

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Habitat Oversight Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment: The amendment submission document is under development and a draft will be submitted to NMFS when ready.
- B. Clam dredge Framework: The Committee met on August 28 and recommended that the PDT develop specific hydraulic clam dredge exemption alternatives within five areas suggested by the clam industry, considering four criteria (motion 1, document 2). The PDT will meet on September 18 to work on this task. The draft framework (document 3) includes additional background about the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area and the clam fishery. PDT, Committee, Enforcement Committee, and potentially Advisory Panel meetings later this fall will refine the range of alternatives in anticipation of final Council action in December.

The Committee also discussed the possibility of including mussel dredge exemption alternatives as part of the framework but did not recommend any exemption alternatives. Instead, the Committee suggests gathering information about mussel distributions through an EFP first, before considering a longer-term exemption program as part of a Council action. Specific to the EFP project, the Committee recommended that access only be granted within clam dredge exemption areas. Members also identified other aspects of the EFP study they felt were important. The Committee recommended that the Council send a letter to GARFO summarizing these recommendations about the EFP (see document 4).

- C. Offshore Energy Coordination: Engagement in offshore energy issues continues to be an important task for the Habitat Committee and staff. Since the June Council meeting, staff has been tracking offshore wind development through a joint NMFS/NEFMC/MAFMC wind team. This group comments on research initiatives, environmental review, and planning for future leasing. Members also collaborate on analyses and information related to fisheries and fish habitats to provide to BOEM. In addition, a joint NEFMC/MAFMC offshore wind webpage was published in early July (<http://www.mafmc.org/northeast-offshore-wind>). The Committee was briefed on various topics related to offshore wind during their August meeting (see document 2). RODA Executive Director Annie Hawkins will brief the Council during this meeting (see documents 5a and 5b).

II. COUNCIL ACTION

- A. Discuss the range of possible alternatives in the clam dredge framework
- B. Discuss/approve letter to GARFO re mussel dredge EFP within the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area

III. INFORMATION

1. Staff presentation on clam dredge framework alternatives (to be distributed)
2. Committee meeting summary (August 28, 2018)
3. Draft clam dredge framework document

4. Draft letter to GARFO re mussel dredge EFP
5. Responsible Offshore Development Alliance
 - a. RODA factsheet
 - b. RODA presentation
6. Correspondence
 - a. Clam dredge related
 - b. Mussel dredge related
 - c. Offshore wind related
 - d. Other correspondence