



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: January 27, 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 at the **Portsmouth Harbor Events & Conference Center** on **Monday, January 27, starting at 1:00**. Due to the late start, the meeting is may run late depending on progress by the Advisors and the Committee.

Purpose: There are three agenda topics for this meeting (see agenda), but main purpose is to develop committee recommendations on a range of alternatives 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 include a potential control rule for rebuilding, alternatives to reduce landings, and alternatives to reduce discards through time/area closures. Detailed analysis of these alternatives has not yet occurred, but for each alternative the PDT provides qualitative advice about the potential effectiveness, pros, cons, and estimated time to analyze the effects.

Following the January Council meeting, Council staff will work with the PDT to analyze the alternatives and develop a draft action document. Depending on the range of measures under consideration, the action could be an interim specifications document, a framework adjustment, or an amendment. There is an obvious tradeoff between the complexity of measures to be analyzed and the time it will take to develop the action. In the meantime, a research track assessment is being conducted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center that could change our perception of stock structure and/or biological reference points. The assessment results will be reported at the June Council meeting and a management track assessment will be conducted in the fall. Based on the outcome of the management track assessment and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations for Allowable Biological Catch, a 2021-2023 specifications document is scheduled for final Council approval in December.

Research priorities for 2020-2024: The Council is expected to update and approve research recommendations at the April 2020 Council meeting and in consultation with the PDT and Advisors, the Committees have been asked to recommend management research priorities. The PDT has not yet had time, however, to discuss or recommend changes to research priorities and it will be necessary for the Committee to take this issue up later by email or at a future meeting. If there is time at today's meeting, the advisors and committee may provide comments to Council staff about needed changes to an existing rough draft. The Council may also fold in research priorities that come from the on-going research track assessment. A draft of the assessment research priorities will become available before the April Council meeting.

Introduction of Wind Farm Fishery Liaisons: Council staffer Michelle Bachman will introduce several Wind Farm Fishery Liaisons to advisors, Council members, and staff. Expected at this meeting are Crista Bank from Vineyard Wind, Elizabeth Marchetti from Equinor, and Chris Sarro from Orsted.

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. 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; 978-465-0492 ext. 111) or Andrew Applegate (aapplegate@nefmc.org; 978-465-0492 ext. 114).

1. Meeting memo and agenda (this memo)
2. Presentation
3. PDT recommendations and advice on alternatives to initiate southern red hake rebuilding
4. Draft research priorities

