

# Greater Atlantic Region Stock Prioritization

Cate O'Keefe

New England Fishery Management Council

September 16, 2026

Plymouth, MA



New England Fishery  
Management Council

# BACKGROUND: NOAA Risk/Value Matrix Proposal

## Goal:

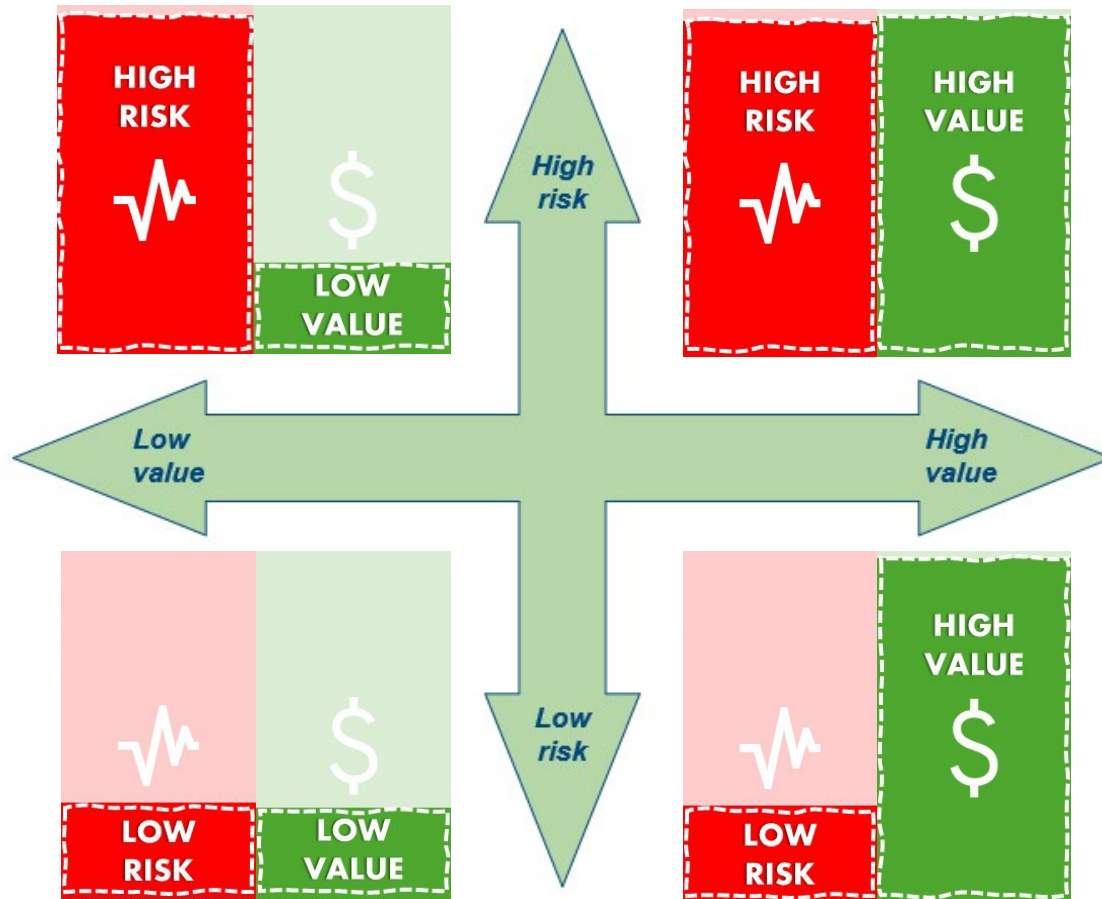
- Provide framework for narrowing the scope of NMFS management and science

## Baseline Assumptions:

- NMFS cannot continue to manage the 500+ stocks/complexes currently in FMPs
- There will be impacts to changing how NMFS manages fisheries
- Balance national consistency and interoperability with regional flexibility
- Creation and application of regional Risk/Value matrices must be co-developed with Science Centers, Regional Offices, and Councils



# NOAA Risk/Value Matrix Proposal (2025)



## Value Categories

- Commercial
- Recreational
- Social

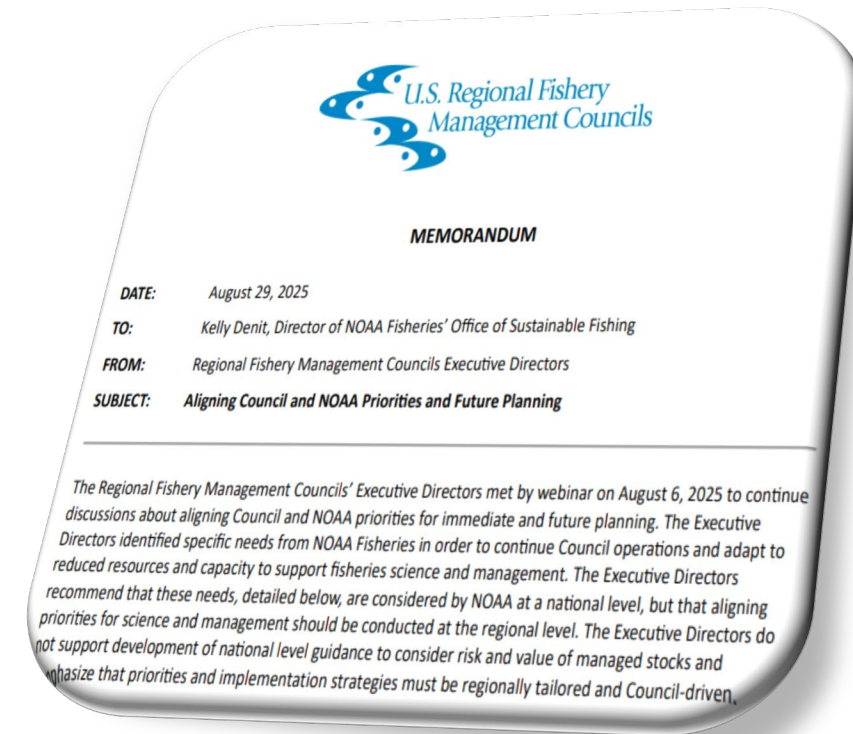
## Risk Categories

- Relative stock status – B/B target
- Susceptibility to environmental phenomenon
  - Climate Vulnerability Analysis (CVA)
  - Probability & Susceptibility Analysis (PSA)
- Proven impact on ecosystem
- Effectiveness of management



# Council Coordination Committee (2026)

- Executive Directors:
  - Questions about national alignment of regionally different needs
  - Request to conduct regional efforts with Council input
- NOAA Updates:
  - Removed requirement for Councils to respond by June 30, 2026
  - Continue work with Councils on tradeoffs and capacity constraints
  - R/V Matrix to be used as a tool for prioritization of NMFS' activities
- CCC Motion (May 2026):
  - Each Council, Regional Office, and Science Center continue work on the alignment of priorities and capacity and report back to the CCC on progress at the October CCC meeting.



# Regional Stock Prioritization Process

- NRCC initial discussion – January 2026 Interseasonal Meeting
- Regional Working Group with representation from all NRCC organizations
  - Moira Kelly, Jay Hermsen – Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
  - Mike Simpkins – Northeast Fisheries Science Center
  - Cate O’Keefe, Jamie Cournane – New England Council
  - Chris Moore, Brandon Muffley – Mid-Atlantic Council
  - Bob Beal, Toni Kerns, Pat Campfield – Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
- Include expertise and representation for value and risk categories
  - Management – policy and regulatory
  - Science – surveys, assessments, fishery information
  - Socioeconomics – risk policy, community impacts, cultural importance



New England Fishery  
Management Council

# Regional Stock Prioritization Approach

- Objectives:
  - To visualize our collective managed species, while recognizing the differences in the overall economic and social value and the biological, ecological, and social impacts of management on stocks and fisheries.
  - Results are intended to provide additional information to all NRCC partners to prioritize science product timing and complexity, staff resource allocation, or whether a stock is still in need of conservation and management, among other uses.
- Definitions:
  - **Value**: the economic value added to the regional economy for the commercial and recreational fisheries
  - **Risk**: the possibility that an event will occur that affects the achievement of management objectives
    - Biological and ecological (e.g., susceptibility to overfishing, climate vulnerability)
    - Management levels (e.g., fishery dependence, impacts of not meeting objectives (OY, etc.))



# Regional Stock Prioritization Approach

- Step 1 – Current Organizational Investment:
  - Baseline summary of relative investment for each stock (*0-none to 3-high*)
  - Excluded state-only managed stocks and focused on federally supported stocks
- Step 2 – Value Considerations:
  - Total value added for both 3- and 7-year horizons from combined commercial and recreational
    - Commercial:
      - Ex-vessel value from GARFO and NEFSC databases
      - Multiplied by a national value-added multiplier from the Input-Output models
        - [Fisheries Economics of the United States](#)
    - Recreational:
      - Total trips constructed at the year-state-mode-stock level
      - Recreational expenditure survey data at the level noted above
      - Multiplied by a national value-added multiplier from the Input-Output models



# Regional Stock Prioritization Approach

- Step 3 – Risk Factors:
  - Based on stock scores from [2017 NRCC assessment prioritization process](#), which considered:

| Factors                   | Metrics                                |                                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Management Needs       | Specification timing                   | Rebuilding status                    |
| 2. Fishery Importance     | Commercial/Recreational importance     | Constituent demand                   |
| 3. Stock Status and Trend | Relative stock abundance and trend     | Relative fishing mortality and trend |
| 4. Ecosystem Importance   | Trophic importance                     | Climate vulnerability                |
| 5. Assessment Information | Unexpected changes to stock indicators | Years overdue for assessment         |

- Step 4 – Quadrant Placement:
  - Value (lognormal transformed) and risk scores for each stock were plotted
  - High/Low **value** threshold is ~\$2 million USD
  - High/Low **risk** threshold is ~2.2 from the risk factor scoring (Step 3)



# Regional Stock Prioritization Approach

- Additional Considerations:
  - New stocks since 2017
    - Inferences to assign scores to risk categories
      - Example: “Old” Georges Bank cod scores applied to “New” Georges Bank and Southern New England cod
  - New information since 2017
    - WG professional judgement to consider updated information for revisions (e.g., stock condition, climate vulnerability, fishery dependency, and management objectives)
      - Example: Scallops shifted from Low to High Risk based on recent distribution changes and climate impacts
- Interpretation:
  - Some stocks may be at high risk biologically, but further management intervention may not meaningfully mitigate risks (e.g., SNE winter flounder)
  - Stocks may be at low risk biologically, but management underperformance may warrant additional investment (e.g., black sea bass)



# DRAFT Greater Atlantic Region Stock Prioritization Results

| High Risk/Low Value                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | High Risk/High Value                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p> <a href="#">Atlantic Sturgeon</a><br/> <a href="#">American Shad</a><br/> <a href="#">Blueline Tilefish</a><br/> <a href="#">CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder</a><br/>           EGOM Cod<br/>           GOM Winter Flounder<br/> <a href="#">Northern Shrimp</a><br/> <a href="#">River Herring</a><br/>           Smooth Skate<br/> <a href="#">SNE/MA Winter Flounder</a><br/>           Thorny Skate         </p> | <p>           Atlantic Herring<br/> <a href="#">Atlantic Mackerel</a><br/> <a href="#">Black Sea Bass</a><br/> <a href="#">Bluefish</a><br/> <a href="#">Butterfish</a><br/>           GB Cod<br/>           GB Winter Flounder<br/> <a href="#">Golden Tilefish</a><br/> <a href="#">GOM/GB American Lobster</a><br/> <a href="#">Jonah Crab</a><br/>           Little Skate<br/> <a href="#">Scallop</a> </p> | <p> <a href="#">Scup</a><br/> <a href="#">SNE American Lobster</a><br/>           SNE Cod<br/> <a href="#">Spiny Dogfish</a><br/> <a href="#">Striped Bass</a><br/> <a href="#">Summer Flounder</a><br/>           WGOM Cod<br/> <a href="#">White Hake</a><br/>           Winter Skate<br/>           Witch Flounder<br/>           GB Haddock         </p> |
| Low Risk/Low Value                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Low Risk/High Value                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>           Atlantic Wolffish<br/>           Barndoor Skate<br/> <a href="#">Chub Mackerel</a><br/>           Clearnose Skate<br/>           GB Yellowtail Flounder<br/>           GOM/GB Windowpane Flounder<br/>           N. Red Hake<br/>           Ocean Pout<br/>           Rosette Skate<br/>           SNE/MA Windowpane Flounder<br/>           SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder         </p>                  | <p>           American Plaice<br/>           Atlantic Halibut<br/>           Deep-Sea Red Crab<br/> <a href="#">Illex Squid</a><br/>           GOM Haddock<br/> <a href="#">Longfin Squid</a><br/>           NFMA <a href="#">Monkfish</a><br/>           N. Silver Hake<br/> <a href="#">Ocean Quahog</a> </p>                                                                                                 | <p>           Pollock<br/>           Redfish<br/>           SFMA <a href="#">Monkfish</a><br/>           S. Red Hake<br/>           S. Silver Hake/Offshore Hake<br/> <a href="#">Surfclam</a> </p>                                                                                                                                                          |

# DRAFT NEFMC Stock Prioritization Results (w/Investment Level)

| High Risk/Low Value                                                               |                                                                                                                                                   | High Risk/High Value                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| High Risk                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                               |
| Smooth Skate (1)<br>Thorny Skate (1)                                              | EGOM Cod (3)<br>GOM Winter Flounder (2)<br>SNE/MA Winter Flounder (2)<br>CC/GOM Yellowtail (2)                                                    | Scallop (3)<br>Atlantic Herring (3)<br>Little Skate (2)<br>Winter Skate (2)<br>Spiny Dogfish (2)                                    | WGOM Cod (3)<br>GB Cod (3)<br>SNE Cod (3)<br>GB Haddock (3)<br>White Hake (3)<br>Witch Flounder (3)<br>GB Winter Flounder (2) |
| Low Value                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                     | High Value                                                                                                                    |
| Low Risk/Low Value                                                                |                                                                                                                                                   | Low Risk/High Value                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                               |
| Barndoor Skate (1)<br>Clearnose Skate (1)<br>Rosette Skate (1)<br>N. Red Hake (2) | SNE/MA Yellowtail (2)<br>GB Yellowtail (2)<br>N. Windowpane Flounder (2)<br>S. Windowpane Flounder (2)<br>Atlantic Wolffish (1)<br>Ocean Pout (1) | Deep-Sea Red Crab (1)<br>N. Monkfish (2)<br>S. Monkfish (2)<br>S. Red Hake (2)<br>N. Silver Hake (2)<br>S. Silver/Offshore Hake (2) | GOM Haddock (3)<br>Pollock (3)<br>Redfish (3)<br>American Plaice (3)<br>Atlantic Halibut (1)                                  |
|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                   | Low Risk                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                               |

# DRAFT NRCC Recommendations

- Investment Level Comparison
  - NRCC and individual organizations to compare current investment levels with results from risk/value matrix
  - Consider if resources and time are aligned, including shared resources
  - “Resource savings” could be redirected to support specific objectives
- Possible Applications
  - Strongly against assigning default reactions to quadrant placement
  - Intended as a tool to inform potential responses and prioritization processes
  - Councils may choose different options for stocks in same quadrant
  - Support for requests/responses to NOAA
    - Surveys, research, monitoring, data collection systems



# Next Steps - NEFMC

- Ecosystem Component Candidates
  - Prioritize stocks for EC screening (IRA project – presented to Council in June)
- Stock Assessment Schedule
  - Draft proposal for 5-year schedule of assessments
- Specification Frequency
  - Inform needs within Management Flexibility to set for up to 5 years
- Council Work Priorities
  - Timing and sequencing of Council activities
- Council Research Priorities
  - Align research investments with stock risk and value



# Next Steps - NRCC

- Complete Summary Report
  - Revisions deadline – Oct. 16
  - Final Report – Oct. 31
- NRCC Applications
  - NRCC meeting – Nov. 19-20
    - Review proposal for 5-year regional stock assessment schedule
    - Consider priority topics for 2027 and beyond

