

POINTS SYSTEM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The “Point System” is a comprehensive output-control management proposal for the northeast multispecies fishery that would replace the current Days-At-Sea (DAS) input-control system. It was developed by the Northeast Seafood Coalition in response to the New England Council’s request for proposals for new and innovative management strategies under the Amendment 16 process. It is intended to serve two fundamental purposes:

- to provide a fair and equitable mechanism for converting current DAS allocations, vessel baselines, and catch histories to a common currency unit (points) that provide the basis for an output control system; and
- to provide an effective management tool to achieve the full range of Council’s biological and socio-economic objectives.

Under this program, each of the multispecies stocks would be assigned a unique Biological Point Value (BPV). Initial stock-specific values would be set at the beginning of each fishing year and be subject to periodic adjustments throughout the year. The vulnerable stocks would have relatively high BPV’s while other stocks would tend to have lower BPV’s.

Each fisherman would be assigned a specific quantity of multispecies points according to a formula that directly reflects their vessel’s permit baseline (fully upgraded) and DAS allocations (see formula below). Like a bank account, these points can be “spent” on whatever stocks the fisherman chooses. The system is very flexible in that it provides each fisherman with the discretion to “spend” his points in different ways at different times of the fishing year. The system can be described as a “pay as you play” concept. Each fisherman would be held to the highest level of individual accountability through a system of real-time balancing of the vessel’s points “bank account”.

The Point System would greatly simplify the current regime of management measures by removing many of the current input controls specifically designed to reduce efficiency. It would also drastically reduce regulatory discards through the elimination of daily and trip possession limits.

There follows some Questions and Answers that should fill in some of the details of this proposal. The Northeast Seafood Coalition invites all those with further questions or interests to contact the Coalition office at (978) 283-9992.

Q: What is the proposed method for determining how individual point allocations are calculated?

A: The primary factor used to determine points allocations will be based upon the

vessel baseline characteristics associated with each permit.

[(Vessel Length X 28) + (Horsepower X 2.8)] X (A+B) DAS = Baseline Points. A **Catch History Bonus Multiplier** will be applied to baseline points (see full proposal for detail)

Q: What years will be used to determine catch history scores?

A. The eight fishing years 1996 through 2003 will be totaled for each permit using two separate evaluations: 1) total landings in pounds 2) total revenues from groundfish.

Q: Why is 2003 proposed as the terminal year for evaluating catch history?

A. 2003 was the last full fishing year before DAS leasing. Prior to fishing year 2004, all permit holders were restricted to fishing with their own allocations of DAS which should provide a more stable and equitable period for each permit in the fishery.

Q: Are points species specific?

A. No. These are multispecies points that can be used on any stock in the complex. The cost of the points will be dependent upon the BPVs associated with each stock upon landing.

Q: How does the Points System consider the substantial investments in permits?

A. Unlike allocation systems that propose to use catch history or areas as the primary method of determining allocation, the Points System is specifically designed to convert the current values of Length, Horsepower and DAS directly into relative values of points. In this way, all current investments in permits with A days will have reasonable allocations and values in the Points System

Q: Is the Points System going to be complicated for fishermen to work with?

A. No. The Points System should be extremely simple for a fisherman or sector to operate within. All a permit holder needs to know is the current BPV for all stocks and his/her current points balance. A fisherman will then go to work and pay as he/she plays. Catch will be covered by points and a fisherman will land what he/she catches.

Q: Can points be carried over?

A. Yes the Point System proposal recommends that up to 10% can be carried over.

Q: What options are available to a permit holder that for one reason or another does not fish at all or does not use much of his/her allocation during a fishing year?

A. A permit holder has three options: 1) Lease points to other permit holders
2) Carryover up to 10% to the next fishing year or 3) Deposit some or all of his / her allocation into their Points Conservation Account. (see proposal for details)

Q: What are the vessel size restrictions on leasing points between vessels?

A. None. By converting all current permits and allocations to a common currency of output units, points are conservation neutral so they can be attained from any vessel with an allocation of points.

Q: Will this system cause a derby mentality in the fishery by creating a perception that it is best to fish early in the season to avoid increases in BPVs?

A. The method for setting the initial BPVs can accommodate a policy that creates a neutral risk to both a derby and reverse derby mentality.

Q: How will the setting of starting BPVs be determined?

A. A balanced approach would be to set values at neutral risk and allow the in-season adjustments to control catch as necessary. Setting initial BPVs unnecessarily high will cause many to wait for inevitable lowering of BPVs later in the year while setting too low will cause a race to fish.

Q: Does this system rely upon NMFS to continuously adjust BPVs to control catch to the target levels?

A. No. A computer model will be developed that will make periodic and automatic adjustments to BPVs in response to stock specific catch trajectories, remaining fleet points and seasonal trends that will be incorporated into the model.

Q: Can this system be developed to reliably control catch to within annual catch limits?

A. Yes. This is a mathematically based system that will be using a finite number of fleet points and total allowable catch figures (adjusted for recreational and discard of undersized fish). The greater the tolerance of changes in BPVs the finer the control on catch.

Q: How effective would this Points System be towards improving our ability to achieve Optimum Yield (OY) on all stocks?

A: The Points System offers the opportunity to harvest OY and is limited only by the fleet's selectivity capabilities.

Q: How is this system an improvement for gillnet vessels?

A. This full retention, "pay as you play", concept will allow netters to deploy the appropriate amount of gear and soak times without the consequence of lost DAS allocation as a result of unpredictable catch rates. All gears

will be treated equal as the only measure of access will be determined by individual accountability to mortality.

Q: Is the Points System an Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ)?

A. No. The definition of an IFQ in Magnuson explicitly describes an IFQ as: "a Federal permit under a limited access system to harvest a quantity of fish, expressed by a unit or units representing a percentage of the total allowable catch of a fishery that may be received or held for exclusive use by a person." The Points System does not allocate a quantity of fish or a percentage of any TAC. Similar to the current DAS system, access to the fishery is entirely dependent upon the manner in which a permit holder chooses to use their allocation.

Q: What are some key advantages of the Points System as compared to an ITQ program?

A. The Points System accounts for the unpredictability of species specific catch mix. Unlike quota balancing systems in ITQs, leasing points will be simpler as they are not species specific. Points will allow the unpredictable cycles that change catch composition for different sectors of the fleet to occur without the need for massive shifts of species specific quota.

Q: Who will be tasked with developing the computer model to be used as the automatic BPV adjustment tool?

A. The Northeast Seafood Coalition in coordination with SMAST and the Massachusetts Fisheries Institute and outsourced computer modelers have offered to develop the model for submission to the NEFMC for review and analysis.

Q: How will the system ensure that enforcement personnel have adequate opportunity to observe offloading and proper recording of all species landed is occurring?

A. Before any landing can occur, a vessel must first declare a haul of all species prior to crossing the demarcation line, identify the unloading station, arrive at the unloading station and request to unload at a computer terminal with a PIN #, wait for confirmation to begin offloading.

Q: How would this system work with Sector management?

A. The points system would work well with the sector concept either as points sectors or sectors who accept hard TACs on all stocks.

Q: How does the Points System interact with the Monkfish plan?

A. Stocks managed under other fishery management plans will continue to follow the measures under those plans. (see Points System proposal for further explanation.)

Q: Does the Points System rely upon effort closures to restrict catch?

A: No. Notwithstanding spawning or habitat justification, the need for rolling and permanent closures as a means to control catch and reduce efficiency would no longer be necessary in this output controlled system.

Q: Are there any trip limits proposed in the Points System?

A: No. Trip limits are the primary cause of regulatory discards.