

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Habitat Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The PDT met on December 16 and January 10 to finalize a white paper on Northern Edge habitat management issues. The team also discussed 2022 work priorities, and at their January meeting developed an initial problem statement and objectives for an action to designate a Habitat Area of Particular Concern in Southern New England. The Committee met on January 18 to discuss the SNE HAPC, Northern Edge white paper, a comment letter on the Amitie telecommunications project, and surfclam industry concerns about fishing opportunities within exemption areas to the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area's mobile bottom-tending gear restrictions. The Committee recommended that the Council initiate the SNE HAPC action at this meeting and suggested edits to the Amitie comments, which staff will finalize.
- B. Northern Edge habitat management: The PDT completed the white paper which was presented to the Committee on January 18. Note that RSA project-related reports and presentations referenced in the white paper but not posted elsewhere on the Council's webpage are available on the January 18 Committee meeting page.
- C. Offshore Energy Coordination: Since December, staff submitted comments in response to BOEM's request for information on fisheries mitigation (see correspondence). Staff continue to collaborate with MAFMC, ROSA, the NMFS Wind Team, and the states, and are tracking ongoing issues such as the New York Bight auction and Central Atlantic lease area planning.
- D. Aquaculture: Staff continue periodic check-ins with GARFO aquaculture coordinators about specific projects and other relevant issues. The timing of an action to authorize salmon aquaculture in the EEZ will be aligned with NOAA Fisheries work on an EIS for the Blue Water Fisheries project.
- E. Northeast Regional Fish Habitat Assessment: The NHRA teams continue to work on products. The Steering Committee met in January to receive updates on this work discussed vetting, rollout, and maintenance of products.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

- A. Initiate an action to consider designation of an HAPC in Southern New England.
- B. Discuss an emergency action request made by members of the surfclam industry operating within the Great South Channel HMA exemption areas.

III. INFORMATION

1. Presentation: Michelle Bachman, Council staff
2. Meeting summary: Plan Development Team – December 16, 2021
3. Meeting summary: Plan Development Team – January 10, 2022
4. Meeting summary: Committee – January 18, 2022
5. Memorandum: PDT to Committee re SNE HAPC – January 12, 2022
6. White Paper: Northern Edge Habitat Management Considerations – January 20, 2022

7. Background information on the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area
8. Meeting summary – MAFMC/NEFMC leadership on GSC HMA – January 14, 2022
9. Correspondence