

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Habitat Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The PDT met on September 20 to discuss updates to the Council's wind energy policy and habitat management on the Northern Edge. The Committee and Advisors will meet in October to discuss these issues 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 assess the possibility of developing and action to revise Habitat Management Areas on the Northern Edge of Georges Bank.
- C. Offshore Energy Coordination: Since the June Council meeting, staff has written six comments letters jointly with MAFMC regarding Notices of Intent to prepare EISs for wind projects, and navigation and leasing in the NY Bight. Two more NOIs are expected this fall and staff will prepare comments for those projects as well. The PDT is recommending updates to the wind energy policy which the Committee will review at its October meeting. The Responsible Offshore Science Alliance will meet on September 24 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 Council, jointly with MAFMC, recently submitted comments on two draft, interagency strategic plans that are intended to improve regulatory efficiency and coordinate research. Staff have periodic check-ins with GARFO aquaculture coordinators about specific projects and other relevant issues.
- 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 November.
- F. Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment: Implemented on July 26, 2021.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

No action required.

III. INFORMATION

- 1. Presentation: Michelle Bachman, Council staff
- 2. Meeting summary: Plan Development Team – September 20, 2021 (forthcoming, draft)
- 3. Correspondence