

Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM) Outreach Project Background

The Council has worked with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and its Plan Development Team (PDT) to develop a [worked example](#) (i.e. a simulation of stock complex catch management for 10 Georges Bank fish stocks, compared to single stock catch management for those 10 stocks) and an example Fishery Ecosystem Plan ([eFEP](#)). Using these tools and related communication materials, the Council intends to conduct a series of outreach workshops to engage dialogue with stakeholder to guide further development of the EBFM concept and application.

The [eFEP](#) is a framework and toolbox for discussion of potential application of EBFM concepts, the strength of the concept being its underlying science. The Council's [MSE Steering Committee](#) identified core approaches or themes in the eFEP that will be helpful to discuss with stakeholders to get their input during our outreach effort, including the following list. Workshop objectives include: a) educate about EBFM (workshop attendees should develop a common, minimum understanding of EBFM concepts), 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 outreach workshops could help us identify the types of tradeoffs that it is 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.

- 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/cannot 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.

To develop the Council's EBFM concept further, the Council wants to engage with stakeholders and the public using materials to be developed or that have already been developed (i.e. the eFEP) to present the new EBFM concept and solicit feedback. This

feedback will be used to further guide the Council's EBFM development efforts.

Public information workshops should be conducted with the help of a facilitator, who would manage and promote effective dialogue. These workshops could be structured to address the specific interests of different stakeholder groups under a variety of formats, including the following.

- Smaller meetings with stakeholders who are leaders in their field (i.e., people associated with the commercial fishery, the recreational fishery, and Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations [ENGOS])
- Larger meetings open to the public to address questions from stakeholders, including:
 - Commercial fisherman
 - ENGOS and conservation groups
 - Research community
 - Other fisheries
 - Non-fishing activities (e.g. shipping, oil & wind)
 - Shoreside support and communities
- Solicitation of feedback via comments from stakeholders who access the EBFM materials online.

Initial workshops should focus on education about EBFM. This can be achieved through carefully selected examples provided by the EBFM PDT and Council staff (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).

Workshop objectives include: a) education about EBFM, b) dialogue about EBFM goals/objectives, and c) identification of stakeholders who are willing to remain engaged [again, thinking eventually a testing phase or Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to come later]. The workshops could help the Council to 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. The Council also wants to enhance its understanding of how different stakeholders see themselves and their interests and potential opportunities from EBFM.

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 the questions should avoid extraneous issues that cannot be tested or are better addressed through other types of management procedures, such as how groundfish sectors are governed.