

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Habitat Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The PDT met on October 25 to discuss updates to habitat management on the Northern Edge. Work on this issue will continue during a meeting on December 16. The Committee and Advisors met on October 26 to discuss updates to the Council's offshore wind policy, which was revised by the PDT this summer, as well as 2022 priorities and other ongoing work. They made several edits to the wind policy and recommended that the Council approve the document. MAFMC's Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Advisors and Committee will review the revised offshore wind policy on November 18 and 29, respectively. The Habitat Committee did not rank the potential priority tasks for 2022, recommending that the Council continue to discuss all tasks in December and evaluate them based on available resources.
- B. Northern Edge: The PDT is drafting a white paper to evaluate habitat management considerations for this area. The Committee will use this information to assess the possibility of developing an action.
- C. Offshore Energy Coordination: Since September, staff have written two letters with MAFMC regarding Notices of Intent to prepare EISs for wind projects. Staff continue to collaborate with MAFMC, ROSA, and the NMFS Wind Team. Staff also support state initiatives related to offshore wind and fisheries, e.g., in Maine and New Hampshire. Brian Hooker will provide an update during the Council meeting on project development, future leasing, etc.
- D. Aquaculture: Staff continue periodic check-ins with GARFO aquaculture coordinators about specific projects and other relevant issues. As discussed briefly in September, Blue Water Fisheries is interested in culturing salmon, steelhead, and lumpfish in a net pen project proposed for waters off northern Massachusetts/New Hampshire. The possibility of an action to authorize salmon aquaculture in the EEZ will be discussed under 2022 priorities.
- E. Northeast Regional Fish Habitat Assessment: The NHRA teams continue to work on products, including an inshore habitats evaluation, habitat suitability models, and a collaboration with NOAA's Habitat Climate Vulnerability Assessment team to develop species-habitat narratives. The Steering Committee will meet in January.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

Approve updated wind energy policy. Separately, approve 2022 work priorities.

III. INFORMATION

- 1. Presentation: Michelle Bachman, Council staff
- 2. Meeting summary: Plan Development Team – October 25, 2021
- 3. Meeting summary: Committee and Advisory Panel – October 26, 2021
- 4. Revised Wind Energy Policy - with Habitat Committee and MAFMC EOP Committee edits
- 5. Offshore wind updates: Brian Hooker, BOEM

6. Presentation: Brian Hooker, BOEM
7. Correspondence