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New England Fishery Management Council

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

DATE: June 16, 2026
TO: Council
FROM: Executive Director, Cate O'Keefe
SUBJECT: Executive Committee Meeting Summary – June 9, 2026

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. Cate O'Keefe and Mr. Jonathon Peros from the Council staff, and Mr. Mike Pentony from GARFO and Dr. Jon Hare from NEFSC. Other Council staff and members of the public attended the meeting.

Agenda Items

The meeting began at 10:00 a.m. The Executive Committee reviewed the agenda and added two items for Other Business.

1. Executive Director's Report

- a. **Funding Status:** Dr. O'Keefe provided an update on active funding balances in the 2025–2029 Cooperative Agreement and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) awards. The Council has received full funding for CY2026; the remaining 75% of the 2026 funds were received on May 20th. The Committee discussed addressing deferred needs such as software and hardware upgrades and executing the State Technical Assistance contracts by July 1st. The Council received a No Cost Extension to the IRA award through December 31, 2027. Spending on the IRA award is on track to complete all projects within the extended timeline, and all IRA initiatives are on track for completion.

2. Inter-Agency Meetings

- a. **TMGC/US Steering Committee**/US Team: May 7, May 13, June 9, virtual
 - i. The NEFMC has become the organizational lead for the US in the US/Canada transboundary resource sharing process. This new structure is intended to increase administrative efficiencies and reduce workload for communications and logistics planning. Key outcomes from the May TMGC and Steering Committee meetings included:
 1. Revised science coordination process to allow listen-only participation by TMGC members at the annual Technical Science Coordination meeting in July.
 2. Confirmed plans for the October 2026 TMGC/Steering Committee meetings in

Boston, MA.

3. Approval of planning for a TMGC process review in 2027 with initial planning to begin in summer/fall 2026.
- ii. The US TMGC/Team met after the Executive Committee meeting and reached consensus on the following items:
 1. Acceptance of the methods, results, and noted uncertainties for the 2026 resource sharing allocations, the survey-based biomass distributions for Georges Bank cod and haddock, and the industry-based CPUE distributions for cod and haddock.
 2. The finalized analyses will be used to support and develop the US negotiating positions for the 2026 TMGC meeting in October.
 3. Establishment of the US Industry Advisory Group consisting of members of the US fishing industry with a goal to provide a structured format for gathering informed industry perspectives to support the US TMGC in transboundary negotiations.
- b. [CCC Meeting](#): May 19-21, Homer, AK
 - i. The CCC meeting included Round Robin updates from all eight Councils about EO14276 responses and regional priorities, NOAA updates on Executive Orders, budgets, science, and overarching priorities, and Working Group updates related to NEPA and recreational fisheries. Key outcomes included:
 1. Suspending efforts on the national Risk/Value Matrix to be replaced with ongoing regional prioritization work.
 2. Improved understanding of regulatory review timelines and the need for Councils to consider “clean specifications” actions as a possible pathway for timely implementation of catch advice.
 3. Discussion of evolving NEPA processes and procedures with emphasis on continuing to work regionally with NOAA partners to establish best practices.
- c. [NRCC Meeting](#): May 27-28, Providence, RI
 - i. The NRCC discussed several overlapping initiatives and IRA projects that may improve regional coordination and inform future priorities for stock assessments and management actions in the greater Northeast region. Key outcomes included:
 1. The Regional Prioritization initiative (formerly the Risk/Value Matrix) will continue with plans to report on results at a summer NRCC intersessional.
 2. The Assessment Working Group is drafting a 5-year stock assessment schedule to span 2028-2032 with consideration of process changes, including assessment and review timing, solicitation of more peer review panel candidates, and increased utility of Data Updates. The schedule will be reviewed at the Fall 2026 NRCC meeting.
- d. [SSC Dynamic Reference Points Workshop](#): June 1-2, Boston, MA
 - i. With support from IRA funding, the SSC convened a workshop about Dynamic Reference Points with goals to establish understanding of current approaches on this

- topic, provide recommendations for evaluating effectiveness of existing approaches, and establish guidance on the appropriate use of methods to determine dynamic reference points for NEFMC-managed stocks.
- ii. A draft workshop report will be delivered to the Council by July 31st, and the SSC will discuss the report and next steps in August.
- e. Council-GARFO Staff-to-Staff Meeting: June 4, Gloucester, MA
 - i. Staff from the Council and Regional Office met to discuss ongoing management topics, including NEPA evolution, Management Flexibility Omnibus implementation, and Risk Policy.
 - ii. The staff participants were appreciative of this opportunity and recommend continuing these meetings in the future.
- f. [East Coast Coordination Group](#): June 5, virtual
 - i. The ECCG discussed updates on IRA initiatives and Climate Change Scenario Planning Action Menu items and confirmed plans for an East Coast Governance workshop to be held February 23-24 in Boston, MA.

3. Executive Order 14276

- a. [Letter from NOAA about Atlantic Herring Industry-Funded Monitoring](#)
 - i. Dr. O'Keefe provided background information related to the May 1, 2026 letter from NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator, Eugenio Piñerio Soler. The letter included a request that the Council reconsider the decision to not revisit the herring Industry-Funded Monitoring (IFM) program in their response to Executive Order 14276. The rationale provided for this request included the program not meeting intended goals to provide accurate estimates of herring catch, accurate estimates of catch for species under catch caps (e.g., haddock and river herring/shad), and affordable monitoring of the herring fishery. The letter noted that the program has been suspended since November 2022, and that it is unlikely that NOAA will be able to support the program in the future. Additionally, the letter referenced ongoing litigation related to the Herring IFM Program and stated that removing the program is an important step toward ending litigation.
 - ii. The Executive Committee discussed possible pathways to consider an action related to the IFM program, including through the 2027 priority-setting process. They noted that the Herring IFM program is not coordinated with other NEFMC industry-funded monitoring programs (e.g., scallop and groundfish) and emphasized that other IFM programs are meeting intended objectives. They also discussed the inter-related issues with the lack of implementation of the Herring IFM program, including inability to monitor vessel accountability following slippage events and lack of reliable data to retain catch cap measures. They discussed the possibility of including an action to rescind the Herring IFM Program in an action that alters catch caps to time/area-based measures for bycatch.

4. Management Action Timelines

Mr. Peros updated the Committee about action status since the April Council meeting, including actions that have been implemented or are in final stages of rulemaking. The Committee discussed the new emphasis on “clean specifications” actions and the potential need to split specifications from other management measures for several planned FMP actions this fall.

a. Groundfish:

- i. The Committee discussed the need to extend the timeline for Groundfish FW68 to revise ABC Control Rules. They noted that the Risk Policy is scheduled for Council approval in June, but further explorations of possible control rule options requires additional time beyond September 2026. The Committee recommends consideration of final action for FW68 in April 2027.

b. Scallops:

- i. The Committee noted that the management measures identified for inclusion in FW42 (e.g., NGOM sub-area management and regional allocation of DAS) could delay implementation of the FY2027 scallop specifications beyond April 1st. They discussed tradeoffs associated with splitting scallop specifications from the other management measures and noted that fishing industry observations suggest that resource and fishing conditions have improved in the early part of FY2026, which may reduce the need to implement new area-based measures in 2027. They also noted that the September 2026 Council meeting is earlier than usual, which could constrain development and analysis of management measures for the NGOM if the Council elected to take final action in September. The Committee recommends consideration of splitting scallop specifications from other management measures for final action in December 2026.

c. Herring:

- i. Similar to scallops, the Committee noted that river herring/shad (RHS) bycatch measures identified for inclusion in the 2026 Herring action could delay implementation of the FY2027 herring specifications beyond January 1st. The Committee recommended that herring specifications should be the highest priority as the Herring Management Track Assessment will be reviewed at the end of June. They continued the discussion related to possibly rescinding the Herring IFM program as an additional measure to be included in an action related to RHS measures.

d. Small-Mesh Multispecies (Whiting)

- i. The scope of the whiting action has yet to be determined but presents similar challenges in considering impacts on implementation timing for inclusion of measures beyond specifications. The Committee noted that the proposal to include revisions to small-mesh exemption areas was not a 2026 Council priority, and they recommended that this may be better included in a holistic review of all the Council’s exemption areas as a future priority.

5. Holistic Strategic Plan

Mr. Peros presented an update on the implementation phase of the Holistic Strategic Plan. The Committee considered a draft Implementation Charter, which details the structured framework for

operationalizing the Strategic Plan and bridges the gap between planning and execution. The Committee agreed to convene a dedicated Executive Committee meeting in August to assist staff in finalizing the Implementation Charter and developing an action plan.

6. Council Meeting Preparations

Mr. Salerno reviewed June Council meeting preparations. He noted that Mr. Eugenio Piñeiro Soler and Mr. Sam Rach will be attending the meeting and provided details about the 50th MSA Anniversary reception.

7. Other Business

Mr. Salerno proposed ideas to improve public comment periods at Council meetings and reminded Committee members that the Executive Director's annual evaluation will be scheduled for a date prior to August 11, 2026.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:15 p.m.