

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Small Mesh Multispecies (Whiting) Committee

I. STATUS

Following a joint Plan Development Team (PDT) and Advisory Panel (AP) workshop on April 1, the Small-Mesh Multispecies Committee met jointly with the AP to recommend the scope of measures to be considered in a 2026 management action, along with updating catch specifications for 2027-2031. The PDT conducted several preliminary analyses of exemption area measures consistency, red hake catch vs. possession limits, and whiting to large-mesh groundfish catch ratios as an indicator of places where it could be possible to modify existing exemption areas.

Based on these analyses and AP recommendations, the Committee is recommending that the 2026 action should include:

- 2027 – 2031 catch specifications
 - Assessment data update, risk policy factor scoring
- Red hake possession limit adjustments
- Exemption area adjustments
 - Standardization of bycatch allowances – monkfish and lobster only
 - Exemption area seasons – extend Raised Footrope Area
 - Exemption area boundaries – modify CSA and SMA2

II. COUNCIL ACTION

1. Approve scope of measures to be considered in the 2026 management action.
2. Initiate framework adjustment action, if necessary.

III. INFORMATION

1. Staff presentation
2. Documents:
 - a. Small-Mesh Multispecies Exemption Area Topics ([link](#))
 - b. List of Small-Mesh Multispecies Frameworkable Measures ([link](#))
3. Meeting summaries:
 - a. May 19, 2026 Joint Committee and Advisory Panel ([link](#))
 - b. April 1, 2026 Advisory Panel and Plan Development Team Data Workshop summary ([link](#)).
4. Correspondence