



## New England Fishery Management Council

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## MEETING SUMMARY

### Risk Policy Working Group

January 8, 2025

The New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) Risk Policy Working Group (RPWG) met by webinar on January 8, 2025 to: 1) Consider revisions to the risk policy matrix; 2) discuss opportunities to leverage the State of the Ecosystem report to support the Risk Policy; 3) discuss implementation of the Risk Policy in 2025; 4) begin work on planning for a Council walk-through of the weightings process; 5) address other business as needed.

#### ***MEETING ATTENDANCE***

Megan Ware (Chair), Dan Salerno (Vice-Chair), Jonathon Peros (Council Staff), Dr. Lisa Kerr, Dr. Jason McNamee, Dr. Naresh Pradhan, Cheri Patterson, Melanie Griffin, Moira Kelly, Rick Bellavance, Lindsey Williams. The working group was joined by Dr. Joe Carracappa from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center.

Materials for the meeting can be found [at this link](#).

#### ***KEY OUTCOMES***

- The working group developed recommendations for a new risk policy matrix that better aligns with the new concept and directly links to factors.
- The working group discussed ways to leverage the State of the Ecosystem report and other NMFS products to support the Risk Policy.
- The working group made preparations for a weightings exercise at the April Council meeting.

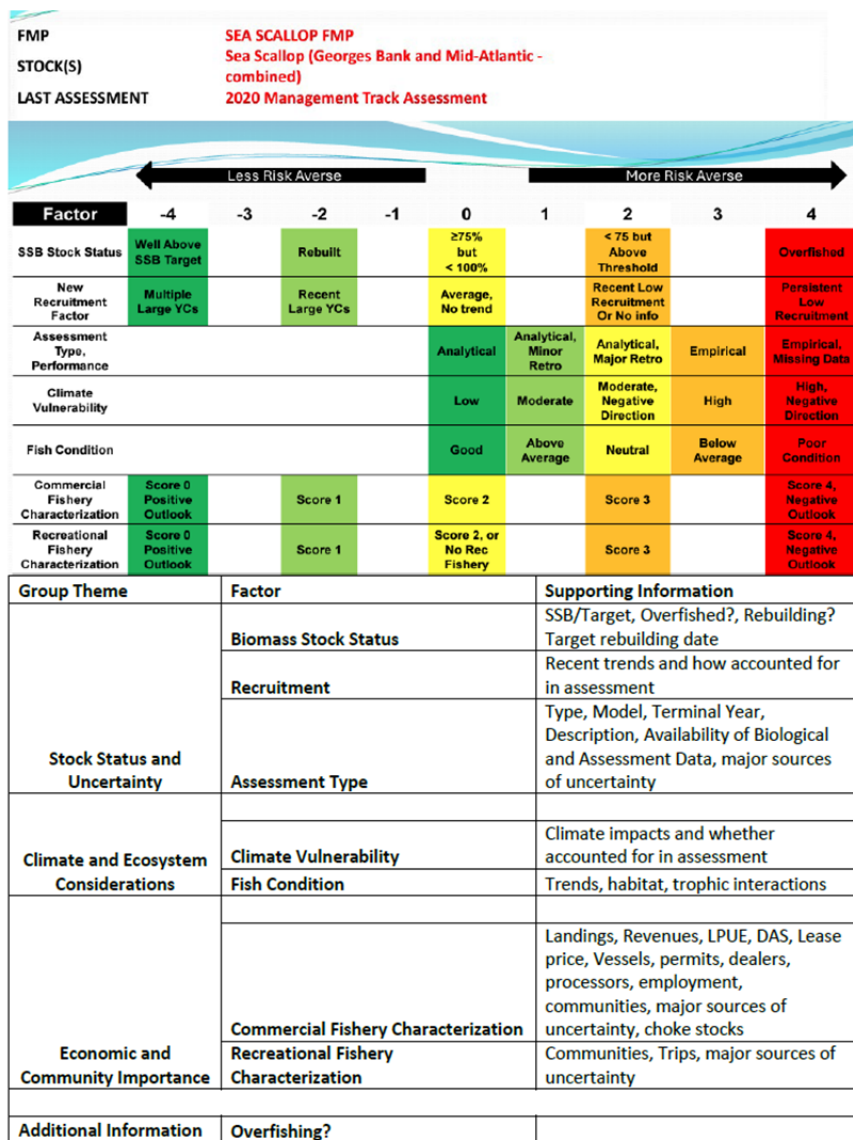
The meeting began at 9:03am.

#### ***RISK POLICY MATRIX AND SCORING OF FACTORS***

Ms. Megan Ware provided an overview of the Risk Policy concept before presenting on possible modifications to the Council's risk policy matrix. The working group reviewed the current matrix in sections, and considered changes to the amount of information being provided, and the way it is organized. Ms. Ware highlighted the need to develop a matrix that aligns with the current risk policy, and is more approachable for Council members and the public. Another emphasis was to create a matrix that could reduce staff workload and trimming down the length of the matrix to

improve clarity. Ms. Ware presented a modified version of the matrix for the group to review, stepping through recommendations to add and remove information, and posed a series of questions to the group. Ms. Melanie Griffin presented a streamlined version of the matrix that combined the color-coded scoring matrix and descriptions of scoring for each factor. There was broad support for the simplified version of the matrix that Ms. Griffin presented (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Draft Risk Policy Matrix Concept discussed at the Working Group Meeting.



## RISK POLICY AND THE STATE OF THE ECOSYSTEM REPORT

Mr. Jonathon Peros presented several slides focusing on the opportunities to leverage the state of the ecosystem report (SOE) to support the Council's Risk Policy. The presentation recapped how the current Risk Policy plans to use indicator data generated for the State of the Ecosystem report. Dr. Joe Caracappa from the Northeast Center explained the schedule and process for the state of the ecosystem report and the potential for aligning indicators with the risk policy

The group discussed the ideas around making more connections between data sources to support the Council's decision-making process, and that there are opportunities to re-think how information is being packaged to better serve the management process. The group noted that there are other products like ecosystem and socioeconomic profile (ESPs) that are often used for stock assessment could also be leveraged to support management efforts like risk policy.

The group asked Dr. Carracappa about the ability to for the SOE to present indicator data at the FMP or species level. There are some indicators that have been grouped by fishery management plan. Most are presented in the SOE report at the ecosystem production unit (EPU) scale. Dr. Carracappa answered several questions about the use of commercial and recreational data in the SOE reports. Dr. Carracappa noted that the SOE process is not in the business of scoring indicators based on predetermined levels. He explained that the Center is looking for input on how to better describe indicators and trends using language of risk in both regions.

#### ***IMPLEMENTATION OF RISK POLICY AND APRIL COUNCIL MEETING PREPARATION***

Ms. Megan Ware addressed planning for a weightings exercise at the April council meeting. She explained that the objective for this meeting is to build familiarity with the weightings process and provide the Council with an opportunity to practice the weightings process, review results in near real-time, and provide feedback. Ms. Ware reminded the group that weightings are a way for the Council to signify the level of importance of a particular factor and that the weightings process is a policy decision that includes input from all Council members. She also explained that all voting Council members are expected to participate and that weightings will occur at the fishery management plan level and not the species or stock level.

The working group discussed the format of the extended Council session, along with technology options, and possible stocks to use in a weightings mock trial. The working group felt that it will be important for the Council to debrief after each round of weightings.

After debating which stocks/species to focus on, the group settled on recommending using scallops and herring as case studies for the mock trial. The working group emphasized the need for multiple rounds and potential challenges with groundfish examples. Dr. Jason McNamee shared a visualization tool for displaying weightings/survey results, and members of the group touched on concerns about potential biases in polling. The group suggested identifying folks at the Council or NMFS who may have experience in survey and polling methods. A weightings sub-group of Ms. Ware, Mr. Salerno, Dr. McNamee, Ms. Kelly, and Mr. Peros was formed to make progress on this topic before the next working group meeting.

Mr. Peros noted that the Council was in the process of developing a request for proposals to conduct simulation testing of the Risk Policy concept in conjunction with the development of groundfish ABC control rules.

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for March 7th, with a focus on refining the weighting process and addressing any remaining questions to address before the April Council meeting.

No other business was discussed. The meeting ended at 11:53am.