

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Habitat Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The PDT met on May 3 and will meet on June 15 to discuss research priorities, habitat management on the Northern Edge, and potential updates to the Council's renewable energy policy. The Committee and Advisors met jointly on May 10 to discuss offshore wind, research priorities, and receive other updates.
- B. Northern Edge: The PDT is drafting a white paper to identify and evaluate habitat management considerations for this region. The Committee will use this information to develop a recommendation as to whether the Council should initiate an action.
- C. Offshore Energy Coordination: Since the April Council meeting, staff has written three comments letters jointly with MAFMC regarding Notices of Intent to prepare EISs for the Ocean Wind and Revolution Wind projects, and regarding a Request for Information related to leasing in the NY Bight. Four additional NOIs and an EA for the NY Bight are expected this summer. Staff will prepare comments if appropriate. The PDT is currently drafting updates to the Renewable Energy Policy, which the Committee will review at its next meeting (not yet scheduled). The Responsible Offshore Science Alliance will meet on June 17 and the Council will participate. Maine continues to develop a research floating lease request. Staff continues to collaborate with MAFMC and the NMFS Wind Team.
- D. Aquaculture: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a comment period open through July 8 for the Blue Water Fisheries project off NH. Staff have periodic check-ins with GARFO aquaculture coordinators about specific projects, aquaculture opportunity areas, and other relevant issues.
- E. Northeast Regional Fish Habitat Assessment: The Steering Committee met on April 29. 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.
- F. Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment: NMFS approved the amendment in November 2019. The final rule is still in review.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

- A. The Council should decide whether to develop comments on the Blue Water Fisheries project in response to a U.S. ACOE solicitation.
- B. GARFO, NEFSC, and BOEM will be providing updates on offshore wind activities, and staff will provide additional updates on recent work. Feedback is welcomed about how the Council might engage in specific initiatives at the staff, Committee, or full Council levels.

III. INFORMATION

- 1. Presentations
 - a. Brian Hooker, BOEM
 - b. Pete Burns, GARFO

- c. Andy Lipsky, NEFSC
 - d. Michelle Bachman, Council staff
- 2. Meeting summaries
 - a. Plan Development Team – May 3, 2021
 - b. Committee/Advisory Panel – May 10, 2021
 - c. Plan Development Team – June 15, 2021 (forthcoming, draft)
- 3. Comment opportunities
 - a. US ACOE, Blue Water Fisheries project – June 8, 2021
 - b. BOEM, NY Bight Leasing Proposed Sale Notice – June 14, 2021
 - c. USCG, Port Access Route Study, Approaches to Chesapeake Bay – June 16, 2021
- 4. Correspondence