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Marine Fisheries News Release

MASSACHUSETTS BAY COD MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

On December 27th, the Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) issued an Advisory indicating its intent to take emergency action to further manage the cod fishery in portions of Massachusetts Bay. That action was to establish a "Cod Conservation Zone" encompassing territorial waters from Boston north to Salem in which no gillnetting was to be allowed; the state's landing/possession limit was to be reduced; and a vessel limit was to be placed on recreational fishing vessels such as charter and party boats.

Marine Fisheries met on December 29th with affected commercial and recreational fishermen to exchange information regarding its concerns/conclusions and fishermen's views as to the best course of action.

Based on recent information provided by the Office of Environmental Law Enforcement indicating that catch rates have decreased and the spawning cod aggregation appears to have dispersed, *Marine Fisheries* has decided not to take emergency action at this time. Nevertheless, fact-finding and planning continues to prevent events of this past December from repeating at the end of this year. *Marine Fisheries* hasn't ruled out emergency action later this winter if cod spawning aggregations reappear.

Marine Fisheries will work with the New England Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service to determine if reciprocal federal action is necessary to address Amendment 13 and federal permitting issues that have complicated state groundfish management. In addition, the agency is committed to working with Massachusetts commercial and recreational fishermen to improve our state water's management of cod fisheries. This initiative will have implications for all groundfish because increased effort in state waters works against all regional groundfish rebuilding strategies.