





**The 2018 Renewals of Areas**

**Apart from the annual ICS advice process, the VME Recommendation also includes a requirement**



**expanding fisheries provide relevant data to assess sustainability, based on best available scientific information. To support this process the Secretariat is also required to provide an up to date overview each year of catches of deep sea species in the Regulatory Area to enable the NEAC Management and Science Committee (NEACMS) to consider catches over a period of years.**

**ICES (the International Council for Exploration of the Sea), as NEAC's independent scientific adviser is also required to take into account the 2016 NEAC approach so needs to clearly categorise its advice according to the four NEAC deep sea stock categories. It also is required to include information on new and rapidly expanding fisheries, even if no stock specific advice can be provided. This is in**

using the monitoring and catch information generated under the Scheme. Additionally, the NEAC Secretariat is tasked with sending alerts to Contracting Parties should any vessel enter the Regulatory Area but outside existing fishing areas and exhibit behaviour that may be consistent with bottom fishing. The Scheme is being updated and improved each year, with the Committee on Monitoring and Compliance (HEMAC) as the guardian of the Scheme. Since the 2016, the process of continual improvement includes two important milestones. One is on transparency in that the annual NEAC compliance reports are now published. These show how well the vessels of Contracting Parties are complying with NEAC regulation, including those on bottom fisheries and VMEs. Additional transparency has also been achieved by the publication of NEAC authorised fishing vessel lists, starting in 2020. The second improvement is a move from the current system of fish catch reporting to an electronic reporting system based on electronic logbooks kept by the vessels. This will improve the accuracy and timeliness of data exchanged between Contracting Parties and the NEAC Secretariat. One aspect in particular that has been highlighted in the 2019 review of the VME recommendation is to have up to date and accurate knowledge of which fishing gear has been used on a particular fishing operation. This will help avoid false positive notifications of bottom fisheries outside existing fishing areas, and indeed target enforcement if any such activity were to take place.

## **Part 2 Background, NEFC's bottom fisheries regulations in the context of the organisation's management of fisheries**

### **NEFC and the Bottom Fisheries resolutions**

The United Nations General Assembly from 2006 onwards adopted resolutions that progressively committed States to act, both individually and through RFMOs, to manage bottom fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction to prevent significant adverse impacts on deep sea species, ecosystems and biodiversity (61/105 (2006) followed by resolutions 64/72 (2009), and 66/68 (2011). The resolutions called on States and RFMOs to conduct impact assessments of individual bottom fisheries and cumulative impacts of bottom fishing close areas to bottom fishing where VMEs are known or likely to occur unless the fishing can be managed to prevent significant adverse impacts on VMEs, and to ensure sustainable levels of catch and bycatch of deep sea species, including the rebuilding of depleted stocks or else not to authorize bottom fisheries to proceed

Accompanying these resolutions has been a process to assess progress in implementation of the resolution. The last UNCA bottom fisheries review was in 2016 and followed an **Area 2 Backgroun**

**NEAFC Geography**

**The northeast Atlantic lies within FAO Major Fishing Area 27, which includes the eastern part of the**



different features from those associated with the MAR are the multitude of seamounts and knolls rising from the abyssal plains in the major ocean basins, for instance, the Altair and Antialtair seamounts on either side of the MAR, and many seamounts north and east of the Azores archipelago in the south.

Further prominent features of the northeast Atlantic area, largely beyond national jurisdiction, are

**NEAFC can consider measures for, among others, fishing gears, net mesh sizes, size limits for fish in the catch, closed seasons and areas, total allowable catches (TACs), and effort. The decisions seek to be consistent with measures applied by Contracting Parties within areas under their jurisdiction and, upon request from a Contracting Party, NEAFC may also adopt measures for such areas. Measures become binding after 50 days, subject to an objection procedure that can result in the measure not being binding on the objecting Contracting Party. Each Contracting Party is also required to provide the Commission with the scientific and statistical information needed for the purposes of implementing the Convention.**

**The amended NEAFC Convention clarifies the aspects that need to be considered by the Commission when making its decisions on the fishery and the fisheries resources. Specific objectives (**



## **Decision process**

**Proposals for action by the Commission are submitted to the Commission by a Contracting Party or a**

regardless of fishing method. However, some bottom fishing not satisfying this definition of deep sea fisheries also occurs in the NEAC Regulatory Area, e.g. the fisheries targeting Redpoll haddock and shrimps and crabs in the Barents Sea.

The total catch of deep sea species in 2018 in the Regulatory Area, as recorded by NEAC, was 3 199 tonnes, including significant catches of Greenland halibut (*Reinhardtius hippoglossoides*) and rough headgenade. For the entire Convention Area (Regulatory Area and national waters), landings of deep sea species in 2018 were 181 000 tonnes; the landings from the Regulatory Area were therefore a small proportion (1.8 percent) of the total landings from the northeast Atlantic.

A major review of deep sea fisheries in the Regulatory Area was carried out by a NEAC working group reporting in 2017. The report was a compilation of the available data on fisheries for deep sea species in the NEAC Regulatory Area. It was based on analysis of data provided to NEAC by its Contracting Parties covering a period from 1973 to 2016, and in particular on data from 2008-2016.

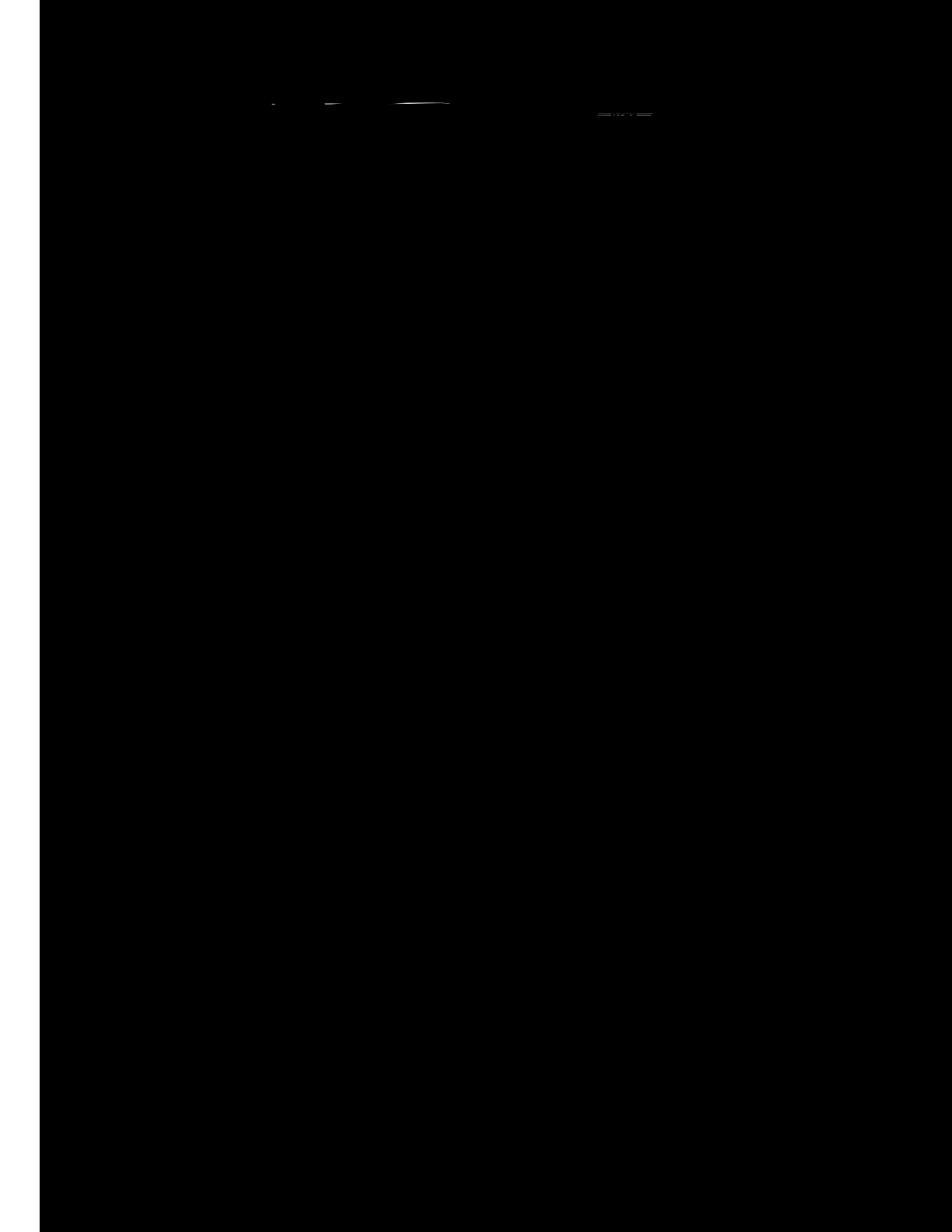
All species of deep sea fish regulated by NEAC were covered including 25 bony fishes, 23 sharks, rays and chimaeras and the deep sea red crab. The report does not cover discarded fish and notes in some cases it has been difficult to exclude data from Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). The report used catch data, as well as time series derived from information on fisheries effort relevant to deep sea species fishing. This represented mostly trawl and longline data, but also data from gear such as gillnets and pots.

The key findings of the report were that for most NEAC Contracting Parties the landings and effort in the Regulatory Area has declined significantly in the most recent years in the period 1973-2016. Some Contracting Parties that previously fished deep sea species in the Regulatory Area have barely fished there in the last decade or so. The combined landings of deep sea species for all Contracting Parties in the NEAC Regulatory Area for the period 2008-2015 (Figure 4) suggest a declining trend after around 2008 to less than 2000t in 2011-2012. The increase in landings from 2014 and 2015 only reflects enhanced fishing for genadeles on the mid Atlantic Ridge by the European Union which was the predominant fishing party for these species throughout the period 2008-2015.

Figure 4 Annual landings of deep sea species from the NEAC Regulatory Area in the years 2008-2015

Landings data from earlier years combined with the 2008-present data series is presented in Figure 5. This includes Russian/USSR only landings from the mid Atlantic prior to 1988 and international landings from 1988-2008. Prior to 1988, the Russian/USSR fisheries from 1973 onwards were most probably dominant in what would become the NEAC Regulatory Area; mid Atlantic Ridge landings of

**series illustrates fisheries increasing again in the NEFC Regulatory Area from around 1995 onwards reaching a maximum about a decade later; followed by a decline**









**TABLE 1**  
**WE indicator species (taxa) and elements adopted by NEARC in 2014**

<b>WEHabitat type</b>	<b>Representative Taxa</b>
<b>Cold water coral reef</b>	
<b><i>Lophelia pertusa</i> reef</b>	<b><i>Lophelia pertusa</i></b>
<b><i>Sclerosmilia variabilis</i> reef</b>	<b><i>Sclerosmilia variabilis</i></b>
<b>Coral garden</b>	
<b>Hard bottom garden</b>	
<b>Hard bottom gorgonian and black coral gardens</b>	
<b>Colonial scleractinians on rocky outcrops</b>	
<b>Nonreefal scleractinian aggregations</b>	

year along with anticipated impacts on VMEs (Recommendation 16/2008). These would then be assessed by ICES and HELCOM and the Commission would decide whether to allow, prohibit, or restrict such fishing. A more detailed interim protocol for exploratory fishing in new bottom fishing areas was adopted the following year (Recommendation 13/2009), and further developed in 2011, which required that cumulative impacts on VMEs also be considered, as well as a risk assessment to determine whether impacts could be regarded as significantly adverse (Recommendation 15/2011).

## Other regulations that also protect benthic areas

### Gear restrictions and retrieval

NEA has prohibited the use of fall nets, entangling nets, and trammel nets in any position where they are used for commercial fishing (Regulation 3/2006). Furthermore, there is an obligation to retrieve lost fishing gear, and to attempt to retrieve lost gear (not just fixed gear). The use of gear and retrieval of gear and



**TABLE 3 (CONTINUED)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015- 2017</b>
<b>Hitton Rd all Basin Area 1</b>											<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>Hitton Rd all Basin Area 2</b>											<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>Hitton Bark 2 Area 1</b>												



