

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
50 WATER STREET, MILL 2
NEWBURYPORT, MA 01950



New England
Fishery Management Council

OPERATIONS HANDBOOK

PRACTICES AND POLICIES
REVISED MAY 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Fishery Management Plans	6
<i>Conservation and Management</i>	7
<i>FMP Development</i>	8
<i>FMP Development Process</i>	9
Organization and Operations	10
<i>Minority Reports</i>	11
<i>Executive Committee</i>	12
<i>Election of Officers</i>	13
<i>Authority of the Chairman</i>	15
<i>Scientific and Statistical Committee</i>	16
<i>Plan Development Teams</i>	21
<i>Advisory Panels</i>	25
<i>MAFMC Voting on NEFMC Committees</i>	28
<i>ASMFC Voting on NEFMC Committees</i>	29
Council Meetings	30
<i>Community Participation</i>	31
<i>Council Meeting Agenda</i>	32
<i>Public Testimony</i>	33
<i>Open Public Comment Period at Council Meetings</i>	34
Administrative Policies	35
<i>Council Member and Other Compensation</i>	36
<i>Travel Authorization and Reimbursement</i>	38
Other Council Policies	42
<i>Habitat Policy</i>	43
<i>Offshore Energy Development Policies</i>	44
<i>Aquaculture Policy</i>	47
<i>Submarine Cables Policy</i>	52
<i>Sector Policy</i>	57
<i>Fishery Allocation Review Policy</i>	60
<i>Research Priority Setting Policy</i>	63
<i>Research Review Policy</i>	64

<i>Use of New Gears in the B-Regular DAS Program and the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock SAP</i>	66
<i>Enforcement Policy</i>	67
<i>Herring Joint Ventures and Foreign Fishing Permits</i>	78
<i>Policy for Council Certification of Draft Regulations Associated with Fishery Management Plan Actions</i>	79
<i>Correspondence from the Council</i>	80
<i>Approval Process and Guidelines for Communications with the Media</i>	81
<i>Scallop Research Set-Aside Program Policy</i>	84
<i>Risk Policy Statement</i>	86
<i>Council Priorities Process</i>	87
<i>Janice Plante Award for Excellence</i>	89

2016 OPERATIONS HANDBOOK

PRACTICES AND POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

February 9, 2016

Dear Council Members:

This document is divided into sections containing policies that address fishery management plan development, the Council structure and its operations, as well as administrative and stand-alone issues. The intent is to provide a useful reference for Council members and the public when policy questions arise or to clarify procedural matters.

The Operations Handbook was substantially revised at Council meetings held in November 2007 and February 2008. Several policies were eliminated because they were no longer consistent with accepted Council practices. Others were modified and several new policies also were added.

In 2012 and 2013, four policies were modified or recommended at the request of the Executive Committee, approved by the full Council and incorporated into this handbook. These included a refinement to the policy that addresses the *Authority of the Chairman*; a change to the *Public Testimony* policy that deleted a section calling for detailed information from the public when providing formal comments to the Council; and clarification concerning the *Advisory Panel* policy about when and how an Advisory Panel (AP) Chair is speaking as an individual, for his or her organization, or for the AP at different types of Council meetings. Criteria for membership on the Council's PDTs were also added to the *Plan Development Team Policy*.

Other changes were approved in 2014. At its June meeting, the Council approved an additional rationale for the removal of an advisory panel member and added a new policy that outlines the details of the NEFMC's scallop research set-aside program; and in November, a *Risk Policy Statement* was approved. In December 2015, the Council revised its Advisory Panel policy to allow, on rare occasions, a Vice Chair to stand in for an AP Chair and preside over an Advisory Panel meeting. In early 2016, the Council established guidelines for conferring its annual Janice Plante award on a deserving individual.

Once revisions or new policies are approved by the Council, the staff will provide a revised copy to members. An updated handbook also will be posted on the Council's website – www.nefmc.org.

Sincerely,
Tom Nies
Executive Director

Additional Changes to Practices and Policies
2017 to Present

June 14, 2018	Council Adopted Offshore Energy Development Policies
September 24, 2018	Council Accepted Voting Seat on ASMFC Atlantic Herring Management Board, Added ASMFC Voting Seat on NEFMC Atlantic Herring Committee
January 30, 2019	Council Approved Fishery Allocation Review Policy
April 17, 2019	Council Deleted Section on Research Steering Committee, Added Section on Research Priority Setting Process, Revised NEFMC Research Review Policy
June 13, 2019	Council Allocated Recreational Fishing Industry Seat on Atlantic Herring and Habitat Advisory Panels
December 5, 2019	Council Approved Annual Priorities Process
January 28, 2020	Council Approved Update to Travel Authorization and Reimbursement Policy
December 1, 2020	Council Approved Aquaculture Policy and Submarine Cables Policy
January 27, 2021	Council Removed Language Stating Eight Members Constitute a Quorum for Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings
April 13, 2021	Council Approved Conflict of Interest and Recusal Guidance for Scientific and Statistical Committee

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS

Conservation and Management

Fishery conservation and management is evolving to include the application of ecosystem-based fishery management principles. To ensure the Council has effective conservation and management programs in place and adheres to sound management practices as it considers and includes ecosystem-based principles in its fishery management plans (FMPs), the Council adopted the following policy:

The New England Fishery Management Council recognizes that allocation is an integral part of its management responsibilities and that measures which have allocative effects should be open and transparent.

The Council will develop conservation measures and controls that have a high level of certainty that ensures they will prevent overfishing, end overfishing, and rebuild stocks.

The Council also recognizes that we manage fishermen, not fish, and that allocation measures and controls must have a high level of certainty that ensures our conservation requirements are met in a fair and equitable manner.

As stewards of New England's valuable fisheries resources, we will be judged by both the biological health of our fisheries and by how fair and equitable we are in our allocation decisions.

FMP Development

Purpose To allow for the most efficient use of time, budget and the skills of its members, staff, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Plan Development Teams (PDTs), the Council has adopted the following to be used as guidance in the development of fishery management plans (FMPs). The Council will endeavor to:

- Improve the quality of its FMPs.
- Improve the clarity of FMPs so that its members vote with a clear understanding of the plan and its biological, economic, and social impacts.
- Reduce the likelihood of disapproval.
- Enhance the probability of successful implementation of plans.
- Improve public participation and understanding.

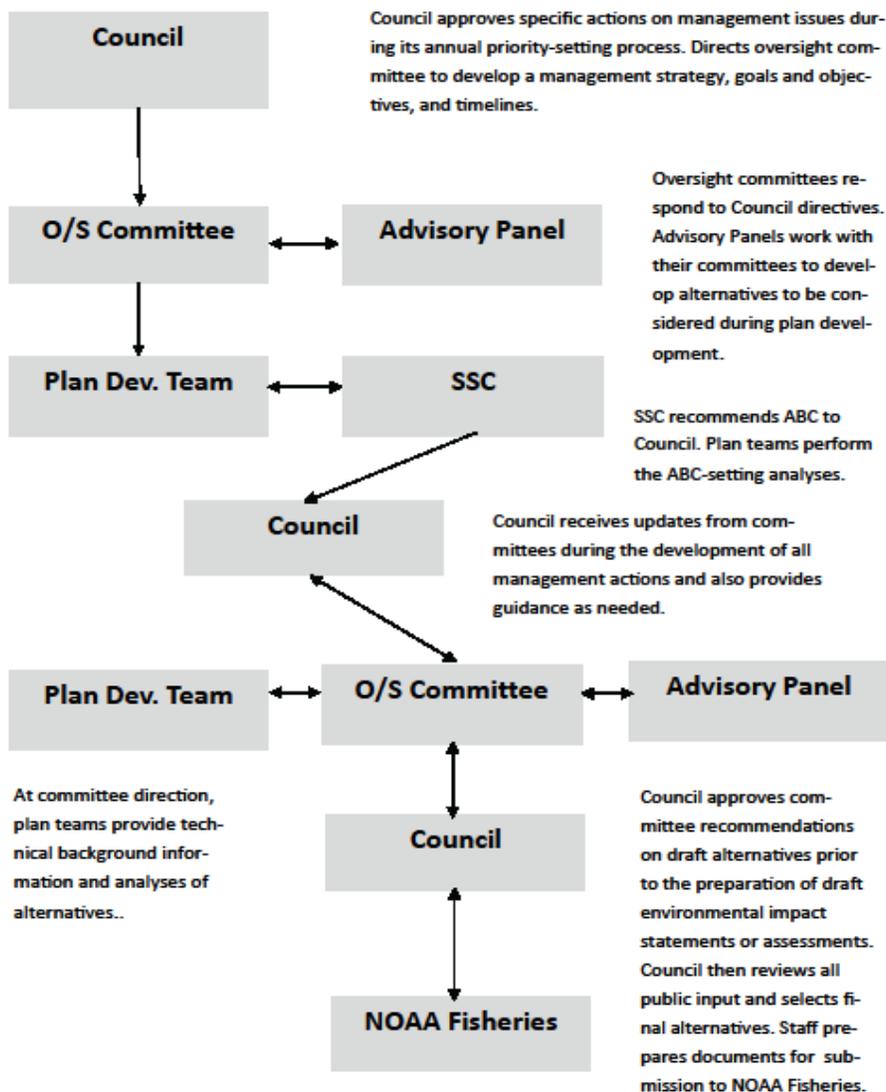
Council and Committee Roles The Council, while providing direction to its oversight committees, focuses on approving goals and overall management strategies, and approving specific management options developed by the committees prior to inclusion in any draft or final version of an FMP.

PDT Role The PDT's are responsible for developing options, providing technical analyses and writing FMPs, based on the Council's explicit direction. The PDTs are not independent, but will work with the oversight committees to refine options that are consistent with Council strategies and achieve the management objectives of the FMP.

SSC Role The SSC will assist the Council in the development, collection, evaluation, and peer review of statistical, biological, economic, social, and other scientific information relevant to the development and amendment of fishery management plans.

The SSC also will provide ongoing scientific advice for fishery management decisions, including recommendations for acceptable biological catch, preventing overfishing, maximum sustainable yield, and achieving rebuilding targets, and reports on stock status and health, bycatch, habitat status, social and economic impacts of management measures, and the sustainability of fishing practices.

FMP Development Process



ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS

Minority Reports

Council members may register official dissent about any decision of the Council on approved Council actions submitted to the Secretary of Commerce. This policy does not foreclose the expression by Council members of personal opinions or viewpoints on any subject under consideration by the Council.

Any Council member expressing his/her personal opinion should make it clear that these opinions are those of the individual only. To do otherwise subverts the Council process and conflicts with statutory process prescribed by the Magnuson-Stevenson Act.

Procedure At the conclusion of the vote on an action to be submitted for Secretarial review, any Council member(s) intending to file a minority report should advise the Chairman.

When a Council member(s) decides that s/he (they) will file a minority report, he (they) shall advise the Council's Executive Director in writing of this intent. Notice shall be given to the Executive Director no later than thirty (30) days after the Council meeting during which the decision that is the subject of the dissent was made.

Upon completion and signature of the minority report, a copy will be provided to each Council member. The Executive Committee may comment on the report. After review and any Executive Committee comment, the minority report will be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce by the Executive Director. It will be included as part of the administrative record, along with the decision documents approved by the Council.

Staff Support The Executive Director will not provide staff assistance and facilities for the preparation of a minority report.

Executive Committee

The Council's five-member Executive Committee consists of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the past-year Chairman (if still on the Council) and, as necessary, either two or three members who are elected in the same manner as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Officers of the Council are elected for one-year terms and may be reelected.

Purpose The Executive Committee advises and assists the Chairman in all his responsibilities. In an emergency situation (which does not permit convening the full Council), the Executive Committee may act of behalf of the Council.

Meetings of the Executive Committee may be held at the request of the Chairman between regular Council meetings as necessary.

Responsibilities The responsibilities of the Executive Committee are to develop policy for Council consideration and provide guidance on administrative, financial and personnel matters. The Council may delegate specific policy development to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee provides the following:

- Assists the Chairman in planning and managing the Council budget; reviews and approves budgets and grant applications; and reviews on a regular basis all Council expenditures.
- Oversees the administration of the Council's employment practices.
- Considers and approves the personnel policy.
- Reviews Standard Operating Policies and Procedures and makes recommendations concerning any changes necessary to facilitate the operation of the Council.
- Provides advice to the Chairman on the appointment of members to the Council's Advisory Panels and Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Election of Officers

Elections for Council officers are held at the first regularly scheduled Council meeting after new Council appointments become effective each year. The Council elects officers from among the voting members of the Council. Officers are elected for one year and may be reelected.

Executive Committee The five members of the Executive Committee will consist of: the Chairman, Vice Chairman, past Chairman (for 1 year after service as Chairman), and two or three at-large elected members (depending on whether a past chairman is on the committee).

Voting Procedures Voting will be conducted by secret ballot. Non-voting members will conduct the elections with assistance from other non-voting members. Specifically, they will distribute, collect and count ballots. Ballots will be retained by the staff for 30 days before destruction and will be available for examination by voting council members during that period. Nominations will not be closed until all who wish to nominate have done so. A nominee may decline a nomination. Write-in votes and absentee ballots are not permitted.

Chairman and Vice Chairman Offices will be filled in the order of Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively, via separate elections and will be filled by a majority of votes for nominated candidates. Write-in votes and abstentions will not be counted in determining a majority.

If three candidates are nominated and none has a majority, the candidate receiving the fewest votes will be dropped from the ballot. If three candidates are nominated and the low two are tied, all three will be kept on the ballot. If four or more candidates are nominated and no one has a majority, the person receiving the fewest votes will be dropped; and if the low two are tied, both will be dropped from the ballot. If the low three are tied, all four will stay on the ballot.

Other Executive Committee Members The additional (two or three) Executive Committee members will be nominated as a single slate of candidates. In the case of only two or three nominees, individuals will serve by acclamation. If four or more candidates are nominated (again for two or three seats), the individuals receiving the highest number of the votes will serve on the Executive Committee. Ties for Executive Committee seats will be resolved by successive run-off elections. Again, the outcome is determined when three nominees receive the highest number of votes.

If there are two positions open for Executive Committee membership, each voting member will be allowed to cast two votes for those positions, but no more than one per candidate. If there are three positions open, three votes may be cast for three individuals.

Past Chairman The past Chairman of the Council will serve as an “automatic” member of the Executive Committee for one year following his/her last term as Council Chairman. Thereafter, s/he may be nominated and elected, as are other members of the Committee.

Repeated Tie Vote In the event of a repeated tie vote between several candidates, motions from the floor will be accepted to resolve the issue.

Authority of the Chairman

The Chairman, or in his absence the Vice Chairman, shall convene and preside over Council meetings. Subject to the authority of the Council, the Chairman is responsible for the operations of the Council, for oversight committee appointments, authorization of Council and committee meetings and for the financial affairs of the Council. The Chairman may designate Council members to officiate at public hearings.

Additionally, the Chairman may serve as an ex-officio member of each of the Council's oversight committees. As such, s/he may vote on motions during committee meetings. In keeping with *Robert's Rules of Order* about ex-officio members, however, the presence of the Chairman does not count when determining whether or not a quorum is present.

The Chairman, as delegated by the Council, functions as the Chief Executive Officer with general charge and supervision over and responsibility for the business affairs of the Council. In the name of the Council, the Chairman may enter into and execute contracts and other instruments in the regular course of business. The Chairman may delegate these matters to the Executive Director at his discretion.

The Executive Director is directly responsible to the Chairman for the work of the staff and the day-to-day operations of the Council office. The Executive Committee advises and assists the Chairman in the conduct of all his/her responsibilities.

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The purpose of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) is to assist the Council in the development, collection, and evaluation of statistical, biological, and other scientific information relevant to the development and amendment of any fishery management plan (Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act §302).

The SSC shall:

- Assist the Council in the development, collection, evaluation, and peer review of statistical, biological, economic, social, and other scientific information relevant to the development and amendment of fishery management plans;
- Provide the Council ongoing scientific advice for fishery management decisions, including recommendations for acceptable biological catch (ABC), preventing overfishing, maximum sustainable yield, and achieving rebuilding targets, and reports on stock status and health, bycatch, habitat status, social and economic impacts of management measures, and sustainability of fishing practices;
- Provide guidance to ensure that fishery management plans, amendments, and framework adjustments are based on the best scientific information available (National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act);
- Review stock assessment updates as requested through the Stock Assessment Workshop or Council. One or more SSC members also shall be requested by the Council to serve on or Chair Stock Assessment Workshops/Stock Assessment Review Committees and other appropriate peer review committees;
- Provide input into the development of Terms of Reference for peer reviews to support the needs of the SSC (e.g. for purposes of obtaining projected catch associated with overfishing and quantification of scientific uncertainty for determining ABC);
- Upon request, advise the Council on the preparation of comments for any FMP or amendments prepared by the Secretary or other bodies that are transmitted to the Council pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act; and
- Perform other appropriate tasks as may be required by the Council.

Organization The Executive Director shall announce SSC vacancies through available communications and media outlets, the mail, and in other ways he determines appropriate. Additionally, the SSC shall be given the opportunity to recommend SSC nominees to the Council Executive Committee based on desired skill sets. Interested persons will be required to submit

resumes and other information requested by the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall prepare a list of nominees. Prior to their appointment, a list of SSC nominees and qualifications shall be made available to the full Council. Members of the Council shall, in turn, have the opportunity to make recommendations to the Executive Committee prior to the selection of SSC members. Subsequently, the five voting members of the Executive Committee shall appoint SSC members on the basis of their expertise in fisheries science, ecology, and social sciences.

SSC Membership, Term Limits, Operations The SSC should have no less than 17 members. Nine of the members should have expertise in fisheries stock assessments, four in fisheries ecology, and four in social sciences related to fisheries management. Committee members shall not represent their agencies or institutions, but will function as independent scientists on the SSC. The Executive Committee may appoint additional SSC members on an ad hoc basis, or the SSC may call upon additional expertise if needed with the approval of the Executive Director.

SSC members are eligible to be appointed to no more than three consecutive three-year terms. The Executive Committee may, at its discretion, deviate from this limitation in order to prevent excessive turnover if numerous members reach the term limit at the same time. A member leaving the SSC due to the term limit may be reappointed after at least a one-year break in service. The SSC chair, vice-chair, and Executive Director should review SSC member attendance records and participation on a periodic basis. Any identified issues should be brought to the attention of the SSC member in question. If necessary, replacement could be considered after discussion with the Executive Committee.

The SSC shall nominate from its members a Chair and Vice Chair who both will be confirmed by the Executive Committee for one-year, renewable terms. SSC members may be compensated when funding is available and will be paid for travel expenses in accordance with the Council's travel policy. SSC members also may be compensated for participation in peer reviews, based on available funding.

SSC Priorities The SSC is tasked with the development of acceptable biological catch recommendations. In doing so, it shall avoid duplication of official peer reviews and consider the larger aspects of the 'spirit of the act' (e.g., ecosystem-based fishery management, socio-economic benefits, and other relevant issues identified in the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act).

Meetings To the extent practicable, the SSC shall meet regularly, either before or in conjunction with Council meetings, and the SSC chair (or appropriate representative) should attend Council meetings. The Committee also should meet as a whole or in part at its own request, or at the request of Executive Director, with the approval of the Council Chair whenever necessary to fulfill its responsibilities. The SSC may schedule additional meetings, as needed, for the review of fishery management plan items and to address longer-term issues that may require SSC recommendations in the form of "white papers." The Executive Director shall provide staff support to the committee. Public comment will be invited at the discretion of the SSC chair.

Council Requests for SSC Recommendations The SSC shall be primarily responsive to Council requests, and shall set its own annual and monthly agendas based on these requests and other issues as time allows. All Council requests for SSC recommendations should be forwarded from the Council through its Executive Committee or Chairman. Council requests should be clearly communicated in a memorandum from the Executive Director and include the specific issues that require SSC review and the development of recommendations to the Council.

All available background information and analyses from the appropriate organizations (e.g., Plan Development Team, technical committee) should be provided by a representative of the organization through technical documents and a visual presentation that addresses the major issues, background information, analyses, and conclusions.

- To the extent possible, documents shall include the “best scientific information available” and meet the criteria specified by the National Research Council (2004): relevance, inclusiveness, objectivity, transparency and openness, timeliness, and peer review.
- Background documentation should include a concise summary of previous scientific and management episodes related to each issue.

Meeting Agendas The SSC should meet in conjunction with Council meetings whenever possible and request other meetings as needed. The SSC should consider each request at least one month before the Council deliberates on the issue, using the following schedule:

Month 1 – “new business”

- Documents are available for SSC review before the meeting
- Critical issues are identified

SSC recommendations are discussed and drafted, if possible, and tasks are delegated for the intervening month

➤ Intervening work

- Critical issues are reviewed further, if necessary
- Draft recommendations are developed (by correspondence or within subgroups)

➤ Month 2 – “old business”

- Intervening review and draft recommendations are discussed
- SSC consensus is developed and recommendations are reported to the Council

SSC Recommendations A quorum is necessary for the development of any ABC recommendation. The committee’s recommendations should be consensus statements. Consensus statements shall identify the greatest common perception with caveats. Majority and minority reports could be included in a consensus statement as a last resort. Only matters of process shall be voted on (chair, vice-chair, agenda, etc.). SSC reports shall consist of concise recommendations, identification of supporting documents, and technical appendices that document SSC analyses.

Annual Agendas The annual schedule of fishery management plans, amendments, and framework adjustments shall be provided by Council staff. An SSC member should be assigned to lead the review of each ABC agenda item at least one month in advance of the SSC meeting and work with the Chair to identify issues for SSC discussion.

Council Remands to the SSC The Council may remand back to its Scientific and Statistical Committee the SSC's recommendations based on the following criteria: (a) failure of the committee to follow the terms of reference provided to it by the Council; (b) an error, in fact or omission, in the materials provided to the committee; (c) an error in fact in the calculations, if any, undertaken by the Committee in developing an ABC recommendation; and (d) failure of the committee to follow its standard operating procedures.

Conflict of Interest SSC members are expected to maintain high standards of conduct. SSC decisions are expected to be objective and must avoid conflicts of interest. The following guidance will help SSC members address frequently encountered situations. Should SSC members have questions about a specific issue, the Executive Director will facilitate consultation with NOAA GC. SSC members who are federal employees may also consult with the appropriate ethics officer.

- 1) Each SSC member is required to complete a financial interest disclosure form on an annual basis and when there is relevant change. These are made available to the public on the Council web page. If an SSC member has a current, recurring, or persistent financial conflict of interest (as defined in the NOAA Scientific Integrity Policy, [NAO 202-735D-2](#)) with an SSC agenda item, the member must identify the conflict and recuse him or herself from participating in SSC discussions on that subject. Recusals must be documented in the SSC report.
- 2) In cases where the SSC, or an SSC sub-panel, is conducting a peer review, SSC members shall follow the guidance on peer reviews as described in the National Standard 2 guidelines as well as other regulations or legal requirements that may be applicable (for example, in the case of federal employees).
- 3) If an SSC member is an author or coauthor of a report considered by the SSC, that individual should recuse him or herself from discussion about SSC recommendations on this agenda item. However, that SSC member may provide clarifications about the report to the SSC as necessary. If, on the other hand, the SSC reviews a report prepared by individuals under the line of supervision of an SSC member, then that SSC member should recuse him or herself from leading the SSC discussion of that agenda item. He or she may otherwise participate fully in the SSC discussion and development of recommendations based on the report after disclosing affiliation with the authors. The Council believes that in the latter instance, the benefit of participation by SSC members outweighs the possible appearance of a conflict of interest. Any recusals must be documented in the SSC report.

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- 4) SSC members, or their employers, are eligible to compete for Council contracts. If the SSC is asked for assistance in drafting the request for proposals, SSC members who may compete for that contract should not provide advice to avoid the appearance of a conflict. SSC members should not assist the Council with the review of their own proposals or competing proposals.

Plan Development Teams

Plan Development Teams (PDTs) provide an expanded pool of expertise for the purpose of conducting data analyses and providing information to the Council. The PDTs also help ensure that Council FMPs, amendments, and framework adjustments meet scientific, legal, and technical requirements for review and approval. The Council's Executive Director appoints all PDT members based on the criteria listed below in this policy.

Responsibilities The responsibilities of the PDTs are as follows:

- To evaluate management proposals with respect to achieving FMP objectives;
- To incorporate SSC recommendations as accepted by the Council into management alternatives;
- To provide guidance and assistance, as appropriate, to the Council staff in the development and preparation of FMP and amendment submission documents; and
- To provide plan monitoring, and scientific and technical expertise to the Council and its committees and, if appropriate, to the Stock Assessment Workshops.

The PDT will provide options to meet FMP objectives, analyses, and relevant data for use by the appropriate oversight committee or Council. The individual members of the PDT will carry out their usual responsibilities to their parent agencies, but as a group, the PDT is responsible to the Council.

Terms of Reference The oversight committee chairs will provide detailed guidance (terms of reference) to the PDTs. Committees may ask PDTs to evaluate management proposals, develop options to meet FMP objectives, or to provide guidance on a variety of scientific, technical or FMP implementation issues. The terms of reference should clearly identify the management objectives against which management proposals should be evaluated and options developed. The goal is to direct the PDTs to develop and/or analyze a variety of options consistent with FMP objectives.

PDT chairs will attend meetings of the relevant committee to facilitate accurate preparation of written terms of reference, and subsequently will present PDT reports and analyses to the committees or the Council. PDT chairs may designate other PDT members to make special presentations to the committees as appropriate.

In meeting the management objectives specified by the committees, PDTs should consider as broad a range of options as possible. All management alternatives shall be consistent with the advice provided by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee.

PDT Reports PDTs will provide reports to their respective committees in response to the terms of reference. The PDT reports will contain options and analyses of options that meet specified objectives. PDT conclusions and recommendations will reflect the consensus of its members. PDT members must have the chance to review and comment on PDT reports prior to their distribution.

Process and Responsibilities The PDT Chair will schedule meetings as far in advance as possible and coordinate assignments of specific tasks to individuals or subgroups of the PDT. The Chair will distribute all terms of reference prior to PDT meetings.

The PDT Chairs will keep PDT members informed of all Council actions affecting a PDT's area of responsibility. The PDTs may determine whether a particular issue or proposed action warrants their involvement, or whether it is better handled solely by the Council staff.

PDTs are working groups and therefore PDT members are expected to contribute to analyses and documents under development. PDT members are chosen for their scientific and technical capabilities. It is important for them to be as impartial as possible in evaluating management alternatives. To maintain the credibility of the PDT as an impartial body, PDT members should be careful not to become advocates for a particular management approach or a particular interest group.

All FMPs, amendments or major framework adjustments should be developed with the involvement of the PDTs unless otherwise delegated to a committee established for a specific purpose. The PDTs also will review major components of submission documents, such as draft and final environmental impact statements, economic, social and Regulatory Flexibility Analyses for all FMPs, and major amendments or framework adjustments.

To ensure the most efficient use of PDT resources, as much work as possible will be done before or outside of PDT meetings by circulating and reviewing analyses and documents by mail or electronically.

PDT members should have the full agreement of their agency/employer to allow them to make the appropriate commitment to the PDT process. Expected time commitments should be explicit so that PDTs can depend on members for some minimum amount of contribution.

PDT Meetings The purpose of PDT meetings is to direct and review analyses and provide guidance to the Council and its committees. Committee chairs may attend PDT meetings to provide guidance and clarification when needed. Council members, industry advisors and members of the public also may attend PDT meetings but may participate in the discussion only at the invitation of the PDT chair.

The purpose of PDTs is to perform analytical and technical work for the Council; and

although the meetings are open to the public, advanced notice cannot be guaranteed.

Criteria for Membership The Executive Director, in consultation with the PDT Chair and Deputy Director, shall review the qualifications of each prospective PDT member. At a minimum, the following four criteria shall be evaluated.

1. Knowledge and skills commensurate with PDT tasks.
2. An ability to remain unbiased during PDT deliberations.
3. The capacity to discuss, negotiate and compromise if necessary with other PDT members; in other words, possess an ability to “fit in.”
4. A unique skill set and/or perspective that does not currently exist on the PDT.

Composition Each Plan Development Team will consist of the following:

- A Chair designated by the Council’s Executive Director.
- Up to two members from the NMFS Regional Office, one of whom is responsible for keeping the Regional Administrator and other appropriate NMFS personnel informed of work undertaken, progress, problems encountered and timetables.
- Up to two members from the NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). Other scientists from the NEFSC may participate in technical sessions or working subgroups of the PDT. Their involvement would be coordinated by the appropriate NEFSC member.
- Designated staff members from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.
- Economists, statisticians, anthropologists, sociologists, marine biologists or other scientists from state fisheries agencies and academic institutions. Subject to the availability of funds, expenses for these PDT members will be reimbursed by the Council.
- Other Council staff as appropriate.
- Representation from different organizations does not need to be proportional, although an effort should be made to include state personnel on Council PDTs.
- Members of Council committees that have the responsibility to task a particular PDT may not serve or stand-in for any member of that PDT.

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- Advisory Panel members may not simultaneously serve on any of the Council's PDTs.
 - Industry-funded scientists and members and/or staff of non-governmental organizations may be approved for PDT membership on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Committee.

Advisory Panels

Council Advisory Panels (APs) that meet the requirements for a fishing industry advisory committee (FIAC) are charged with carrying out the objectives and duties listed below for a specific fishery management plan (FMP) or management problem. The Council may establish or abolish its Advisory Panels as necessary.

New England Council APs shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Council. When a Council oversight committee determines that an Advisory Panel will facilitate its work in preparing or amending a fishery management plan (FMP) or provide assistance in addressing a special issue or problem, the Council will appoint an AP.

Every fall, each oversight committee reviews its existing advisory panel membership and recommends any changes to the Council's Executive Committee. A maximum of 15 individuals may be appointed to any Advisory Panel.

The Executive Committee provides final approval for membership on all NEFMC Advisory Panels. The three-year term of advisors begins on January 1 or as soon thereafter as possible. All decisions and recommendations made by an Advisory Panel are considered to be advisory in nature and are not binding on the Council.

Membership The Advisory Panels shall be composed of individuals who are either: (1) actively engaged in some aspect of the region's commercial or recreational fisheries; or (2) knowledgeable and interested in the conservation and management of a fishery or group of fisheries that are managed by the Council. Panel membership shall also, to the extent possible, reflect a broad cross-section of interests and expertise from the standpoint of geographical distribution, user group representation, and social and economic diversity that generally may be found within the Council's geographical area of concern. At least one seat on the Atlantic Herring AP and one seat on the Habitat AP shall be allocated to a representative of the recreational fishing industry.

Other Councils may be invited to name advisors to serve as members of a New England Council Advisory Panel if the FMP, amendment, or problem under consideration extends into the management area of the other Council.

The New England Council will reimburse advisors from the New England region for travel expenses. Advisors from outside New England may be reimbursed by either the New England Council or other Council(s) whom the advisor(s) may represent.

Appointments At the end of each three-year term, advisors' performance and attendance will be reviewed by the oversight committees. If needed, new members will be solicited to fill any vacancies. Additional advisors could be appointed in response to the creation of a new panel, the addition of members to an existing panel, resignation, or Council action that removes an advisor.

Neither proxies nor designees shall serve in place of appointed members of any Advisory Panel.

The Executive Director will solicit applicants through the media, Council mailing lists, and/or other means deemed appropriate. Applicants will receive a questionnaire to be completed and returned to the Council or could be asked to submit a resume depending on the nature of the Advisory Panel. The relevant oversight committee will review the qualifications of the nominees and recommend appointments to the Executive Committee.

Prior to selection, nominees shall be subject to an additional level of review by NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement. Advisory Panel membership may be declined if applicants have had a marine resource violation.

Terminations An Advisory Panel member could be replaced at the Council's discretion if he or she:

- 1) Transfers employment or moves to a different location;
- 2) Is absent from two consecutive meetings without giving adequate notification or reason to the Council Executive Director;
- 3) Appears unable or unwilling to fulfill their obligation as an Advisory Panel member;
- 4) Their area of expertise is no longer required; or
- 5) The Chairman, in consultation with the Executive Committee, determines that an Advisory Panel member should be removed for *just cause* (e.g., violation of marine resource regulation, felony, conviction, etc.; these examples are not all inclusive). This also includes removal of an advisory panel member who refuses to adhere to proper decorum by failing to show respect for other panel members, or the panel itself, as evidenced by frequent rude and disruptive behavior and/or an unwillingness to refrain from abusive treatment of other members and/or Council staff assigned to assist the advisory panel in carrying out its business of providing recommendations to committees and the Council.

Organization A chairman for each Advisory Panel will be designated by the oversight committee chairman (with the advice of committee members), reviewed by the Executive Committee, and approved by the Council Chairman.

The AP Chair is expected to routinely fulfill this responsibility and communicate meeting results to the relevant oversight committee. If an oversight committee determines it is necessary, the Advisory Panel may also designate a vice chairman who will be selected in the same manner as the AP Chairman.

Advisory panel chairs are encouraged to attend meetings of their respective committees and will be seated at the committee table with other members. On rare occasions, and with the concurrence of the Committee Chair, the Executive Director may authorize the AP Vice Chair to attend committee meetings in place of the AP Chair.

These individuals will not be allowed to vote but may freely enter into the committee's deliberations. Input provided by Advisory Panel chairs must be identified "as discussed by the advisory panel" or "personal input." To further clarify this distinction and to avoid the appearance of providing any personal advantage to advisory panel chairs when they are seated at the committee table, AP chairs must leave the committee table and comment from the public microphone when providing personal comments or speaking on behalf of those they represent.

Expenses for participation in oversight committee meetings will be covered by the Council and will be indicated on the appropriate *Travel Authorization and Reimbursement* form.

Meetings Advisory Panels will meet as directed by the oversight committee chairman. They may meet in conjunction with their oversight committee or independently. Advisory Panel meetings shall be scheduled by the Executive Director as often as necessary to fulfill the panel's responsibilities, taking into consideration time and budget constraints. Generally, meetings will be scheduled for one day. Meetings of more than one day must have prior approval from the Council Chairman.

The Advisory Panel Chairman will be given explicit directions and guidance from the Oversight Committee Chairman concerning committee tasks (i.e. prepare comments on draft public hearing document, prepare comments on the scoping document, prepare comments and advise on a specific measure, etc.). Each Advisory Panel meeting shall be open to the public and the conduct of business will be in accordance with the guidelines found on page 66, Committees and Advisory Panels, of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Blue Book).

The chairman of the oversight committee may attend meetings of the Advisory Panel at his or her discretion and will be reimbursed for expenses. Other members of the oversight committee or Council may attend but will not be reimbursed for expenses.

The Executive Director may provide support as necessary for panel activities within budget limitations and staff availability.

Travel Authorization and Reimbursement Members of Advisory Panels shall serve with compensation, provided funding is available. Advisors are eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses incurred while attending authorized meetings scheduled by the Executive Director and subject to availability of funds.

Instructions for reimbursement can be found in the Council's Policy on *Travel Authorization and Reimbursement*.

MAFMC Voting on NEFMC Committees

Members of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) may, in certain cases, be appointed to and vote as members of a New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) oversight committee. When a significant portion of a stock or stocks of NEFMC-managed species occur in Mid-Atlantic waters, or when there is a high degree of Mid-Atlantic participation in an NEFMC-managed fishery, the MAFMC may appoint one or more of their voting members to serve on and vote as a member of the New England Council's committee for the relevant species, stock or fishery.

The MAFMC also may appoint members to New England Council non-species or ad-hoc committees, with the exception of the NEFMC's Executive Committee.

Currently, there are two joint plans for which these procedures are applicable. The NEFMC has the lead in preparing the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan jointly with the MAFMC, while the MAFMC leads in the preparation of the Spiny Dogfish Fishery Management Plan.

Alternates An alternate voting member may be designated for each MAFMC member appointed to an NEFMC committee. If neither the appointed member nor the designated alternate is able to attend a particular committee meeting, the MAFMC may appoint another voting Council member to serve as its representative at that meeting, provided the MAFMC notifies the NEFMC Chairman or Executive Director in writing of this change.

Travel and Compensation The MAFMC is responsible for reimbursement of all expenses associated with travel and compensation for its members when attending NEFMC meetings.

ASMFC Voting on NEFMC Committees

Members of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) may, in certain cases, be appointed to and vote as members of a New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) oversight committee. Conversely, NEFMC members may be appointed to and vote as members of an ASMFC management board.

Such appointments may be especially beneficial for stocks of mutual interest that are actively managed in federal waters by the New England Council and concurrently managed in state waters by ASMFC.

Alternates ASMFC may designate an alternate voting member to attend NEFMC committee meetings. If neither the appointed member nor the designated alternate is able to attend a particular committee meeting, ASMFC may appoint another voting Commission member to serve as its representative at that meeting, provided ASMFC notifies the NEFMC Chairman or Executive Director in writing of this change.

Travel and Compensation The New England Council will reimburse ASMFC members for travel expenses associated with attending NEFMC meetings.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Community Participation

The Council's mandate is to conserve and manage fisheries for the greatest overall benefit of the nation by relying on scientific information and data, as well as the input and participation of fishing communities and the public. To improve community participation in this process, the Council has established the following:

Definition A fishing community is a social or economic group whose members reside in a specific location and share a common dependency on fishing (commercial, recreational, subsistence), or on fishery-related services and industries, such as boatyards, tackle shops, ice suppliers, etc. Fishing communities include fishing vessels, owners, operators, crew and fish processors that are based in or dependent on those communities.

Effective Participation The Council believes that trust, honesty, competence and credibility are the keys to developing effective community participation.

The Council will make every effort to support and encourage community participation in the Council process.

Whenever possible, the Council will use community expertise to complement available scientific information in the development of its FMPs. Toward that end the Council will:

- Establish and maintain a consistent process.
- Clearly explain its process to all affected parties.
- Clearly define and explain any legal constraints.
- Involve communities from the outset.
- Enlist the help of credible community organizations.
- Seek public input to the extent practicable.
- Consider the interests of all groups equally and fairly.

Council Meeting Agenda

The Council is involved in a public process and therefore makes every effort to keep all affected parties informed about Council activities. To that end, the Council provides as much detail as possible on agendas and is specific when taking action or addressing highly controversial issues.

The *Federal Register* (FR) serves as the Council's notice of record. Meeting notices must be published for oversight committee, Advisory Panel and Council meetings at least 14 days prior to the meeting date. The Council meeting agenda is also sent to the Council's extensive mailing list.

Timing In order to publish the *Federal Register* notice 14 days in advance of meetings, NOAA must receive the Council meeting agenda at least 23 days before the meeting date. NOAA, prior to publishing the FR notice, reviews the document to ensure proper formatting or to address substantive concerns.

Modifying FR Notices The Magnuson-Stevens Act makes reference to the possibility of modifying a Council meeting agenda up to 14 days in advance of the meeting. However, given the length of time it takes to publish a notice, there is no practical way to make a change in the FR notice once it has been submitted, with the possible exception of making a correction within 24 to 48 hours of submission.

Therefore, the 23-day timeframe for *Federal Register* notices is a firm deadline. Changes made this period could delay the meeting notice publication date and jeopardize the Council's ability to comply with the 14-day requirement. Council actions then taken at that particular meeting could be subject to legal challenge.

Agenda Items The Council will not take action, except in an emergency, if that action is not listed on the published agenda.

The Council's Executive Committee is responsible for developing detailed Council meeting agendas. To ensure that issues or recommendations discussed at committee meetings will in turn be addressed at the next scheduled Council meeting, oversight committee chairmen should schedule committee meetings appropriately.

If an oversight committee has recommendations to be considered by the Council at its next meeting, the committee is advised to meet more than 23 days before the scheduled Council meeting. This will enable the staff to develop an agenda that includes the committee action items. If the committee cannot meet this timetable, the committee chairman is advised to discuss the proposed meeting agenda items with Council staff, who will provide advice on the best approach.

Public Testimony

Public comments will be allowed at Council meetings on all agenda items requiring final action and on all agenda items at Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel meetings. Both oral and written comments may be submitted.

The Chairman or presiding officer will schedule public comments at an appropriate time during the meeting that is consistent with the orderly conduct business. During the time allocated for each major Council meeting agenda item, the Council Chairman will seek comments from the public. Generally, this opportunity will occur after the Council has discussed the action items and once motions have been made and are under consideration.

Individuals offering comments must provide their name and affiliation, and identify the subject of the discussion. Council members may ask questions of individuals addressing the Council. Public speakers should be aware that the meeting is recorded and, consistent with 16 USC 1852 of Federal law, copies of the recording are available upon request.

Limits on Comments The Chairman may limit public comment on Council meeting agenda items on which no final action is being taken or defer comments to future oversight committee meetings, public hearings, and/or to the Council meeting at which final action will be taken. Where constrained by available time, the Chairman or the presiding officer may limit public testimony in a reasonable manner by: a) requesting that individuals avoid duplication of prior testimony; b) requiring persons with similar concerns to select a spokesman; and/or; c) setting a time limit on individual comments, which, in general, will be three minutes.

Written Materials Written comments received at the Council office by 5 p.m. four business days before the Council meeting date will be copied and distributed to the Council prior to the meeting. Anyone unable to provide written comments within this timeframe and wishing Council members to have paper copies of the information should provide 35 copies to the Council staff for distribution to members. If distribution to the Council is not essential, submission of a single copy is sufficient for the record, and the material will be electronically distributed to Council members following the meeting.

All written information submitted to the Council must include a statement of the source and date of such information. Any oral or written statement must also include a brief description of the background, affiliation, and interests of the person submitting comments. All written comments received are part of the administrative record and available to the public.

Public Input at Other Meetings At meetings of the Council's oversight committees or other working groups, the extent of public comment taken will be at the discretion of the Chairman or presiding officer.

Open Public Comment Period at Council Meetings

The NEFMC routinely provides an opportunity for the public to provide comments at all regularly scheduled meetings of the full Council. The purpose is to encourage the public to bring issues that are not listed on the published meeting agenda to the Council's attention. A few general guidelines shall apply to the orderly conduct of this meeting element:

1. Any interested party may speak about specific issues that are of interest, but these must, overall, be relevant to Council business.
2. The defined open public comment period is separate from the other items listed on the agenda. It does not in any way replace the comment periods called for by the Council Chairman while agenda topics are considered and voted on.
3. The timeframe for the public comment period should not exceed 30 minutes total. Speakers should be aware that other members of the public may wish to comment. Consequently, individual remarks should not exceed three-to-five minutes.
4. The Council will provide a sign-in sheet prior to the start of the meeting day on which the open public comment period is scheduled. Individuals who know in advance that they would like to comment may contact the Council staff to be included on the sign-up sheet.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Council Member and Other Compensation

Voting Council members who are not state, local or federal employees are entitled to receive compensation at the daily rate for GS-15, step 7 of the General Schedule, while actually engaged in the performance of Council duties including travel as assigned by the Council Chairman.

Compensation is paid on a full day basis. The time is compensatory because the individual member is required to expend a significant amount of personal effort that substantially disrupts his/her daily routine to the extent that a work day is lost to the member. Members will not receive compensation unless present at a meeting for at least ½ day. Homework time in preparation for formal Council meetings is not compensatory.

Authorization The Executive Director has extended blanket authority to compensate Council members for attendance at regular meetings of the Council and its oversight committees, as well as meetings of the Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Compensation will not be paid for attendance at regular committee meetings if a member is not assigned to that specific committee, nor will compensation be paid to members attending public hearings.

Compensation is authorized if an eligible Council member chairs a public hearing, and when a committee chairman attends an authorized PDT or Advisory Panel meeting. Compensation is also authorized for the designated liaison to Mid-Atlantic Council to attend Mid-Atlantic Council and committee meetings.

Eligible Council members may be authorized for compensation for other activities such as working group sessions of species oversight and other regular committees of the Council, ad hoc committee meetings, and participation in meetings or Council-related work when members are assigned by the Council Chairman to such activities.

Consultants Compensation for experts and consultants retained by the Council shall be paid at the same rate as Council members unless a different rate is specifically negotiated. The Council Chairman must authorize the use of experts or consultants. Approval authority in this category may be delegated to the Executive Director at the Chairman's discretion. Requests for authorization of compensation for outside experts may be submitted directly to the Chairman or through the Executive Director.

Limitations Any requests for compensation for activities that were not properly authorized in advance will be referred to the Executive Committee for consideration before the Chairman makes a decision regarding payments.

Council members are paid under a contractual arrangement; therefore, social security and federal and state income taxes are not withheld from the payment of compensation for services.

Certification Authorization for compensation will be indicated on the Travel Authorization issued for each meeting by placing an asterisk after the name of each person who is entitled to be compensated. To be eligible for compensation, authorized members must sign an attendance sheet which is provided at each meeting. To be paid, members must submit a *Travel Reimbursement Voucher* which covers claims for both travel and compensation.

Travel Authorization and Reimbursement

All voting and non-voting members of the Council, members of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Council staff, experts and consultants retained by the Council, and members of the Council's Advisory Panels (APs) and Plan Development Teams (PDTs) are eligible to be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred while engaged in authorized Council business. Employees of the federal government are not eligible for travel reimbursement.

Authorization Prior authorization is necessary to establish eligibility for reimbursement. Either the Council Chairman or the Executive Director may authorize travel and reimbursement for expenses incurred. A numbered *Travel Authorization* (TA) form will be prepared by the Council staff and mailed to all authorized individuals prior to each Council meeting, oversight committee meeting, SSC, PDT or Advisory Panel meeting or other approved activity. The authorization will indicate those persons entitled to receive reimbursement. TA's will be routinely issued for the various types of meetings indicated below:

- **Council Meetings:** Voting and non-voting members designated Council staff. SSC and PDT members and the Chairman of an Advisory Panel will be authorized as needed.
- **Oversight or Other Regular Committee Meetings:** The Council Chairman, committee members, designated Council staff, and the advisory panel chairman. PDT members may be authorized to receive reimbursement for travel expenses for a specific committee meeting, as needed.
- **Mid-Atlantic Council Meetings:** The designated liaison to the Mid-Atlantic Council or other Council members designated by the Council Chairman.
- **Advisory Panel Meetings:** Advisory Panel members, designated Council staff and the oversight committee chairman, if necessary.
- **SSC Meetings:** SSC members, Council members and Council Chairman, and Council staff.
- **Plan Development Team Meetings:** PDT members, the oversight committee chairman and Council staff will be authorized to attend PDT meetings.
- **Additional persons may be authorized reimbursement for expenses.**

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- **Expert members of working groups** that are established with the approval of the Council Chairman may be authorized travel and reimbursement for specific Council, oversight committee or working group meetings.
 - **Consultants** who are authorized for travel and reimbursement by the Council Chairman or the Executive Director. Requests for consultant services should be made to either of them.
 - **Public hearing attendees** such as a Council member who chairs a public hearing and the Council staff member assigned to attend the hearing will be authorized for travel reimbursement for attending the hearing(s).
 - **Other travel** which may include seminars, conferences or other meetings if prior authorization by the Chairman or Executive Director is granted.

All Council, committee and working group meetings are open to the public, but only individuals identified on the *Travel Authorization* form will be reimbursed for travel expenses.

General Limitations Unless otherwise authorized, travel will be reimbursed based on the traveler's primary residence or primary place of employment. Reimbursements are limited to amounts reasonably necessary for the conduct of travel in connection with Council business. Travel must be undertaken using the least expensive means of transportation practicable and appropriate to the nature and purpose of the travel. If an individual elects to use a more expensive mode of transportation, reimbursement will be limited to the least expensive transportation available, and the traveler will be responsible for the difference.

If unsure about the lowest cost to travel to a meeting, contact the Council Office for a determination prior to traveling.

From time to time, the Council may issue detailed Travel Policy clarifications and additional guidance which will be provided to authorized travelers and included on all Travel Reimbursement Voucher forms as tab 2. Council travelers are required to follow any Travel Policy clarifications and guidelines so issued.

Airlines may charge a fee for travelers with additional bags or bags over a specified weight or size. The traveler must pay these charges. Reimbursement can be claimed on the travel voucher if the bag is mission-essential, medically necessary, or essential for an extended length of stay. Claims for excess baggage reimbursement must include documentation of the charges.

The Chairman or the Executive Director will determine applicable limitations in approving each Travel Authorization, although reimbursement will be guided by the allowances provided by the current version of the General Services Administration (GSA) in the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR). These rates are published by the GSA and can be viewed at <http://www.gsa.gov>. Because of frequent changes, the rates are no longer included in the Council's Operations Handbook, but will be noted on the Travel Authorization forms distributed prior to each meeting.

Generally, this amount will be the cost of lodging, which cannot exceed 150% of the maximum amount allowed by the federal government for the area, plus a maximum amount per day for meals.

Reimbursement for meals while on travel to cities outside the contiguous states, including Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Canada, will be at the federal level authorized for each of these areas.

Air Travel Air travel reimbursement is limited to the lowest rate that is appropriate for the specific travel. To obtain the lowest possible fare, individuals traveling under Council authorization are encouraged to allow the Council staff to make their air travel reservations and purchase the tickets. Individuals making their own travel reservations will be reimbursed for only the rate that could have been obtained through the staff.

Foreign Travel The Council Chairman or Executive Director approves all travel. All foreign travel must comply with the Fly America Act.

Identification Proper identification is the responsibility of the individual. The Council does not pay for passports or other forms of identification. A passport is considered the best document for identification. Individuals traveling to Mexico or Canada are encouraged to obtain a passport. Effective 10/1/2020, all travel within the United States will require identification that is [REAL ID compliant](#). All travel outside the United States will require a passport. Passport applications or renewal forms can be obtained online at <http://travel.state.gov/passport/>.

Expenses in a 50-mile radius Lodging expenses are not authorized within a 50-mile radius unless official business requires the individual be available before 6 a.m. or after 8 p.m.

Voucher Preparation To receive payment, authorized individuals must prepare and submit a *Travel Reimbursement Voucher*. This form is used to verify meeting attendance, request reimbursement for expenses incurred while attending an authorized meeting and for eligible members to claim compensation. The Travel Authorization number for each meeting must be noted on the *Travel Reimbursement Voucher*. A separate voucher must be submitted for each Travel Authorization.

Hotel receipts are required in all cases where lodging is claimed. Actual hotel costs are reimbursable within the limits of the total level of actual expense reimbursement set by federal travel regulations. Although receipts for meals, taxis, tolls, parking and other similar expenses are not required, such costs must be itemized. Claims for alcoholic beverage or entertainment expenses are not allowed and will not be reimbursed.

Actual cost of transportation by public carrier or mileage for use of personal autos are also reimbursable, as are road tolls and parking fees. Airline, rail, bus or auto rental receipts must be submitted.

Telephone calls directly related to Council business are also reimbursable. Those included on hotel bills should be noted as business related. Claims for reimbursement for Council-related telephone calls placed from home phones must be supported by a copy of the bill.

Non-refundable Expenses The Council is not responsible for charges resulting from the traveler's failure to cancel a confirmed reservation. Those costs are the responsibility of the individual.

Certification All claims for reimbursement of travel expenses must be signed by the traveler and submitted to the Council office. Faxed copies of the claims are acceptable. Vouchers also are accepted via email. Receipts also can be emailed, faxed, or mailed to the office.

A voucher must be submitted within six weeks of the meeting date it covers. Forms received after the cut-off date will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and payment may be held until the end of the fiscal year. Vouchers will be handled promptly. Reimbursement checks will generally be mailed within ten working days from the date received at the Council Office.

All claims are subject to review by the Executive Director for reasonableness. no claims will be approved that are not in accordance with the limitations noted on the Travel Authorization. Any claims considered excessive will be referred to the Executive Committee for disposition.

OTHER COUNCIL POLICIES

Habitat Policy

Recognizing that all species are dependent on the quantity and quality of their habitat, it is the policy of the New England Fishery Management Council to promote and encourage the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of the habitat upon which living marine resources depend.

Objectives This policy shall be supported by four policy objectives:

- 1) **Maintain and enhance the current quantity and quality of habitats supporting harvested species, including their prey base.**
- 2) **Restore and rehabilitate fish habitats which have already been degraded.**
- 3) **Create and develop fish habitats where increased availability of fishery resources will benefit society.**
- 4) **Modify fishing methods and create incentives to reduce the impacts on habitat associated with fishing.**

These objectives are based on ensuring the sustainability of harvested species and optimizing the societal benefits of our marine resources. The Council shall assume an active role in the protection and enhancement of habitats important to marine and anadromous fish.

Offshore Energy Development Policies

On June 14, 2018, the New England Fishery Management Council adopted the following policies related to offshore energy development, as recommended by the Council's Habitat Committee. These policies were originally developed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Council Policy on Wind Energy

Policy Goal: *The Council supports policies for US energy development including wind energy development and operations that will sustain the health of marine ecosystems and fisheries resources while minimizing the risks to the marine environment and fisheries.*

1. Best management practices¹ should be employed throughout all phases of offshore wind development and operations to avoid adverse impacts on fish habitat and to prevent conflicts with other user groups, including recreational and commercial fisheries.
2. Developers should engage early with the fishing industry and Federal and state agencies.
3. Transmission cables should not be placed in areas with sensitive fish habitat such as shellfish beds, fish spawning and/or nursery habitat areas, submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), or hard/structured habitat.
4. The best available technology should be utilized for transmission cable installation to reduce potential impacts on aquatic ecosystems. This may include horizontal directional drilling to avoid impacts to sensitive fish habitat.
5. Transmission cables should be buried to an adequate depth to reduce conflicts with other ocean uses, including fishing operations. Cables should be monitored after installation to ensure bathymetry is restored, and after large storm/meteorological events to ensure cables remain buried.
6. Project proposals should evaluate the expected impacts from scour and sedimentation beyond the footprint of the wind facilities. These should consider changes in currents. These scour impacts should be minimized to the extent possible.
7. Wind service platforms should implement adequate fuel spill response plans and protocols² for support vessels and platforms, and these plans should:
 - a. Include the identification of sensitive marine habitat;
 - b. Include methods to track the movement of spills;
 - c. Ensure adequate response equipment is immediately available; and

¹ Additional information on best management practices can be found in: MAFMC, 2014. Proceedings from a workshop on Offshore Wind Best Management Practices. 16 p. Available from: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901, or online at <http://www.mafmc.org>

² Consistent with the US Coast Guard, US Environmental Protection Agency, Occupational Safety & Health Administration/HAZMAT, and other state or Federal requirements.

- d. Allow researchers to have timely access to impacted areas, as needed.
8. Research and monitoring should be conducted to better understand the impacts of persistent electromagnetic fields around transmission cables on aquatic species.
9. Noise generated by wind facilities should be minimized, including sounds produced during surveys (e.g., survey vessels), construction (e.g., pile driving, hammers), and operations (e.g., spinning turbines). Research and monitoring should be initiated to evaluate the short- and long-term impacts of wind facility noise on the environment/ecosystem.
10. Safety and navigation threats (e.g., radar disruption, vessel collisions, and security threats) should be routinely monitored in areas where fishing operations are permitted near wind facilities. Safety issues should be efficiently identified and addressed using best management practices.³
11. The Council supports the development of a compensatory mitigation fund for damages that occur to the marine environment and fish habitat as well as damages to fishing vessels, their gear, and operations/revenues, as a result of wind activities.

Council Policy on Offshore Oil

Policy Goals: *The Council supports policies for US energy development that will sustain the health of marine ecosystems and fishery resources while minimizing the risks to the marine environment and fisheries.*

1. The Council is committed to the effective stewardship of the marine fisheries and associated habitats in the New England region. The environmental risks associated with offshore oil development and operations are not consistent with the Council's vision for healthy and productive marine ecosystems supporting thriving, sustainable marine fisheries.
2. Renewable energy, if implemented in a manner which minimizes impacts on fish habitat and fisheries, may be more consistent with the Council's vision for sustainable fisheries.

If offshore oil development moves forward:

3. Best management practices should be implemented throughout offshore oil development and operations to avoid adverse impacts on fish habitat and conflicts with other user groups, including recreational and commercial fisheries.
4. Coordination should occur across regions to avoid conflicts between Highly Migratory Species fishing tournaments and oil development surveys (e.g., seismic testing).
5. Nearshore/onshore facilities associated with exploration and production (e.g., pipelines, access roads and bridges, and other structures) should not be constructed through areas with sensitive fish habitat such as shellfish beds, fish spawning and/or nursery habitat areas, submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), or hard/structured habitat.

³ Ecology and Environment, Inc. 2014. Development of Mitigation Measures to Address Potential Use Conflicts between Commercial Wind Energy Lessees/Grantees and Commercial Fishermen on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf Report on Best Management Practices and Mitigation Measures. A final report for the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Office of Renewal Energy Programs, Herndon, VA. OCS Study BOEM 2014 - 654. 98 pp. Available at: <http://www.boem.gov/OCS-Study-BOEM-2014-654/>.

6. The need for additional dredging should be reduced by expanding or repurposing sites with existing deep water facilities, such as existing oil facilities and other industrial sites or ports.
7. Handling of oil during transportation should not occur in sensitive fish habitat.
8. Offshore oil development should not occur in sensitive habitats already prohibited to fishing, including discrete and broad areas on the Outer Continental Shelf identified by both the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils for deep sea coral protection.
9. The Council encourages the use of the best commercially available technology, including horizontal directional drilling, to avoid potential impacts to sensitive habitat.
10. Monitoring and leak detection systems should be used at oil extraction, production, and transportation facilities to prevent oil from entering the environment.
11. The disposal of chemicals/contaminants used in petroleum development should be rigorously regulated. The discharge of chemicals, produced waters, drilling muds, and cuttings into marine and estuarine environments should be avoided. Frac-out plans should be developed, and produced waters should be reinjected into the oil formation, whenever possible. The physical and chemical effects of discharges on pelagic and benthic species and communities should be carefully monitored.
12. Potential adverse impacts to marine resources from oil spill clean-up operations should be weighed against the anticipated adverse effects of the oil spill itself. The use of chemical dispersants in nearshore areas where sensitive fish habitat is present should be avoided.
13. Oil production and transportation facilities should develop and implement adequate oil spill response plans and protocols⁴. These plans should:
 - a. Include the identification of sensitive marine habitat;
 - b. Include methods to track the movement of spills;
 - c. Ensure adequate response equipment is immediately available; and
 - d. Allow researchers to have timely access to impacted areas, as needed.
14. Short- and long-term impacts from sound during exploration, construction, and operation on the environment/ecosystem (including marine mammals, sea turtles, fish populations, and associated fisheries) should be evaluated and minimized using time and area restrictions.

The Council supports the development of a compensatory mitigation fund for damages that occur to the marine environment and fish habitat as well as damages to fishing vessels, their gear, and operations/revenue, as a result of offshore oil activities.

⁴ Consistent with the US Coast Guard, US Environmental Protection Agency, Occupational Safety & Health Administration/HAZMAT, and other state or Federal requirements.

Aquaculture Policy

INTRODUCTION

NOAA Fisheries defines aquaculture as the breeding, rearing, and harvesting of fish, shellfish, algae, and other organisms in all types of water environments. Aquaculture activities occur in onshore, nearshore, and offshore environments. Construction and operation of aquaculture facilities can have both positive and negative impacts on marine habitats, species, and fisheries. Various state and federal agencies are involved in permitting aquaculture projects. Potential impacts are considered during the siting and environmental review process, and in many cases can be mitigated via project siting or design choices. NEFMC's Aquaculture Background Document provides more information on current and future aquaculture activities in the New England region, the process for permitting aquaculture projects, and the potential impacts of aquaculture on marine fishery species and their habitats.

The NEFMC's Habitat Policy ([Operations Handbook](#)) recognizes that all species are dependent on the quantity and quality of their habitat, and therefore establishes that the NEFMC shall assume an active role in the protection of such habitats. As required under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) implementing regulations (CFR Part 600 Subpart J), the NEFMC designates essential fish habitat for each of the species it manages, and for some species and in some locations, identifies habitat areas of particular concern. Part 600 Subpart K of the MSA regulations detail NOAA Fisheries and Regional Fishery Management Council responsibilities to consult with federal agencies when their activities may affect essential fish habitats. Beyond habitat considerations, as a steward of the species it manages, the NEFMC has an interest in ensuring that these species are not negatively affected by non-fishing activities occurring in the marine environment. The NEFMC also has an interest in promoting safe operation of commercial and recreational fisheries for these species. To this end, the Council provides input and guidance on the conduct of other marine activities in a way that promotes compatibility with fishing.

Given the NEFMC's regulatory responsibilities, interests, and expertise, the Council is committed to consulting with NOAA Fisheries, other federal and state agencies, and aquaculture developers to ensure that aquaculture activities in New England are developed in a manner that is compatible with the protection of Council-managed species and their habitats, and with commercial and recreational fishing activities. This includes but is not limited to providing input on project siting or design, based on the following list of considerations and best management practices. Consultation should take an "early and often" approach, whenever possible, to communicate concerns during the design phase, thus increasing opportunities for modification, rather than mitigation, of impacts. Given that Council-managed species and their EFH occur both nearshore and offshore, projects in various locations and of both smaller and larger scales

are of interest to the Council. Because individual aquaculture operations do not occur in isolation from one another, or from other types of development, it is very important to consider the potential for cumulative effects to species under management, habitats, and fisheries when siting and designing projects. Cumulative effects analyses are the responsibility of the lead federal agency preparing the National Environmental Policy Act document, but the Council will commit to raising specific concerns for possible incorporation into those analyses. The Council recognizes that, like wild capture fisheries, aquaculture contributes to food production and food security, and that aquaculture is a valid and valuable use of the coastal zone and the EEZ.

The primary audience for this policy is the Council itself, as it engages in these consultations. Secondary audiences include NOAA Fisheries, other federal agencies (including those responsible for enforcing permit conditions), state agencies, fishermen, aquaculture developers, and other members of the public.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AND BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The remainder of this policy is organized around general, higher-level principles for project design, followed by specific considerations and best management practices. The general principles encompass the Council's major areas of concern. The lists of specific considerations are not exhaustive but provide examples of best practices. Generally, projects should comply with local, state, and federal permitting guidelines, and adhere to existing best management practices relevant to the type of operation being considered (see background document for a list of BMP resources). Where BMPs cannot be met, proponents should provide a rationale as to why in the application materials.

1. General principle: Aquaculture projects should be sited and designed in the context of ecosystem functions and services, including biodiversity, with no degradation of these beyond their resilience.
 - a. Siting should consider the intersection between aquaculture facilities and designated essential fish habitat and habitat areas of particular concern and avoid installations in areas where adverse effects are more than minimal or more than temporary. Developers and action agencies should document how conclusions regarding magnitude and duration of impacts were reached.
 - b. Siting should consider interactions with fishery management areas including those designated for habitat and spawning protection and consider whether installation compromises achievement of these conservation objectives, with a particular focus on maintaining function of rocky habitats.
 - c. Siting should consider oceanographic conditions such as currents, waves, and the potential for severe weather. For projects producing effluents, modeling should be conducted to ensure adequate dispersal of wastes. In addition, structures should be designed to withstand routine and historic weather events to minimize the risk

of escapement of cultured animals and formation of marine debris from storm related damage.

- d. Siting should avoid marsh and seagrass habitats to minimize adverse effects on these habitats. Allow for a buffer between these habitats and any infrastructure where possible, as recommended by state and federal resource managers. If sensitive habitats such as seagrasses cannot be avoided, consider whether an alternative type of gear could be used to minimize effects. Specific to seagrasses, since these habitats are reduced relative to their historic distribution but recovering in some locations due to water quality improvements, siting should ideally avoid locations where these habitats historically occurred. Current site conditions should be confirmed via on-site inspection. State resource managers can provide information about past habitat distributions. Because resource managers are interested in the restoration of habitat value associated with seagrass, operators should communicate if they notice that seagrasses are regrowing at the site, so that operational impacts to seagrasses can be minimized.
 - e. Siting should avoid habitat types and other resources including existing shellfish beds that could be sensitive to the discharge of organic material or effluent from aquaculture operations. Even if facilities are installed in the water column, discharges could affect both the water column and seabed near or below the facility.
 - f. Siting should avoid areas where coral and sponge habitats occur, including within the Council's coral protection zones. Anchoring of vessels and grow out structures, as well as deposition of organic material, could negatively impact deep-sea corals and sponges, which are in many cases long-lived and fragile. These habitats are spatially rare and therefore possible to avoid. NOAA Fisheries can serve as a resource in terms of identifying coral habitats.
 - g. In addition to relying on existing data, site surveys may be required to determine exactly where specific habitats occur.
2. General principle: Adopt operational practices that minimize adverse environmental effects wherever possible.
- a. All proposed gear and structures should be designed and secured in a manner sufficient to withstand routine and episodic site conditions in order to reduce the risk of creating marine debris or other hazards that could result in negative interactions with sensitive habitats, vessels, and/or marine species.
 - b. If the addition of unconsolidated materials or fill (e.g. sediments, cultch) is proposed, ensure they are compatible with those naturally occurring at the site.
 - c. Minimize indirect impacts (i.e. increased turbidity and siltation in adjacent areas, access through sensitive areas, etc.) associated with maintenance and harvest

- activities.
- d. Gear maintenance and husbandry practices should be conducted in a manner that minimizes the potential for culled and fouling organisms to negatively impact sediment and water quality or exacerbate the spread of invasive species.
 - e. Disease testing and other practices should be adopted to minimize the risk of the introduction or spread of shellfish or fish diseases or parasites that could negatively impact wild populations.
 - f. Whenever possible, use only native or naturalized species unless the best available science demonstrates that the use of non-native or other species would not cause undue harm to wild species, habitats, or ecosystems, in the event of an escape.
 - g. Emergency response plans should be developed to minimize the likelihood of escapement in the event of gear damage.
 - h. Gear and any in-water structures should be removed completely if a facility is taken out of service.
3. General principle: Development should consider the cumulative effects of multiple aquaculture facilities on the ecosystem, within the context of ecosystem change and resilience.
 - a. Resilience refers to both the aquaculture operation itself and the associated ecosystem perturbations.
 - b. Consider whether there is a synergistic relationship with other ocean uses.
 4. General principle: Aquaculture operators should contribute positively to local and regional coastal communities. This could include actions such as:
 - a. Creating jobs in coastal communities.
 - b. Supporting traditional fishing communities.
 - c. Revitalizing working waterfronts.
 - d. Restoring depleted species and habitats.
 - e. Supporting efforts to reduce runoff and improve coastal water quality at both local and regional scales.
 5. General principle: Aquaculture should be developed in the context of other sectors, policies, and goals.
 - a. Planning and zoning should consider safety and compatibility with other marine operations.
 - b. Siting and project design should consider coastal access for other users of the area.
 - c. Aquaculture siting should rely on high-quality information about both regional and local environmental conditions and the distribution and characteristics of other human uses in the area.

- d. Facilities should be sited to avoid well-known vessel transit lanes, including those used by fishermen.
 - e. Facilities should be sited to avoid fishing grounds if adverse interactions are expected, considering such factors as the number of individuals participating in commercial or recreational fishing, the type of fishing gear used, the number of fishing days, and the amount of harvest. Developers should consider multiple years of fishery usage data to determine overlaps, as fishing activities can vary over time.
 - f. Facilities should be physically marked to be visible from a vessel approaching the site, in accordance with state and U.S. Coast Guard guidelines. Facilities should also be marked on electronic navigational charts as appropriate.
 - g. Pilot or demonstration-scale projects are encouraged to better evaluate impacts of novel types of operations (e.g. species not previously cultured in the region, or in locations not previously used for aquaculture).
 - h. Analysis of projects under the National Environmental Policy Act should address Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. This order provides guidelines to ensure that potential impacts on these populations are identified and mitigated, and that these populations can participate effectively in the NEPA process (EO 12898 1994).
6. General principle: Clear and ongoing communication between all parties is important. These parties include fishery management councils, commercial and recreational fishermen, developers, regulating and consulting agencies, and members of the public.
- a. Information about the project should be provided to the public (including the Council and its stakeholders) during the project design phase to allow for early input and mitigation of impacts to fish habitats and fisheries.
 - b. Aquaculture developers should consult with the fishing community, early and often, when identifying potential sites. Organizations like the NEFMC, NOAA Fisheries, ASMFC, or state agencies may be able to provide information on spatial distribution of fishing activity at broad scales, but local fishing organizations will be important contacts when determining use patterns at spatial scales relevant to aquaculture projects.
 - c. Permitting agencies should consider the need for public scoping sessions during the siting process to understand the concerns that stakeholders may have.
 - d. Permitting agencies and developers should describe how project design choices avoid or mitigate impacts on fish, fish habitats, and fisheries.
 - e. Developers should provide advisories about at-sea construction, survey, and maintenance operations to mariners.

Submarine Cables Policy

INTRODUCTION

Submarine cables carry both electricity and data. These cables extend from the coastline into the Exclusive Economic Zone, sometimes crossing entire ocean basins. Placement and operation of cables can have negative impacts on marine habitats, species, and fisheries. Various state and federal agencies are involved in permitting cable projects. Potential impacts are considered during the siting and environmental review process, and in many cases can be mitigated via project design choices. The New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) Submarine Cables Background Document provides more information on cable configuration and installation, past, current, and future cable projects in the New England region, the process for permitting, and the potential impacts of installation and operation on marine fishery species and their habitats. This policy pertains to cables installed in or on the seabed, and not to cables in the water column, i.e. those that might be suspended from floating offshore wind platforms.

The NEFMC's Habitat Policy ([Operations Handbook](#)) recognizes that all species are dependent on the quantity and quality of their habitat, and therefore establishes that the NEFMC shall assume an active role in the protection of such habitats. As required under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) implementing regulations (CFR Part 600 Subpart J), the NEFMC designates essential fish habitat for each of the species it manages, and for some species and in some locations, identifies habitat areas of particular concern. Part 600 Subpart K of the MSA regulations detail NOAA Fisheries and Regional Fishery Management Council responsibilities to consult with federal agencies when their activities may affect essential fish habitats. Beyond habitat considerations, as a steward of the species and fisheries it manages, the NEFMC has an interest in ensuring that these species are not negatively affected by non-fishing activities occurring in the marine environment. The NEFMC also has an interest in promoting safe operation of commercial and recreational fisheries for these species. To this end, the Council provides input and guidance on the conduct of other marine activities in a way that promotes compatibility with sustainable fishing and fishing communities.

Given the NEFMC's regulatory responsibilities, interests, and expertise, the Council is committed to consulting with federal and state agencies to ensure that cable projects in New England are developed in a manner that is compatible with the protection of Council-managed species and their habitats, and with commercial and recreational fishing activities. This includes but is not limited to providing input on cable project siting, design, and execution, based on the following list of principles and best management practices. Consultation should take an "early and often" approach, whenever possible, to communicate concerns during the design phase, thus increasing opportunities for reduction, rather than mitigation, of impacts. Given that Council-managed species and their EFH occur both nearshore and offshore, projects in various locations are of

interest to the Council. Because individual cables do not occur in isolation from one another, or from other types of development, it is very important to consider the potential for cumulative effects to species under management, habitats, and fisheries when siting and designing projects. Cumulative effects analyses are the responsibility of the lead federal agency preparing the National Environmental Policy Act document, but the Council will commit to raising specific concerns for possible incorporation into those analyses.

The primary audience for this policy is the Council itself, as it engages in these consultations. Secondary audiences include NOAA Fisheries, other federal agencies, state agencies, fishermen, project developers, and other members of the public.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AND BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The remainder of this policy is organized around general, higher-level principles for project design and communication, followed by specific considerations and best management practices. The general principles encompass the Council's major areas of concern. The lists of specific considerations are not exhaustive but provide examples of best practices. The Council recognizes that some of these recommendations are required as state and federal permit conditions.

1. General principle: The environmental characteristics of the cable corridor should be evaluated during the design phase of a cable project. To the extent possible, cable routes should avoid sensitive and important fish habitats to minimize effects on those habitats.
 - a. Route selection should consider the intersection between cable corridors and designated essential fish habitat and habitat areas of particular concern and avoid installations in areas where impacts are more than minimal or more than temporary. Developers and action agencies should document how conclusions regarding magnitude and duration of impacts were reached.
 - b. Route selection should consider interactions with fishery management areas including those designated for habitat and spawning protection and consider whether installation compromises achievement of these conservation objectives, with a particular focus on maintaining function of rocky habitats.
 - c. Sensitive habitats to be avoided include marsh, seagrass, hard substrates, and coral and sponge habitats. Surveys may be required to determine exactly where these habitats occur. Many deep-sea coral species are fragile, long-lived, and slow-growing, such that recovery from impacts will be very slow.
 - d. Where avoidance is not possible, impacts to sensitive habitats should be mitigated.
 - e. Route selection should avoid areas with contaminated sediments to minimize the release of these contaminants into the water.
 - f. A cable burial route assessment is recommended for each installation (see principle 2 specific to burial vs. surface lay, below).

2. General principle: Cable burial is preferable to laying cable on the seabed. Sufficient depth of burial, as determined by a cable burial risk assessment, is important to minimize the risk of exposure as well as fishing gear interactions and emergency, accidental or intentional anchoring. If cables must be laid on the seabed due to unavoidable intersection of the route with hard bottom or existing cables, ensure that sufficient and appropriate cable protection materials are used.
 - a. If a route crosses an existing, inactive cable, seek removal of a section of the inactive cable whenever possible so that the new cable can be buried to appropriate depths.
 - b. Cable protection materials should be selected based on their habitat value, mimicking adjacent habitats when feasible. For example, using natural rounded stone in gravel habitats, or sandbags in sand habitats. Material selection should also consider effectiveness in reducing the potential for interactions with fishing gear, consulting with mobile gear fishermen to assess suitability of specific materials. The Council recognizes that other materials may have advantages such as a smaller footprint, or the ability to be moved as a unit and repositioned.
 - c. The Council can share information and expertise on the depths to which fishing occurs in the region, and the locations of long-term fishery closures. Together these can inform decisions about whether burial or surface lay are most appropriate in a particular location and depth.
 - d. In water depths where burial is not needed to avoid fishing gear interactions, avoid surface lays through deep-sea coral and sponge habitats and other sensitive ecosystems.
 - e. In some locations with complex topography where the cable cannot lay flat on the seafloor free spans may occur. These could cause incision of rocks and removal of attached organisms, thereby degrading deep-sea habitats. The Council recommends routing the cable in a way that precludes free spans.
3. General principle: To the greatest extent possible, cable routes should avoid areas where mobile bottom tending fishing gears are heavily used to reduce any chances of interactions between cables or cable protection materials and fishing gear.
4. General principle: Once a route is identified that will minimally intersect with sensitive habitats, use installation techniques that reduce environmental and fisheries impacts.
 - a. At the land/water interface, consider horizontal directional drilling instead of trenching when possible to avoid disturbing the seabed surface. Ensure that the substrate is compatible with directional drilling in areas where these techniques are planned, so that the drill does not need to surface during installation.
 - b. Avoid installation work during times of year when noise or physical disturbance

- could have a particular impact on marine species and habitats, for example during periods of spawning activity, egg deposition, or juvenile settlement to the seabed.
- c. Most fisheries demonstrate spatial and temporal variation in the level of activities, in part due to seasonal movements of target species. Avoid installation during times of year when fishing activity might be displaced.
 - d. Consider via suspended sediment modeling or other analyses the potential for release of sediments and how this relates to the timing of construction and the presence of sensitive life stages. Monitoring and stop work thresholds may be appropriate to mitigate effects.
5. General principle: Cable routes should be coordinated, where possible, to minimize the total footprint of cables in the marine environment. This could include installing multiple cables adjacent to one another within the same corridor.
 6. General principle: Cable projects should be designed to minimize operational impacts including heat and electromagnetic fields which can affect marine species.
 - a. Electrical transmission cables should be configured to reduce magnetic fields.
 - b. The selection of a target burial depth should consider the implications of this choice on expected temperature increases in the surrounding seabed, including on the seabed surface, which will be related to sediment characteristics and other factors.
 7. General principle: Cable corridors should be monitored at intervals following installation, both to assess the condition of seafloor habitats relative to pre-installation conditions, and to ensure that the cable installation remains intact. The Council recognizes that many aspects of cable monitoring are done continuously and remotely.
 - a. Conduct post-installation monitoring of the corridor, particularly in areas where cable corridors intersect with sensitive habitats.
 - b. Monitoring should occur at intervals to assess changes to the environment around the cable over time.
 - c. Monitoring should be sufficient for evaluating biological and habitat effects.
 - d. Monitoring should identify whether conditions after installation may be preventing the recovery of benthic habitats.
 - e. Monitoring should measure electric fields, magnetic fields, and temperature along the cable, and compare to estimated values.
 - f. Monitoring should occur more frequently in years following installation, while monitoring intervals may be extended further out from installation.
 - g. It is important to check for integrity of the system (continued cable burial, movement of cable protection materials such as mattresses) following major storm events.

- h. Monitoring data should be made available to the public whenever possible, to facilitate mitigation and adaptive management.
 - i. If issues arise (e.g. a cable becomes unburied, or negative environmental effects are occurring), cable owners should mitigate the issue as quickly as possible.
- 8. General principle: Decommissioning should be planned for as much as possible before installation and should consider whether removal or decommissioning in place is likely to result in fewer negative environmental effects.
 - a. Prior to installation, developers should plan for and document sufficient funding to remove the cable after the project is finished. Lack of adequate funding to remove the cable is not sufficient justification to avoid cable removal.
 - b. In some cases, the impacts of cable removal will be greater than leaving it in place. Some discussion of whether removal is preferred, or if it is better to leave cables in place, depending on the conditions, should occur during installation, and additional evaluation should occur as the cable nears the end of its serviceable life.
 - c. Survey the corridor prior to removal; conditions may indicate that removal or decommissioning in situ will have fewer impacts or may indicate that removal during a certain season will have fewer effects.
- 9. General principle: Clear and ongoing communication between all parties (Council, developer, regulating and consulting agencies, public) should be emphasized to minimize environmental and human impacts of the project.
 - a. Provide information about the project to the public (including the Council and its stakeholders) during the project design phase to allow for early input and mitigation of impacts to fish habitats and fisheries.
 - b. Describe how project design choices avoid or mitigate impacts on fish, fish habitats, and fisheries.
 - c. Develop and implement a plan to minimize the loss of fishing gear during surveys and installation.
 - d. Provide advisories about at-sea construction, survey, and maintenance operations to mariners to improve safety and reduce space use conflicts.
 - e. Advertise and chart locations of cables, including locations where mattresses or other cable protection materials were used, to help mariners including fishermen avoid interactions with cables.

Sector Policy

Definition of “Sector” A sector means a group of persons holding limited access vessel permits in the fishery management plan through which the sector is being formed, who have voluntarily entered into a contract and agree to certain fishing restrictions for a specified period of time, and which has been granted a TAC(s) in order to achieve objectives consistent with applicable FMP goals and objectives.

Formation of Sectors Each FMP may adopt a sector program through a plan amendment to enable limited access permit holders in the respective fishery to form sectors. In developing a sector program, the responsible species committees should adhere to the policy described in this document. Each committee should also review the Multispecies FMP sector program provisions as a basis for such a program, making modifications as needed to suit the specific fisheries.

In developing a sector program, each species committee should state the objectives of such programs specific to the FMP, and such objectives will be the context for the periodic evaluation of specific sector programs.

Each FMP must identify a single, fixed and permanent baseline for the purpose of sector allocation, but the Council recognizes that there may be reasons for exceptions. In such a situation, the respective species committee should provide the Council with the rationale for adopting multiple, movable, or temporary baselines.

Individual species committees should address the question of sector size limitations in the development of their own sector programs but each FMP, with the exception of red crab, should define a minimum sector size by specifying a minimum number of participants, expressed as a number of individuals or percent of permits, in order to ensure accountability among sector members, and not complicate administration or enforcement.

Individual species committees should address the geographic limitations on sectors in development of their sector programs.

Species committees should state which management measures within their respective FMPs could be eligible for exemption under sector programs, and such blanket exemptions would be subject to Council approval in the adoption of the FMP sector program.

Allocation Individual species committees, in considering sector proposals, must consider bycatch in other fisheries, effort displacement and the impact on common pool (non-sector) vessels and any other relevant factors when allocating TAC.

Sectors will adopt Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Accountability Measures (AMs) for species managed under the Sector’s FMP(s) and sector shares will be allocated as a percentage of

the ACL of the applicable FMP. Species committees should consider stock condition in determining allocation eligibility in a manner consistent with the applicable FMP. Sectors will adopt measures consistent with ACLs and AMS for each FMP for incidentally caught species.

Discards will not count toward a sector's allocation but discards will count against a sector's shares, unless a sector can provide other accountability for the discards and obtain an exemption. In other words, the calculation of a sector allocation, as a percentage of the total landings, would be based on historic landings only (not discards), but when the TAC is calculated each year, and a sector's catch is monitored against the TAC, both landings and discards will be counted.

Mortality Controls Any allocation of TAC applied to a sector, when reached, would result in the sector fishery closing. Based on provisions in Multispecies Amendment 13 regarding overages by sector and non-sector vessels: if the sector does not exceed its assigned share or percentage in a given fishing year, but other sectors or the common pool do, the sector's allocation will not be reduced; if the sector exceeds its annual allocation but others do not, then the sector share will be reduced in the following year, and if all sector and open pool vessels stay within their shares, but the resource condition requires a reduction in catch, then all groups will take reductions.

Individual species committees should address the regulatory response to the situation where both sector and non-sector groups exceed their portion of the total TAC in the FMPs Accountability Measures. Overages of a sector's allocation would be addressed in the annual evaluation and reauthorization process, and that individual species committees should establish the appropriate response for repeated overages, which may include disapproval of an operations plan.

In terms of mortality controls in fisheries not directly impacted by the sector fishery, each FMP sector program should require that sector applicants identify potential redirection of effort as a result of sector operations and propose limitations ("sideboards") if necessary to eliminate any adverse effects of effort redirection.

Administrative, Monitoring and Other Policies Sectors will be required to report their catch annually consistent with the Multispecies FMP sector reporting requirements, and any additional monitoring requirements should be stated in each sector's Operations Plan and reviewed annually.

Each FMP may allow proposals that request authorization for multi-year operations. If a multi-year sector program is allowed, and if the range of possible changes (e.g., membership and quota) is analyzed in the Environmental Assessment (EA), then a new EA would not need to be prepared each year.

Each FMP also may allow transfers of quota among sectors contingent on evaluation of proposals. If any transfers of TAC between sectors is allowed within an FMP's sector program, those transfers would be on an annual basis, and the sector TACs would be reset each year based on the membership (which might change from year to year).

The FMP also may authorize sector managers to request a quota transfer between themselves and stipulate they may do so any time after the TAC(s) for the fishing year have been finalized. The species committees should develop FMP specific criteria for the approval or disapproval of TAC transfers. If a sector transfers a portion of its TAC to another sector, and then exceeds its remaining portion, the transferred portion would not be affected, but the sector would have its TAC reduced proportionally the following year by the amount of the overage.

Each FMP should state that vessels can only be in one sector within that FMP in any fishing year.

Species committees should adhere to the policy and guidelines described above, and wherever they deviate from these, should provide substantial rationale for such variance to the Council for its consideration and approval.

Fishery Allocation Review Policy

In general, a fisheries allocation is a “direct and deliberate distribution of the opportunity to participate in a fishery among identifiable, discrete user groups or individuals” (50 CFR 600.10). Allocations are designed to help achieve the goals and objectives of a fishery management plan (FMP). As such, periodic review of allocations is important to ensure that the allocations are accomplishing their purpose. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) combined to develop policy and procedural guidance for the frequency and performance of periodic review of fisheries allocations. Three documents summarize the results of that effort:

- NMFS Policy Directive 01-119: Fisheries Allocation Review Policy (February 23, 2017). This policy directive assigns responsibilities and defines the general process for the review of allocations.
- NMFS Procedural Directive 01-119-1: Criteria for Initiating Fisheries Allocation Reviews. Council Coordinating Committee Allocation Workgroup Guidance Document (July 27, 2016). This procedural directive identifies criteria that can be used to determine when an allocation review should be performed.
- NMFS Procedural Directive 01-119-2: Recommended Practices and Factors to Consider When Reviewing and Making Allocation Decisions (July 27, 2016).

NMFS PD 01-119 outlines the general steps for the management of allocations. The need for an allocation review is determined based on criteria adopted by a Council (see PD 01-119-1). If the conclusion is a review is necessary, a review is performed as outlined by PD 01-119-2. The review could determine that no changes are needed to existing allocations or may determine that changes should be considered. At this stage, in depth analyses are not required; however, to ensure transparency, a clear articulation of how the objectives are or are not being met, and a clear rationale on relevant factors considered should be included in the record. This fisheries allocation review informs whether or not a consideration of new allocation alternatives is warranted. The latter conclusion could lead to a Council action addressed during the normal prioritization process.

This Council policy identifies the criteria that will be used to trigger the review of allocations. This policy covers only allocations that distribute specific quantities to identifiable, discrete user groups or individuals (see PD 01-119 for additional discussion). This narrower definition means that this policy does not apply to days-at sea allocations or allocations of access to an area, for example, since they are not a specific quantity of fish. Unless otherwise specified in a management action, the criteria that will be used by the Council are:

- 1) Catch share programs: Allocations will be reviewed as part of the review of catch share or LAPP programs.

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- 2) Time-based: The primary trigger criteria for review of non-catch share allocations will be at eight to ten years after initial implementation. This range of years is selected so that the allocation review can be coordinated with other competing Council priorities and the availability of data. When allocations are created in a management action, the Council may specify a more frequent review period.
 - 3) Public interest: The secondary trigger for review will be public interest as developed through the existing Council input process. A key element of this process is the annual setting of priorities. Public interest in an allocation review will be considered as part of this process.

As of January 2019, the relevant NEFMC allocations and the expected review period are listed in the following table.

FMP	Allocation	Date Established	Most Recent Update/Review¹ (as of 1/1/2019)	Planned Review Date
Northeast Multispecies	GOM Cod: Rec/Comm Split	2010	2010	2018-2020
	GOM Haddock: Rec/Comm Split	2010	2010	2018-2020
	Commercial Sector PSC	2010	2010	2018-2020
	GOM and GB Haddock: MWT Sub-ACL	2006 (2010) ²	2017	2025-2027
	GB YTF: Scallop Fishery Sub-ACL	2010	2013	2021-2023
	GB YTF: Small-Mesh Fishery Sub-ACL	2013	2013	2021-2023
	SNE/MA WINP: Scallop Fishery Sub-ACL	2013	2013	2021-2023
	GOM/GB WINP: Scallop Fishery Sub-ACL	2017	2017	2025-2027
	SNE/MA WINP: Large-Mesh Fishery Sub-ACL	2013	2013	2021-2023
	SNE/MA YTF: Scallop Fishery Sub-ACL	2010	2018 ³	NA ⁴
Atlantic Sea Scallops	LA with LAGC ITQ Allocations	2007	2017	2025-2027
	LAGC ITQ Allocations	2007	2017	2022
	NGOM Allocation	2007	2018	2026-2028
	LA Access Area Trips and Trip Limit	1999	2018	NA ⁴
Atlantic Herring	River Herring/Shad Catch Caps	2014	2016	NA ⁴
	Fixed Gear Set Aside	2006	2016	NA ⁴

¹ Update refers to allocation of sub-ACL, not measures related to an AM. In some cases, changes to the AM effectively modify the sub-ACL on a short-term basis.

² Adopted as a catch cap for haddock in 2006, converted to a stock-specific sub-ACLs in 2010.

³ Value is calculated each time scallop specifications are set, as established in 2010.

⁴ Allocation is reviewed when specifications are set.

Research Priority Setting Policy

Consistent with section 302(h) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Council develops, in conjunction with its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), research priorities that are necessary for management purposes. These priorities are established for five-year periods, updated as needed, and submitted to the Secretary of Commerce and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) for their consideration in developing research priorities and budgets. The Council's research priorities include a wide range of science-based needs that would support or improve the Council's ability to steward the marine resources in its jurisdiction and maintain sustainable fishing communities.

Process The Council will approve research priorities annually, typically at its spring meeting, to keep the list more current. The oversight committees, in consultation with plan development teams, may review existing research priorities and recommend revisions. Committee approval ideally occurs at an in-person meeting, but electronic mail is acceptable if a committee meeting is not otherwise planned. The SSC then reviews committee recommendations and makes its own recommendations to the Council. Upon Council approval, the updated priorities are provided to the Secretary of Commerce and the NEFSC and may be distributed to other research and funding entities (e.g., Sea Grant programs).

Documentation Council research priorities will be listed on a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet can be queried and filtered by priority category (urgent, important, strategic), status (e.g., not begun, underway), relevant FMPs and species, broad categories (e.g., bycatch, habitat), and cross-listings with the priority lists of other entities (e.g., RSA, assessment), and other categories that may be added in the future. The priority categories help identify when the data or project results would be needed to inform the management process:

- **URGENT** (essential): Research that is essential for compliance with federal requirements, including the National Standards, or that has been identified by management as necessary to aid decision-making. It is expected that a one- or two-year project would meet the information need. Postponement would have a significant impact on management.
- **IMPORTANT** (near term): Obtaining a new set of data or research result that is likely to aid in the evaluation of a near term or ongoing management goal. The research might involve a time-limited program or work that could continue indefinitely. Postponement will not have an immediate impact on fishery management; however, the information generated will likely inform near term (<5 year) Council actions.
- **STRATEGIC** (future needs): Research that is valuable but is not associated with an immediate need or near-term Council action.

Research Review Policy

Consistent with National Standard 2, Council FMPs are based upon the best scientific information available. Thus, the scientific information that is used by the Council in decision-making should be technically reviewed, as appropriate and consistent with the National Standard 2 guidelines. The normal entry point for data or analyses that will be considered by the Council is through the appropriate PDT, FMAT, or other technical team (such as a Stock Assessment Working Group). If information has not had a technical review, or a PDT determines the technical review is not sufficiently rigorous, the PDT may recommend that a technical review take place. A PDT may advise that information is not appropriate for use in a management context based on the summary of technical reviews, comments by PDT members, or other rationale related to the efficacy or appropriateness of the information.

Care should be taken before using analyses and data received (oral or written) directly by the Council, that has not been reviewed by the PDT. Generally, if the information has not been subjected to one of the forms of technical review enumerated below, it should not be used as the sole basis for a decision until the PDT has had an opportunity to review it.

Technical reviews include:

The following are examples of appropriate technical reviews. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.

- Publication in a peer-review journal
- Publication in a Federal/State Agency or academic technical report series in which papers are subject to internal peer review
- Review by a peer-review forum such as a SARC, TRAC, or the SSC.
- Expedited review by NMFS and/or other appropriately qualified scientists
- Review of the research paper by two or more independent experts, unaffiliated with the PIs (with proof that any review comments provided by the reviewers were subsequently addressed by the PIs); this might pertain to the Center reviews of final reports of state/federal grants and contracts, or to reviews specifically solicited by the PIs themselves from independent scientists.
- Academic dissertations and theses (presuming that the research in these reports have been reviewed for technical sufficiency and rigor by faculty members)
- A peer-review forum (perhaps a workshop) developed specifically to review/vet draft research reports (e.g., convened by the Cooperative Research Branch or

other research funder)

- Review by the PDT to assess the technical merits of unvetted research results; the PDT may also recommend an outside review by additional scientists.

Technical reviews do NOT include:

- Oral presentation of the research results at a scientific meeting (e.g., AFS, ICES) and publication of an abstract
- Preparation/submission of a Working Paper/Research Document to a Meeting/Working Group at which peer review is not the main objective of the Group (e.g., ICES Working Papers; NAFO Research Documents, ICES ASC Documents) or in which the review is likely to be perfunctory

Use of New Gears in the B-Regular DAS Program and the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock SAP

In response to a Council request in June 2007, NMFS issued a final rule (72 FR 72965) on December 26, 2007 to amend the procedures and requirements for approval of additional gear types for use in the Eastern U.S./Canada Haddock Special Access Program (SAP) or additional trawl gear in the Northeast multispecies Regular B DAS (Days-at-Sea) Program.

The regulations allow the Council or its Executive Committee to request the Regional Administrator to authorize additional gear for use in both programs through a notice action if the proposed gear meets one of two standards in the regulations.

The standards require that new gear either reduce the catch of each regulated stock of species of concern or other non-groundfish stocks that are overfished or subject to overfishing, by at least 50% (by weight on a trip-by-trip basis); **or** that its catch of each regulated stock of species of concern, or other non-groundfish stocks that are overfished or subject to overfishing, be less than 5% of the total catch of regulated groundfish (also by weight on a trip-by-trip basis). The approval process is as follows:

- 1) Before the Council considers recommending a new gear for either program, the proposed gear must have been the subject of a completed experiment and results reviewed by the appropriate Plan Development Team (PDT) in accordance with the Council's research review policy. The PDT report to the Council will contain a recommendation concerning the sufficiency of the experimental results for management decision-making.
- 2) The PDT will normally forward its findings to the relevant oversight Committee for consideration. If time constraints are an issue, the PDT will forward its findings directly to the full Council or the Council's Executive Committee for development of a recommendation to the Regional Administrator.
- 3) If approved, a formal request will be forwarded to the National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Administrator recommending that the new gear type be added to the allowed gears that may be used in the B Regular DAS program or the Haddock SAP.

Enforcement Policy

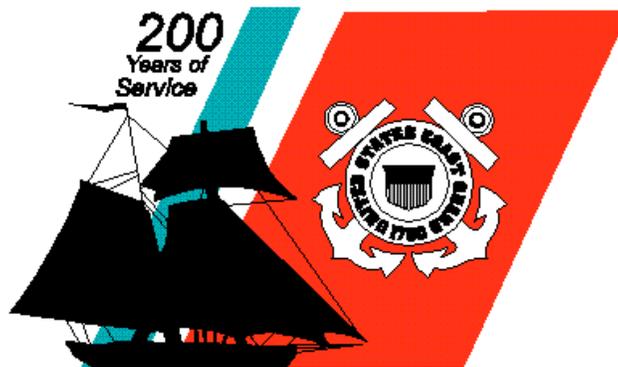
During the development of a fishery management plan, the Council and its oversight committees shall be guided by the appended Enforcement Considerations prepared by the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, NOAA General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation and the U.S. Coast Guard. The purpose is to enhance the likelihood of approving effective fishery management programs that accomplish the goals and objectives associated with Council actions.



Enforcement Considerations For Regional Fishery Management Councils

Developed by NOAA Office for Law Enforcement,
NOAA General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation, and
The U.S. Coast Guard

October 2007



**NOAA OFFICE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT,
NOAA GENERAL COUNSEL FOR ENFORCEMENT AND LITIGATION
AND
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

GUIDANCE FOR EFFECTIVE FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT

Fisheries regulations are constantly being written and most of those in place seem to be in a continual state of change. Fishery Management Council, NMFS Sustainable Fisheries, Protected Resources, and Habitat staffs are tasked with the creation and revision of these regulations. Although involving enforcement personnel in the process is essential, it is difficult to include enforcement on every conference call and at every meeting. With that in mind, the following is provided for consideration by those who are assigned a project which include elements of enforcement.

Before approval and implementation of a Fishery Management Plan (FMP), the following measures are enforcement's advice as it relates to the plan's efficacy. The basis for these principles is the historical experience of over thirty years of enforcing the many and varied regulations promulgated under the Magnuson-Stevens Act on a nationwide basis.

Please note that the information in this paper is intended only as general guidance. Depending on the specific design of any regulatory program, the enforcement tools and strategies used in that program may require mixing or even deviation from the individual enforcement precepts mentioned in this paper. The information contained herein in no way limits NMFS and the Coast Guard's ability to employ the enforcement techniques that it considers most appropriate for accomplishing the goals of a specific regulatory program.

Each Fishery Management Council has a team of enforcement personnel, including NOAA Enforcement, Coast Guard, and State Enforcement, who should be your sounding board for ensuring that the regulations you are proposing are enforceable and will accomplish the desired outcome.

ENFORCEABLE REGULATIONS ARE:

Simple and easy to understand - The more complicated the rule, the higher the likelihood of creating loopholes and legal defenses. Straightforward requirements that are black and white without exceptions make it more difficult for intentional violators and conspirators to evade enforcement. For example, "possession of an undersize halibut on a commercial fishing vessel" is clearly a simple prohibition. It is illegal regardless of where taken or how it was harvested or any other variable, condition or stipulation.

Simple regulations are easier for industry to comply with. Complex regulations result in errors, misunderstandings, and cause industry to simply ignore them.

To the extent possible, consideration should be given to consistently similar management measures amongst the FMPs and regulatory areas, as well as between federal and state waters.

Few as possible - Adding too many control measures frustrate the industry as well as enforcement. Too many regulations allow for more possibilities for mistakes to be made and reports to be forgotten; and it gives more work for enforcement. Reports should be consolidated where possible, and instructions made simple. Regulations sometimes have to be very restrictive, but compliance should be easy for the industry.

Fish is accountable and traceable throughout the wholesale process - The intent of this requirement is for there to be traceability of product wherever found. This enables enforcement to intercept unlawful seafood at various funnel points such as airports and customs borders. With required documentation and labeling, everything could be traced back to the responsible harvester.

Supported by appropriate penalties up to and including permit revocation and criminal charges for the most egregious offenses - The penalty schedule of NOAA General Counsel is constantly evaluated to ensure it is sufficient to effectively penalize civil offenders commensurate with their violations. However, chronic repeat offenders who do not possess resources to pay their fines may warrant permit sanctions or revocations. Those who commit egregious crimes must be punished via criminal sanctions up to the felony level. In these cases, incarceration may be the appropriate avenue of attaining justice. (See PENALTY section below for more on this subject)

REGULATIONS ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO ENFORCE IF THEY ARE:

Man power intensive regulations – Regulations requiring monitoring of offloads are manpower intensive. Enforcement will never have enough manpower to monitor more than a small fraction of the total offloads. This requires constant shifting effort from port to port, while not having adequate resources to properly be pro-active towards serious offenders. Use of technologies such as VMS and electronic logbooks can allow enforcement to monitor remotely, reducing manpower needs.

Complex or convoluted regulations - Regulations such as by-catch limits are nearly impossible to enforce at-sea. Enforcement of these regulations requires monitoring the entire catch during offload. At that time, it is too late for the vessel to do something about any overages it may have. The fisherman must rely on their ability to estimate catch composition at sea to stay in compliance.

Lack of accountability - Fish can become “legal” merely by doctoring the records, without traceable accountability, or the ability to audit. Requiring a paperwork trail to track fish from harvest, to offload, and through the processing and shipping add to good accountability.

Estimates - Regulations requiring a vessel captain to estimate catch, catch composition, and/or discards are difficult to enforce. Using estimates may work just fine for managing a fishery. However, enforcement cannot prove the false reporting of an estimated weight of a discard, nor can we establish how close an estimate must be before we can cite someone.

Law Enforcement resource intensive - Finally, any new plan or regulation must take into consideration the enforcement resources of the NMFS and the Coast Guard in terms of maximum capable enforcement contacts and investigative effort. Nationwide, enforcement is spread thin, so adding more regulations to enforce, usually means decreasing, or in some cases ceasing, effort in other areas.

PENALTIES

Once regulations are in place, penalties are discussed. The goal of regulatory enforcement agencies is to ensure compliance, whereas prosecution agencies exist to assess responsibility and punish violations. The NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement (OLE) has both mandates. These two mandates often lead to conflict when we are criticized for not pursuing cases of wrongdoing more aggressively, and then criticized for being too heavy handed when pursuing major civil and criminal violations. OLE works with various NOAA and NMFS divisions, the Fishery Management Councils, NOAA General Counsel, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office to determine the appropriate prosecution method for an offense. OLE has one of the most versatile selections of penalties of any agency in the United States. For civil violations, these include verbal warnings, fix-it notices,

written warnings, summary settlement fines, as well as monetary penalties permit sanctions, permit suspensions, and permit revocations from NOAA General Counsel. There are also options for hearings with a Civil Administrative Law Judge or with a federal judge in federal civil court. Our goal is to seek the least penalty to gain compliance. If a penalty is too low, it may result in being considered simply the cost of doing business. If a penalty is too high, a person discovering they have committed a civil violation may decide to cover up the error instead of reporting it. Or, they may feel the need to challenge the violation in court, not to claim innocence, but to petition for a lower penalty. For criminal violations, penalties include monetary penalties, home confinement, and/or imprisonment. Criminal investigations and prosecutions are saved for the intentional violators who commit the violation many times, conspire with others, or those who intentionally commit one serious offense where a civil penalty would not be appropriate or adequate.

VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS (VMS)

The technological sophistication of the modern fisherman is incredible, and demands equivalent technological applications by law enforcement to ensure that regulations and laws are being adhered to while at sea. VMS allows enforcement to use 21st century technologies to monitor compliance, track violators and provide substantial evidence for prosecution while maintaining the integrity of the individual fisherman's effort. VMS uses electronic transmitters placed on fishing vessels to transmit information about the vessel's position to enforcement agencies via satellite. This position information is used by enforcement to focus limited patrol time on those areas with the highest potential for significant violations. It is critical to recognize that VMS cannot replace at-sea enforcement by aircraft, vessels, and boarding teams, but rather complements existing capability and allows enforcement to target violators, thereby increasing efficiency. VMS is only useful for enforcement of regulations that are location specific, at-sea boardings are still needed to verify compliance with other regulations, such as net mesh size and prohibited species.

Although not primarily a safety device, VMS may contribute to increased vessel safety. Some VMS transceivers allow constant two-way communication between the vessel and shoreside monitors. If an accident were to occur, the recorded track of the vessel may aid rescue efforts.

Expansion of VMS into additional domestic fisheries would increase the efficiency of enforcement operations by enabling more efficient patrol planning in those fisheries.

OBSERVERS

The NOAA Fisheries Observer Program authorizes NOAA Fisheries employees or contract personnel to embark on fishing vessels in support of an FMP. It is critical to note that observers are NOT enforcement personnel. Rather, they provide fishery managers with more accurate data with which to make management decisions. Maintaining the integrity of unbiased observer data is at the core of effective fisheries management and is a top enforcement priority. Significant violations include failure to carry a required observer, observer harassment, and biasing of samples. NOAA Fisheries regulations establish national safety standards for commercial fishing vessels carrying observers. These regulations require that any commercial fishing vessel, not otherwise inspected, must pass a Coast Guard dockside safety examination before carrying a NOAA Fisheries observer. Further, an observer may conduct an independent review of the fishing vessel's major safety items and may refuse to sail if there are major deficiencies. This is significant because NOAA Fisheries prohibits a vessel required to carry an observer from fishing if an observer is not aboard.

MATRIX of MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The following matrix is designed to help fishery managers and staff better understand the enforcement aspects related to certain management measures. It is important to note that these guidelines address the enforceability of regulations, not necessarily the merits of the regulation. Where it is applicable and important to enforcement agencies, the guidelines address safety, economics and biology considerations.

This matrix allows fishery managers and staff rapidly identify how enforceable a management measure is by at-sea cutter patrols, aircraft patrols, and dockside enforcement. The matrix is supplemented by an analysis defining each management measure, outlines the enforcement advantages and disadvantages of the measure, and then concludes with a recommendation on how to write regulations to make the management measure the most enforceable.

Fishery Management Measure Enforceability Matrix

	Surveillance – Aircraft/Ship/VMS	At-Sea Boarding	Dockside
Limiting Amount/ Percent Landed	No	No	Yes
Limiting Amount/ Percent Onboard	No	Limited	Yes
Prohibiting Retention	No	Yes	Yes
Requiring Retention	Limited	Yes	No
Size Restrictions	No	Yes	Yes
Closed Areas	Yes	Yes	No
Closed Seasons	Limited	Yes	Yes
Gear/Vessel Restrictions	Limited	Yes	Limited
Limited Access Privilege Programs	No	Limited	Yes
Recordkeeping/ Reporting	No	Limited	Yes
Permits	Limited	Yes	Yes

ENFORCEMENT ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF FISHERY MANAGEMENT MEASURES

LIMITING AMOUNT/PERCENT LANDED

Definition:

This management measure aims to reduce bycatch retention/mortality by limiting the amount or percentage landed.

Advantages:

Measure acts as an incentive to focus fishing efforts in areas that minimize bycatch if there is some penalty associated with excessive bycatch (i.e. fishery will be closed as a result of reaching a limit).

Disadvantages:

This is a landing provision, and is difficult to enforce at sea, through either surveillance or boardings. Effectiveness is directly proportional to dockside effort expended. High grading may be an issue.

Recommendations:

Consider prohibitions which regulate areas, seasons, types of gear or types of operations to minimize bycatch. Policies should incorporate industry best practices and consider industry recommendations. Segregating catch at sea would facilitate enforcement. On catcher processor vessels, regulations should prescribe that eventual landing limits shall not be exceeded while at sea. This allows for enforcement at sea as well as dockside. If an at sea boarding determines that the trip limit is met, then the F/V returns to port to preclude further resource degradation/economic advantage.

LIMITING AMOUNT/PERCENT ON BOARD

Definition:

This management measure aims to reduce bycatch retention/mortality by limiting the amount or percentage of a bycatch species allowed on board a fishing vessel.

Advantages:

This measure is similar to limiting amount/percentage landing but allows for at sea enforcement. If an at sea boarding determines that the limit/percentage is met, then the fishing vessel returns to port to preclude further retention.

Disadvantages:

Full and accurate count of catch onboard cannot easily be done at sea during in most fisheries (due to species mixing, loading, icing, safety of boarding party in accessing fish hold at sea, etc.). High-grading may be an issue.

Recommendations:

Regulations should specify how much target species catch is required to justify retention of bycatch species and in what amounts. This is necessary to preclude bycatch species from becoming a targeted catch. Consider prohibitions which regulate types of gear or types of operations to minimize bycatch catches. When regulating gear, it is best if the gear types are readily identifiable by aircraft. Policies should incorporate industry best practices and consider industry recommendations. Segregating catch at sea would facilitate enforcement. This provision works best with frozen product.

PROHIBITING RETENTION

Definition:

This enforcement measure aims to restrict retention by prohibiting the retention of certain species aboard fishing vessels.

Advantages:

Prohibition violations are easier to document and enforce than regulations that allow a limited percentage to be retained.

Allows for at-sea enforcement. Once fish are landed, detecting a violation for retention of prohibited species is easy if enforcement is present.

Disadvantages:

May create an incentive to hide prohibited species from observers or to underreport prohibited species catch if it influences the fishing season.

Recommendations:

Consider prohibitions which regulate types of gear or types of operations to minimize bycatch catches. When regulating gear, it is best if the gear types are readily identifiable by aircraft.

Policies should incorporate industry best practices and consider any industry recommendations.

REQUIRING RETENTION

Definition:

This enforcement measure requires retention of all catch.

Advantages:

Allows for enforcement during boardings or aircraft/vessel surveillance, as catch discards can be observed from a distance.

Provides managers with a more accurate picture of the impact of a fishery on target and bycatch species, and allows managers to close the fishery when a limit is landed.

Disadvantages:

Difficult to enforce shoreside.

Recommendations:

Policies should incorporate industry best practices and consider industry recommendations.

SIZE RESTRICTIONS

Definition:

Possession or fish below or above a specified size is prohibited.

Advantages:

Violations are easy to document and prosecute.

Disadvantages:

Effectiveness is limited by the amount of processing done at sea.

Effectiveness is proportional to the effort expended in dockside checks and at-sea boardings. Has potential to be manpower intensive.

May provide incentive to high-grade.

Recommendations:

Prohibit processing/filleting at sea for fisheries where size restrictions are used. Measurements should include head and tail intact.

Require standardized measurement procedures, equipment and techniques by state and federal agencies.

Maintain same regulations across state and federal boundaries.

CLOSED AREAS

Definition:

Fishing in a specific geographic area is prohibited.

Advantages:

Fairly easy to enforce if below recommendations are followed.

Very easy to monitor with VMS. However, even with VMS cueing, a response asset is generally required to document the violation for prosecution. Aircraft and surface patrols also verify the accuracy of the VMS picture.

Easy to document presence in the closed area by aircraft and vessel surveillance. It is tougher to document fishing activity without an at sea boarding, depending on the fishery and gear type.

Disadvantages:

Without VMS, effectiveness is directly proportional to the surveillance effort.

Recommendations:

Clearly defined areas. Use exact latitude/longitude and straight lines. Avoid simply stating distance offshore, center point and radius, or depth contours.

Regular shaped areas. In most situations, closed areas are easier to enforce if they are square or rectangle shaped, since it is more clear cut that a vessel is west/east, north/south of an indicated line, and therefore, in or outside a closed area.

Large closed areas are preferred in most situations. Small closed areas with open areas in between make it easier to cheat by enabling a vessel to quickly enter and exit a closed area. However, if making smaller areas opens fishing grounds, then there may be less incentive to violate the closed area restriction.

Temporary, short-term closures can be difficult to enforce, as communicating the requirement to the fishing fleet can be challenging.

If possible, close an area to all activity; limit grand-fathering and other exemptions. Where practical, areas should be closed to all types of fishing as well as transiting fishing vessels.

If transit is allowed, fishing gear should be stowed and transit must be continuous (i.e. no loitering/stopping).

If vessels need to stop/loiter in a closed area, include a requirement to notify enforcement. Stowage requirements must be clearly defined.

Regulated gear areas are difficult to enforce, because they still require at-sea boardings to verify that fishing vessel is using legal gear in the closed area.

CLOSED SEASONS

Definition:

Fishing during specific times of the year is prohibited

Advantages:

Large vessel fisheries are easy to monitor since vessels are in port or in other fisheries.

Gear intensive fisheries (pots, etc.) are noticeable if a vessel gears up for a trip.

The presence of a particular species in the marked during a closed season should be detected if retention is prohibited everywhere.

Disadvantages:

Small vessel fisheries are more difficult to monitor. Smaller quantities are easier to hide in the market.

Fisheries with multiple gear types for the same species are especially difficult to enforce if only one gear type has a closed season.

Recommendations:

See Closed Areas: ensure closures are clearly defined; limit exemptions to the closed season, and dates/times should be defined to the minute.

Regulations should fully describe what activity is allowed to occur before, during, and after the closure. For example: all gear must be hauled in prior to the closure, gear may not be set prior to the opening. For short

duration fisheries, prohibit all fishing with any gear type 72 hours before and after the fishery. Monitoring the fishing vessels with VMS during closed seasons can greatly aid enforcement.

GEAR/VESSEL RESTRICTIONS

Definition:

Specific gear types or gear modifications are prohibited. Gear includes not only the primary methods and tools to harvest the resource, but also includes vessels, horsepower and other such variables. Certain regulatory gear may be required to minimize catch of bycatch species and/or protect certain marine species (i.e., pelagic vs. demersal trawls or protected species avoidance gear).

Advantages:

Gear is easy to inspect dockside and, in most cases, readily visible at sea.

Disadvantages:

Restrictions on gear employment (i.e. set/trawl depth) are more difficult to enforce. For example, a limitation on amount of fixed gear/hooks is difficult to regulate/enforce.

Normally gear needs to be inspected at-sea to ensure gear is in compliance while engaged in the act of fishing. This becomes resource intensive as it may require multiple checks at sea and is intrusive; as it may require interrupting fishing operations for the gear to be inspected while at sea, which tends to foster ill will towards enforcement officers.

Recommendations:

If use is prohibited, then allowing the gear on board should be prohibited.

Gear restrictions should be standardized across state and federal boundaries.

Federal and state enforcement officers should develop and use standard procedures, equipment and techniques.

LIMITED ACCESS PRIVILEGE PROGRAMS

Definition:

These programs delineate a specified amount of particular fish species to be allocated to an individual, a particular vessel, a processor, or a community.

Advantages:

LAPPs are often praised for their safety benefits. By allowing a quota that can be caught over an extended period of time, fishermen are able to choose when to fish rather than being forced to fish during bad weather based on mandated time periods (e.g. derby fisheries).

Once an individual fisherman has met their quota, additional fish are treated as prohibited species, as discussed above.

Disadvantages:

Manpower intensive. LAPPs spread out fishing effort over long periods, requiring increased monitoring and enforcement.

Individual quota holders have the incentive to underreport their landings throughout the fishing season.

Recommendations:

Effectiveness depends on monitoring landings.

Electronic reporting provides real time debiting of an individual's quota account. That is beneficial to enforcement, to the fisherman, and fishery managers. Electronic reporting also decreases reporting errors.

VMS should be considered for LAPP fisheries.

If at-sea quota debiting is allowed, the use of certified scales, observers, and video monitoring should be considered to ensure accuracy.

RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTING

Definition:

A requirement to keep records of specified information on board the vessel. As technology permits, the data from records could be transmitted to managers for decision-making, depending on the fishery and the need

for near real-time catch/effort information.

Advantages:

At-sea boardings can verify the presence and use of logbooks and other records.

Dockside monitoring of offloads can verify accuracy of catch data.

Disadvantages:

Full and accurate count of catch onboard is difficult at sea for unprocessed fish, due to species mixing, loading, icing, safety of boarding party in accessing fish hold at sea, etc.

Recommendations:

Regulations need to identify the time requirements for completing reports and entering data into logbooks (e.g. per set, daily, end of trip). By specifically describing the time requirement, enforcement can better determine whether to focus effort at-sea or shoreside.

Require a standard logbook format for all federal fisheries.

Use of electronic reports can simplify enforcement. Electronic reports can be used as a way to provide enforcement near real-time data before or during a boarding. Electronic reporting also reduces reporting errors.

PERMITS

Definition:

Document which indicates allowable gear type, fishing areas, and/or species which are allowed to be retained.

Advantages:

Easy to track and identify.

Revocation or suspension of permit is an effective penalty provision.

Easy method for enforcement to determine lawful operations.

Disadvantages:

Permits are largely used by enforcement to identify allowed fishing activity, but the bureaucracy for amending and issuing them creates a system that can be frustrating for fishermen to follow.

Recommendations:

Require original permits, not copies, to be carried on board the vessel at all times.

Permit transfers must follow strict guidelines and should require adequate notification to enforcement.

Standardize permit format across fishery management plans where possible.

Herring Joint Ventures and Foreign Fishing Permits

The Council annually sets specifications for optimum yield (OY) through the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP). It also specifies an amount of herring that could be available for joint ventures (JV) and directed foreign fishing or total allowable foreign fishing (TALFF).

In 2000, while reviewing the first applications for foreign fishing permits, the Council also developed a list of conditions and restrictions that such permits must meet.

Procedure The Executive Director will review future applications when they are forwarded to the Council by the Department of State. If the applications are consistent with the specifications, conditions and restrictions set by the Council, the Executive Director will reply with a standard letter without further consultation with the Council. If the application is not consistent with our FMP, the Executive Director will inform the State Department accordingly. NMFS will address any allocation issues among applicants.

Repeal Effective April 1, 2011, the Council eliminated further consideration of foreign fishing operations and removed JV processing, TALFF, and internal waters processing (IWP) allocations from subsequent specifications packages. This decision was implemented through Amendment 4 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan.

The Council continues to consider specifications for border transfers with Canada where U.S. caught herring is transferred to Canadian herring carriers for transshipment to Canada to be used for human consumption.

Policy for Council Certification of Draft Regulations Associated with Fishery Management Plan Actions

If draft regulations have not been deemed necessary and appropriate at the time a fishery management plan, or an amendment or framework adjustment to a fishery management plan is approved by the New England Fishery Management Council, the Council Executive Director shall review the draft regulations, when available for such actions, before they are implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

After reviewing the draft regulations, the Executive Director shall recommend to the Council Chair whether they are necessary and appropriate for the purposes of implementing the Council-approved action.

After considering the Executive Director's recommendation the Council Chair, on behalf of the full Council, shall make the determination to deem the draft proposed regulations as necessary and appropriate for the purposes of implementing the action, consistent with section 303(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Act).

Once this process has occurred and if approval has been granted, the Executive Director shall forward the appropriate documents to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Correspondence from the Council

The Council must correspond frequently with the public, its partner and other agencies, as well as a myriad of organizations and institutions. All of these circumstances constitute formal contact by the Council in various formats, including emails, but generally in letter form.

In particular, the Council comments on various issues, both regional and national, makes requests for information and submits or provides documents in response to requests. Only the Council Chairman and the Executive Director are authorized to sign such communications or correspondence. The Executive Director should be consulted for guidance if members or staff are unclear about the correct approach to formal communications from the Council.

Approval Process and Guidelines for Communications with the Media

Identification of Issues In April 2011, the Council directed its staff to develop a document that: 1.) Clarifies issues that are generally acceptable to discuss in Council press releases and other major forms of mass communications distributed to the media; 2.) Discusses who approves text before communications are distributed; and 3.) Provides suggestions about how the Council as an organization might present its views to the public via the media, pending further Council discussion.

Background The Public Affairs Officer routinely communicates with the media via press releases, letters to the editor, and through the Council's newsletters, and other written materials as well as phone calls and emails. At the direction of the NEFMC's Executive Committee, the staff has more aggressively responded to negative press articles and editorials that have mischaracterized the Council's intent or actions on a range of issues.

Largely because of the ongoing frustration expressed by many in the fishing industry about NEFMC and NOAA programs, several Council members have questioned the appropriateness of the subject matter and verbiage used in some recent Council communications to the press. Based on the discussion at the April 2011 Council meeting, members requested an outline of the process used to determine who speaks on behalf of the Council and who approves the final text in its communications.

Approval Process There is a long-standing process in which the Public Affairs Officer (PAO) works with the appropriate technical staff member to ensure that Council-related issues are accurately described in any external mass communications that target the media and public. These take the form of press releases, letters to the editor, opinion pieces, and Council newsletters, as well as web content, occasional articles, fliers and brochures. The PAO is responsible for the tone, quality and relevance of the materials, while the Executive or Deputy Director provide final approval. During Council meetings, the Chairman and Vice Chairman often provide feedback and approval of press releases.

The Executive Committee has recently become part of this process, reviewing and revising press releases or letters to the editor as necessary. When referring to the "Council leadership" as the source of written comments to the press, permission is sought from each Executive Committee member. That group of individuals must give final approval to such communications.

Current Practice NEFMC communications are intended to promote a better understanding of the Council's charge to conserve and manage fisheries, educate the public about the process it employs to achieve that end and encourage stakeholder participation and buy-in to Council decisions. The staff follows a number of broad guidelines in crafting its communications to the public.

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- 1) Communications are based on and support approved Council actions and positions.
 - 2) Because the Council uses majority votes to make its decisions, communications are generally written to reflect the rationale used by the prevailing side in any vote and provided in Council documents, public testimony and Council member comments.
 - 3) All forms of Council communications should be fact or policy-based. Speculation about the outcomes of Council votes should always be avoided. Staff and members can still be helpful to the media by presenting the major issues, both pro and con, associated with any Council action and the reasons an action is moving through the Council process.
 - 4) Council members are often asked to speak to the media on behalf of the Council. This is generally a responsibility that is assumed by the Chairman, but can and does include others – for example, Oversight Committee Chairs or Council members who also are local fishermen or state directors and are recognized as sources of information to local media reps. The Public Affairs Officer and staff also serve in this capacity.
 - 5) Individual Council members are free to express themselves to the media as they see fit, but they should be clear about speaking for themselves or their own institutions and not the Council.
 - 6) When press releases are necessary, but concern issues that are highly controversial, or address interim reports or other actions that are otherwise not final, particular care must be taken to ensure these types of communications are fair, balanced and clearly acknowledge all sides of an issue. Examples of these would include issues that relate to safety, as well as economic, social and community impacts.
 - 7) Council communications should not include verbiage that expresses personal opinions unless they are consistent with approved Council positions. If included, they should be appropriately attributed to a voting Council member, such as the Chair, Vice Chair, Oversight Committee Chair or Executive Director.
 - 8) Opinion pieces written by members on behalf of the Council and by staff on behalf of the Council should also be consistent with Council positions. Communications of this nature may concern a range of issues, correct the record or more fully describe Council actions, as well as address other fishery matters. Opinion pieces written independently should clarify that the writer is speaking on behalf of him or herself, and not for the full Council.
 - 9) As a matter of course and in keeping with most professional guidelines, press releases should be written for general consumption, although they should include enough

information to make them useful to stakeholders and interested members of the public. They should be objective and contain facts that are relevant to the subject matter.

- 10) As a reminder, submission of press releases, letters to the editor or opinion pieces does not guarantee publication or a follow-up news article. In New England, Council press releases are more likely to be picked up by local fishing community or trade publications rather than by larger print media outlets that cover issues with greater news impact. Of course, groundbreaking decisions or very high-profile issues are an exception to this, as well as timely, relevant letters to the editor that are of regional interest.

Scallop Research Set-Aside Program Policy

The Scallop Committee, at the request of the New England Fishery Management Council's Executive Director, developed a policy for how the Council is involved in the review of scallop research set-aside proposals.

The Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program is a process coordinated by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). Four unique RSA programs were established by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils. The programs for scallops, monkfish, and Atlantic herring currently are active. No Federal funds are provided for the RSA programs. Instead, funding for research is provided by the sale of set-aside allocations in quota-managed or days-at-sea-managed fisheries, which are awarded through a competitive grant process.

The Scallop RSA Program was formally included in the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan in 1999. The program has evolved over time. Currently, 1.25 million pounds of total annual allocated landings are set aside to fund research projects that support scallop management. At least biennially, the Council recommends specific research priorities that should be used for the scallop RSA funding announcement.

The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) and Scallop Advisory Panel provide input about needed research priorities through the NEFMC Scallop Committee, and the Committee's recommendations are then considered and approved by the full Council. The Council's decision forms the basis for the Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) announcement that is written by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

NMFS's Office of Communications announces the FFO through a wide-reaching email notice, which also is distributed by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils. Additionally, the notice is posted on the NOAA Northeast Cooperative Research website and the New England and Mid-Atlantic Council websites.

The official Federal Funding Opportunity document, which contains application information, submission deadlines, and the list of research priorities, is posted on the federal Grants.gov portal. The portal collects and then funnels submissions to the Commerce Department's Grants Online system, where all activities related to the competitive grants process, post-award functions, final reports, and grant close-outs are managed. The Council and Council staff are not involved in this stage of the program.

Each scallop RSA proposal is subject to a thorough review. The process now includes input from both technical reviewers and fishery managers. Proposals are evaluated by subject matter experts who score the technical merits of the proposals. A panel of experts may be convened to evaluate proposals. Details about the evaluation process will be described annually by NMFS.

Reviewers consider several aspects of each proposal, including importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed project, technical/scientific merit, overall qualifications of the project, project costs, and outreach and education. Each technical reviewer provides a final numerical score based on a possible 100 total points. The NEFSC is responsible for assigning the technical reviewers, which include staff from multiple departments within both NEFSC and the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, as well as other relevant experts from academia, Council staff, state agencies, and various research institutions. For each competition, Council staff provides at least one highly qualified technical reviewer for each proposal. These reviewers are required to sign a conflict of interest form before participating in the review and must submit written comments and final scores directly through NOAA Grants Online.

Council staff also identifies individuals to participate in the management review process of all proposals, and the NEFSC provides additional participants, if necessary, to make sure a diverse group of reviewers is represented. Potential management reviewers are contacted by the NEFSC. Roughly a dozen individuals are selected to discuss the management relevance of each proposed project. The group of reviewers includes individuals from the NEFMC Scallop Committee, Scallop Advisory Panel, and Scallop PDT, commercial and recreational fishermen, appropriate NEFSC staff, and other scallop fishery and management experts. Individuals on the RSA management review panel must also sign a conflict of interest form and are required to examine all proposals prior to the meeting. The management reviewers do not operate by consensus or make recommendations as a group. Following the meeting, each management reviewer is required to submit written comments. The management reviewer comments and recommendations are used by the NEFSC in the selection process to determine management relevance and applicability of a project.

On occasion, after the management panel meeting, Council staff is consulted to clarify how projects relate to the FMP. However, the NEFSC staff ultimately is responsible for compiling the information provided from both technical and management reviewers. The Northeast Fisheries Science Center Director then makes final recommendations, which are reviewed by NOAA's Federal Assistance Law Division to ensure that the selections are in accordance with the program policies. The agency is responsible for the final decision because this is a legal requirement of the grants process used to distribute RSA funds. After final projects are selected, NMFS also administers the grant process, carries out regulatory consultations, issues necessary permits, and conducts report reviews. After final reports are available, the results are forwarded to the Scallop PDT if project results already have been reviewed.

Risk Policy Statement

Recognizing that all fishery management is based on uncertain information and that all implementation is imperfect, it is the policy of the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) to weigh the risk of overfishing relative to the greatest expected overall net benefits to the Nation.

The purpose of the New England Fishery Management Council's risk policy is to:

1. Provide guidance to the Council and its subordinate bodies on taking account of risk and uncertainty in Fishery Management Plans and specification-setting;
2. Communicate the priorities and preferences of the Council regarding risk and uncertainty to NOAA Fisheries; and
3. Make fishery management more transparent, understandable, and predictable while better achieving FMP objectives in the face of uncertain information and imperfect implementation.

This risk policy will be supported by the following strategic approaches:

1. The Council's risk policy will take account of both the probability of an undesirable outcome and the negative impact of the outcome. The probability of outcomes that have a long-term negative impact on ecosystem function should be low.
2. The cumulative effects of addressing risk at all levels of the fishery management process (e.g., estimation of OFL, ABC, ACL, ACT, and setting accountability measures) will be taken into account.
3. Harvest control rules and management procedures will consider stability in the face of uncertain information and inherent variability in ecosystems.
4. Implementation of the policy will be analysis-based, using methods commensurate with the importance of tradeoffs between conservation, ecosystem roles, and fishery benefits, as well as the tradeoffs between short-term and long-term benefits. The goal should be harvest control rules and management procedures that are formally evaluated with a view towards extracting signal from noise so that management and fisheries are less sensitive to uncertainty. This goal should allow for a dynamic process of implementation and review, and modification when warranted.

Council Priorities Process

In order to allocate Council and staff resources in an organized manner, each fall the Council will identify its planned activities for the following year. This process will take place over two consecutive Council meetings. The objective is to identify priorities in time for the start of the Council's fiscal year but deviations from this schedule may occur. The following steps are intended to provide general guidance to promote transparency.

Initial Task List

Working with staff, the Executive Director will prepare an initial list of tasks that the Council will consider for the following year. The identified tasks should be those that require a Council activity or action, or that require extensive staff involvement (e.g. stock assessments, extensive working groups, monitoring reports, etc.). The goal is to create as comprehensive a list as possible of actions the Council may want to consider, without considering resource limitations. Suggestions from Committees or the public will be included. Tasks that are legal or regulatory requirements will be identified, as will tasks that are ongoing or expected to take more than one year. This list does not imply a particular organization to tasks that are ultimately adopted. Items on this list will not be prioritized, and inclusion on the list does not mean any particular task is adopted. It will be reviewed by the Executive Committee for thoroughness and presented to the Council at a meeting in early fall. The Council will modify and approve the list for further review.

Task Selection

After this initial list is completed, individual Council members will be provided an opportunity to rate the importance of each task. Members are asked to rank every task, even those that may be required. This helps determine if there is a need to more closely examine whether a required task could be modified through a future Council action (for example, by changing the periodicity of the requirement). Committees will also be provided an opportunity to prioritize the tasks for their Committee. Using this information, the Executive Committee will prepare a recommendation for the tasks that will be addressed in the following year. The Executive Committee will consult with the Executive Director to match the recommendations to the available resources. It will also develop a preliminary "bundling" of tasks – that is, which tasks might be included in the same action.

The Council will consider the Executive Committee recommendations, normally at a meeting in late fall. Changes to the Executive Committee recommendation should address whether they can be accommodated with the available resources. The Council will approve the final list, which will be used to guide Council activities in the following year. "Bundling" identified at this meeting will normally be followed, but deviations are allowed without Council concurrence.

Modifications

New issues might be identified at any time during the year and may necessitate a change to the Council's planned activities. Any subsequent changes to the approved priorities list must first be discussed by the appropriate Committee – preferably at a meeting, but through correspondence if a meeting is not planned. The Committee will bring the proposed change forward at a subsequent Council meeting, along with a recommendation on whether it should be adopted or not. The Committee should also address how the suggested change will be reconciled with any resource constraints. Adoption of the proposed change requires a 2/3 vote of the members present at a Council meeting. Any mid-year change that is not adopted by the Council will be added to the initial task list during the following year's priority setting process.

Janice Plante Award for Excellence

Guidelines for the Award

The *Janice Plante Award for Excellence*, first awarded to Janice herself in April 2015, was established by the New England Council (NEFMC) to annually honor an individual who has produced exceptional work “to further the effectiveness of the fishery management process in New England.” In particular, the Council seeks to pay special tribute to those who have displayed outstanding commitment and contributions of time and energy in service to the Council fishery management system.

The Council will use the following process for the award:

1. Nominations for the Janice Plante Award will be made by voting Council members and the Executive Director, prior to March 1 each year, and provided to the NEFMC’s Executive Committee for consideration.
2. The Executive Committee will, either by consensus or a majority vote of its members, select the awardee based on the criteria described in the above two paragraphs.
3. Nominees will be individuals. Current Council members are not eligible for the award, nor will it be awarded to past Council members as recognition of their Council service. NEFMC staff and NOAA employees are not eligible.
4. Nominators should justify, in writing, the long-term distinguished service of the nominee, relative to the criteria in this document. No nominations will carry over.
5. The Executive Committee should view the Janice Plante Award as a special honor and therefore make and review nominations with care.
6. The recipient’s identity will remain confidential until announced during the award presentation.
7. Recipients may be reimbursed for travel expenses to receive the award.