



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 3, 2019
TO: New England Fishery Management Council
FROM: Management Strategy Evaluation Steering Committee (MSE SC)
SUBJECT: **Recommendations and advice on Ecosystem-based Fishery Management (EBFM) public information workshops**

At the September Council meeting, the MSE SC was directed to develop recommendations and advice on two elements for advancing the development of EBFM, based on the recently completed example Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Georges Bank (eFEP) document:

“The MSE Steering Committee should examine the eFEP document and advise how the Council should 1) develop a less technical and publicly digestible document with examples that focuses on a core EBFM approach, 2) structure and conduct public information workshops that will illustrate this core approach, answer questions and receive feedback from stakeholders, identify more detailed EBFM goals and objectives that relate to the authority of the Council to manage fisheries, and identify key stakeholders that are willing to engage in an MSE process.”

The MSE SC understands its role is to provide the recommendations below to guide Council-hired contractors, a science communicator and an outreach facilitator.

The MSE SC fundamentally believes that a successful EBFM design requires a co-development from all interested stakeholders.

This outreach phase should be part of an iterative, participatory process that gives stakeholders a voice rather than seeks to persuade towards a specific outcome. This principle of co-development influences our recommendations for a science communicator as well as workshop design. The following objectives should guide the outreach efforts:

- Build greater understanding of EBFM as a tool to assess and manage fisheries
- Identify potential opportunities and concerns that different stakeholders see in EBFM
 - What opportunities do you see to use EBFM to improve existing assessment and management systems?
 - What do we stand to lose in shifting towards an EBFM approach?
- Give opportunity to stakeholders to define next steps, building a willingness to continue participation in the process.

Cross-cutting issues

We recommend that the Council articulate a vision about why it is pursuing EBFM approaches prior to going out to the public in these workshops. The products used in the public information workshops should draw from this vision as well as the description of considerations in the eFEP document.

The MSE SC also recommends that the publicly digestible EBFM document and the public outreach present consistent messages about EBFM in all forums.

We anticipate that concerns will be raised during these initial workshops that are difficult to answer in this conceptual stage, such as specific implications on permits, choke stocks and other sensitive issues. We recommend that this outreach process acknowledge those concerns and help stakeholders see how those issues would be addressed in future stages of a process.

The MSE SC recommendations are detailed below in separate sections addressing products and workshop format.

Advice and recommendations about “a less technical and publicly digestible document with examples that focuses on a core EBFM approach”

How to develop materials

For developing this document, the MSE SC feels strongly that an individual or group skilled in communicating science should assist the Council. Ideally, this person or group should also have a familiarity of EBFM as well as New England fisheries. The MSE SC recommends that this person or group should work with Council staff and the EBFM PDT to exchange ideas and understand the eFEP approaches and options. The final draft products should be reviewed by the EBFM Committee and Council before using them for public workshops.

Types of materials/documents

For developing the concepts further into more easily digestible forms, the MSE SC suggests that the science communicator could consider the following forms and approaches:

The MSE SC suggests that a short, publicly digestible document is not the only effective means to convey the core approach and that a scientific communication specialist should be able to consider other options. These products should allow for multiple entry points based on stakeholder point of view or interest to make it relatable from a user’s perspective. Options to consider are:

- Document, pamphlets, video, presentations, news releases, webinar, social media etc.
- Design materials to be used in small and large format information workshops
- Match up presentations with stakeholders expected at workshops
- Use visually rich orientation presentations, create visual material. A visual storybook may be very effective

Content

The eFEP is a toolbox for discussion of potential application of EBFM concepts and its strength is in the underlying science. The MSE SC identified some core approaches or themes in the eFEP that will be helpful to discuss with stakeholders to get their input:

- Communication in this outreach phase should focus on the opportunities EBFM may present and its potential application, rather than specific management issues.
- The core eFEP concept includes a catch framework that sets an overall ecosystem cap on removals as well as setting allowable limits for stock complexes rather than individual stocks. These catch limits and targets will recognize the trophic interactions between species.
- Although complex, this approach could be simpler for managers and allow more flexibility for fishermen to retain the species that they catch.
- The approach has the potential to be responsive to changes in the ecosystem and support the resilience of fisheries in a changing ecosystem.
- EBFM can be a more flexible and adaptive approach than the current fishery management practice.
- All management actions have tradeoffs, and there are things an ecosystem plan may not/can not address. It will not alleviate the need to prevent depletion of stocks due to fishing or the need to rebuild depleted stocks. It also does not totally take away from the potential for a ‘choke’ stock to restrict fishing for other species.
- The outreach should emphasize how EBFM contrasts with today, using simple examples - energetic based vs single species, i.e. parts of the approach that are fundamentally different

One way to convey the content listed above is through a worked example. We envision the EBFM Committee guiding the development of such an example.

Advice and recommendations to “structure and conduct of public information workshops”

Possible workshop objectives include: a) educate about EBFM (testing/MSE should likely happen later), b) identify EBFM goals/objectives, and c) identify stakeholders willing to remain engaged (again, thinking eventually a testing phase, but that phase would come later). The workshops could help us identify the types of tradeoffs that will be important to consider and explicitly identify issues that stakeholders do not want the Council to address through EBFM. We also want to enhance our understanding of how different stakeholders see themselves and their interests and potential opportunities from EBFM.

The MSE SC recommends that the public information workshops could be conducted in different formats such as those outlined below to address different kinds of stakeholders and also recommends that a facilitator be used to manage and promote effective dialogue.

- Smaller meetings with stakeholders who are leaders in their field (e.g., commercial fishermen and ENGOs)
- Larger meetings open to the public to address questions from a broader interest group, including:
 - Commercial fisherman
 - ENGOs and conservation groups
 - Research community
 - Other fisheries

- Non-fishing activities (e.g. shipping, oil & wind)
- Shoreside support and communities

Initial workshops should focus on education about EBFM. This can be achieved through carefully selected examples (e.g., drawing from eFEP and tangible worked examples), being careful that the examples are not conveyed as forgone conclusions or the only possibilities. The examples could introduce possible objectives and metrics, possible EBFM management actions, and the tradeoffs and contrasts with existing management approaches (e.g., strengths and weaknesses).

With an improved understanding of EBFM, subsequent workshops could solicit objectives and metrics of interest in the New England region. Furthermore, feedback on concerns and challenges to implementing EBFM should be welcomed. It will be helpful to ask what is currently not working well that EBFM might address, but also steer away from outcomes that cannot be tested or are better addressed through other types of management procedures, for example how sectors are governed.