

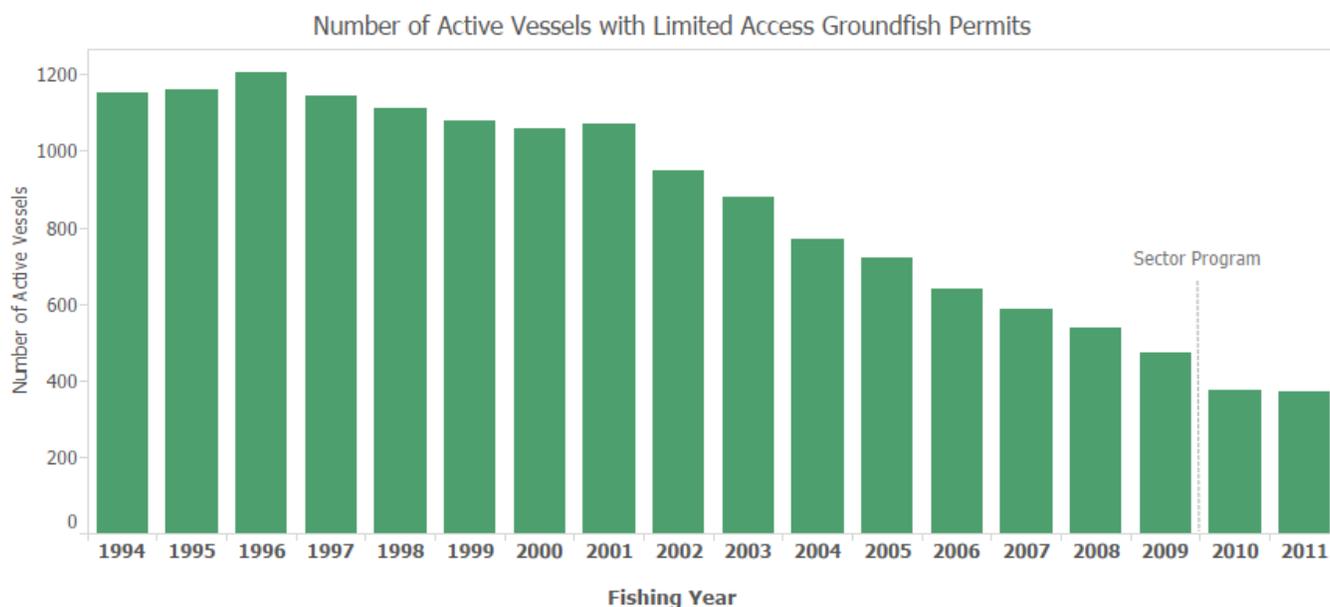


Northeast Groundfish Interim Findings: Economic Indicators

Version: February 2014

Number of Active Vessels

This indicator measures changes in the number of fishing boats that actively participated in the catch share fishery ([Number of Active Vessels: Introduction](#)).



“Active” is defined as landing groundfish on at least one trip during the year.



The images in this downloadable fact sheet may not show all the components within each indicator. To work with an interactive display of the data underlying this indicator, go to:

<http://catchshareindicators.org/indicators/northeast/number-of-active-vessels/>

Overview

The number of vessels participating in the groundfish fleet declined during the baseline period, and this trend continued after the Northeast Multispecies Sector Program was implemented. A particularly sharp drop in fleet size occurred during the first year of the program. Since 2010, the number of fishermen harvesting groundfish has continued to contract, but at a slower rate.

Baseline Period

The size of the groundfish fleet declined during the baseline period, when catches declined ([Groundfish Landings](#)) and fishing restrictions become more stringent ([Management Framework](#)). The number of limited access groundfish vessels that were active (i.e., landed groundfish on at least one trip) decreased 59 percent from 1994 (approximately 1,153) to 2009 (approximately 473). During that period, among the largest annual declines were 11 percent (2001–2002) and 12 percent (2003–2004). During the fishing year of 2002, major adjustments to groundfish management occurred as a result of a lawsuit. In the 2004 fishing year, a number of measures were implemented under Amendment 13 that increased fleet consolidation, including provisions for the leasing or transfer of days-at-sea (DAS) between comparable vessels ([Management Framework](#)).

Between 1994 and 2009, groundfish landings and gross revenues became concentrated among fewer individual vessels. The number of vessels actively landing groundfish fell by more than half over the 15-year period, while fleet-wide landings decreased only about 23 percent ([Groundfish Landings](#)), and inflation-adjusted gross revenues decreased about 48 percent ([Groundfish Revenues](#)). During roughly the same period, however, the distribution of landings across vessels showed no appreciable change. From 1996 to 2007, some 20 percent of the vessels consistently accounted for about 80 percent of the total groundfish landings each year. About half of all active vessels landed less than five percent of the total catch during the same time period. The high percentage of vessels landing relatively small amounts of groundfish suggests that many vessels were catching groundfish as incidental catch in another fishery or as a minor supplement to their total fishing income.

Catch Share Program

During the first year of the Northeast Multispecies Sector Program, the number of active vessels fell around 21 percent, the largest percentage decrease during the period for which data are available. It is likely that some vessel owners received insufficient allocations of fish to make groundfish fishing profitable. For example, a number of small vessels fishing inshore had low catch histories relative to larger vessels because they were more affected by the Gulf of Maine area closures established by Framework 25 (1998) of Amendment 7 ([Management Framework](#)). Other vessels had never been more than part-time participants in the groundfish fishery. Some vessel owners with little [potential sector contribution](#) (PSC) to contribute to a sector's overall ACE opted to fish under the "common pool" system ([Northeast Multispecies Sector Program](#)) or elected to leave the groundfish fishery entirely. In addition, Amendment 16 resulted in the implementation of a number of measures that reduced fleet size without necessarily requiring owners of non-active vessels to entirely exit the fishery. For example, a fisherman with a limited access groundfish permit on each of three vessels is allowed to stack all three permits onto one active vessel. By stacking their permits and fishing their ACE holdings off fewer vessels, fishermen can increase the flexibility and economic efficiency of their fishing operations.

Since 2010, the number fishermen harvesting groundfish has continued to contract, but at a slower rate.

In all vessel size categories the number of vessels with revenue from at least one groundfish trip declined between 2009 and 2012. The number of active vessels less than 30 ft in length declined the most, roughly by one-half between 2009 and 2012. Vessel owners may have transferred the allocations associated with the small boats onto other vessels they own, or leased the allocations to other fishermen. The 30-ft-to-less-than-50-ft-in-length category, which contains the largest number of active vessels, experienced the second-largest reduction in vessels—about 32 percent. Vessels 50-ft-to-less-than-75-ft underwent a reduction of around 27 percent, and vessels 75 ft-long and over underwent a reduction of about 9 percent. The overall result of these disproportionate changes was a less diverse fishing fleet in terms of vessel size, with the largest vessels increasing in prominence.

Data Gaps and Limitations

Data for the number of active vessels in which “active” is defined as landing groundfish on at least one trip during the year are currently unavailable prior to 1994 or after 2011. Data for the number of active vessels by vessel size category are currently unavailable prior to 2007.

Information Sources

Clayton, M. 2010. Consolidation of the New England Multispecies Fishery between 1996 and 2007. CapLog Group. Davis, CA.

Kitts, A. et al. 2011. 2010 Final Report on the Performance of the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery, (May 2010-April 2011), 2nd Edition. NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center Reference Document 11-19. Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Available online: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/>

Murphy, T. et al. 2012. 2011 Final Report on the Performance of the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery, (May 2011-April 2012). NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center Reference Document 12-30. Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Available online: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/>

Murphy, T. et al. 2013. 2012 Final Report on the Performance of the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery, (May 2012-April 2013). NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center Reference Document 14-01. Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Available online: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/>

National Marine Fisheries Service. 2013. Indicators of Fleet Diversity in the New England Groundfish Fishery. Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Social Sciences Branch. Woods Hole, Massachusetts.