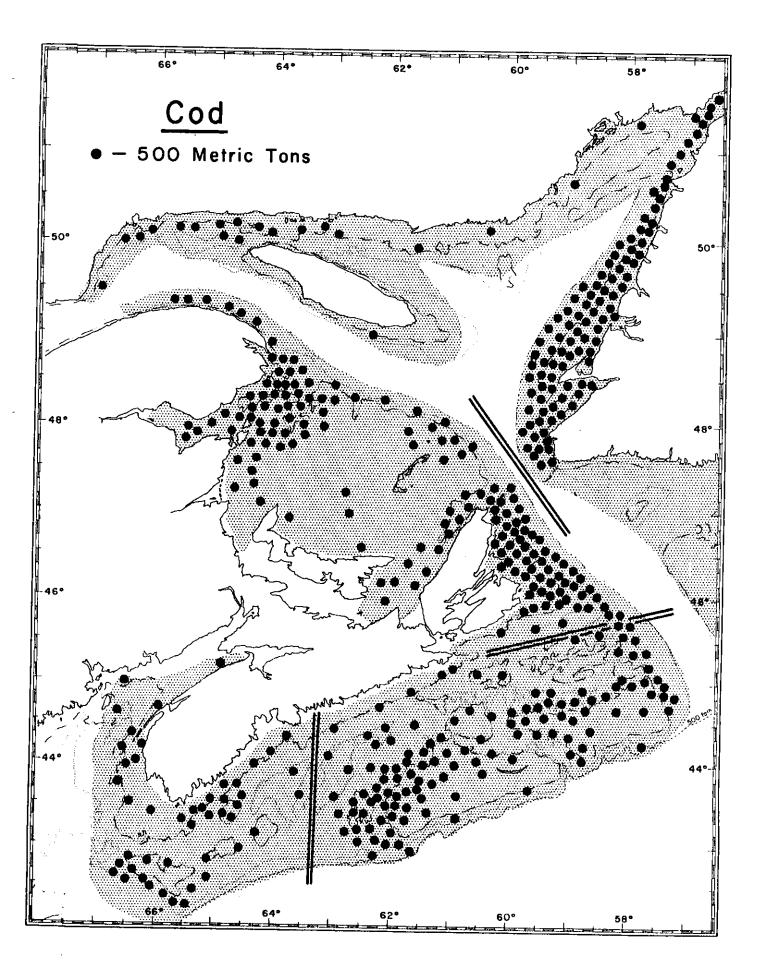
- 17 -

All samples from otter trawl catches except those marked (trap) * Age frequency tables -- age length keys available



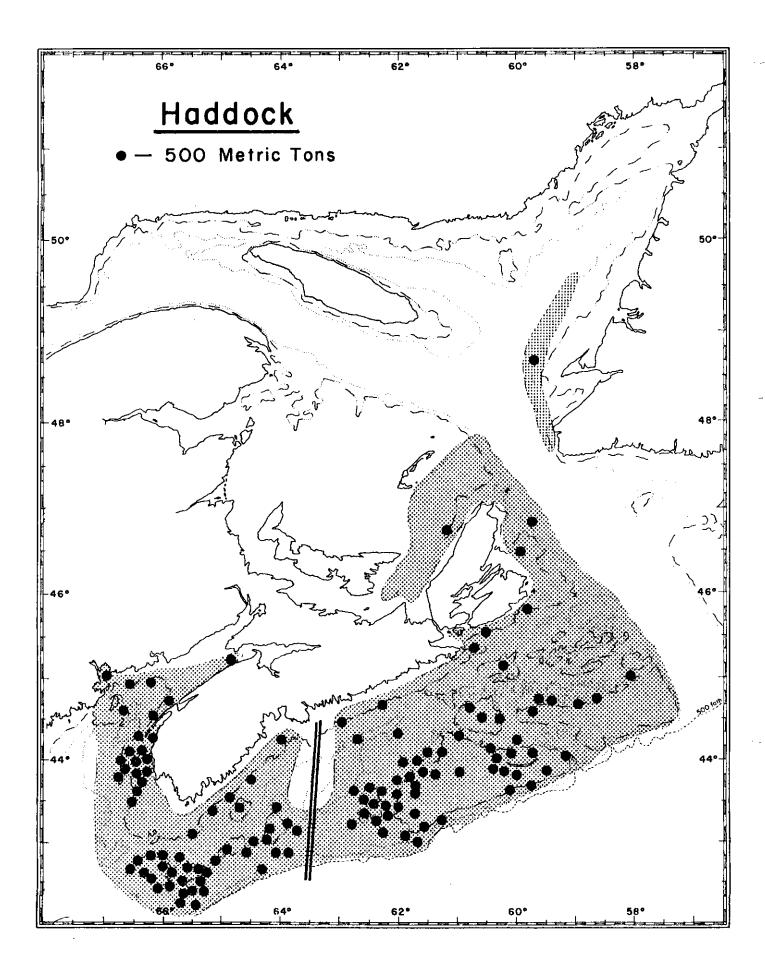
- 18 -

Fig. 1. Divisions of ICNAF Subarca 4.



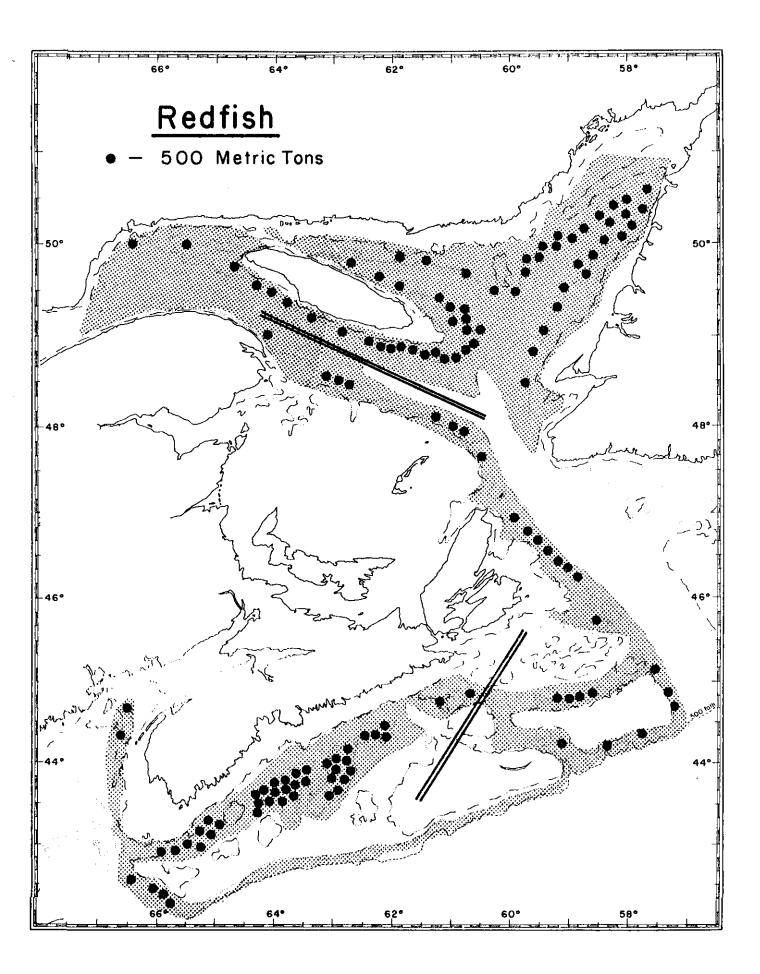
- 19 -

Fig. 2. Cod distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled zones show areas of significant distribution. Straight lines show approximate divisions of stocks.



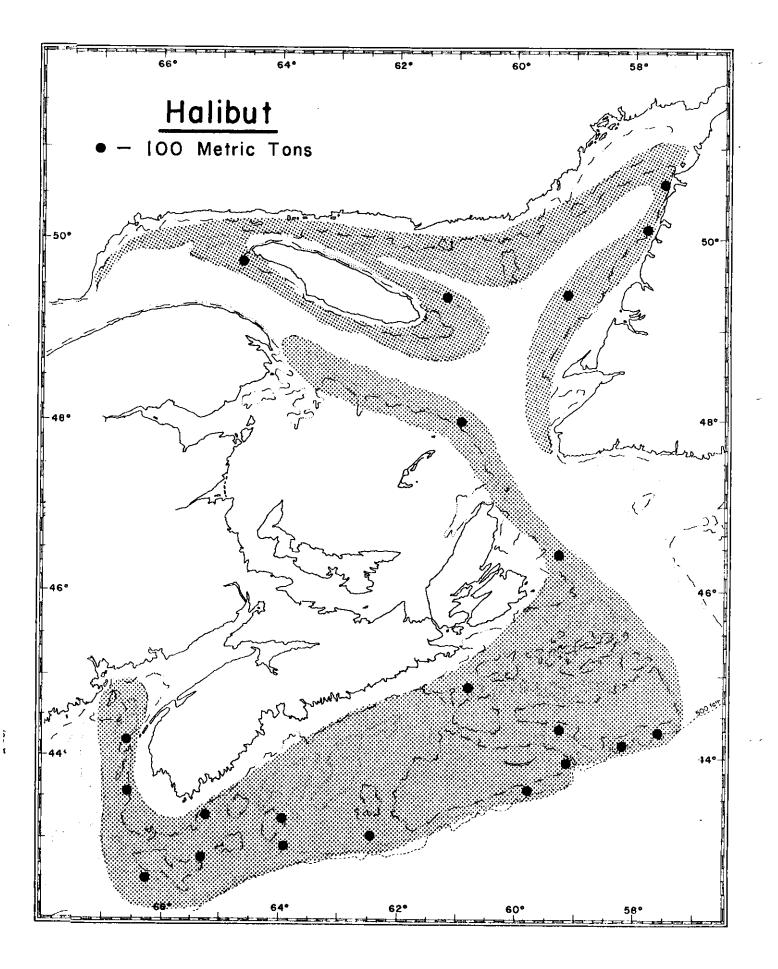
- 20 -

Fig. 3. Haddock distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled stocks.



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Fig. 4. Redfish distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled stocks.



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Fig. 5. Halibut distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled zones show areas of significant distribution.

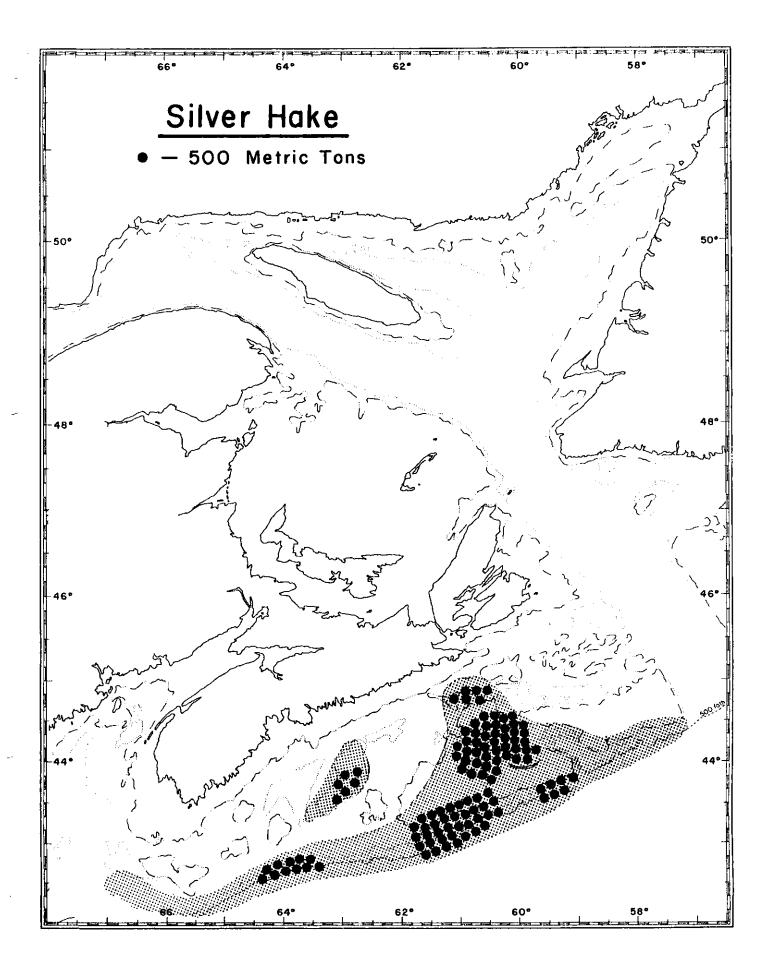
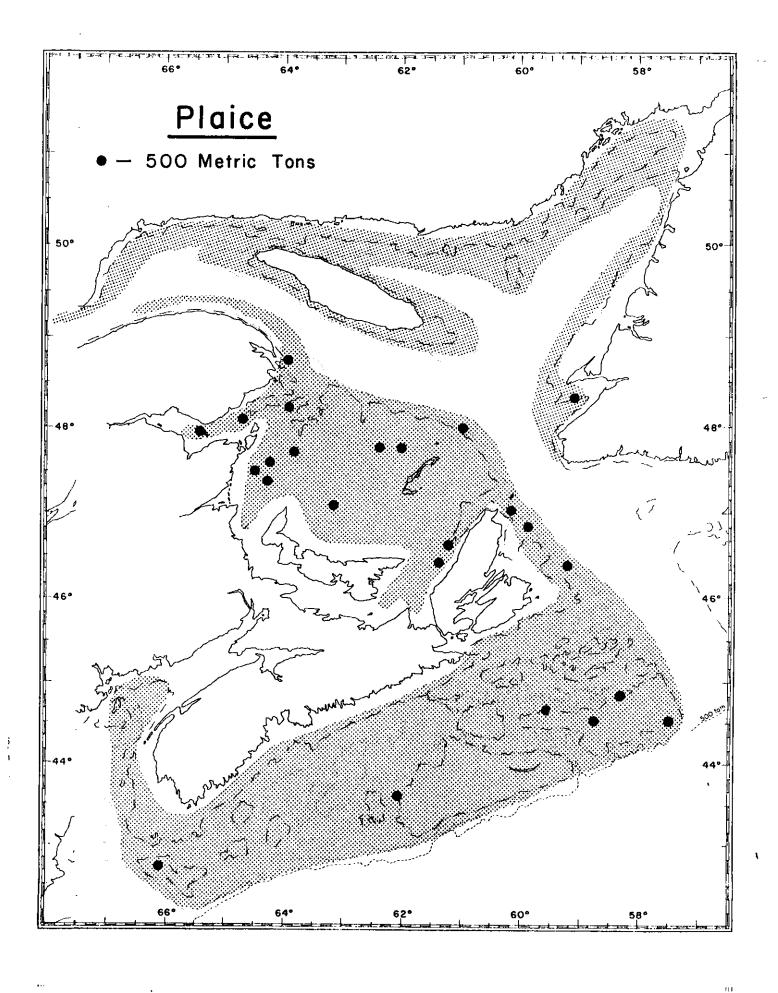
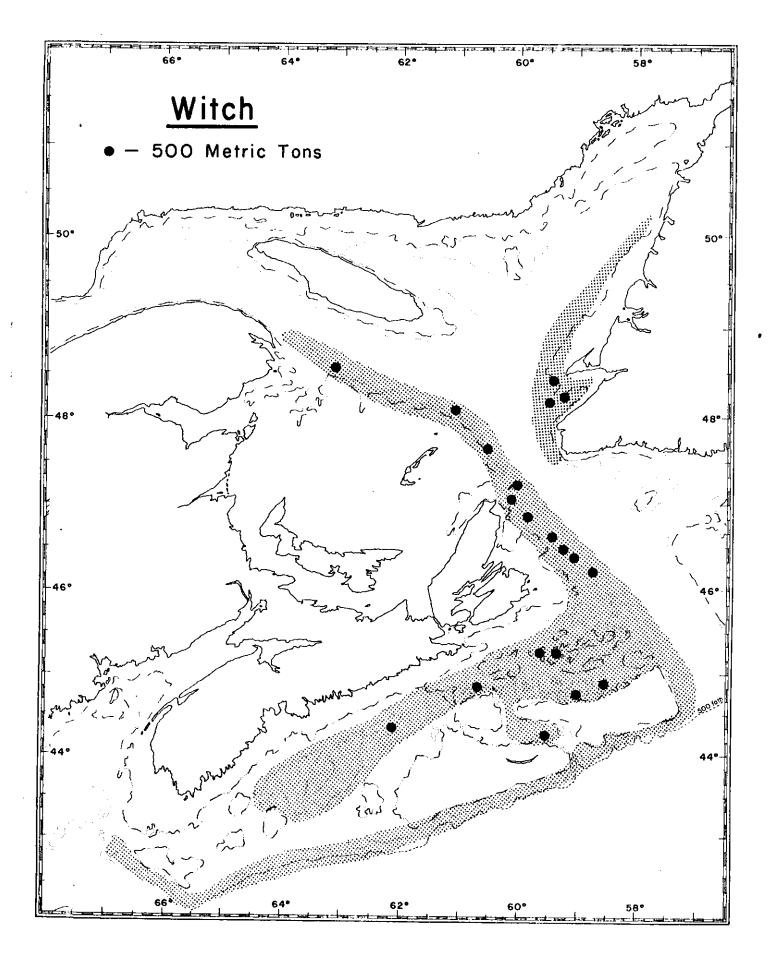


Fig. 6. Silver hake distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled distribution.



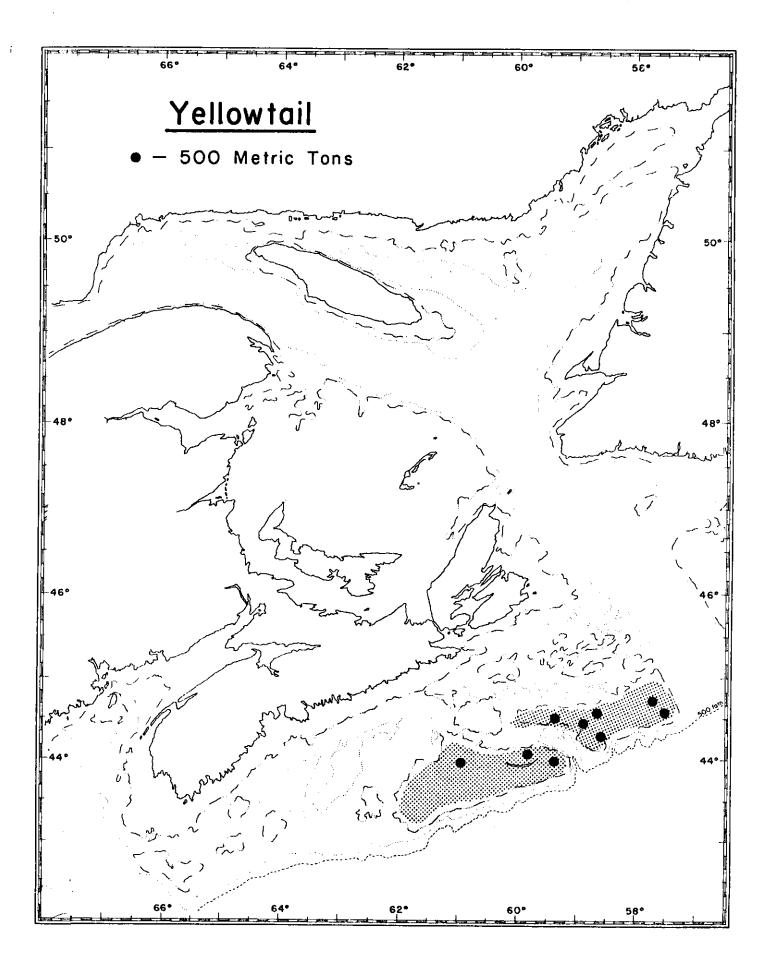
- 24 -

Fig. 7. Plaice distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled distribution.



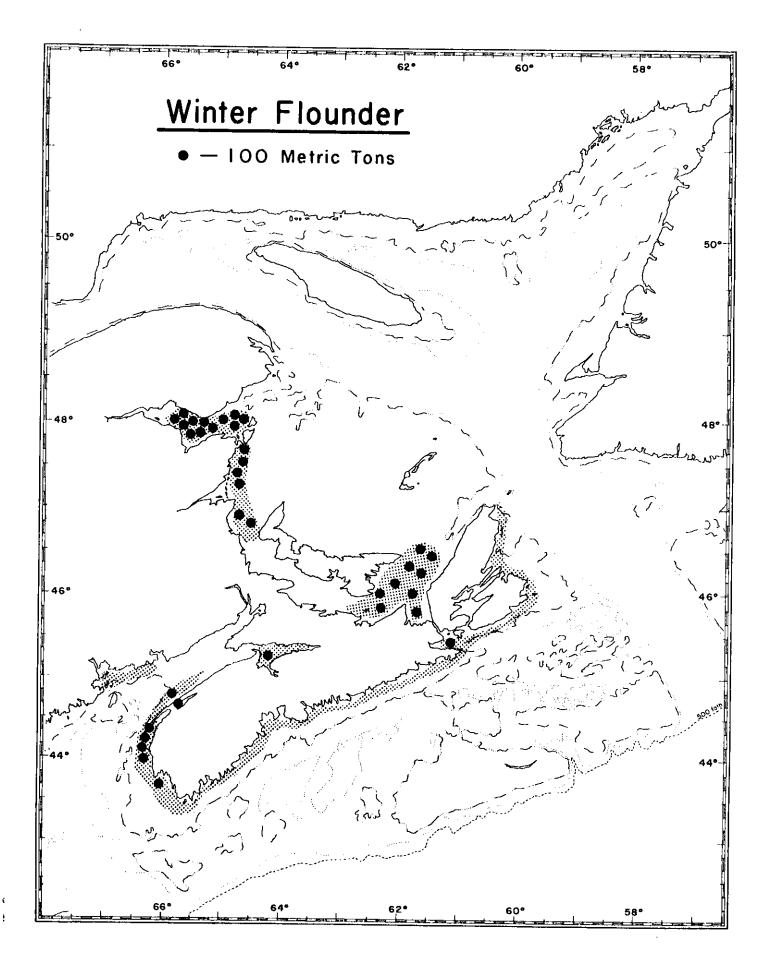
- 25 -

Fig. 8. Witch distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled distribution.



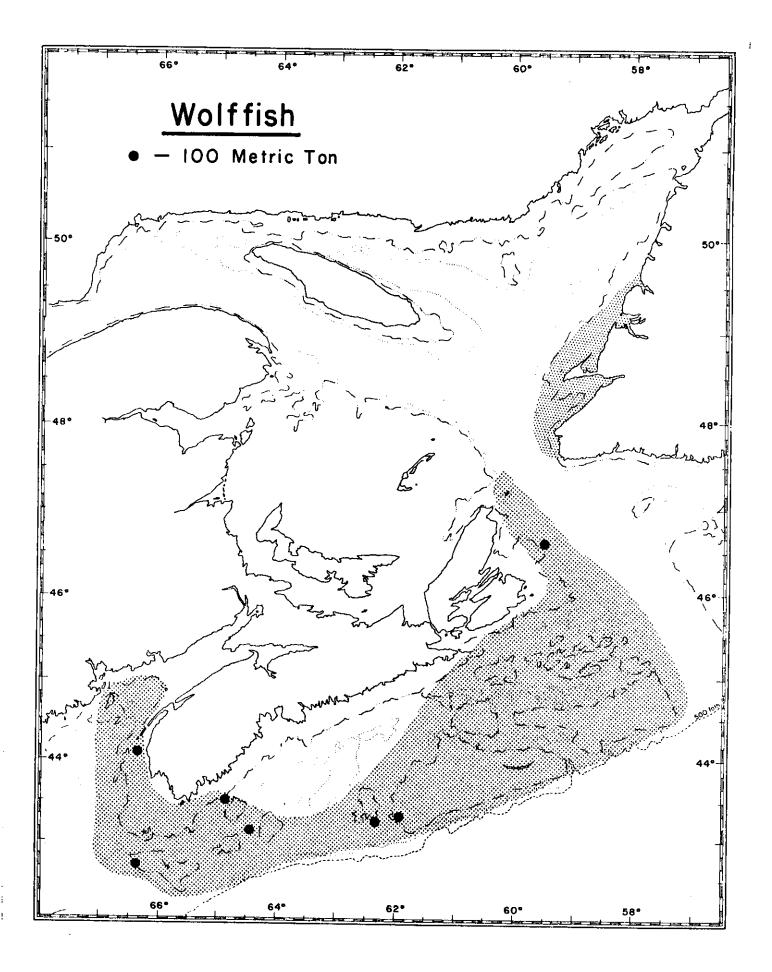
- 26 -

Fig. 9. Yellowtail distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled distribution.



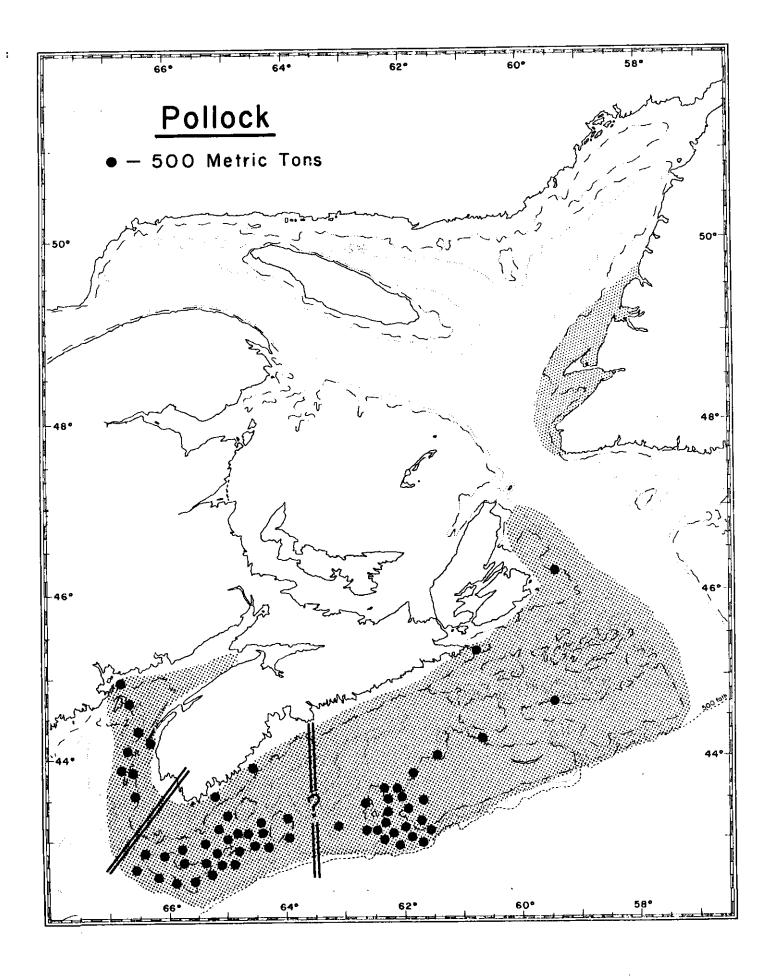
- 27 -

Fig.10. Winter flounder distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled distribution.

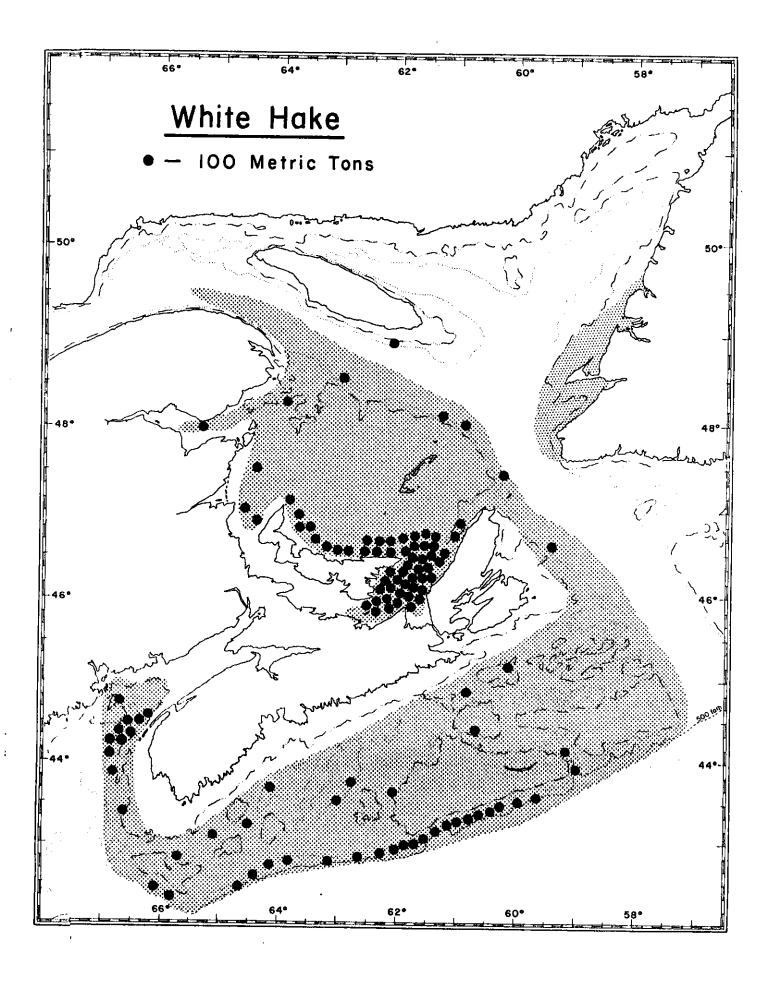


- 28 -

Fig.11. Wolffish distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled distribution.

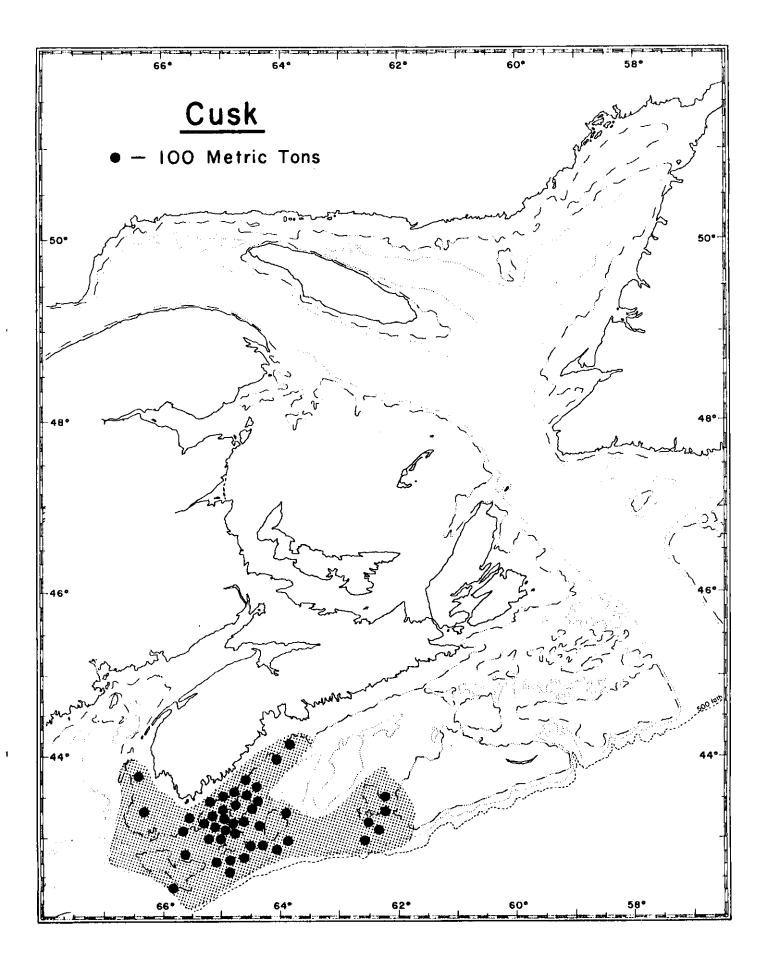


- 29 -



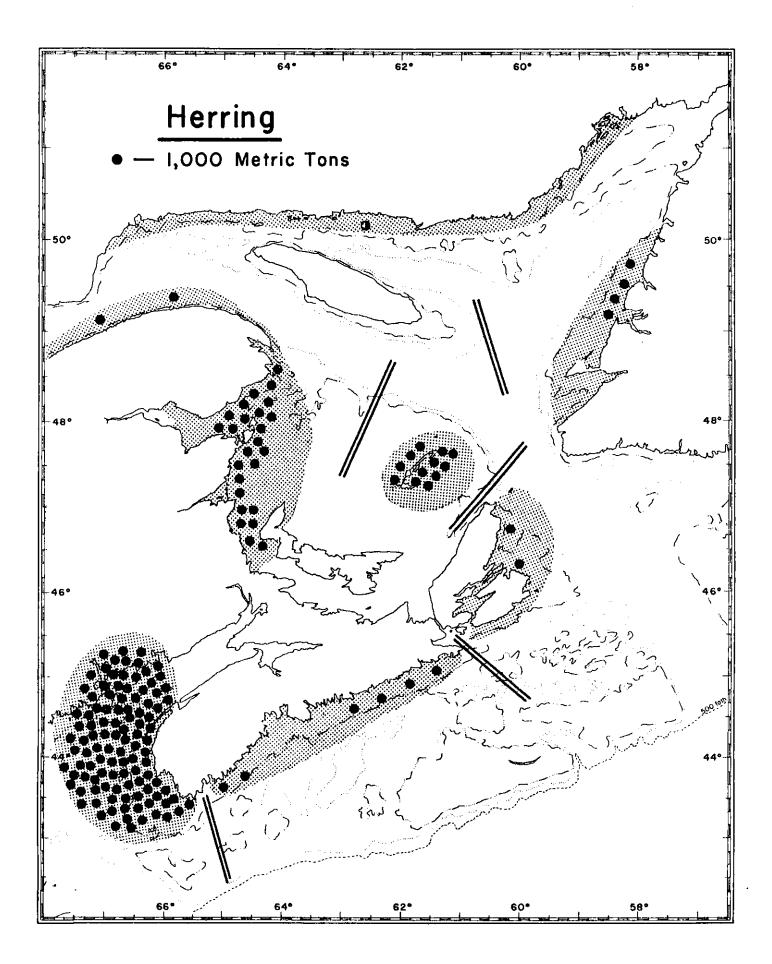
- 30 -

Fig.13. White hake distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled distribution.



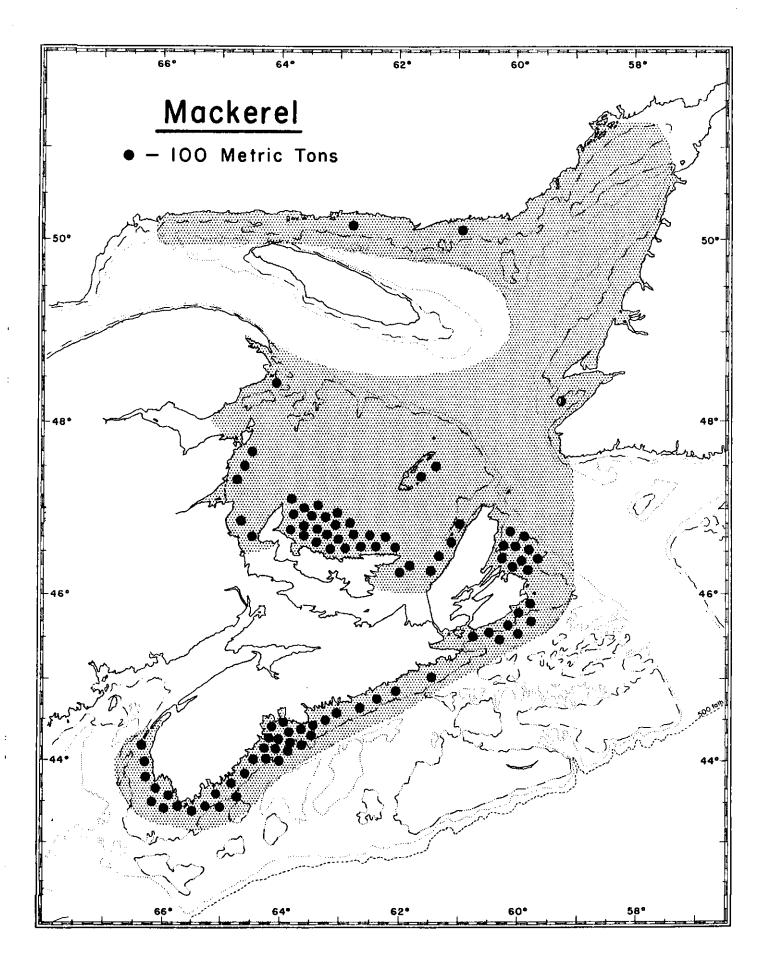
- 31 -

Fig.14. Cusk distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled distribution.



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Fig.15. Herring distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled stocks.



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Fig.16. Mackerel distribution in ICNAF Subarea 4. Stippled distribution.

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