

New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chair* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

DATE: January 28, 2022
TO: Council
FROM: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Summary of January 21, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting

Attendance: The Executive Committee met via webinar, and the committee members attending were Mr. Reid, Mr. Bellavance, Ms. Griffin, Ms. Ware and Mr. Pappalardo. Also attending were Mr. Nies, Mr. Kellogg, Ms. Boelke, Ms. Plante, Ms. Bernier and Ms. Bachman from the Council staff, Dr. Hare from NMFS\NEFSC, and Mr. Pentony from NMFS\GARFO. Mr. Hughes from the MAFMC and others also attended.

Agenda items

1. Executive Director's Report

a. Budget Overview

Mr. Nies reported that there was no significant changes in Council expenditures relative to its budget since December. In 2021 the Council spent approximately \$4.2 of the \$4.6 million dollars allotted. This was due to low travel expenses caused by the continuation of the COVID pandemic and the Council's use of funds from the no-cost extension to the previous 5-year grant to pay for some 2021 expenses. The funds from the no-cost extension have now been fully spent. For 2022, the Council already has received \$2 million so its planned activities in the first part of the year will be covered and the amount of the 2022 award should be sufficient for the full year.

b. Program Review Update

Mr. Nies explained that no further progress has been made on the program review recommendations since the last Executive Committee meeting in mid- November.

2. Management Action Timelines

Mr. Kellogg reviewed the timelines and noted that no delays are anticipated for the implementation of Scallop FW 34 and Amendment 21, Groundfish FW 63 and Amendment 23, Herring FW 9 (although the timeline is still uncertain), and Small Mesh Multispecies specifications. The COVID situation has continued to make timelines uncertain for actions such as Herring FW 7 and EBFM that require some in-person meetings based on Council direction. Frameworks or specifications for Herring, Groundfish, Scallops and Monkfish to be developed in 2022 have timelines similar to previous adjustments for those FMPs. A timeline for consideration of an HAPC in SNE will be developed if and when the Council moves forward with this priority.

3. Report on NEFMC/MAFMC Great South Channel HMA Discussion – Eric Reid

The committee discussed the January 14, 2022 meeting between the leadership from the MAFMC and the NEFMC about Atlantic surfclam fishing access within the GSC HMA and a request for emergency action (EA) made at the December NEFMC meeting. In response to committee questions about progress reports from the Coonamessett Farm EFP, Ms. Bachman from the Council staff

reported that CFF was planning a progress report that might be submitted to the Council before its February meeting. Mr. Pentony noted that in his letter responding to the request for Emergency Action (EA), that even if the criteria for emergency action were met, the maximum duration of any action would be one year. He also explained that the requirement that an EA must be for responding to unanticipated situations would be very hard to meet in this case. In response to another committee question, Mr. Nies stated that the FR notice for the upcoming Council meeting mentions the EA discussion, but the Habitat Committee would have to provide a recommendation for a change in priorities to be approved by the Council before the Council could consider requesting an EA.

4. Research Track Assessment Update

Dr. Hare reported that the Gulf of Maine haddock research track assessment would be reviewed on January 25-27 and the Georges Bank haddock assessment would be reviewed in late March. The GB haddock assessment review has been delayed because of the lack of consensus in the assessment working group about the choice of assessment model. Dr. Hare also summarized the progress of the Cod research track assessment working group. He noted that the research track assessment process was relatively new and that because it is more inclusive than the benchmark assessment process, the assessments are taking more time.

5. DOI request for information on America the Beautiful Atlas

Mr. Nies explained that the deadline for commenting on the Dept. of the Interior's request for information on developing the America the Beautiful Atlas, is March 7, 2022. Therefore, the only chance for the full Council to consider it would be at the Feb. 1-3 meeting. Ms. Boelke summarized the main points of the letter and the committee agreed that the draft should be brought to the Council for its consideration under Other Business.

6. Council meeting preparations

a. Did-not-fish reports

Mr. Nies explained that a follow-up item from the November NRCC meeting was that the MAFMC suggested that DNF reports be required for the EVTR program, and that change would require a joint MAFMC /NEFMC action. One option would be for the Council to be briefed on it at the February meeting and if the Council wished, it could be put on the agenda for the April meeting. There was a discussion about the possible rationale for the action. Mr. Bellavance commented that he thought it was desired for the for-hire recreational vessels because there were fewer checks and balances to understand why a VTR reports might not be filed by them.

b. Mid-Atlantic mackerel

The committee added this issue to this agenda because of the amount of attention the mackerel rebuilding amendment listening sessions requested by Maine and NH received. Mr. Nies explained that Mr. Didden from the Mid-Atlantic staff could present the same information from the listening sessions at the April Council meeting and Ms. Griffin stated that the MAFMC would not make any decisions about the amendment until after April. As a result, the Committee agreed it should be on the April Council meeting agenda.

7. Closed Session

a. SSC Appointments Discussion

In a closed session, the committee decided on Scientific and Statistical Committee appointments and will consult the Council about them at the Feb 1-3, 2022 meeting.

The meeting ended at about 4:00 p.m.