

Scientific and Statistical Committee Social Sciences Subcommittee

Webinar

March 10, 2026



New England
Fishery Management Council

Introductions

Social Sciences Subcommittee
Hiro Uchida, SSC (Chair)
Anna Birkenbach, SSC
Rachel Feeney, Council staff
Mateja Nenadovic, SSC
Tarsila Seara, NEFSC SSB
Kevin St. Martin, SSC

Agenda

9:00	Welcome, introductions, opening remarks, review agenda
9:10	Social Sciences Branch data products
12:00	Lunch
12:45	Social science work anticipated in 2026
3:15	Other Business <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update on CINAR workshop planning• Updates to SSS workplan and next steps
4:00	Adjourn

SSS Work Plan

SSS Purpose:

“To foster communication and collaboration between the NEFSC Social Sciences Branch and Council to improve the use of social science information in the Council process”

SSS objectives:

1. Create more opportunities for integrating social sciences tools to inform management.
2. Better understand the Council’s socioeconomic objectives to help address management needs.
3. Increase coordination between SSS and SSB staff in various Council PDTs.
4. Better integrate existing tools and data from SSB and other sources into fisheries management advice and decision-making processes.
5. Improve effectiveness and optimize timing of social science data inputs and recommendations.

SSS Work Plan

Selected – what the SSS expects to make progress on today

Actions	Approaches
Meet needs for Council actions	Identify opportunities for SSB data products
	Review Council annual work priorities to strategize what information would be informative
	Invite social science PDT members to discuss what social and economic issues they are helping address, where information is used and how, and any barriers; support improved analyses
	Using CINAR Phase 1 list of data products, find barriers to uptake; identify on-ramps, make connections, and maintain list over time

Social Sciences Branch data products

- Presentation on the range of data products (T. Seara, NEFSC)
- SSS questions
- Public comment
- Discuss and develop recommendations on data products and pathways for use by the Council

(see separate presentation)



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Social science work anticipated in 2026

- Presentation
 - Prior identifications of barriers
 - Social science work occurring in support of the Council's 2026 work priorities
- Clarifying SSS questions after each management plan
- Public comment
- Solution-oriented discussion to develop recommendations on:
 - What information is needed to support this work,
 - Any barriers to conducting the work, and
 - Actionable steps for how to overcome these barriers

MAY 2024 CINAR WORKSHOP

- 21 SSC members, SSB and Council staff; 1.5 days
- Goals:
 - Develop shared understanding of *existing tools and data sets*.
 - Explore range of *barriers* to use of social science in decision processes.
 - Identify *characteristics* of barriers (where, nature) and *approaches* to address them.
 - *Recommend* follow-ups; strengthen *connections* and *dialog*.
- Acknowledged much has been done to identify data gaps and capacity needs; sought to understand more specific barriers.

MAY 2024 CINAR WORKSHOP

Barrier Type	Barrier Examples
Redirecting capacity / prioritization / tradeoff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given constraints on researcher and staff capacity, redirecting capacity to where it might be more impactful (e.g., from “back end” impact analyses and report writing to “front end” context setting).
Data infrastructures (content, design, systems of use)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent periodicity of data collection / baselines. The Paperwork Reduction Act presents multiple barriers to the representativeness and timeliness of social and economic data collection.
Data scale / resolution / format / units of analysis / etc. (i.e., “square peg, round hole”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to integrate data on targeting behavior in a multispecies fishery into a single-species stock assessment? Socioeconomic data often at fishery or community level, not species/stock level or specific to management alternatives.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siloed conversations based on disciplinary expertise and/or familiarity with certain fisheries. Awareness /understanding of tools/needs.
Process and institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Path dependency (i.e., “this is how have always been done”) and inertia of keeping the status quo, often resulting in leaving out social science. Timing of data needs and advice windows are “off” relative to the timing of decision-making.
Multi-objective management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear how to balance different decision outcomes, like distribution vs. maximization of value, or conservation vs. value from harvesting (i.e., how to weight criteria).

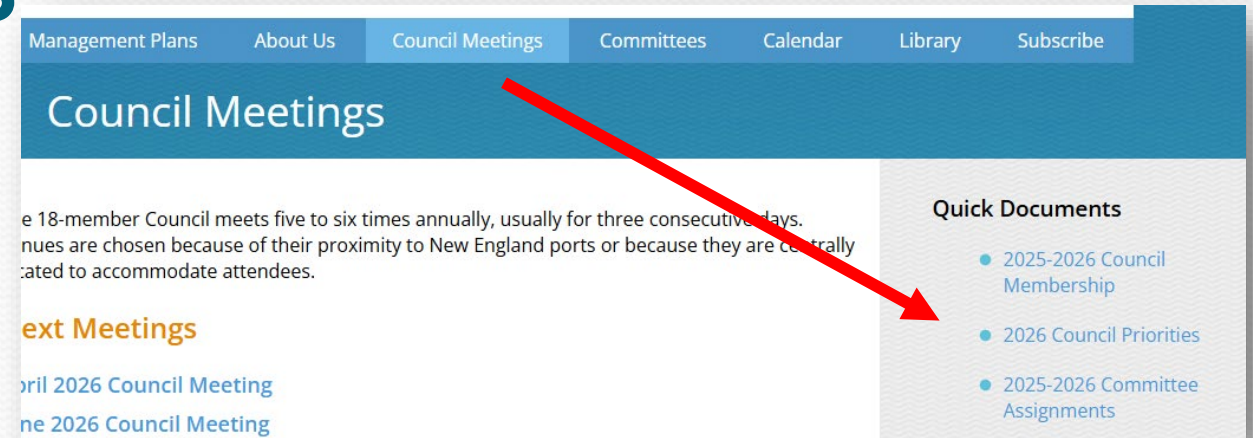
MAY 2024 CINAR WORKSHOP

Approaches to Address Barriers	Possible Avenues/Goals
<p>Enhance/expand the use of social science in existing/established tasks, processes, and working groups within and beyond the SSC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Socioeconomic context briefs/short performance reports <i>(in progress!)</i> -For Council priorities, highlight data needs, products to meets needs, analyses most needed. <i>(today!)</i> -Participate in management strategy evaluations adding vessel and fleet behavioral responses/adaptations. -Input on Risk Policy metrics to incorporate financial risks for participants and communities. <i>(in progress!)</i> -Incorporate social science into assessments (e.g., fishermen’s behavioral adaptations, bycatch avoidance, changes in targeting, timing and location of effort) and in peer reviews.
<p>Establish a formal or informal SSC subgroup dedicated to developing social science advice for management <i>(done!)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ultimate goal: to not only enhance preparedness if social science is called upon ad hoc in SSC meetings, but also to foster a culture in which social science advice is considered a regular and essential part of the decision-making structure.
<p>Build a more connected fisheries social science “ecosystem”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Foster continuous working relationships (SSB, SSC, public, academics) to address barriers related to communication and data formats. <i>(today!)</i> -Meet people where they are, visiting communities to share findings. -Shift social science involvement to the “front end” of decision-making processes. <i>(today!)</i> -Maintain a user-updated listing of information products available.

COUNCIL WORK PRIORITIES

Annual priorities posted on NEFMC.org

- **Annual decision process:**
 - September – Council reviews draft priorities: prior commitments, required work, input from Committees
 - December – Final decisions, considering available staff/contractor resources
 - Can be revised mid-year, but change requires $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote



- **Priorities usually include:**
 - Specification setting for a subset of stocks (e.g., skate & herring ABCs)
 - Multi-year priorities committed to in a prior year (e.g., FMP amendment, strategic planning)
 - Legally required work (e.g., rebuilding plan, program review)
 - Inter-organization work (e.g., NRCC, CCC)
 - Inflation Reduction Act & E.O. 14276 projects
 - Discretionary FMP revisions

- Focus today on 2026 work priorities coordinated by Plan Development Teams.
- All priorities for the FMP listed, with notes on expected social science work.
- Slides prepared by PDT social scientists, chair, other Council staff.

FMP	PDT Chair	PDT Analysts/Presentation Contributors
Scallops	Connor Buckley	Bobby Murphy, Naresh Pradhan
Herring	Jamie Cournane	Emily Bodell
Small-mesh multispecies	Andy Applegate	Naresh Pradhan, Emily Bodell
Northeast multispecies	Robin Frede	Greg Ardini, Matt Cutler
Monkfish and Skates	Jenny Couture, Rachel Feeney	Emily Bodell, Rachel Feeney, Samantha Werner

ATLANTIC SEA SCALLOPS

2026 Work Priority	Timing/Progress
Complete and submit FW40	Action completed in February
LAGC IFQ program review (2016-2023)	Review completed in January
Action to set ABC/ACL for scallop stock with specifications for FY2027 (FY2028 default); Develop sub-management units in NGOM and regional allocations of Limited Access DAS/analyze carryover provisions	Social science analysis is expected ahead of final action in December.
Develop new projection methods	Social science analysis not expected
Scallop Strategic Plan Menu Items	Social science analysis not expected
Scallop RSA Management (Share Day, Proposal Review)	Social science analysis not expected

ATLANTIC SEA SCALLOPS

Priority: FY2027 Specifications and other measures

Information needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social and economic impacts of proposed specifications (Framework 42 EA).• Estimate of how economic benefits of regional DAS allocations, NGOM sub-areas would be distributed across different permit types and scallop ports.• Analysis of minimum profitable DAS allocation by region and permit type.• Analysis of the effect of reducing DAS carryover provision on fleet behavior
Potential barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uncertain fixed-cost information due to low survey response rate and incomplete survey responses.• Staff resources / analytical tools / data
Overcoming barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved industry cooperation

ATLANTIC HERRING

2026 Work Priority	Timing/Progress
Action to set ABC/ACL for Atlantic herring stock for FY2027-FY2031; Develop measures to minimize interactions with river herring and shad	Social/economic analysis for management action developed April-September; Council final action anticipated in September
Herring Management Track Assessment	Results to inform 2026 action
Amendment 10: minimize user conflicts, achieve OY, and support rebuilding of the Atlantic herring resource	Social science work TBD (revisiting once Council takes final action on 2026 action)
Coordination with MAFMC/ASMFC for river herring/shad issues	N/A

ATLANTIC HERRING

Item #1 – Atlantic herring specifications and RH/S measures	
Information needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updates to affected environment: fishing effort, fishery prices/value, bait market info<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revisit primary port criteria?• Additional RH/S information TBD• Social/economic impacts of specifications, RH/S measures
Potential barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No economist currently on PDT• Access to engagement/social vulnerability data
Overcoming barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinate with SSB staff early to identify specific data needs and deadlines

SMALL-MESH MULTISPECIES

2026 Work Priority	Timing/Progress
Action to set ABC/ACL for small-mesh stocks for FY2027-2029(+); additional management measures	Social and economic analyses needed for action; development from May - November. Final action anticipated in December.

SMALL-MESH MULTISPECIES

Priority: 2027-2029(+) specifications, other measures

Information needs

- Affected environment:
 - landings/prices/revenues (automated)
 - Recreational data update (automated)
 - Small-mesh fishing communities – (automated)
 - Engagement/ social vulnerability indicators update (SSB branch; SOE)
- Impacts analysis: economic impacts of alternatives (Naresh completes)
 - RegFlex analysis
 - Community impacts
 - Cumulative effects analysis

Potential barriers

- Need SSB staff to pull social vulnerability indicators data
- No SSB staff from NEFSC on the PDT; do not participate
- Limited staff resources to provide analysis (partially addressed by recent automation of fishery performance reports and other documents).
- Wind farm impacts difficult to quantify

Overcoming barriers

- Identify economists and social scientists to analyze alternatives and provide supporting data summaries

NORTHEAST MULTISPECIES

2026 Work Priority	Timing/Progress
Complete and submit FW72	Action near completion, additional social science analysis not expected
Action to set ABC/ACL for groundfish stocks for FY2027-FY2031; US/CA stocks for FY2027; additional management measures	Action to be initiated in June and final action in December, social science analysis is expected.
Groundfish management track assessments and data updates	Social science analysis not expected
Updates for transboundary management	Social science analysis not expected
Review redfish sector exemption program	Review in progress, anticipated to be complete by April, social science analysis included.
Amendment 23 monitoring system review including complete development of metrics	Review in progress, anticipated to be complete by June, social science analysis included.
Continue work to revise ABC control rules for Northeast Multispecies stock	Action in progress with anticipated final action in September, TBD but social science analysis not expected.
Review white hake rebuilding plan and reference points	Timing TBD, but social science analysis may begin in fall 2026.

NORTHEAST MULTISPECIES

Priority: setting FY 2027-2030 specifications, other measures

<p>Information needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic and social impacts of proposed specifications, other measures in Framework 7X• Affected Environment updates for Framework 7X:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effort/landings/price/revenue• Lease prices- interest in adding intra-sector lease price• Groundfish fishing communities - community engagement and social vulnerability indicators• Commercial crew survey• Recreational fishery data• Cost data- mainly operating costs for specs setting
<p>Potential barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community engagement and social vulnerability indicators: updates/overhauling methods, how does timeline align with action development• Ex-vessel prices: Substantial year-to-year shifts• Lease prices: New markets (e.g., redfish)• Staff resources/capacity
<p>Overcoming barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CSVI updates: communication/coordination with SSB• Ex-vessel prices: USDA purchase program impacts, ongoing research• Lease prices: Increased communication with sector managers/industry• Staff resources: automation could help free up analysts time to work on new data sources

MONKFISH AND SKATES

2026 Work Priority	Timing/Progress
Peer review of the monkfish Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) research projects and evaluate use of CPUE indices in monkfish assessment and management	SSC subpanel review in March. Social science analysis not expected.
Scope a potential IFQ program for monkfish and/or skate wing fisheries;	Scoping document to be approved by both Councils in April. Councils to receive comments and determine next steps in June (NEFMC) and August (MAFMC). Social science analysis not expected in 2026.

PDTs meeting a few times in 2026, but specific social science analysis not expected.

OTHER TOPICS

2026 Work Priority	Timing/Progress
Habitat: Evaluation of the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area surfclam exemption area	Habitat PDT will outline evaluation report and identify necessary analyses during the spring. Awaiting key report related to this evaluation from an Exempted Fishing Permit-based research project, which is expected mid-summer. Anticipate including recent fishery data from the exemption areas to evaluate changes in amount and distribution of clam dredging before and after exemption area designation. Completion date TBD.
On-Demand Gear: Joint action with MAFMC and GARFO to revise gear marking regulations across FMP	Council postponed final action in September 2025 until additional information is made available through a NMFS Request for Information. RFI under development, timeline TBD.
Modifications to Vessel Baseline Restrictions, Joint with MAFMC	Developing white paper for consideration in Sept/Oct by Councils. Staff held initial coordination meeting in Feb.

OTHER TOPICS

Priority: Modifications to Vessel baselines

Information needs
(DRAFT!)

- Baselines for all federally permitted vessels, and degree of ongoing data gaps.
- Impacts of prior baseline amendment: determine the degree to which permit holders have upgraded vessels, constraints on upgrades due to the regulations or other factors. Sources: permit data, industry input.
- How NMFS has implemented and enforced vessel baseline regulations despite data gaps.

Potential barriers

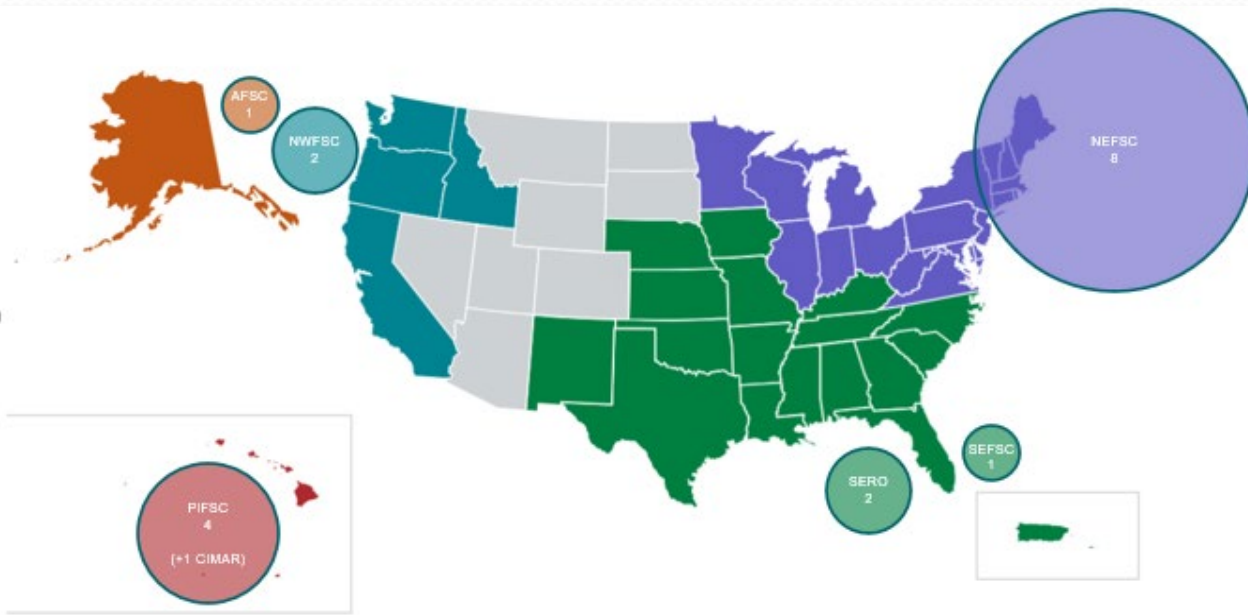
- Need to determine if data gaps identified through the prior action in vessel baselines have been met.
- Seeking industry input consistent with the Paperwork Reduction Act.

Overcoming barriers

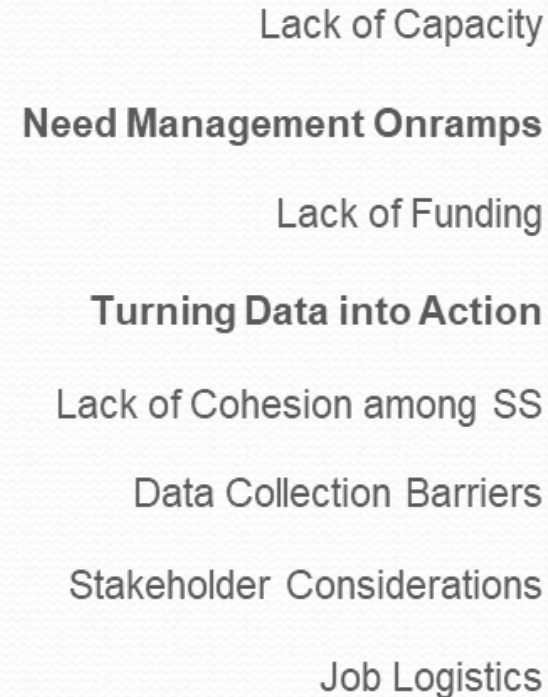
- If data gaps persist. Revisit assumptions.
- Hold a public comment period, invite voluntary conversations with AP members.

BARRIERS TO SOCIAL SCIENCES IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

National survey with 18 NOAA human dimensions social scientists to generate a list of barriers to advancing the field and integrating information into fisheries management.



Perception of Social Sciences



Other Business

- Updates and input on planning for a CINAR-funded workshop on industry-based fisheries social science data (K. St. Martin, SSS)
- Updates to the SSS workplan and next steps (H. Uchida, SSS)

