

## International Commission for



## the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries

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Note by US Commissioners on Quota Regulations in Subarea 5 - Statistical Area 6

The Commission has clearly recognized that the high degree of species mix in Subarea 5 and Statistical Area 6 poses critical management problems which must be met through the administration of an effective quota system and the application of specific regulations designed to more directly limit by-catches of depleted groundfish stocks. In Commissioners Documents 74/38 and 74/39, the United States has set forth new measures as well as modifications of existing regulations which are clearly required to achieve an effective management regime for this area.

In addition, it is the US view that these proposals, recent events, and current assessment data has and may continue to require a re-examination of required quotas and allocations for certain stocks, such as yellowtail flounder in Subarea 5 - Statistical Area 6. The United States has on many occasions stressed the difficulties created for our coastal fishermen by the depletion of critical stocks off the New England coast which once formed the mainstay of the New England fishing industry, such as haddock and yellowtail flounder. Emphasis has been placed on both the need to restore these stocks to former levels, and the right of the United States to participate exclusively in those small fisheries permitted in the interim. However, it has been demonstrated that in the absence of effective restrictions on by-catches, such minimal catches may be exceeded through by-catches of distant-water vessels, despite the imposition of a zero quota on the vessels of the coastal nation. Substantial development of most fisheries off the southern New England coast by distant-water fleets has created a difficult situation for US coastal fishermen who depend almost entirely on yellowtail flounder, other flounders, cod, and haddock for their livelihood and whose catches have declined markedly as a result of removals from these small stocks as by-catch from directed fisheries for other species.

It is the US view that effective control of total removals can only be obtained through adequate limitation of by-catches, coupled with the administration of any allowable catch through an appropriate quota allocated to the coastal nation. Such a system would insure that total removals are maintained at the prescribed level, and that those catches allowed are made available for the relief of US coastal fisherment, thereby alleviating to some extent the problems they face in seeking alternative fishery resources during the period required to rebuild these stocks to optimum levels.

Accordingly, the United States proposes that a 1975 total allowable catch (TAC) of 6,000 metric tons be established and allocated to the United States for the yellowtail stock west of 69°W in Subarea 5 and Statistical Area 6. Such a quota is equal to the estimated current level of incidental catches and would prevent any further decline in this stock. The United States also proposes that the 1975 total allowable catch of 16,000 metric tons approved at the 1974 Annual Meeting be re-allocated to the United States for the stock east of 69°W in Subarea 5.

In addition, current developments within the Subarea 5 herring fishery clearly require reconsideration of 1975 total quotas and their allocations initially considered at the 1974 Annual Meeting. At this meeting the United States drew attention to the cautionary advice of scientists that while continuation of 1974 quotas for both the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank stocks would probably result in stock sizes meeting the minimum requirements specified for the beginning of 1976, lower levels would provide better opportunities for stock rebuilding and minimize the need for a substantial TAC reduction in 1976. At its May-June 1974 Meeting, the Assessments Subcommittee noted that a TAC of 25,000 tons for the Gulf of Maine stock would "not take advantage of the good 1970 year-class to rebuild the stock", and that a TAC of 150,000 tons for the Georges Bank stock "would continue the adult stock decline of previous years that was interrupted sharply in 1974 with the addition of the 1970 year-class to the adult stock" (Proceedings of STACRES, May-June 1974, p. 101, 113). Recent evidence obtained from the US juvenile fishery now indicates that the strength of the crucial 1972 year-class is less than that estimated in June, clearly indicating that reduced quotas will be necessary to provide a reasonable chance for future stock recoveries. Accordingly the United States proposes that the TACs for herring for Div. 5Y be reset at 15,000 metric tons for 1975 (of which 11,000 would be allocated to the US) and for herring in Div. 5Z-Statistical Area 6 be reset at 90,000 metric tons for 1975 (of which 6,955 metric tons would be allocated to the US).

In addition, 1975 quotas were based on assessment data which assumed that 1974 removals would be based on quota levels established at the January 1974 Special ICNAF Meeting. However, evidence from reports of

inspections and surveillance indicate that national quota allocations have been exceeded in the Gulf of Maine. It is the US view that the overfishing associated with the failure to observe quota limits is cause for re-examining not only the TAC for the Div. 5Y stock, but those allocations for both the Div. 5Y and Div. 5Z-Statistical Area 6 stocks initially considered at the June 1974 Annual Meeting.