



New England Fishery Management Council

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

DATE: January 22, 2026
TO: Council
FROM: Executive Director, Cate O'Keefe
SUBJECT: Executive Committee Meeting Summary – January 14, 2025

Attendance: The Executive Committee met via webinar. The committee members attending were Mr. Salerno, Ms. Griffin, Ms. Ware, Mr. Pappalardo, and Mr. Pierdinock. Also attending were Council Executive Director Dr. O'Keefe and Mr. Jonathon Peros from the Council staff. Mr. Mike Pentony from GARFO and Dr. Mike Simpkins from NEFSC were also in attendance. Other Council staff and members of the public attended the meeting.

Agenda Items

The meeting began at 11:00 a.m. The Executive Committee reviewed the agenda and added "Housekeeping Items" for Other Business. The Committee met in closed session at the conclusion of the public meeting to provide recommendations for 2026 Scientific and Statistical Committee appointments.

1. Executive Director's Report

a. **Budget Overview:** Dr. O'Keefe reported that the prior cooperative agreement covering 2020–2025 has closed and that the current 2025–2028 award remains the Council's primary source of operating funds. While full funding was received for 2025, funding for 2026 has not yet been distributed, though coverage for January through March is expected soon. The Committee discussed carrying a portion of the 2025 surplus into 2026 to address deferred needs such as software and hardware upgrades, while maintaining reserves given ongoing budget uncertainty and pending Congressional decisions.

2. Inter-Agency Meetings

Dr. O'Keefe shared details about recent meetings of interest, including:

- a. Executive Director's Meeting: Dec 11, webinar
 - i. The Executive Directors discussed recent inter-agency coordination efforts and concerns about delays in NOAA review and implementation of Council actions during 2025.
- b. NRCC Winter Intersessional Meeting: Jan 13, webinar
 - i. Budgets and capacity

1. There is continued uncertainty around budgets and staffing for NOAA with challenges for restoring capacity in the new hiring and contracting environment.
2. The Regional Administrator provided the NRCC with an overview of NOAA's "Risk/Value" prioritization process. The initiative is intended to help identify where limited scientific and management resources should be focused, while acknowledging questions about governance, ownership of the process, and how it interacts with the Council's existing risk policy and specification-setting process. NRCC organizations committed to identifying participants for a dedicated Working Group for this initiative by late February.

- ii. 2026 Work Priorities
 1. The New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented details of 2026 work priorities, highlighting areas of coordination.
- iii. Stock Assessment Schedules
 1. The NRCC tentatively approved a 2027 assessment schedule to be revisited during the May 2026 NRCC meeting.

3. Management Action Timelines

Mr. Jonathon Peros provided updates on the status of ongoing fishery management actions. Several actions, including herring, monkfish, skate, scallop, groundfish, spiny dogfish, essential fish habitat, and management flexibility measures, are in various stages of preliminary or final submission. In multiple cases, regulation deeming is complete, and staff continue to work with NOAA to minimize delays and keep actions on track.

4. Holistic Strategic Plan

Dr. O'Keefe reported on the outcomes of the recent holistic strategic planning workshop, noting strong participation and agreement on the Council's mission, vision, and high-level goals. A two-page summary document has been distributed to workshop participants, and staff and contractors will begin drafting detailed goal descriptions and key performance indicators. The Executive Committee discussed maintaining momentum, with a draft strategic plan targeted for review in the spring and potential approval by early summer 2026.

5. Executive Order 14276

Dr. O'Keefe provided an update on Executive Order 14276, which focuses on regulatory efficiency and seafood harvest productivity. NOAA has indicated that additional public comments received through December 2025 will be shared and that further discussions with Councils are expected. Executive Committee members noted that depending on the direction of NOAA guidance, adjustments to Council priorities may be needed, with any significant changes brought to the full Council for discussion in April 2026.

6. Council Meeting Preparations

Mr. Dan Salerno reviewed January Council meeting preparations. He noted that the meeting will be fully remote via webinar.

7. Other Business

Dr. O'Keefe noted that the Executive Committee will be requested to complete an availability poll to schedule the remainder of the 2026 Executive Committee meetings. The 2027 Council meeting dates are being finalized and will be distributed in February.

8. Closed Session

- a. SSC Nomination Review and Recommendations
 - i. The Executive Committee met in closed session to review nominations for 2026 SSC appointments.

The public meeting ended at approximately 12:05 p.m.