

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Habitat Committee

I. STATUS

- A. Meetings: The Plan Development Team met on July 21st and August 25th to develop Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) designation alternatives using methods established during the recently completed EFH Five-Year Review, incorporating refined estuarine and inshore workflows. The Committee and Advisory Panel met jointly on September 11th to review the 2025 EFH Designation Framework, receive ocean planning and other updates, and plan 2026 activities.
- B. Essential Fish Habitat Designation Framework (2025): This action considers updated EFH designations for Atlantic cod, Atlantic herring, monkfish, and all seven skate species. The Habitat PDT worked with Mid-Atlantic Council staff and their EFH Fishery Management Action Team, as well as a modeling contractor, to develop a range of alternatives for the framework. The PDT consulted with the Groundfish, Atlantic Herring, Monkfish, and Skate PDTs and Advisory Panels on the draft designations. The Habitat Committee and Advisory Panel met on September 11th to recommend a preferred alternative. The New England Council is scheduled to take final action in September; the Mid-Atlantic Council is expected to receive an update on monkfish EFH (joint FMP) during their October meeting.
- C. Ocean Planning: Staff continue to coordinate with MAFMC, GARFO, NEFSC, ROSA, RODA, and other partners on offshore wind issues of regional interest. Staff are also following the Locking Away Carbon on the Northeast Shelf and Slope (LOC-NESS) project (a marine carbon dioxide removal project proposed in the Gulf of Maine; field experiment completed in August), offshore oil/gas leasing, potential for offshore mineral mining, and other offshore projects including the New England Shelf Expedition coring [project](#) (completed in August). Staff also continue to engage with NROC and the national marine sanctuaries (Stellwagen and Hudson Canyon).
- D. Atlantic Salmon Aquaculture Framework: Proposed rule publication is pending NOAA review.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

Final action on 2025 EFH Designation Framework.

III. INFORMATION

- 1. Staff Presentation
 - 2. 2025 Essential Fish Habitat Designation Framework
 - 3. Recent Meeting Summaries
 - a. Habitat PDT, July 21, 2025
 - b. Habitat PDT, August 25, 2025
 - c. Habitat Committee and Advisory Panel, September 11, 2025 (DRAFT)
 - 4. Correspondence
- Habitat, Ocean Planning, and other correspondence is archived [here](#).