



## New England Fishery Management Council

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

**DATE:** November 21, 2025  
**TO:** Council  
**FROM:** Executive Director, Cate O'Keefe  
**SUBJECT:** Executive Committee Meeting Summary – November 13, 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. Jon Hare from NEFSC were also in attendance. Other Council staff and members of the public attended the meeting.

### Agenda Items

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m. The Executive Committee reviewed the agenda and did not identify any additional topics for discussion. The Committee met in closed session at the conclusion of the public meeting to provide recommendations for membership of Advisory Panels for 2026-2028.

#### 1. Executive Director's Report

- a. **Budget Overview:** Dr. O'Keefe provided a budget overview to the Executive Committee noting that there have been no substantial updates since September. The final fund distribution for fiscal year 2025 has been received and all state technical assistance contracts have been executed and paid. Underspensing was identified in several budget lines with anticipated Q4 increases. Dr. O'Keefe explained that the planned surplus for 2026 is due to federal budget uncertainty and the continuing resolution through January 30, 2026. Updates were provided on Inflation Reduction Act and no cost extension funding, with both initiatives currently on track. A potential scope change for the cod transition initiative may be needed by May 2026.

#### 2. Inter-Agency Meetings: Dr. O'Keefe shared details about recent meetings of interest, including:

- a. US Pre-TMGC Public Listening Session: Sept 26, Gloucester/webinar
  - i. The US TMGC members met with supporting staff from the Council, GARFO, and NEFSC to develop the US position paper for negotiations on Total Allowable Catches for the shared US/Canada cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder stocks on Georges Bank.
- b. TMGC Meeting: Oct 1, Halifax, NS/webinar
  - i. 2026 TMGC Guidance:

1. The US was represented by Drew Lawler, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries. The Council was not represented at the meeting because the TMGC Co-Chair and US consensus position developed by US TMGC members were not recognized by NOAA in advance of the meeting.
  2. The Executive Director received the draft TMGC Guidance Document on October 16<sup>th</sup> and presented it to the SSC on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. The final 2026 TMGC Guidance Document was shared with the Executive Director by Canada DFO on October 30<sup>th</sup>.
  3. The US/Canada Steering Committee scheduled for October 14<sup>th</sup> was cancelled due to the government shutdown.
- c. CCC October Meeting: cancelled due to Federal shutdown
- i. Executive Directors Meeting: Oct 16, webinar:
    1. In lieu of the cancelled CCC meeting, the Executive Directors met via webinar on October 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss approaches for soliciting feedback from NOAA Fisheries related to updates on science and management capacity, updates on approaches to align Council and NOAA priorities, and updates on EO14276 guidance.
- d. NRCC Fall Meeting: cancelled due to Federal shutdown
- i. NRCC Fall Meeting agenda topics:
    1. The agenda for the fall NRCC meeting included several time-sensitive topics, such as stock assessment schedules for 2027 and beyond, possible methods to simplify the stock assessment process, and planning to coordinate resources for Executive Order 14276 tasks. The Executive Committee asked if this meeting will be rescheduled, and Dr. O’Keefe responded that there would need to be discussion of the time-sensitive topics before the next scheduled NRCC meeting in May 2026.
- e. ECCG Meeting: Nov 12, webinar
- i. The East Coast Coordination Group met without NOAA partners to discuss the status of ongoing IRA initiatives and plans for upcoming 2026 workshops. Leadership from the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Councils and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission made recommendations about workshop timing, participation, and scope, which will be shared with NOAA partners for review and feedback.
- 3. Management Action Timelines:** Mr. Jonathon Peros updated the committee on management timelines. Mr. Peros reported that there are several ongoing scallop and groundfish actions with scheduled completion of specification measures for both FMPs at the December Council meeting. He updated the group on the submission timelines of actions that were completed at the September Council meeting, indicating that preliminary document submission for the Management Flexibility Omnibus, Groundfish Amendment 25, Skate 2026-2028 Specifications, Monkfish Framework 17, and Essential Fish Habitat Designation Framework will be completed by early December. Dr. O’Keefe noted that there has not been an update from NOAA Fisheries about the status of Groundfish Framework 69 or Atlantic Herring 2025-2027 Specifications. The

Executive Committee raised questions about timelines for these actions in light of the recent government shutdown and emphasized management uncertainty around implementation of groundfish measures, as well as the need to process the 1,000 mt transfer of Atlantic herring from the Canadian weir fishery.

#### **4. Council Committee Assignments:**

- a. Updated assignments and new Council member:
  - i. Dr. O’Keefe provided an update on the Council’s 2025/2026 Committee assignments. Mr. Terry Alexander joined the Council as an out-of-cycle appointment for the seat formally held by Mr. Alan Tracy. Committee assignments have been updated to include Mr. Alexander. The committee discussed filling vacancies for the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team and Enforcement Committee.
- b. Enforcement Committee reengagement:
  - i. The Committee reviewed a memo from the Executive Director related to reengaging the Enforcement Committee, which was identified as a 2025 Council priority. The Executive Committee recommended the following approaches:
    - 1. Membership (Option A)
      - a. Representatives from NOAA Office of Law Enforcement and General Counsel, US Coast Guard, and marine enforcement representatives from each of the five New England states.
      - b. The Committee’s recommendation was based on the need for the Enforcement Committee to have representation from both Federal and state agencies with the ability to meet in closed sessions to discuss confidential information.
    - 2. Advisory Panel (Option A)
      - a. Dissolve the Enforcement Advisory Panel.
      - b. The Committee’s recommendation was based on a lack of clearly defined objectives to support an advisory process for enforcement issues. They suggested that enforcement questions can be raised at other Council-related meetings with public input, and feedback can be requested from the Council to the Enforcement Committee.
    - 3. Format and Logistics (Option B)
      - a. Standing annual meetings with additional meetings scheduled as needed.
      - b. The Committee’s recommendation was based on the need to maintain regular commitment with the ability to meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss emergent issues.
- c. HMS/ICCAT – future funding and public awareness:
  - i. Dr. O’Keefe provide an overview of the “quasi-formal” rotational schedule among east coast Councils to provide a representative to the annual ICCAT meeting. There is no dedicated funding to cover expenses associated with ICCAT, so the NEFMC, MAFMC, SAFMC, GPMC, and CFMC (five eastern region Councils) have developed a rotation schedule which does not reflect specific regional needs on an annual basis.

The Executive Committee suggested that the Executive Director follow up with the other Councils to develop a more formal arrangement that specifically considers frequency of each Council's needed representation, ways to integrate ICCAT management measures with Council decisions, and shared funding mechanisms.

5. **Draft 2026 Council Priorities:** Dr. O'Keefe presented draft recommendations for 2026 Council Priorities. The Executive Committee discussed each proposed work item in the memo and made recommendations for consideration by the Council in December. See the "251121 Ex Comm to Council – 2026 Priorities" memo for additional details.
6. **Council Meeting Preparations:** Mr. Dan Salerno reviewed December Council meeting preparations. He described possible contingency plans if the Federal Register Notice for the meeting were not published by November 18, 2025, which would prohibit the Council from taking final actions in Newport, RI. After the Executive Committee meeting, the Council received notification that the Notice will publish on time and the December meeting can proceed as planned.
7. **Other Business:** There were no items identified or discussed.
8. **Closed Session**
  - a. Advisory Panel Application Review and Recommendations:
    - i. The Executive Committee met in closed session to review applications for the 2026-2028 Advisory Panel term.

The public meeting ended at approximately 1:20 p.m.