

## NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

### Habitat Committee

#### I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The PDT will meet on January 25 to discuss preliminary results from an EFP-based research project being conducted in the Great South Channel HMA. The Committee and Advisors will meet in March to discuss various habitat related items. Additional PDT meetings are likely during February and early March but have not been scheduled yet.
- B. Offshore Energy Coordination: The South Fork DEIS was released the first week of January, and public meetings will be held next month (more information at [South Fork Wind Farm Virtual Meetings | Bureau of Ocean Energy Management \(boem.gov\)](https://www.boem.gov)). If recommended to do so by the Council, staff will draft comments on the DEIS in collaboration with the PDT (the deadline is February 22). Vineyard Wind is revising the construction and operations plan for their project and the NEPA process for this project is therefore on hold. Maine is developing a proposal to request a lease for a research floating wind project in federal waters. Staff has been discussing project siting and research planning with staff at Maine DMR and NOAA Fisheries, and will identify additional opportunities for Council engagement if possible. Staff continues to collaborate with MAFMC and the NMFS Wind Team.
- C. Northeast Regional Fish Habitat Assessment: The NRHA team held a joint inshore/offshore team meeting in December, and an inshore sub-group meeting is planned for January 26 to discuss status/trends reporting ideas. The offshore team is currently refining single species and guild-based modeling using various methods. For more information visit <http://www.mafmc.org/nrha>.
- D. Aquaculture: In December, the Council submitted comments on both the Manna Fish Farm project off NY and the Blue Water Fisheries project off MA/NH, and in response to NOAA's request for information on Aquaculture Opportunity Areas. Planning around continued coordination with NOAA, which was identified as a 2021 work priority, will begin soon.
- E. Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment: NMFS approved the amendment in November 2019. The final rule is still in review.

#### II. COUNCIL ACTION

Recommend sending a comment letter to BOEM on the South Fork DEIS.

#### III. INFORMATION

- 1. Staff presentation (forthcoming)
- 2. Correspondence