

Consideration of Social Information in New England Fisheries Management: Report on 2019 Interviews with New England Fishery Management Council Members

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Project Purpose

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- Fisheries management is managing the human use of a renewable but exhaustible resource, as such understanding human dimensions is essential to management decisions
- “Sociocultural” covers aspects of human dimensions of fisheries that relate to the “who” of fishing which are inextricably linked with the economics of fishing
- Two project drivers:
 - Opportunity to revisit 2012 project findings
 - Council program review rec. re: consideration of social info
- Goal: Provide information to assist the Council in its deliberations and future planning around use of social info

- Overarching question:
 - What information do you need to know about fishery participants, communities and other stakeholders that would help you make better-informed decisions as a Council member?
- 19 semi-structured confidential interviews (July-Oct 2019)
- Transcripts and notes analyzed for themes
 - Needs/recommendations, negatives/challenges, positive statements
 - information and data, documents, staff interactions, general

Results: Information and Data (1)

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- Positives (examples)
 - Where available, good information is provided
 - Community dependence, groundfish performance reports, scallop leasing info
 - Ability to discuss social science info improving

"All socio-economic data is limited. That's my perspective anyway. So any new information is helpful. ... [What's there] can be maybe described a little bit better, but they're not that bad now, it's just there is a data limitation in the system."

Results: Information and Data (2)

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- Needs and Challenges

- Wide range of types of info noted as needed for management, but also as described as lacking
- Voluntary nature of much info
- Distrust / survey fatigue
- Fishermen not being able to “envision themselves in the analyses”
- Information needed and lacking / prevalence by seat (see Table 1)
 - demographics (13)
 - economics / financial (12)
 - data quality / scientific rigor (7)
 - dependence / reliance (6)
 - shoreside (6)
 - community (5)
 - diversification (5)
 - recreational (5)
 - confidential data (3)
 - data from industry (3)
 - leases (3)
 - scenarios (3)
 - consolidation (2)
 - others

See rpt pages 7-12

Excerpt from Table 1. Information noted as needed and as lacking by Council members

Theme	Needed for Decisions - Details	Lacking - Details	Prevalence
Demographics	general, # of individuals/ participants (also at community level), age, community demographics (general and primary target species), comparison across communities, crew info (inc. earnings), demographics of impacted, gear type demographics, distribution of jobs, distribution of landings, ownership demographics (individuals, corporations, etc.), fishery participation, permit structure, recreational and commercial make-up, usage patterns / participation, vessel classes.	distribution: # permits landing % fish, fishing activity locations, length of operation of businesses, role/position in industry, *Many items noted as needed for decisions were also noted as areas for improvement.	13 seats
Economics/ financial	Differential financial impact of regulations, distribution of profit, distribution of revenue, distributional aspects, economics at fleet level not community, ex-vessel value, financial impact to vessel owners, general, geographic distribution of impacts, impact on businesses, input prices, overhead costs, return to owner.	jobs linked indirectly to vessels, lost markets, percent income from fishing, percent income from leasing, see fishery economics from industry perspective, info on ability to access capital (new vs established operations), economic analysis doesn't take enough into consideration (initial permit, boat cost / payments) / solvent number is too low, incomplete economic info (i.e. health insurance costs missing, financial info missing), more needed. *Most items noted as needed for decisions were also noted as areas for improvement.	12 seats
Quality / scientific rigor	Accuracy and reliability key	Economic numbers/info isn't right, need more up to date info, need improved quality of economic impact analysis, info doesn't seem accurate (communities, average income, etc.), MRIP data concerns, slight negative / slight positive is hard to interpret, concern with stretching/ extrapolations, use of assumptions in economic models impacts confidence, use of averages challenge, scale of the analysis.	7 seats

Results: Information and Data (4)

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- Recommendations from Council Members
 - Include and consider socio-economic information earlier and more iteratively throughout the deliberative process
 - Include dedicated social impact presentations as part of deliberative process
 - Consider the interaction of biological and social uncertainty
 - Have a centralized data source that all can draw from
 - Revisit confidentiality / rule of three requirements and implications
 - Revisit the definition of active groundfish permit (one pound landed is not realistic)
 - Possible areas for future study suggested

See rpt pages 7-12, 24-25

Results: Documents (1)

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- Positives

Useful Items	Noted Improvements
Groundfish performance report Charts/graphs Social section of EIS Summary documents Correspondence summaries Public hearing summaries	Conscious effort to improve See improvements over time Improvements in timeliness of docs Structure of documents (standardization) Improvements to info on shoreside

See rpt pages 12-13

Results: Documents (2)

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- Challenges
 - Volume of information (9 seats)
 - Timing of documents (5 seats)
 - Various others
- Recommendations from Council Members
 - streamlining where possible (5 seats)
 - use of visualized data (5 seats)
 - viewing the industry and public as the target audience for documents (4 seats)
 - desire for digitized interactive documents and/or open source data (1 seat)
 - presenting social information as formally as possible (1 seat)

“[Think] about how to best communicate another type of science that is the least familiar to all the members ... there is a whole other vocabulary involved” [in social science].

Results: Staff interactions (1)

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- Positives

- Smart
- Hardworking
- Competent
- Open to adding information
- Responsive

- Challenges

- Lack of familiarity with staff beyond Council staff
- Past lack of social science trained staff impacts current operations/ processes
- Limited interaction with NEFSC staff
- Differential access to expertise
- Processes and interactions are not set up for feedback on the social science analyses

"I don't know how they'd do a better job. I truly don't. They do a pretty darn good job laying information out there, just they're using really bad information to derive an answer."

Results: Staff interactions (2)

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- Recommendations from Council Members
 - Recognize the importance of relationships and all make an effort to reach out to each other
 - Continue opportunities for small group/ informal
 - Explore building in more time / opportunities for idea exchange and collaboration
 - Staff to staff interaction to learn
 - Have social science technical experts available at the beginning of the process, not just the end
 - Ensure that the presentation of data and results are objective and unbiased / acknowledge the disciplinary perspective
 - Continue to focus on and build capacity to clearly communicate

"take what the scientists say and provide a picture to the fishermen that they can relate to, from their personal experiences, or to be able to describe why, what they're seeing may not be, and understanding may not be, what is coming out of the social science work that they're doing."

See rpt pages 13-15

Results: General/other (1)

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- Challenges

- Interconnectedness and complexity of issues (7 seats)
- Perceived legal constraints (5 seats), and
- Different levels of involvement by various Council members, industry members, and others (4 seats).

“working to improve [the social science] I think is going to benefit the council members like me and making their decision but it's also I hope will build buy in from the communities that are suspect of everything we do right now. Building that trust, I think ends up with better decisions.”

Results: General/other (2)

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- Recommendations from Council Members
 - Consider how the Council process around human dimensions impacts buy-in
 - Increase the Council's general social science awareness to help know what questions to ask
 - Increase interagency coordination on socio-econ impacts (especially re: offshore wind activities)
 - Provide more opportunities for interaction
 - Explore a role for CCC or NRCC to assist with shared social science challenges across Councils
 - Have more socio-economic discussion (based on data) at the table

- Progress since 2012 report
 - Use of SIAs seems to have increased, but challenges remain
 - Still learn of social impacts from public comments, but use docs too
 - New social science resources and tools available
- Social sciences are the areas where most members have the least technical expertise and comfort
- Wide range of perspectives on data and information, documents, staff interactions, and several general areas.
- Council members were highly positive about the staff involved, but expressed frustration and challenges with the data and information available to them to consider the human dimensions.
- Report provides a starting point for further consideration by the Council, as well as opportunities for agency and academic partners to consider

- Any questions on the project / outcomes?
- Do you “see yourselves” in the report? Does it seem to capture what you shared? Are there any major themes/ issues missed?
- What next steps should be pursued?
 - Staff review?
 - Research priorities input?
 - Other?

Thank you

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“In science, when human behavior enters the equation, things go nonlinear. That's why Physics is easy and Sociology is hard.”

- Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson