



# PRESS RELEASE

## Recreational Fishing Alliance

5724 N. Route 9, New Gretna, NJ 08224

P: 888-564-6732 F: 609-294-3812

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

April 4, 2012  
888 564-6732

### **RFA SAYS NEW ENGLAND ANGLERS SEE TEMPORARY RELIEF 2012 Recreational Cod Regs To Have Minimal Impact**

Recreational fishermen planning to target cod in the Gulf of Maine (GOM waters are those north of Cape Cod) this season breathed a collective sigh of relief after new regulations for the coming season were posted on April 2.

NOAA has announced that a total of 6,700 metric tons (mt) of GOM cod would be available to commercial and recreational fishermen for the 2012 fishing year, down from 8,000 mt in 2011. A new stock assessment conducted late last year indicated that the cod biomass was much smaller than presumed, and that a cutback in the range of 90% would ultimately be needed.

In response, however, NOAA accepted a 22% cutback for the current year, but made it clear that a much more stringent reduction would likely need to be implemented for the 2013 fishing year.

“I worked closely with Sam Rauch (head of the National Marine Fisheries Service) and Rip Cunningham (chairman of the New England Fishery Management Council) to come up with a mortality reduction scenario for the recreational sector that would have the least impact on anglers,” said Capt. Barry Gibson, the Recreational Fishing Alliance’s (RFA) New England Director and chairman of the Council’s Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP). “I was particularly concerned about the groundfish party/charter sector, as these guys depend on cod. That’s what their customers pay to catch.”

The measures agreed upon included a reduction in the daily bag limit from 10 cod to nine, and a reduction in the minimum size from 24 inches to 19 inches. The new minimum size is intended to reduce the number of cod discarded by anglers attempting to reach their nine-fish limit, and thus reduce discard mortality.

“I polled all of the RAP members, as well as lot of other fishermen, as to their opinions on the proposed cutback,” said Gibson. “Everyone I spoke with felt they could live with the new regulations. I sent a formal letter of request to Rip, and he forwarded it on to Sam, who ultimately approved the regs. We ended up getting what we asked for.”

“This is certainly good news for this season,” said RFA executive director Jim Donofrio, who added “but we remain concerned about what will happen next year.”

“It’s pretty apparent to all those involved in the fisheries management process that the 2011 cod assessment contained some rather questionable methodology and assumptions, so we’re urging NOAA to conduct a new survey in 2012 in order to get the most timely and accurate data possible,” Donofrio said.

“With rigid rebuilding deadlines and statutory definitions in the federal fisheries law still hanging over our heads, let’s hope a new assessment will show that the cod stock is in better shape than currently believed,” he added.

#####

*The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. RFA’s Mission is to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our Nation’s saltwater fisheries. For more information, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit [www.joinrfa.org](http://www.joinrfa.org).*