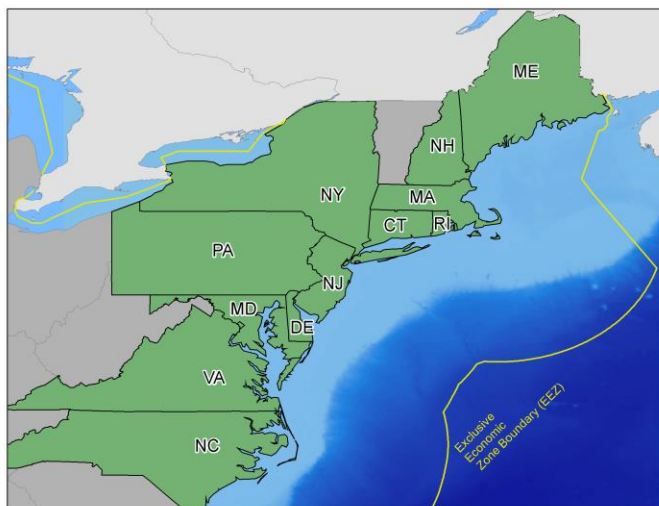


# NORTHEAST REGION COORDINATING COUNCIL

Spring 2017 MEETING

June 13-14, 2017

Courtyard by Marriott Providence – Providence, RI



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## 2017 SPRING NRCC MEETING AGENDA

The Providence Courtyard by Marriott—Providence, RI  
Call-in Information: (877) 661-2084, participant code: 613780

*All times are approximate*

### Tuesday, June 13

1000-1010

1. Welcome, introductions, modifications and additions to agenda, announcements  
(Bullard, Hare, Gilbert)

1010-1200

2. Long-term Assessment Goals and Prioritization

Discussion leader: Simpkins

- Review proposed two track (management and research) approach
- Discuss prioritization and scheduling process recommendations
- "Plan B" Working Group update and discussion (Lead: Brown)

1200-1300 Lunch

- *Members of the Working Group for the 2018 Workshop on Climate Change and Species Distribution should plan on eating together for an offsite working lunch.*

1300-1345

3. MRIP FES Transition Update

Discussion leader: NEFSC

1345-1615

4. Review Current Assessment Schedule

Discussion leader: NEFSC

- Update on 2017 Operational Assessments (Simpkins/Weinberg/Brown)
  1. Update on data received for the 20 operational assessments (Brown)
  2. Assessment oversight panel and peer review plans (Simpkins)
  3. Plan B specifically in the context of the 20 operational assessments (Brown)
  4. Timeline from data to peer review to product delivery, including communication and engagement (Weinberg)
- Discuss 2018 assessment schedule, including decision on placeholder "MRIP" benchmark (Hare/Simpkins)
- Discuss 2019 assessment schedule – consider context of long-term assessment scheduling process (Hare/Simpkins)

1615-1700

5. River Herring Topics

Discussion leader: Beal

- Update on the River Herring Stock Assessment

- River Herring Data Portal: Collection and warehousing of river herring river run data
- Update on the status of the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (Diane Borggaard)

*1700-Adjourn Day 1*

*1830-Dinner at McCormick & Schmick's Seafood & Steaks, 11 Dorrance St, Providence  
(within walking distance of hotel)*

## **Wednesday, June 14**

*0900-0915*

### 6. NEFSC Progress Reports on Various Working Groups

Discussion leader: Hare/Simpkins

- Updates for the 2018 Workshop on Climate Change and Species Distribution
- Update on the Progress of the Cod Stock Structure Working Group

*0915-0930*

### 7. Update on Multispecies/Ecosystem Model Review

Discussion leader: Simpkins

*0930-1000*

### 8. Ecosystem Reports to the Councils

Discussion leader: Beal

- What is the process to add a few Commission managed species into these reports that may have an influence on the systems?
- Provide feedback to NEFSC on ecosystem reports (NEFSC request)

*1000-1045*

### 9. Discussion of Discard Methodologies Produced by the NEFSC and GARFO

Discussion leader: Moore

- Discuss why methodologies differ and implications for management.

*1045-1100 Break*

*1100-1130*

### 10. Exploring Use of Programmatic EIS for FMPs

Discussion leader: Nies

- Discuss any interest in GARFO/NEFMC/MAFMC to explore the use of a programmatic EIS for an FMP.
- The idea behind a programmatic EIS is that it might reduce the length of NEPA documents for specific actions. A few Councils have tried this, with considerable financial support from their NMFS regions.

*1130-1145*

11. Update on NEFMC/MAFMC Coordination on FMPs  
Discussion leader: Quinn

*1145-1215*

12. Coordinating Atlantic Herring Management between NEFMC and ASMFC  
Discussion leader: Nies
- ASMFC is adopting additional measures that affect federally-permitted vessels. How do we coordinate these efforts and make sure ASMFC measures do not conflict with the federal FMP?

*1215-1245*

13. Meeting wrap up
- Complete any unfinished discussions or unresolved new business
  - Review action items and assignments
  - Identify Fall 2017 (MAFMC host) meeting date
  - Adjourn meeting

## **UPDATES provided through May 2017**

### **NRCC Fall Meeting 2016 Action Items**

October 11-12, 2016 Kimpton Carlyle, Washington DC

Color code key:  
**ASMFC** **MAFMC**  
**NEFMC** **NEFSC**  
**GARFO** **NRCC**

1. Develop background information, draft terms of reference, and conduct basic evaluation of NRCC performance  
Lead: **ASMFC**  
Appointees need from **MAFMC**, **NEFMC**, **ASMFC**  
Next step(s):  
Due date(s): May 2017  
**STATUS: In progress.**
2. Prepare letter formally requesting participation from Councils in creating National Monument FMP prior to their priorities setting discussion at their next meetings  
Lead: **GARFO**  
Appointees needed from  
Next step(s):  
Due date(s):  
**STATUS: Completed 10/21/2016**
3. Send out a letter to both Councils and the Commission requesting staff participation to scope out a Greater Atlantic Regional Aquaculture FMP  
Lead: **GARFO**  
Appointees needed from **ASMFC**, **MAFMC**, **NEFMC**, **NEFSC**  
Next step(s):  
Due date(s): December 2016  
**STATUS: Complete. GARFO mailed letters on May 4<sup>th</sup> asking to identify staff members to participate in a working group.**
4. Create a working group to determine long term assessment goals and prioritization  
Lead: **NEFSC**  
Appointees needed from **GARFO**, **NEFSC**, **ASMFC**, **MAFMC**, **NEFMC**  
Next step(s):  
Due date(s): May 2017 Report Out  
**STATUS: Working Group created; 3 meetings have convened as of March 31, 2017, email update from Dr. Simpkins. Intend to report out on progress at June 2017 meeting.**
5. Create a steering committee to develop a workshop for 2018 to discuss species of concern in regards to shifting distributions and climate change  
Lead: **NEFSC**  
Appointees needed from **GARFO**, **NEFSC**, **ASMFC**, **MAFMC**, **NEFMC**  
Next step(s):

Due date(s): May 2017 Report Out

**STATUS:** Steering Committee members have been requested/identified (?); Committee has not yet convened. Plan was to develop a strawman outline before June meeting to present to the NRCC. Still possible?

6. Briefing on FDDV

Lead: **GARFO**

Appointees needed from **NEFSC**

Next step(s):

Due date(s): Report Out at Jan/ Feb Council meetings and Feb Commission meeting

**STATUS:** GARFO staff (Barry Clifford) proved the NEFMC with an update in January. Barry will present at both Councils' meetings in June to discuss implementation challenges associated with FDDV.

7. Ensure staff deliver all the data needed to support the 20 groundfish operational assessments in 2017

Lead: **NEFSC, GARFO, ASMFC**

Appointees needed from **NEFSC, GARFO, ASMFC**

Next step(s):

Due date(s): Data due to **NEFSC** by May 1, 2017

**STATUS:** Data needs request reminder sent out to all relevant parties on January 12, 2017. Based on Dr. Simpkins' March 30, 2017, email update, age data will not be available by May 1, 2017, and the operational assessment review is now slotted to occur the week of September 11, 2017.

Spring 2017 NRCC (**GARFO host**) – June 13-14, 2017 (Rescheduled from May 23-24, 2017)

Fall 2017 NRCC (**MAFMC host**) – TBD



# Long term, strategic assessment scheduling

Mike Simpkins, Ph.D.

Chief, Resource Evaluation and Assessment Division  
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

**NOAA  
FISHERIES  
SERVICE**

# Long term, strategic assessment scheduling

- Why should we do this, how is it better?
- Two tracks – management and research
- Scheduling and priorities
  - Management track needs vs capacity
  - WG review of scheduling/priority factors
- Recommendations – decision points



# Why should we do this, how is it better?

- Better coordination between timing, and predictability, of assessment products and management decisions
- Higher quality and more rapidly improving assessments
  - Improved ability to design and implement research to inform research track assessments
  - Flexibility to improve management track assessments inline
- More strategic discussions and longer term research, assessment, and management vision
- Current process can be near-sighted, unpredictable for setting specifications, and uneven across partners – resulting at times in poor investments in “unready” assessments

# Two tracks – management and research

## Management track

- Routine assessment updates on regular schedule to inform specification setting
- Applies methods from most recent relevant research track assessment to current data

## Research Track

- Complex, intensive investigations of methods, data streams, etc., to inform future management track assessments
- Divorced from immediate use in specification setting
- Could include stock specific “benchmarks” as well as topical investigations (e.g., MRIP issues, retrospective patterns)

# Management track

- Relatively fixed schedule for reasonable time frame (5-10 years)
- Limited ability to deviate from most recent research track, but some flexibility to make improvements to avoid stale assessments
- Management track assessments should be conducted by NMFS to ensure stable support for routine schedule
- Perhaps “under schedule” to allow “excess” capacity to address unexpected needs (tradeoff between flexibility and number/frequency of scheduled assessments)
- Focused WG discussion so far primarily on scheduling
- Need to tackle questions of peer review, external engagement, and if and how to include external data or analytical inputs

# Research track

- Focus is on thorough investigation and including new research
- Separation from direct specification setting allows more flexible scheduling within any given year
  - Schedule so outputs are available in time to be applied with new data in management track assessment for spec setting
  - This ensures comprehensive research track assessment and application of newest data – all come together for specs
- Key considerations will be:
  - What research needed to inform research track assessment
  - How long it will take to conduct that research
  - Clear output requirements to feed management track
  - Peer review, external engagement, transitions between tracks

# Scheduling and priorities

- Management track scheduling and priority decisions are about:
  - How frequently assessments should happen
  - Ensuring alignment with specification setting schedules
  - Note: May need shifts in both assmt and spec schedules
- Research track scheduling and priority decisions are about:
  - How soon a given assessment should occur
  - Research needs and time required
- Note: Also need to consider whether to plan for “excess capacity” to address unexpected needs for either track
  - Again – clear tradeoff between flexibility and number and frequency of assessments (of either type) scheduled

# Management track needs vs capacity

- WG considered appropriate balance between research and management track investments – and defaulted to recent history
- Recent history and projected needs:
  - Typically around 15-30 assessment updates (various types) and 3-5 benchmarks (stocks) per year
  - Given specification cycle and projected needs, every odd year could need 50 updates (even years vary near 20)
- Capacity estimates
  - 20-30 assessment updates occupy ~40-65% capacity
  - 4 benchmarks/res track occupy ~30% capacity (total 70-95%)
  - 2017 has 43 updates and 5 benchmarks = 130% capacity
- Clear need for scheduling and priority setting

# WG review of scheduling/priority factors

- WG reviewed NMFS' "Prioritizing fish stock assessments"
  - Considered which factors we felt were (and were not) relevant to management vs research track scheduling
  - Identified additional factors that we felt were relevant
  - Developed our proposed approaches to "scoring" the factors
- Still need to consider how best to "weight" the factors
- May suggest considering the factors in a tiered fashion, with some factors setting initial priority groupings and others serving as tie-breakers or ordering factors
- Output of scheduling/priority process would provide information and solid basis for NRCC discussion and final decisions

# WG review of scheduling/priority factors

- Walk through scheduling factors (*separate sheet - coming soon*)
- Seeking NRCC feedback and decisions



# Recommendations – decision points

WG needs decisions from NRCC; we recommend the NRCC:

- Approve two track process
- Approve scheduling factors – at least in concept (details remain)
- Task WG (or other body) with taking first crack at applying scheduling factors for next NRCC meeting
  - Objective 1: see how it works and report to NRCC
  - Objective 2: use to develop draft/strawman management track schedule for NRCC review, discussion, and hopefully decision
  - Objective 3: use to classify research track by priority (perhaps in priority tiers or groupings) to inform NRCC discussion
- WG has additional work to develop suggestions for peer review, incorporation of external input, transitions between tracks, etc.

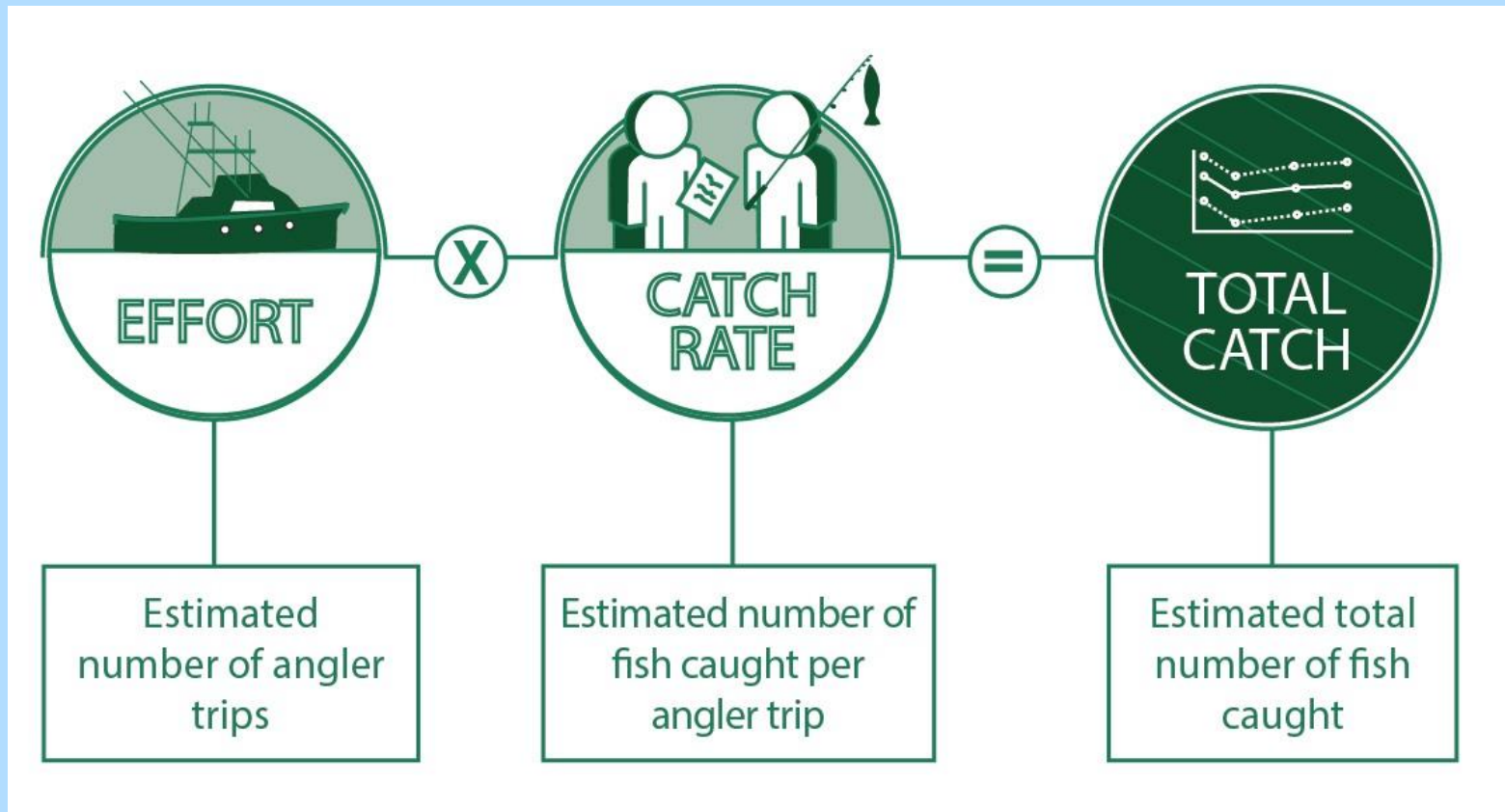


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# Marine Recreational Information Program Update

Dave Van Voorhees, Ph.D.  
Spring NRCC Meeting  
June 13, 2017

# Estimating Recreational Fishery Catch



Supporting NOAA's mission of ensuring productive, sustainable fisheries and vibrant fishing communities through science-based decision-making.

# MRIP MILESTONES

Marine Recreational  
Information Program



New Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates

MRIP established

National Saltwater Angler Registry launched

Launch of new angler catch survey protocols

Benchmarking of new mail survey with existing phone survey

Regional Implementation Plans developed

MRIP strategic planning process

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

National Research Council (NRC) findings released

Research and pilot projects begin

Re-estimation of historic catch based on improved methodology

Develop new mail effort survey based on pilot studies

National Academies review of MRIP progress

National Academies issues final report



NOAA FISHERIES



Milestone



Milestone in response to NRC guidance (*completed*)



Milestone in response to NRC guidance (*in progress*)



NOAA FISHERIES

# National Academies Review

- Collection of recreational fishery data is difficult - advanced survey methods and complex statistical analyses needed
- MRIP has made “impressive progress”
  - Major improvements in statistical soundness of survey designs
  - Progress made in evaluating/testing use of new technologies
  - Surveys conducted in cooperation with interstate commission and state agency partners
  - Very responsive to regional and state needs
  - Improved communications with partners and stakeholders
- Additional challenges do remain

# Access Point Angler Intercept Survey

## Key Takeaways

- National Academies: “The new APAIS design is a substantial improvement on the MRFSS intercept survey methodologies.”
- We’ve greatly reduced potential for bias:
  - Strict adherence to formal probability sampling protocols.
  - Decision-making by samplers greatly limited
  - Expanded temporal coverage of daytime/nighttime fishing
  - Site-time assignments completed without rescheduling
- State agency staff now conduct field sampling in all Atlantic and Gulf Coast states covered by the APAIS

# New Fishing Effort Survey (FES)

## Key Takeaways

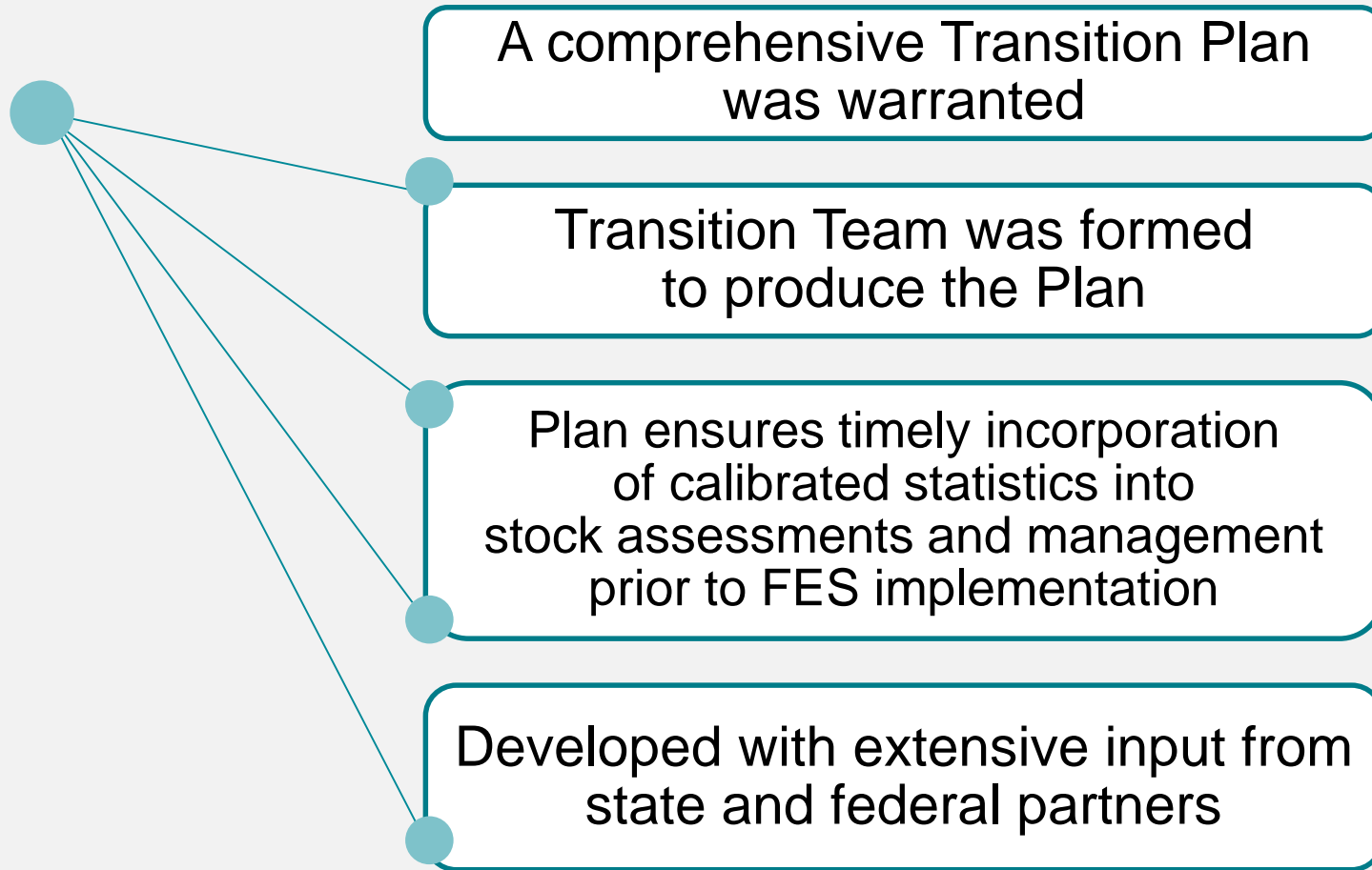
- National Academies: “The methodologies, including the address-based sampling survey design, are major improvements from the original Coastal Household Telephone Survey that employed random-digit-dialing.”
- This mail survey is a *more accurate* method for estimating shore and private boat fishing effort on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts.
  - Better coverage
  - Higher response rates
  - Better chance of reaching people who fished
- In pilot studies the FES produced considerably *higher estimates* of fishing effort than the telephone survey.

# Transitioning to New Surveys

- Immediate implementation of the new FES would cause a major disruption
  - Stock assessments and fisheries management rely on having a comparable time series of recreational catch statistics
  - A calibration is needed to convert historical catch estimates based on legacy surveys into estimates compatible with those produced by any new surveys
  - We need numbers in the same “currency”
- Calibrations are needed to account for both the new FES and the recent change in the APAIS design



# Transition Plan



# Transition and Calibration Timeline

## Step 1

2015-2017

- FES/CHTS Benchmarking

## Step 2

2016-2017

- FES calibration model development
- FES calibration model peer review
- APAIS calibration model development

## Step 3

2018

- APAIS final calibration model peer review
- Re-estimation of historical catch and effort

## Step 4

mid-2018

- Calibrated catch and effort time series available for use in stock assessments and management

- **Three-year transition period** from current phone survey estimates to new mail survey estimates
- **Phone survey estimates will be used for science and management** until the calibration models are developed, peer-reviewed, adopted and used to update stock assessments and annual catch limits
- Plan **developed with extensive regional and state-level input** through Atlantic and Gulf subgroup of the Transition Team

# FES/CHTS Calibration Model Peer Review

- June 27-29 Workshop in Silver Spring, MD
- Review Panel:
  - Chair: Dr. Paul Rago (MAFMC SSC)
  - 3 CIE Reviewers:
    - Dr. Cynthia Jones (Old Dominion Univ.)
    - Dr. Rob Hicks (College of William & Mary)
    - Dr. Ali Arab (Georgetown Univ.)
  - 4 Non-CIE Reviewers:
    - Dr. Patrick Sullivan (NEFMC SSC)
    - Dr. Fred Serchuk (SAFMC SSC)
    - Dr. Sean Powers (GMFMC SSC)
    - Jason McNamee (ASMFC/Rhode Island DEM)
- Will be accessible by webinar and fully recorded
- Independent reviews and Chair's summary due 3 weeks after Workshop

# For-Hire Data Collections

- **Ultimate Goal:** Develop and certify designs for for-hire electronic trip reporting programs
- Currently we utilize a combination of methods:
  - For-Hire Telephone Survey
  - Northeast Vessel Trip Reports
  - Access-Point Angler Intercept Survey
- We are supporting development and testing of alternative methods that include:
  - Electronic logbook reporting
  - Compliance monitoring
  - Dockside sampling for validation

# MRIP Next Steps

1

- Complete strategic plan for MRIP

2

- Respond to new National Academies review

3

- Transition to the new mail survey of fishing effort by 2018

4

- Expand outreach efforts

5

- Complete regional implementation plans and rely upon them to establish priorities for research and execution

6

- Continue MRIP's broad range of research and pursue regional implementation of improved methods



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# Questions & Discussion



**NOAA FISHERIES**

<b>Timeline for Development of Groundfish Framework 57 (2018-2020 Specs)</b>	
<i>Planned Date (week of)</i>	<i>Action</i>
June 5	Commercial and All Recreational Data to NEFSC
June 19	NEFSC Processing of Input Data Complete (e.g., AA tables)
June 26	Industry Outreach Meetings? or Other Outreach Effort?
July 24	Assessment Oversight Panel (AOP) meets to review assessment plans including any substantial changes/modifications
August 14	Draft Assessment Reports for NEFSC Internal Review (8 wks post-data)
August 21	Data Portal Opened: Working Papers Available to Review Panel
September 11-15	Operational Assessment Peer Review - one week duration
October 2	Near Final Report to the SSC and Groundfish PDT – (this might be optimistic, another week would be good)
October 2 - 13	2 weeks of PDT work to develop projections, etc., inputs for SSC meeting
Mid-October	NEFMC SSC Meeting - peer review outputs reviewed and SSC recommendations developed for NEFMC
Mid-November	NEFMC Groundfish Committee Meeting – Groundfish Committee recommendations specifications alternatives
December 5-7	New England Fishery Management Council Meeting – Final action on Framework 57
Late December-April	NEFMC and GARFO work on FMP action, review, etc.
1 May	Fishing year starts

2015: 1st half		2015: 2nd half	
1	Scup - SARC 60, June 2-5 , might be done with incomplete 2014 data		
2	Bluefish - SARC 60 June 2-5 , might be done with incomplete 2014 data		
3			
4			(20 Groundfish Stocks, Operational Assessment, Sept.14-18; AOP: July 22??)
5	(ASMFC - Lobster peer review - June 2015)		
6	(Scallop Survey Methods- March 17-19, New Bedford)		
7	(Herring, Operational Assessment, April; AOP: Dec.2014)		
8	(TRAC - EGB cod, EGB haddock, GB YT - July 7-9, St. Andrews, Canada)		
9	(Protected species: Program Review - April 13- ,2015 )		
10	(Updates: BlkSeaBass [data update],Fluke, surfclam [data update], Dog, skates, OQ [data update] )		
	( Mackerel [data update], butterfish [data update], tilefish [data update], squids [data update] )		
2016: 1st half		2016: 2nd half	
1	Surfclam - SARC 61, July 19-21	Black sea bass - SARC 62, Nov. 29 - Dec. 2	
2		Witch Flounder - SARC 62	
3	Black sea bass stock structure TOR-1 (SSC review, Feb. 23)		
4	(Monkfish - Operational Assessment - June 20)		
5		(Cumul. Discard Methodology - Nov. 7-9, Gloucester MA))	
6	(TRAC - EGB cod, EGB haddock data update, GB YT - July 12-14, Woods Hole)	(Research Topic: Retrospective Patterns)	
7	(ASMFC - Weakfish)		
8	(Ecosystem Applications, Management, Habitat : Program Review - June 6-10)		
9	(Assessment Updates: skates, summer flounder )		
	(Data Updates: mackerel, black sea bass, bluefish, ocean quahog, dogfish , surfclam, butterfish, tilefish ,longfin and shortfin squid, scup)		
2017: 1st half		2017: 2nd half	
1	Ocean Quahog - SARC 63, Feb. 21-23	Atl. Mackerel - SARC 64, Date: Nov 28-30	
2			
3	(Golden tilefish - Assessment Update with SSC review, Mar. 1 )	(20 Groundfish Stocks, Operational Assessment, Date: Sept.11-15)	
4			
5	(TRAC - EGB cod, EGB haddock, GB YT - July 11-14, St. Andrews, Canada)	(Cod stock structure - NOT in the SAW/SARC process)	
6			
7	(SEDAR - Blueline tilefish )	(ASMFC - Sturgeon, River herring , Northern shrimp)	
8			
9	(Economics and Social Sciences : Program Review - Date: May 1-4)		
10	(Assessment Updates: skates, Golden tilefish, butterfish, longfin squid, scup )		
11	(Data Updates: hakes, mackerel, summer flounder, black sea bass, surfclam, dogfish, shortfin squid, bluefish)		
2018: 1st half		2018: 2nd half	
1	Sea scallop - SARC 65, Date TBD		
2	Atl. Herring - SARC 65		
3		MRIP --Multiple assessment updates; type and review TBD; Date TBD)	
4			
5			
6			
7	(ASMFC - Shad )		
8	(TRAC - EGB cod, EGB haddock, GB YT - Date TBD)		
9	(Assessment Updates: skates , summer flounder, black sea bass, bluefish)		
10	(Data Updates: hakes, mackerel, scup, ocean quahog, surfclam, butterfish, golden tilefish ,dogfish, longfin and shortfin squid)		

2019 +: GB multispecies models and supporting data; Possible Benchmarks: GB Haddock, summer flounder, striped bass, American plaice, spiny dogfish;

Key:

*Italics* = Under consideration, but not officially scheduled.

"( )" = not in the SARC process.

Cells filled with gray = work completed.

~/sarc/boilerplate/Schedule-worksheet-assessments(date).xls 10/25/2016





## Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901  
Phone: 302-674-2331 | FAX: 302-674-5399 | [www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org)  
Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman  
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

March 24, 2017

Mr. Tom Nies  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill 2  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Tom:

In June of last year, the New England Fishery Management Council adopted a motion, and sent a letter to the GARFO Regional Administrator, requesting joint management of summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. In response to the letter, the Mid-Atlantic Council proposed an alternative that was later rejected by the New England Council. Since then, we have had several conversations at the NRCC and respective Council meetings on the topic.

At our recent February Council meeting, the Council discussed the issue again and agreed by consensus that two additional New England Council members should be added to our Demersal Committee in lieu of joint management. They based their decision on the following:

- The Mid has 2 seats and represent 15% of the membership on the New England Groundfish Committee (2/13)
- The Mid has 2 seats and represent 18% of the membership on New England Scallop Committee (2/11)
- However, New England has 1 seat and represents 6% of the membership of the Demersal Committee's voting members (1/17).
- As such, adding 2 voting members (for a total of 3) from New England to our Demersal Committee increases their representation to 16% of the membership of the Demersal Committee's voting members which is in line with our participation on the groundfish and scallop committees.

Please discuss this with your Council at your earliest convenience to determine if they agree with this approach. We expect to convene the Demersal Committee more frequently over the coming year as we continue development of our Summer Flounder amendment and would like to have the full committee formed as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

cc: M. Luisi, W. Elliott, J. Bullard, K. Dancy



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*

April 21, 2017

Dr. Christopher Moore  
Executive Director  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
Suite 201, 800 N. State Street  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Chris:

Thank-you for your letter of March 24, 2017, that offered the New England Fishery Management Council two additional seats on the your Demersal Committee. The Council agreed to accept this offer at our April 2017 meeting. The Chair will make assignments in the near future.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas A. Nies".

Thomas A. Nies  
Executive Director

cc: Michael Pentony, GARFO



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

Robert Beal  
Executive Director  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1050 N. Highland Street  
Suite 200 A-N  
Arlington, VA 22201

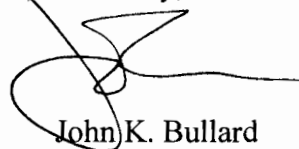
**MAY - 4 2017**

Dear Bob,

As you may recall, during the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC) meetings in 2016 we discussed the need for a process to review and streamline permitting of proposed offshore aquaculture operations. At the October NRCC meeting in Washington D.C., the conversation concluded with the suggestion that we would invite the two Councils and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to participate in working group meetings to be initiated this year. The working group would be tasked to scope out the work that would be required to develop and implement a comprehensive fishery management plan amendment focused on the review and permitting of offshore aquaculture projects or achieving such a goal through other mechanisms, such as amendments to existing FMPs. At this time, we envision a review of existing models for offshore aquaculture permitting resulting in a white paper that each fisheries management entity can use to inform its respective members prior to deciding on a preferred course of action. I would like to suggest that the white paper be prepared this summer and presented to the NRCC at our fall 2017 meeting.

With this letter, I am requesting you identify a point of contact on your staff that would be able to participate in this working group. Please respond to Kevin Madley (978-282-8494 or [kevin.madley@noaa.gov](mailto:kevin.madley@noaa.gov)) with confirmation of your planned participation and identify which of your staff will participate in this work group and/or with questions you may have. We foresee in-person meetings coinciding with other scheduled meetings to reduce travel and time costs, as possible. Additionally, phone and web-based meeting options will be available. Identical letters have also been sent to Tom Nies, NEFMC, and Chris Moore, MAFMC.

Sincerely,



John K. Bullard  
Regional Administrator

EC: Pentony, GARFO SFD  
Madley, GARFO SED





**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

**MAY - 4 2017**

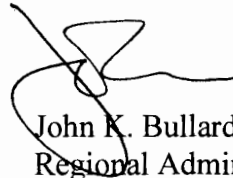
Dr. Christopher Moore  
Executive Director  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Chris,

As you may recall, during the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC) meetings in 2016 we discussed the need for a process to review and streamline permitting of proposed offshore aquaculture operations. At the October NRCC meeting in Washington D.C., the conversation concluded with the suggestion that we would invite the two Councils and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to participate in working group meetings to be initiated this year. The working group would be tasked to scope out the work that would be required to develop and implement a comprehensive fishery management plan amendment focused on the review and permitting of offshore aquaculture projects or achieving such a goal through other mechanisms, such as amendments to existing FMPs. At this time, we envision a review of existing models for offshore aquaculture permitting resulting in a white paper that each fisheries management entity can use to inform its respective members prior to deciding on a preferred course of action. I would like to suggest that the white paper be prepared this summer and presented to the NRCC at our fall 2017 meeting.

With this letter, I am requesting you identify a point of contact on your staff that would be able to participate in this working group. Please respond to Kevin Madley (978-282-8494 or [kevin.madley@noaa.gov](mailto:kevin.madley@noaa.gov)) with confirmation of your planned participation and identify which of your staff will participate in this work group and/or with questions you may have. We foresee in-person meetings coinciding with other scheduled meetings to reduce travel and time costs, as possible. Additionally, phone and web-based meeting options will be available. Identical letters have also been sent to Tom Nies, NEFMC, and Rob Beal, ASMFC.

Sincerely,



John K. Bullard  
Regional Administrator

EC: Pentony, GARFO SFD  
Madley, GARFO SED





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

**MAY - 4 2017**

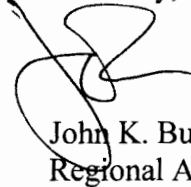
Tom Nies  
Executive Director  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill 2  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Tom,

As you may recall, during the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC) meetings in 2016 we discussed the need for a process to review and streamline permitting of proposed offshore aquaculture operations. At the October NRCC meeting in Washington D.C., the conversation concluded with the suggestion that we would invite the two Councils and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to participate in working group meetings to be initiated this year. The working group would be tasked to scope out the work that would be required to develop and implement a comprehensive fishery management plan amendment focused on the review and permitting of offshore aquaculture projects or achieving such a goal through other mechanisms, such as amendments to existing FMPs. At this time, we envision a review of existing models for offshore aquaculture permitting resulting in a white paper that each fisheries management entity can use to inform its respective members prior to deciding on a preferred course of action. I would like to suggest that the white paper be prepared this summer and presented to the NRCC at our fall 2017 meeting.

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Sincerely,



John K. Bullard  
Regional Administrator

EC: Pentony, GARFO SFD  
Madley, GARFO SED

