MEETING SUMMARY

Habitat Committee
Four Points Sheraton, Wakefield, MA
January 9, 2018

The Habitat Committee met to discuss the decision on the Habitat Omnibus Amendment (OHA2) and the trailing clam framework, review final alternatives for the deep-sea coral amendment, and discuss engagement on offshore energy development.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Doug Grout (Chair), Eric Reid (Vice Chair), Matt McKenzie, Melissa Smith, Libby Etrie, Vincent Balzano, Peter deFur, Terry Stockwell, Peter Hughes, Terry Alexander, Peter Christopher, Scott Olszewski, David Borden (all Committee members present); Michelle Bachman, Rachel Feeney (NEFMC staff); Moira Kelly, Travis Ford, David Stevenson (NMFS GARFO staff); Mitch McDonald (NOAA General Counsel); Chris McGuire (Habitat AP chair). In addition, approximately 11 members of the public attended.

KEY OUTCOMES:
- The Committee did not recommend immediate action to address habitat management issues for eastern Georges Bank, where portions of OHA2 were disapproved by NMFS, but agreed that action would be appropriate in the future.
- The Committee reiterated that the clam framework was a very high priority item for 2018, and supported close collaboration between the Habitat Plan Development Team and Advisory Panel, in addition to close collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.
- The Committee reviewed methods and analysis of an updated Option 7 broad coral management zone for the slope/canyon region, and recommended that the Council adopt the Option 6 broad coral protection zone as a final preferred alternative.
- The Committee recommended a high level of Council engagement on offshore energy development, including strong comments against oil and gas development in the Atlantic, working group to review the MAFMC’s non-fishing impacts policies and adapt them for NEFMC use, and the preparation of a report that documents spatially the fisheries value of the Northeast US continental shelf. This report can then be used to develop Council comments related to offshore energy.

AGENDA ITEM #1: OHA2 DECISION AND TRAILING ACTIONS
Michelle Bachman reviewed NMFS’ decision on OHA2. Measures that were disapproved included those for eastern Georges Bank (Northern Edge Reduced Impact HMA, Northern Edge HMA, Georges Shoal HMA, removal of Closed Area II, and removal of Closed Area II Habitat Closure), as well as the two Cox Ledge HMAs. She noted that in order for Closed Area I to open to clam dredges, there would need to be additional agency action to adjust the exemption area in the Georges Bank Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning Closure. This is not something NEFMC needs to act on. Implementation is expected as early as April 1, depending on how quickly NMFS can prepare and publish the final rule.

Terry Alexander asked about the rationale for disapproving the Cox Ledge areas; there has been research on raised ground cable gears using David Goethel and Jim Odlin’s vessels. Moira Kelly explained that it’s not that there wasn’t information, but that the data available were insufficient to know how much less efficient the modified gear is, and how much longer a vessel would need to fish.¹ Thus, the gear modification could actually increase swept area rather than decreasing it, and have opposite the intended effects with respect to benthic habitats. Mr. Alexander responded that it might be good for the Research Steering Committee to look at this issue.

Vincent Balzano asked what happens to the disapproved parts? Mr. Grout responded nothing, unless the Council takes additional action. Mr. Balzano asked if this would require an amendment, and Ms. Kelly responded that it would depend on the magnitude of the change (a very significant change might still require an amendment), but one of the measures approved in OHA2 is that habitat closure changes can be done in a framework adjustment.

Audience member Drew Minkiewicz (Fisheries Survival Fund) commented that they are happy to be able to go forward with our optimal fishing strategy in CAI and NLCA, but disagree with the CAII decision; we think the Council fulfilled the mandate of the law. Significant scallops grounds are still closed. We want to work within the Council but want to begin the process about how do gain access to that are. We want to begin a dialog about can this be done in a framework, and being discussion of how to we answer the NMFS concerns. Intent is to work with the Council. We don’t see the partial disapproval is the end. We don’t want to resort to other means, because the Council process is a better process.

Ms. Bachman asked at what point would NMFS be prepared to say that CAII changes would require an amendment? We have an EIS. Would tiering off our existing EIS streamline the action? Mitch MacDonald commented that it should be frameworkable, unless the action is broadened in some respect.

Mr. Minkiewicz wondered if the agency could give guidance as to what remains to be addressed with regard to CAII, anticipating additional guidance in the final rule and response to comments.

Ms. Kelly agreed there would be more detail in the final rule. How frequently would scallop fishing occur, and what would the impacts be on the components of the HAPC important to juvenile cod? Also how does the Council intent to compensate for these impacts? What are the rates of recovery of habitat elements important to juvenile cod?

¹ As a footnote, the Cox Ledge areas were proposed as no ground cable areas, while the studies used ground cables raised with disks. The PDT described the raised ground cable studies as pilot studies in the FEIS.
Audience member David Wallace (Wallace and Associates) referenced Mr. Minkiewicz’s comments and prior work on these issues. He (Mr. Minkiewicz) proposed to close an area (Georges Shoal) that is not nearly as complex as the northern edge, but has more surfclams that are more valuable that the scallops he proposes to trade for it. If the area closes then all the surfclams (not scallops) will die of old age. The reason NMFS opened the PSP area is due to millions of dollars of clams out there. The surfclam fishery on Georges Bank works precisely where the area proposed to be closed is located, which is preposterous. NMFS was correct to reject opening such a complex portion of Georges Bank closed for 20 years so that scallop industry can destroy it.

Dr. deFur asked at what point does the Committee recommend initiating a framework? Mr. Grout responded that it’s up to the Committee and Council, and while priorities have already been set for this year, they have been revisited in past years (despite staff/workload concerns). We have a number of tasks already on our plate for this year.

Libby Etrie commented that the priorities list has this item included, i.e. the space to deal with OHA2 issues. What are you looking for us to do now? Mr. Grout said that the record of final decision might inform a more thorough discussion; this issue is still very fresh.

Terry Stockwell suggested that the Council and Committee need to move forward, but additional changes on the Northern Edge would be a heavy lift. I’d put addressing the disapproved measures as item three, after finishing the actions on corals and clams. He indicated he would not support at this meeting or the January Council meeting initiating a framework. Later in the meeting, he asked for clearer information on why the scallop access measures were disapproved. Ms. Kelly stated that more detail will be in the final rule, and Mr. Stockwell agreed that the Council could wait until then to see if additional clarification was required.

Clam framework

Ms. Bachman gave an update. We are aiming to have alternatives for the Council to review in June, perhaps April if possible, with final action in September. She and Mr. MacDonald agreed it would take a Council action to extend the one-year deadline.

The Council initiated the framework in September 2015; the statement of work can now be limited to the Great South Channel HMA only. The updated statement of work would be:

The SC/OQ fishery will be granted a one-year exemption for the Great South Channel Management Area (HMA) following implementation of OHA2, which will allow NEFMC to consider development of an access program for this fishery. The Council intends through this action to identify areas within the HMAs that are currently fished or contain high energy sand and gravel that could be suitable for a hydraulic clam dredging exemption that balances achieving optimum yield for the SC/OQ fishery with the requirement to minimize adverse fishing effects on habitat to the extent practicable and is consistent with the underlying objectives of OHA2.
Ms. Bachman continued with her summary. The PDT has been assembling information to support the framework. This includes image-based habitat surveys, trawl surveys to assess fish abundance, dredge surveys to assess clam abundance, and commercial fishery effort data. The PDT still needs to take a close look at all the data, but a likely next step is summarizing all the data in a common spatial framework (likely a grid) for comparison across the different attributes. We might be able to use updated fishing effects model outputs to assess habitat vulnerability for the area, but it is not clear that the timing will line up. We do have the original Swept Area Seabed Impact model outputs as well as additional environmental data (depth, benthic boundary shear stress). The updated clam survey data from the August 2017 SCEMFIS survey of Nantucket Shoals definitely fills a previous data gap, and can be used to understand where the most important fishing grounds will be in the coming years, based on where smaller clams are presently located. Surfclams are sensitive to water temperature increases. For fishing effort data, we have logbooks (similar to VTR), some tow tracks from a SCEMFIS project, and VMS data, which align well with one another.

In terms of alternatives for the framework, as the No Action alternative we are looking at full closure of the Great South Channel HMA (the one year exemption sunsets), with the other end of the range being the area is entirely open to clam dredging, except for the northeast corner which was set aside during final action by the Council in April 2015. Intermediate to these would be a range of exemption/closure options, keeping in mind that the areas need to be a reasonable size, and that we don’t want an overly complicated range of options.

The AP suggested that the Committee should think about keeping the area open to dredging, and closing smaller sections for habitat protection (this was a motion but there was no quorum at the AP at that point in their meeting). Chris McGuire noted that another point of discussion was the minimum size of the open/closed areas. Stability over time is also a question – both in terms of the habitat characteristics and the clam resource. Does it make sense to set aside a management area if the clam resource is shifting? Terry Alexander noted he wondered about the area size as well.

Audience member Gib Brogan (Oceana) asked what is the relative importance of this particular area for the fishery? Is the Great South Channel HMA necessary for achieving OY in this ITQ-managed fishery? That’s an important question that gets at the statement of work, and it’s getting lost. Ms. Bachman noted that in the FEIS for OHA2, there is analysis of scale of removals from this area relative to rest of fishery, although the final cumulative analysis included both Georges Shoal and this area. It’s a significant portion of the fishery. We have talked about pulling together the affected environment/background information in the short term, and will work with MAFMC staff on that. Catch rates are variable because clam density varies spatially, and we can look to the clam dredge surveys for information. Also we know that different vessels fish in different areas – in this case, smaller vessels fish Nantucket Shoals and larger ones work on Georges Bank.

Dr. McKenzie asked if the PDT is looking at post-fishing sediment deposition studies? This is the most impactful gear type and I am concerned about sedimentation. Ms. Bachman noted that the literature on effects of clam dredges is scant, but we could speculate about likely outcomes,
given an understanding of water flow at this location. These areas are very dynamic. Dr. McKenzie suggested he would forward some information (recent Hiddink et al. paper).

Mr. Grout referenced the range of alternatives that might be considered in the framework. Does the Committee have any initial feedback? Seems like this is a good opportunity for PDT and AP to collaborate directly. Might be good to get the MAFMC’s clam AP to give feedback as well. Dr. deFur noted that those of us from the Mid-Atlantic think that it is a good idea to collaborate, and Peter Hughes and Dr. McKenzie agreed. Dr. deFur commented that a smaller number of larger closures would be more practical than many small management areas. He hoped SCEMFIS is completing more analysis of their Nantucket Shoals survey. Ms. Bachman said she would follow up with Dr. Eric Powell on the availability of a report. She asked at what point MAFMC clam AP input would be most productive – perhaps after alternatives have been drafted? Dr. McKenzie asked if it would be possible for Committee members to listen in on those meetings.

There was consensus among Committee members that the PDT would develop some options and then provide those to the two advisory panels for feedback.

Terry Alexander asked how far do clams move? We don’t want box ourselves in. How deep does the fishery go? 50 fathoms? Ms. Bachman said she would investigate the movement question – she believed there has been some published work on this topic. Eric Reid noted that these types of questions confirmed the need for collaboration with the industry. For example, what is the direction of towing?

Peter Hughes confirmed that clams are moving – one issue they are facing is spatial overlaps between surfclams and quahogs. This is an issue because vessels have been required to carry only once species at a time. Dr. deFur noted that Jim Weinberg has published on this; he also referenced Dave Wallace’s statements that the center of the industry has moved from VA to NJ over time.

Mr. Hughes developed a motion related to initiating a framework related to hydraulic dredge exemptions in the Great South Channel HMA, but it was not necessary to make the motion given that the Council initiated the framework at their September 2015 meeting.

1. **Motion: Hughes/Reid**

In the event a Clam Dredge (Hydraulic Dredge) Exemption Framework cannot be implemented within the parameters of a one-year timeline the Habitat Committee recommends the Council issue a continuance of the clam dredge exemption until such time as the Clam Dredge (Hydraulic Dredge) Framework can be realized.

Rationale: Any delay in the Clam Dredge (Hydraulic Dredge) Exemption Framework implementation could cause unintended harm and lead to severe negative consequences to the participants of the clam fishery who have historically fished in what OHA2 identifies as the Great South Channel HMA.
Pete Christopher noted that this would be a Council action (vs. an agency action), and that a change to the timeframe would need to be analyzed in terms of the impacts of continuing the exemption.

Terry Stockwell indicated support for the intent, but can’t support the actual motion at this time – I don’t want to hardwire in a delay. This says that we can’t get the job done. We need to roll up our sleeves and can take this action at a later meeting. Libby Etrie agreed – this has been a known issue for years. We want to make progress, and we can revisit this issue in September if progress is not sufficient. This makes the situation very open ended. The one year clock was intended to make progress.

P. Hughes the reason I made this motion was because other fisheries have default measures in the event that a framework has not been implemented in time. The purpose of this motion is not to delay work on the framework.

Eric Reid agreed that the clam fishery is really important to all of us and is comforted that others agree we will get the job done. If we need to take this up later to prevent uninterrupted access for the fishery, we can do that.

Vincent Balzano agreed that this motion was premature. He confirmed with Mr. Christopher that the framework has already been initiated.

Mr. Christopher reminded the group that doing an extension would require a framework, and you need to think forward about timing on an exemption extension framework. Mr. Grout asked that staff provide a very clear sense of that timing at a future meeting. Mr. Christopher suggested that June would be an opportunity to initiate an extension framework in time to take final action before the one-year expires. Dr. deFur expressed concern about what happens if the framework leaves the Council office and is stalled at NMFS. He suggested that the motion was helpful because it would permit rather than obligate the Council to take action.

Mr. Stockwell stated that he heard a request for substance and detailed rationale in any request to extend the timeline. Mr. Christopher commented further that even September initiation of an action to extend the one-year exemption might be possible.

Audience member Jackie Odell – Motion is preliminary. We have known about this action for a while. The delay in the motion is open ended. Habitat protection measures are important.

Audience member David Wallace – I didn’t support the one-year timeframe initially, and I support this motion. If closing the fishery is the objective of the Council, then let’s state it. This notion that we have to keep our nose to the grindstone; who knows who will request more scientific information that needs to be gathered, analyzed, etc.? I see the system stacked against approving this in one year.

Audience member Gib Brogan commented that this is setting the Council up to fail, and creates an incentive not to complete this on time. There are 16 months until the exemption sunsets. Incentive is for industry to throw a monkey wrench in the analysis, given that there is an
extension waiting at the end. By taking this action right now, this affects the Council’s ability to ask for an emergency action – admits that the Council is planning to fail. A bad way to go – check in in six months.

Peter Hughes asked how long an emergency action takes. Mr. Christopher responded that it depends on the nature of the emergency and how complex the analysis is. Mr. Hughes reiterated his concerns that there are no defaults in place. He stated he would bring up a similar motion in the future, if this is withdrawn or fails.

**Motion #1 was withdrawn by unanimous consent of the Committee.**

In summary, while no motions were passed, it is clear the clam framework is a top priority and needs to advance quickly. There was quite a bit of discussion on a motion that said if the framework is delayed, that the Council should extend the timeline. There was agreement that such an idea could be explored later, but disagreement that such a motion was necessary at this time. There were concerns that any action to promise a timeline extension now could just lead to slowing down the action.

Extending the exemption would have to be done via a Council action. Assuming a framework adjustment, it could be initiated at one meeting and voted the next. As noted above, there would need to be some analysis of why an extension is appropriate. An emergency agency action to implement an extension seems like it would be hard to justify given that this issue and timeline has been known since OHA2 approval in 2015.

The Committee was supportive of collaboration with MAFMC on this issue, including involving the clam AP somehow in the action and development or at least review of alternatives. NEFMC and MAFMC staff will collaborate on the best way forward. The Committee supported the idea of joint habitat AP/PDT work on alternatives development.

**AGENDA ITEM #2: DEEP SEA CORAL AMENDMENT – OPTION 7 AND PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

Ms. Bachman described the PDT’s work to update the Option 7 boundary and the reanalyze the deep-sea coral and human community impacts of the new area. She noted the AP’s recommendation to designate Option 6 (a 600 m minimum depth zone) as a closure to all bottom-tending gears except red crab pots. Mr. McGuire described the rationale of the AP in making this recommendation. Overall, his sense of the discussion was that the principal concern with option 7 was the proximity to fishing effort, as shown in the red/yellow/green summary table. There’s not much effort that is over the line, but there was effort close to the line. There are operational concerns given that this is a high current environment. The AP also raised concerns about fishing activity that hasn’t been well characterized (the two examples raised were the historic monkfish fishery and *Illex* fishery this past summer). Advisors and others opposed to Option 6 were focused on the process as far as how the alternative was arrived at, noting that Option 7 was a careful analysis of data versus a depth boundary that makes sense to fishermen. While both are reasonable some felt that Option 7 made better use of the data. Another point was raised about the number of vertices – there are more in Option 6 than Option 7. There seems to be about a 15% difference in coral protection between the Option 6 and Option 7 boundaries. Mr.
McGuire noted that the various alternatives can be viewed on the Northeast Ocean Plan data portal.

The chair asked for Committee member questions.

Dr. McKenzie referred to page 9 of the PDT memo, which characterized Option 7 as neutral to slightly negative impacts. Is this in terms of lost revenue or shifts in effort? Ms. Bachman noted that the amendment document includes more detailed caveats, but we are generally assuming effort displacement, vs. loss, but that displacement could include costs. These costs are expected to accrue unevenly across individuals. Dr. McKenzie wondered if these are temporary costs. Ms. Bachman responded not necessarily. If the coral area encompasses a persistent aggregation of fish, there will be a continued cost of not being able to fish on that biomass.

Eric Reid asked if the negative impacts of vessel displacement on other vessels were factored in. Ms. Bachman noted that these types of factors have been considered qualitatively.

Peter deFur wondered about comparisons to the MAFMC’s coral action. Both actions have a general characterization of slight negative impact to fishing. What are the differences? Ms. Bachman replied that it’s hard to compare apples to apples. Whiting and lobster are much more important in the New England than in the Mid-Atlantic, and because of the lobster fishery, the interplay between fixed and mobile gears is not as important in the Mid-Atlantic. AP members suggested that currents and tides relative to canyons impact operations differently in New England.

Dr. deFur clarified that the PDT memo analyzes Option 7 as a closure to mobile bottom-tending gears and Option 6 as a closure to fixed gears but not lobster traps.

The Committee broke for lunch and then resumed discussion of preferred alternatives.

Dr. McKenzie commented that clearly this is a large issue with many people interested and potentially affected by it. He suggested deferring a recommendation to the January Council meeting, allowing additional time for people to comment and reflect on the decision.

2. **Motion 2: McKenzie/deFur**

That the Committee not recommend a preferred alternative at this time, and defer to the decision to be made by the Council at its January 30, 2018 meeting.

Dr. deFur agreed that the Committee and Council have been addressing the issue of coral protection for many years. The Council does bear the burden of this decision, ultimately, so it makes sense to not indicate a preferred at this time.

Audience member Meghan Lapp (Seafreeze Limited) was opposed to the motion and supports the AP motion. She noted that there have been no observed interactions between corals and fishing gear such that it is not necessary to limit fishing activity. She also emphasized the
statements from the PDT memo that some of the highly exposed individuals in the VTR data are not represented in the 2005-2012 VMS data used in the analysis.

Audience member Katherine Deuel (Pew Charitable Trusts) expressed support for Option 7 as modified, but would also support delaying the decision to the Council meeting.

2A. Motion to substitute: Reid/Borden

That the Committee recommend to the Council Option 6 as the preferred alternative (600 m minimum depth) as a closure to all bottom-tending gears with an exemption for the red crab pot fishery.

Rationale: Uses the discretionary authority of the Council, has been fully vetted, freezes the full footprint except the MSC certified red crab fishery, manages all gear types.

Audience member Roger Fleming (Earthjustice) was opposed to the motion. Even if we are to assume that the action is based on the discretionary authority, the action has to comply with the Magnuson Stevens Act and Administrative Procedures Act, and be based on the record, including a reasonable and rational basis for the decision. Option 7 is data driven, and there have been many opportunities for the industry to bring forward additional data showing evidence of fishing within Option 7. Option 7 has a neutral or slight impact on industry.

Audience member Gib Brogan argued that Option 6 does not comply with National Standard 2 (best information available). He agreed with Mr. Fleming that a discretionary action still needs to comply with all national standards. You gave the fishing industry an opportunity to come forward with new information. Option 7 should also should be selected because it follows agency guidance almost exactly, whereas Option 6 takes an arbitrary approach by selecting a depth. Option 7 uses VMS, VTR, coral habitat suitability model, and best mimics the MAFMC process and outcome.

Audience member Greg Wells (Pew Charitable Trusts) thanked Ms. Bachman and the PDT for the work on refining this boundary with additional data. What has come forward since June is a better optimized boundary. Option 6 protects significantly less corals than Option 7, and Option 6 is contrary to NOAA’s policy to freeze the trawl footprint in coral habitats. Encourage support for a combination of Options 6 and 7.

Audience member Katie Almeida (Town Dock) supported the motion to substitute. At the coral workshop, which many attended, people agreed that Option 6 was preferred of the options available at the time. We should honor what came out of that workshop. Perhaps Option 7 could have been supported if available earlier.

Dr. McKenzie expressed his view that the comments reflect a good reason to delay a recommendation to the Council meeting, giving further time to digest what the PDT had done. Continue to support the underlying motion.
Mr. Christopher noted his opposition to the motion to substitute. The better option is to include Option 7 as a closure to mobile bottom-tending gears, and Option 6 as a closure to lobster gear. Option 7 alone just focused on mobile bottom-tending gears falls short, and Option 6 does not protect as much coral habitat.

Mr. Stockwell commented that could support both motions. The comments are indicative of the discussions we will have at the Council meeting. Option 7 does protect more corals but is of concern to the industry. Dr. McKenzie suggested that he’d be willing to withdraw and bring up a motion to designate Options 6 and 7 together, as fixed and mobile gear closures, respectively. Mr. Stockwell was opposed to the combined approach.

**The motion to substitute carried on a show of hands, 9/3/0.**

**The main motion as substituted carried on a show of hands, 10/2/0.**

David Borden complemented the AP chair on their meeting.

Dr. deFur asked about if we can discern how this action compares to the outcome of the MAFMC amendment.

**AGENDA ITEM #3: OFFSHORE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Bachman briefed the Committee on ongoing issues. How does the Committee wish to be involved? What should the focus be? An important area for comment is on upcoming wind energy leases, particularly in New York but also off Massachusetts. In addition, construction and operations plans for multiple wind farms will be released soon. Very recently, BOEM released a draft plan for oil and gas leasing, which includes all areas along the Atlantic coast. The AP recommended a joint committee between the two Councils and Commission to address these issues.

Chris McGuire said that since the AP has broad representation across the fisheries, it’s a good place to discuss these issues. The States have done a good job of weighing in, and both RI and MA have fishery advisory groups. The NY area is obviously contentious, straddles New England and Mid-Atlantic. Ms. Bachman noted that the NY request for information comment period could align with our April Council meeting, and provide a comment opportunity. The call for information on the NY areas should be published in February or March.

Mr. Alexander asked how the Gulf of Mexico FMC interacts with the oil and gas leasing process. Ms. Bachman noted that she would follow up on that issue. The North Pacific FMC has also dealt with these issues.

Mr. Stockwell commented that the Council should stay on top of the Atlantic Link power cable, which is planned to run from Canada through the Gulf of Maine and come ashore in Plymouth. It will impact some of our habitat areas. Ms. Bachman agreed that the Atlantic Link proposal goes through Jordan and Wilkinson Basins and that she was planning on tracking the issue (a detailed map of the proposed routes has not been released).
Dr. deFur urged the Committee to urge the Council to write a letter opposing oil and gas development. A drain on the local economy. Works in the Gulf, because they keep adding things.

Eric Reid asked what do we do today? We are going to get creamed. Only gets worse with every presentation we’ve had. Does the Executive Committee need to address this? Need to become very effective very quickly or there will be no fishing left.

Mr. Grout stated he felt that this is the appropriate Committee to develop comments on offshore wind leasing and operations. We can recommend opposing oil and gas development as well.

Dr. McKenzie agreed with Mr. Reid. We all have a common cause here.

**Motion 3: McKenzie/Alexander**

*The Habitat Committee recommends that the Council oppose offshore oil and gas development in the strongest terms possible.*

Mr. Stockwell agreed he would raise these concerns at the CCC meeting next month. Ms. Etrie suggested that the CCC might ask about the role of the Councils in consulting on offshore energy projects. Mr. Christopher said he needed to abstain as he did not know the agency position on this issue.

**Motion 3 carried on voice vote with one abstention.**

Ms. Etrie raised the issue of developing Council policies on offshore energy and other issues. This is a 2018 priority. Ms. Bachman suggested that we may be up to speed on these issues enough to make an informed assessment now or soon regarding what our policy statements should be. Mr. Grout asked if we need a motion if we want to start working on this issue in the short term. Ms. Etrie suggested that Committee members could start working on this to move things along. Mr. Reid felt that we need to get going on this now.

**Motion 4: Reid/McKenzie**

*That the Committee convene a sub-committee to review the MAFMC’s policies on offshore wind and oil and gas development and develop a template for their use in New England.*

*Members who will work on this issue: Terry Alexander, Eric Reid, Matt McKenzie*

Audience member Meghan Lapp was in support of this approach. BOEM has ignored input from other agencies input. If BOEM is going to ignore NOAA and the Coast Guard, it’s going to ignore the Council. It needs to be at a higher level.

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2 Staff clarified after the meeting that the Council chair convenes committees and subcommittees, but that Committees can task individuals to do work and report back to the group.
Audience member John Williamson (Fishery Liaison Officer for Bay State Wind) commented that BOEM is struggling with understanding effects of wind farms, to what extent they will cause impacts, and on cumulative impact analysis. What issues will really affect fisheries? How do we balance this with a need to diversify our energy mix? These questions will keep getting bigger.

Audience member Drew Minkiewicz was supportive of this initiative, but noted that the Council can only have so much impact in terms of advocacy, and its best role is to educate decision makers.

Ms. Bachman noted that both Councils were asked pull together information on fishing activity in wind energy areas to be able to quickly answer questions and provide comments. The executive directors support collaboration between the two Councils. While it is BOEM’s role to do environmental review, we as fisheries managers and fishermen are in the best position to describe fishery uses of the areas and concerns.

**Motion 4 carried on a voice vote without objection.**

Ms. Bachman suggested that we focus on commenting on the New York areas and developing the background information to support writing comments.

Mr. Borden asked what about the AP recommendation for a wind committee? Mr. Grout agreed to bring that up at the Executive Committee meeting.

Chris McGuire supported Mr. Minkiewicz’s earlier comments that the Council has a role in providing information.

**Motion 5: McKenzie/Alexander**

The Committee recommends that the Council support the development of a report that documents spatially the fisheries value of the Northeast US continental shelf. This report can then be used to develop comments related to offshore energy.

*Note: ‘Fisheries’ includes the value of extracted resources as well as supporting habitats, etc. Data could be summarized by wind energy area, statistical area, etc.*

Audience member John Williamson asked if the Council should first prioritize what’s important to the maintenance of fisheries? There’s a need for prioritization. NAS workshop tried to address this, along with issues of assessment of effects.

Audience member Georges Lapointe suggested that the Council look at cumulative VMS maps. Try to be focused, rather than replicating the Northeast Data Portal. Don’t take too much time.

Dr. McKenzie clarified that he meant fisheries and their habitat.

**Motion 5 carried on a voice vote without objection.**
Mr. Alexander suggested looking at the gillnet monkfish fishery in the NY area that doesn’t have a VMS requirement.

Audience member John Williamson commented that things are getting busier on the wind power front. With the construction and operations plans for three wind farms, more workshops, etc., Council staff time will be in demand.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m.