



## 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*

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** June 4, 2020  
**TO:** Joint Small-Mesh Multispecies Committee and Advisory Panel  
**FROM:** Rick Bellavance, Small-Mesh Multispecies Committee Chair  
**SUBJECT:** Purpose and agenda for meeting

The **Small-Mesh Multispecies (Whiting) Committee** will meet by conference call beginning at 9:30 am on June 4, 2020. The meeting will break for lunch and at other times, as needed.

**Purpose:** There are three agenda topics for this meeting (see agenda), but main purpose is to develop Advisory Panel and Committee recommendations on final alternatives for Framework Adjustment 62, an action to initiate southern red hake rebuilding.

**Southern red hake rebuilding:** Southern red hake was declared overfished in January 2018 and the Council voted in September 2019 to initiate an action to rebuild southern red hake. The intended timeline is to vote on final action no later than June 2020. In December, the Council received PDT recommendations on potential approaches, approving three of them. Since December, the PDT has developed recommendations and advice on potential management alternatives. These alternatives were presented and approved for analysis at the January 2020 Council meeting and include a potential control rule for rebuilding, alternatives to reduce landings, and potential approaches to reduce discards through time/area closures. The PDT has analyzed the expected direct and indirect impacts of the alternatives for rebuilding and for reducing southern red hake possession limits. The framework document has been drafted and is nearly complete, although it will require some clean up before the Council meeting. Some parts of the document may change based on the discussion with the PDT on June 1 and during this meeting. Nonetheless, there is no opportunity to add new alternatives or modify the ones that are included. The Council may however choose a measure that falls within the range of alternatives that have been analyzed.

A research track assessment (RTA) was conducted in early March, focusing mainly on two issues: stock structure and survey catchability. A preliminary summary was given to the Council at its April meeting and the NEFSC is in possession of the independent peer review reports. The RTA did not reject the current stock boundaries for assessment and management in favor of several other alternatives that were analyzed. It did, however, find that the survey catchability was much lower than previously estimated and that the total catch of red hake was a small fraction of the catchability-adjusted swept-area biomass. The conclusion was that fishing was not the main driver of observed changes in stock biomass. The Council expects to receive NOAA

Fisheries guidance about whether the previous assessment is still valid and the stock should still be considered to be overfished and in need of rebuilding. If the current stock status remains, the Council needs to approve Framework 62 at the June meeting so that it can be implemented by a September 2020 deadline.

**Brief review of NROC/MARCO/RODA fishery dependent data project:** Dr. Fiona Hogam will give a presentation on this project and ask for feedback from Advisors and Committee members.

**Other business:**

**Executive Order on Promoting Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth.** Section 4 of the EO highlights that RFMCs are requested to take a number of steps within 180 days to identify actions that would “reduce burdens on domestic fishing and to increase production with sustainable fisheries...” We are also to propose how to initiate each action by May 7, 2021. Note that “actions” are broadly defined and are not limited to management actions. Sections 6, 7, and 8 refer to aquaculture permitting; while Section 7 involves the Councils, NMFS would have the lead.

Note that the objectives of this EO are not identical to those in EO 13777. That EO targeted regulations that eliminated jobs, were outdated or ineffective, imposed costs that exceeded benefits, or were inconsistent with various regulatory initiatives. Nonetheless, the previous review of small-mesh multispecies regulations are included as a document for this meeting and would provide some guidance as to how the Council should respond with respect to the new EO.

The Council will discuss this EO in June and decide how to respond. Given the short time frame, though, there will only be one more Council meeting before our reply is due.

**Meeting materials.** Paper copies of the documents listed below will be provided at the meeting. A PDF of each document is posted to [www.nefmc.org](http://www.nefmc.org). Staff will provide copies of any additional meeting materials that are not included in this package. If you have any questions about the documents, please contact Jenny Couture ([jcouture@nefmc.org](mailto:jcouture@nefmc.org); 978-465-0492 ext. 111) or Andrew Applegate ([aapplegate@nefmc.org](mailto:aapplegate@nefmc.org); 978-465-0492 ext. 114).

1. Meeting memo and agenda (this memo)
2. a. Presentation of Framework 62 alternatives and analysis of impacts  
b. Draft Framework Adjustment 62
3. a. Presentation: Updating Commercial Fisheries Data on the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portals  
b. Data Portal Info Sheets
4. a. Executive Order on Promoting Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth  
b. 2018 Council letter to NMFS regarding EO 13771 and 13777  
c. Summary and assessment of small-mesh multispecies regulations with respect to EO 13771 and 13777

## **AGENDA**

### **Joint Small-Mesh Multispecies Committee and Advisory Panel**

#### **Conference Call**

**June 4, 2020**

- |         |  |                          |
|---------|--|--------------------------|
| 9:30 am | Agenda and purpose of meeting; Whiting Advisory Panel chair and introductions; remote meeting procedures (Document 1) .....          | (Bellavance, Applegate)  |
| 10:00   | Summary of Framework 62 alternatives and impacts analysis (Documents 2a and 2b) .....  | (Applegate, Couture)     |
| 10:30   | Discussion and recommendations for final Framework 62 alternatives .....   | (Advisors and Committee) |
| 1:30    | Brief review of and opportunity for feedback on the NROC/MARCO/RODA fishery dependent data project (Document 3) .....                | (Dr. Fiona Hogan)        |
| 2:00    | Other business: Executive Order on Promoting Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth. Section 4 (Documents 4a, 4b, and 4c) ..... | (Applegate)              |