



New England Fishery Management Council

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

Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 26, 2026
TO: Small-Mesh Multispecies (Whiting) Advisory Panel and Plan Development Team
FROM: Katie Almeida (AP Chair) and Andrew Applegate (PDT Chair)
SUBJECT: **Purpose and Agenda for Workshop**

Meeting registration: <https://nefmc-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/XzaThacQQz-hTJCDHKLmPw>.

Meeting materials (to become available): <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/apr-1-2026-whiting-joint-advisory-panel-and-plan-development-team-data-workshop>

The **Small-Mesh Multispecies (Whiting) Advisory Panel (AP) and Plan Development Team (PDT)** will meet jointly at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Warwick, RI and via webinar starting at 10:00 am on April 1, 2026. The meeting will break for lunch and at other times, as needed.

PURPOSE: The Advisory Panel and Committee will:

- Identify and summarize recent fishery performance and issues
- Discuss preliminary analyses of the small-mesh multispecies fishery in preparation for the management action
- Status and potential application of the Council's new risk policy to set specifications; 3) small-mesh fishery management issues to be identified by the Advisors
- Possible management measures and alternatives to consider for 2026 and future management actions
- Other business, as necessary.

The Council has initiated a 2026 management action to set catch specifications for 2027 up to 2031, with the potential for additional measures to be identified by the Small-Mesh Multispecies Committee. The PDT has performed some preliminary analyses of recent fishery performance, which will be shared and discussed with the Advisory Panel at this meeting. The Committee will meet jointly with the Advisory Panel on May 19th to identify management measures and alternatives for this action. Depending on the extensiveness of the action, the Council may prepare a specifications document or framework adjustment.

The Northeast Fishery Science Center will provide an assessment data update report for the PDT to develop recommendations for catch specifications. The Council will also apply a new risk factor analysis to apply to the specifications, a process that combines a global weighting by the Council and risk factor scoring performed by the PDT. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee is scheduled to meet in late October to approve specifications and the Council will approve the action in December.

The PDT has so far focused on analysis of exemption area regulations and fishing activity to potentially evaluate measures to adjust exemption area regulations. Following up on a topic at the last AP meeting, the PDT has also gathered information about imports and pricing that will be shared and discussed. Risk policy factor guidance is under development and will be approved by the Council in June, along with a global weighting procedure.

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

1. Meeting memo and agenda (this memo)
2. Code of conduct for Council Advisors and PDT
3. Staff summary presentation
 - a. 2026 management actions; setting specifications for 2027-2029
 - b. Council's new risk policy procedures
 - c. Assessment data updates
 - d. Fishery performance questions for advisors
 - e. Domestic whiting pricing and import analysis
 - f. Observed red hake catch
4. AP questions about recent fishery performance
5. Exemption area regulations presentation
 - a. Exemption area research and management history
 - b. Letters of Authorization
 - c. Finfish bycatch rules
 - d. Whiting to large-mesh groundfish ratios near existing exemption areas
6. Small-Mesh Multispecies Exemption Area Regulation Issues memo

AGENDA

Small-Mesh Multispecies Plan Advisory Panel and Plan Development Team

April 1, 2026

- 10:00 am Agenda, purpose of meeting, introductions (Almeida; Document 1)
- 10:15 Council Rules of Conduct..... (Bodell; Document 2)
- 10:30 2026 management actions and risk policy (Document 3)
- 2026 action planning and schedule (Applegate)
- Assessment data update planning..... (Alade)
- Overview of risk factor scoring and application to setting specifications
.....(Applegate, Peros)
- 11:15 Fishery performance
- Questions for advisors (Almeida; Document 4)
- Domestic whiting pricing and imports (Pradhan, Applegate)
- Observed red hake catch vs catch limits (Applegate)
- Commercial fishery risk factors (Advisors)
- 12:30 pm Lunch break
- 1:15 Fishery performance (continued)
- 1:45 Exemption area data and information..... (Document 5)
- Exemption area management priorities (Odell)
- Exemption area research and management history (Odell, Bodell, Grant)
- Letters of authorization and finfish bycatch rules (Bodell, Grant; Document 6)
- Whiting and large-mesh groundfish catch ratios..... (Applegate)
- 3:30 Discussion of potential management alternatives..... (Advisors and PDT)
- 4:30 Other business
- 5:00 Adjourn