



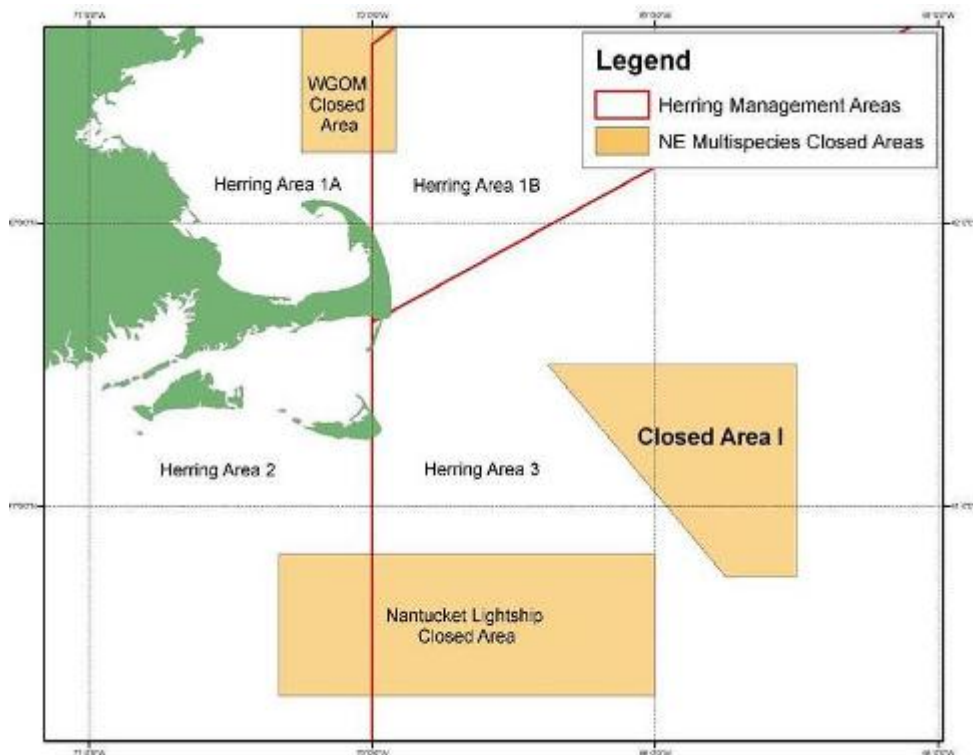
# Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## NMFS Enacts (Further) Restrictions on Herring Trawlers in Closed Area I

NORTH CHATHAM, MA: Starting today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service (NMFS) will enact new rules for herring vessels fishing in Groundfish Closed Area I (a critical habitat area off Cape Cod established to protect spawning groundfish from excessive fishing pressure). This final rule is in response to increasing evidence that industrial herring vessels with the region's largest, most efficient, and potentially destructive fishing gear catch untold quantities of non-target groundfish bycatch. The new rule will require a federal observer on each trip, prohibit the at-sea dumping of catch with several exceptions, and require that all fish be pumped aboard the vessel to be sampled by an observer, again with several exceptions.



Over the past few years, fishermen from the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association have witnessed and reported numerous groundfish bycatch events by these industrial midwater trawlers in Closed Area I. These reports prompted the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), the decision-making body for all federally managed fisheries, to request 100% observer coverage for midwater trawlers and a ban on dumping un-sampled catch while in Closed Area I. The new rule partially implements the request of the council and creates true 100% observer coverage, at least inside this sensitive nursery area.

"Many fishermen from our port have made continuous sacrifices over many years so that cod and other groundfish populations can rebuild," said Eric Hesse, captain and owner of the F/V Tenacious II. "Closed Area I is an important part of that rebuilding plan and anyone fishing in that area needs to be under strict regulations. NMFS got the 100% coverage thing right. It's also important to understand that the coverage requirement only levels the playing field in that we weren't allowed to fish in there until we first conducted a data collection program with 100% observer coverage," he said.

While the final rule is a departure from the proposed rule, which the Hook Association had encouraged the NMFS Regional Administrator to enact without changes, it represents an important incremental improvement in monitoring the herring fishery. Currently, the NEFMC is working on a new monitoring amendment to the herring fishery management plan which includes provisions for increased monitoring throughout the entire fishery. That amendment offers the opportunity to build on these new changes and close remaining loopholes in the monitoring program.

"This rule has put us in a better place today than we were last fall when thousands of pounds of groundfish were being caught and not being accounted for," said Tom Rudolph director of the Sea Herring campaign for CCCHFA. "There is some unrestricted dumping that is still allowed to take place, which concerns us, but the rule has for the first time acknowledged some important problems like pre-sorting of fish in the water. Those problems can now be solved through the council's work on the larger monitoring amendment-which should be prioritized at its November meeting. We look forward to working with NMFS and the Council to put a comprehensive monitoring program in place for the industrial midwater trawl fleet."

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Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association

The Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association is a nationally recognized, non-profit organization that aligns protection of the oceans with the economic interests of our historic fishing community. We support stewardship of coastal ecosystems through education, research, and policy programs. Started in 1991 by the local fishing fleet, the Hook Association is now the leading community fisheries organization in the region. We are taking action now to make sure there are fish for future generations.