



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116

John F. Quinn, J.D., Ph.D., *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

DATE: July 17, 2018
TO: Council
FROM: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Summary of January 26, 2018 Executive Committee Meeting

Attendance: The Executive Committee met in Danvers, MA. Executive Committee members attending were Mr. Quin, Mr. Stockwell, Mr. Grout, Mr. Alexander and Mr. Kendall. Also attending were Mr. Nies, Mr. Pentony, Mr. Ruccio, Dr. Hare, Mr. Macdonald, Ms. Frede, and Mr. Kellogg. The committee discussed the agenda items below.

1. Closed sessions – During closed sessions the Committee approved changes in SSC appointments for 2018 pending consultation with the Council at its January 30-31, 2018 meeting and some Advisory Panel appointments.

2. Executive Director's Report

a. Budget overview

Mr. Nies reported that there would be about a \$280,000 carryover from the Council 2017 total awards; however that much of this would be used to cover some contracts for which payments are still outstanding. These include contracts to update the SASI model, outreach conducted by the Sustainable Fisheries Forum for the Council's program review and work on developing catch advice for Atlantic halibut. The largest changes in Council expenditures resulted from filling two staff vacancies and travel and compensation expenses from hosting the Council Coordinating Committee meeting. He added that the Council had a cumulative carry over that should enable it to meet anticipated expenditures in 2018 even if, as expected, there would be no increase in its base administrative award.

b. Council Performance Review update

Mr. Nies explained that the Performance Review Panel would meet on March 13-16. Although there will be public access to most of the meeting, the review panel felt that it needed to meet in an executive to facilitate writing its report. He noted panel members also requested that the Council consider some modifications the terms of reference (TORs) for the review. These include evaluating NMFS policies for supporting the Council and strengths and weakness of the scientific information used by the Council. The reasons for the request are that the panel thinks these would require resources - do we really expect the RP to do this - it is beyond what we have time for - do we want the RP to look at the way the system is set up to provide information. Gave MS a heads up. Will probably ask a few more people to participate in the review at the request of the RP - asked Terry & Doug to participate when certain Council actions are reviewed. Not everyone. LS will be on the conference line.

c. Council financial support to states

The committee agreed that the Executive Director should contact the states to see if they were interested and able to receive Council funding on the following terms: \$40,000 per year in support to each state over the next two years; the states would be required to file annual reports and funding for 2019 would not be provided until the report was received for 2018; continuation of this program into the next grant cycle (2020-2025) would depend on evaluation of the tow-year program and the future budget.

3. Groundfish Data Workshop

At the December Council meeting, the Council discussion clarified the primary purpose of forming a working group to identify and/or improve methods for using monitoring data in stock assessments to estimate stock biomass was to explore the use of CPUE in stock assessments as an index of abundance and again asked the Executive Committee to discuss the issue. After discussing the issue, the Executive Committee agreed to the following to the following recommendations.

The Council and the NEFSC should convene a working group with four main deliverables.

- Explain how fishery dependent and fishery independent data is used in stock assessments. This should include an explanation of how different data elements are used and interact in an age-based analytic assessment.
- Summarize the theoretical utility and limitations of using CPUE/LPUE as an index of abundance for Northeast Multispecies stocks. List recent (GARM III or later) efforts to create a CPUE for any of these stocks and the results of those efforts (i.e. successful/unsuccessful, used in analytic assessment, etc.).
- Without regard to existing fishing practices, regulations, or monitoring systems, identify the fishery factors and fishery dependent data needed to create a CPUE that would be a reliable index of abundance for Northeast Multispecies stocks.
- Compare the desired factors identified with existing conditions and data for the fishery. This should be a gap analysis of factors and data needed, as well as the analytical approaches necessary, to create a CPUE that would be a reliable index of abundance for Northeast Multispecies stocks.

Working group participants should include NMFS and Council staff, industry representatives, and other scientists. The Council and the SSC should each select two external scientists as members. The Council will pay travel costs for external participants. The working group should consist of 8-10 members. The working group should conduct its business as efficiently as possible; if in-person meetings are held they should be open to the public.

The working group should prepare a report that reflects the consensus of the group. If a consensus cannot be reached the report should summarize key differences of opinion. This report should be written in a clear, non-technical manner so that it can be easily understood by the public. The SSC will review the report; after review by the SSC it will be presented to the Council (via the Groundfish Committee) for consideration and possible action.

If possible, the work should be completed so that it can be presented to the Groundfish Committee prior to the June Council meeting; however, the committee felt this timeframe would be very difficult to meet. Individual committee members added that the information should apply to all stocks and although the workgroup results should inform the Council in its consideration of Amendment 23, it should not delay the completion of the amendment.

4. ASMFC/Atlantic Herring Section request

Mr. Grout reported that ASFMC had no plan to revisit their offer of non-voting seat for the Council on the herring section. He added that he did not know how ASMFC would respond to the Council's request for a voting seat and he had suggested to ASMFC that the herring and shrimp sections be changed to boards to help resolve the problem. A cause for some confusion was the mistaken perception that a Council representative might oppose requiring days-out of the herring fishery, but only commissioners from MA, ME and NH may vote on these measures. The committee agreed to decline the offer of the non-voting seat and to continue work on the issue through the Council/ASMFC leadership work group.

5. Management timelines

Mr. Kellogg reviewed changes to the Council action timelines. New timelines were added for 2019 scallop specifications (FW 30), 2019 Groundfish specifications (FW 58), and Skate FW 6 to consider increasing the uncertainty buffer and to keep the directed wing fishery open as long as possible. He also reported the staff was in the process of preparing submission documents for specifications for whiting, groundfish, scallops and skates that also included other measures as well as the DEIS's for Herring Amendment 8 and Whiting Amendment 22 and waiting for comments on preliminary submissions for several of these including Groundfish FW57.

Mr. Nies pointed out that an issue with the IFM amendment timelines was whether the Council intended that an observer would be required on any trips into year-round closure areas.

6. Observer Committee composition

Mr. Nies reported that the Observer Committee originally was formed to provide input on operational concerns with the observer program and that the issues being raised by the Industry-funded Monitoring Amendment, Electronic Monitoring initiatives and the Council priority to develop a strategic approach to monitoring were much broader in scope than the committee's original purpose. Also, the committee, unlike Council species committee, had only a minority of Council members, and because of its changing responsibilities needed to be comprised of mainly Council members. The Executive Committee agreed that the Council should begin the process of changing the Observer Committee's membership in response to the change in the tasking for the Committee.

7. Habitat Planning: OHA2, wind power and offshore drilling

The committee discussed the timing of the implementation of the Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2 (OHA2). Mr. Pentony reported that it was still expected to be implemented in April 2018

Mr. Nies explained the staff had discussed with the MAFMC and GARFO staff the possibility of sharing effort and resources to better support steps by both Council to address concerns about the development of offshore wind power. This effort might eventually result in the development of a "report" on fisheries and offshore wind that's a living, modular, online resource, with an early data product consisting of a series of VTR-based maps of revenue and landings by FMP, with accompanying summary tables by statistical area and wind energy area.

8. RSA Program Review

Mr. Nies summarized the information in a draft paper outlining the issues the review might address including program administration, structure and expected results. The committee approved the draft provided by Mr. Nies with the addition that when the group discusses alternatives to a competitive grant approach, a NOAA or DOC grants attorney should be included in the discussions.

9. Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) Update

Mr. Stockwell reported the NTAP discussed the need to amend its charter to add two members, one from the Science Center stock assessment group and another from the trawl survey group to enhance communications among NTAP membership and organizations. The committee supported Mr. Stockwell's suggestion that the NTAP charter be amended under the directions of the committee chairs - Mr. Stockwell and Mr. Luisi, chair of the MAFMC.