



New England Fishery Management Council

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

September 30, 2025

Mr. Eugenio Piñeiro-Soler
Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Mr. Piñeiro-Soler:

Please accept this letter and attached list of proposed measures as the New England Fishery Management Council's (Council) response to your request related to Executive Order 14276 *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness* signed by the President on April 17, 2025. To prepare this response, the Council requested input from Plan Development Teams (PDTs) and Advisory Panel (AP) members on potential actions that address one or more of the Executive Order's stated goals: *reduce burdens on domestic fishing; increase production; stabilize markets; improve access; enhance economic profitability; or prevent closures*. Members of the public also submitted written comments to the Council. The Council finalized its prioritized list of recommended activities as requested under Section 4(a)(i) of the Executive Order during their September 2025 meeting.

The Council's response is organized into four categories (outlined below). Items 1 through 2 are included in the Council's 2025 priorities and projects with ongoing effort and anticipated implementation. Item 3 provides a prioritized list of Council activities recommended in response to Executive Order 14276. Item 4 provides a list of recommendations that could contribute to restoring American seafood competitiveness but are not within the Council's purview.

New England Fishery Management Council Recommendations for Executive Order 14276

1. Council Actions in the NOAA Fisheries Rulemaking Process

- 1.1. Northeast Multispecies Framework Adjustment 69
- 1.2. Atlantic Herring 2025-2027 Specifications

2. Council Actions Under Development

- 2.1. Omnibus Management Flexibility Amendment
- 2.2. Actions to Set Specifications for Monkfish and Skates
- 2.3. Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment for Accountability Measures and Specifications
- 2.4. Sea Scallop Strategic Plan
- 2.5. Ecosystem Components Evaluation
- 2.6. Modernizing Approaches to Governance

3. Proposed Council Activities for Executive Order 14276

- 3.1. Modifications to Vessel Baseline Restrictions
- 3.2. Atlantic Herring Slippage Measures

- 3.3. Monkfish Management Modifications
- 3.4. Revisions to Reactive Accountability Measures
- 3.5. Fishery Management Plan Revisions
- 3.6. Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area Modifications

4. Non-Council Activities for Executive Order 14276

- 4.1. Seafood Marketing and Promotion
- 4.2. Fisheries Monitoring and Scientific Programs
- 4.3. Recreational Bioeconomic Model
- 4.4. Changing Environment and Fisheries Initiative
- 4.5. Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act

1. Council Actions in the NOAA Fisheries Rulemaking Process

The identified actions (1.1 and 1.2 from the list above) have been approved by the Council and submitted to NOAA Fisheries for review and rulemaking. Although Council work on these actions is completed, the Council recommends approval and implementation of these actions in response to EO 14276. Both actions include increased catch limits for certain stocks, which were intended to be in place by May 1, 2025, for the Northeast Multispecies fishery and expeditiously following final submission of the Atlantic Herring 2025-2027 specifications that occurred on May 6, 2025. Implementing these actions as soon as possible would reduce burdens on domestic fishing, increase production, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent or lift closures.

2. Council Actions Under Development

Actions currently under development have been identified as responsive to EO 14276.

- 2.1 Omnibus Management Flexibility Amendment
 - Increase management flexibility by revising/removing constraining regulations across the Council's Fishery Management Plans.
- 2.2 Actions to Set Specifications for Monkfish and Skates
 - Provide specifications to increase flexibility, reduce burdens on domestic fishing, enhance economic profitability, and stabilize markets.
- 2.3 Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment for Accountability Measures and Specifications
 - Avoid undue socioeconomic impacts on commercial fishing operations by reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens associated with payback accountability measures and promoting the sustainable and economically viable harvest of U.S. fisheries.
- 2.4 Sea Scallop Strategic Plan
 - Identify priority issues to enhance management of the scallop fishery, including measures that prevent closures, enhance economic profitability, increase production, and reduce burdens on domestic fishing.
- 2.5 Ecosystem Components Evaluation
 - Identify stocks that may be removed from regulatory requirements for conservation and management to alleviate undue burdens of bycatch limits, prevent closures, and increase efficiency of available staff and funding resources.
- 2.6 Modernizing Approaches to Governance
 - Evaluate organizational and operational performance, in coordination with east coast partner organizations, to improve efficiency and effectiveness of management approaches to provide timelier actions, increase public accessibility of information, and reduce burdens on domestic fishing.

3. Proposed Council Activities for Executive Order 14276

3.1 Modifications to Vessel Baseline Restrictions

Issue: Current regulations require that a replacement vessel or an upgrade made to an existing vessel must be within 10 percent of the length and 20 percent of the horsepower of the permit's baseline vessel. The purpose of these restrictions is to limit potential increases in the harvest capacity of the fleet. However, industry participants have reported challenges in acquiring suitable replacement vessels or engines that meet these specifications, particularly in cases where comparable options are not reasonably available with the existing limits.

Action: The Council, in coordination with the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAMFC), proposes to evaluate the current baseline restrictions and consider initiating a joint management action to explore potential modifications to these requirements.

Rationale: Revising vessel baseline restrictions could provide greater flexibility for permit holders seeking to upgrade or replace aging vessels, without compromising the Council's ability to manage overall fleet capacity. This would support safer and more efficient fishing operations while reducing regulatory barriers that may prevent modernization of the fleet.

3.2 Atlantic Herring Slippage Measures

Issue: Under existing regulations, if a herring vessel releases any fish from its nets for reasons of mechanical problems, vessel safety, or because the fish cannot be pumped aboard (e.g., if there are large numbers of dogfish in the catch), the vessel must relocate (i.e., "move along") to a fishing area at least 15 nautical miles from its location. If a vessel releases fish for any other reason (e.g., the vessel is not allowed to retain the species), the vessel must terminate the trip and return to port.

Action: The Council proposes to evaluate the necessity and utility of this regulation and consider including a deregulatory measure in a future Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan action.

Rationale: The events that would trigger the "move along" requirement, including mechanical failure, dogfish encounters, and conditions impacting vessel safety, are beyond the control of the vessel and crew. Additionally, the need for slippage restrictions does not appear to have a strong biological or operational basis. Removing the slippage and consequence requirements would support safer and more efficient fishing operations and reduce regulatory burdens that impose costs on the herring fishery.

3.3 Monkfish Management Modifications

Issue: Current regulations specify the absolute number of Days-At-Sea (DAS) that can be used in the northern and southern management areas, as well as bind monkfish DAS to Northeast multispecies (groundfish) and sea scallop DAS. These measures can result in limiting the areas that monkfish vessels can access in a single trip and increase reporting requirements associated with declarations of the type of DAS used.

Action: The Council proposes to develop a white paper to evaluate how the monkfish fisheries interact with other fisheries to consider approaches that may decouple monkfish from groundfish and scallop regulations.

Rationale: Modifications to the monkfish regulations could reduce unnecessary restrictions, improve access to the fishery, and support more efficient resource use.

3.4 Revisions to Reactive Accountability Measures

Issue: Several Council plans include "pound-for-pound payback" when annual catch limits are exceeded in one year by reducing the catch limit in a future year. If a stock is above its biomass target ($>100\% B_{MSY}$), paybacks could be considered unnecessary and overly burdensome to meet conservation and management goals.

Action: The Council proposes to evaluate the effectiveness of pound-for-pound paybacks in preventing overfishing with consideration of the Spiny Dogfish Accountability Measures Framework Adjustment as an example to be applied across multiple Fishery Management Plans.

Rationale: Modifications to reactive accountability measures could minimize negative socioeconomic disruptions while continuing to maintain sustainability of Council-managed resources.

3.5 Fishery Management Plan Revisions

Issue: Several Council plans include outdated regulations that have not been removed due to oversight, focus on other priority topics, or lack of application. The PDTs conducted an evaluation of existing regulations in each of the Fishery Management Plans and identified several provisions that are no longer deemed necessary or effective, as well as regulations that could be streamlined to improve access and reduce burdens on the fishing industry.

Action: The Council proposes to review outdated and irrelevant regulations across Fishery Management Plans and consider removal of regulations via future management actions.

Rationale: Removing unnecessary and overly restrictive regulations could reduce burdens on the fishing industry, increase access, and enhance economic profitability.

3.6 Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area Management Revisions

Issue: The timing and location of migrations of spiny dogfish and other species like bluefish and black seabass are changing based on environmental conditions. The current regulations for the Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area may no longer align with species distributions in the southern New England region and may be limiting access to important fishery resources.

Action: The Council proposes to evaluate the Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area to 1) expand the season and 2) add bluefish and black sea bass to the exempted species list for the area and consider including a deregulatory measure in a future Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan action.

Rationale: Modifications to the dogfish gillnet exemption area could increase access to commercially important species in Southern New England while continuing to maintain sustainability of Council-managed resources.

4. Non-Council Activities for Executive Order 14276

4.1 Seafood Marketing and Promotion

Issue: Despite being among the most sustainably managed in the world, U.S. seafood products often face competition from lower-cost imports, many of which do not meet the same rigorous environmental and labor standards and may include Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing practices. Public awareness of the benefits of domestically sourced seafood, including its nutritional value, sustainability, and contribution to coastal economies, remains limited. This lack of visibility undermines consumer demand and the economic viability of U.S. fishing and seafood industries.

Action: NOAA Fisheries and other federal agencies should expand and enhance efforts to promote U.S. seafood through coordinated marketing campaigns, public education initiatives, coordination with sub-national and state initiatives, and support for regional branding strategies that highlight the nutritional importance, sustainability, quality, and economic value of domestic seafood products. This effort must move beyond a website to include initiatives that engage the public and reach broad audiences with methods to track progress and performance. Additionally, the Council recommends expansion of USDA seafood purchasing programs.

The Council previously recommended the following related priorities in response to EO 13291 in October 2020:

- 1) Recommend creating a seafood marketing branch in NMFS that encourages Americans to buy/cook American caught seafood. The Council recommended that NMFS coordinate development of a national

seafood marketing effort, partnering with industry. The Council supports continuation of the recently established Market and Trade Working Group by NOAA's Office of Science and Technology.

- 2) Recommend establishing federal policy that imports of seafood, including HMS products, should meet or exceed the same standards of harvest and sustainability (e.g., types of gear used and minimized impacts on protected species) as fish landed in the U.S. The Council recommended that NMFS convene a working group to identify the steps necessary to implement this policy.

Rationale: Increasing consumer awareness and demand for U.S. seafood is critical to supporting the long-term competitiveness of domestic fisheries. Enhanced marketing and promotion can help differentiate U.S. seafood in the marketplace, build trust and confidence among consumers, and increase the value of landings for fishermen and seafood businesses. By investing in the visibility and marketability of U.S. seafood, we can strengthen coastal economies, reinforce the value of science-based management, and support food security through a more resilient domestic seafood supply chain. A national-level program that emphasizes the sustainable products produced by the U.S. fishing industry would increase demand and help reduce the seafood trade deficit.

4.2 Fisheries Monitoring and Scientific Programs

Issue: The New England region has been experiencing a loss of scientific support systems for fisheries management. This includes, but is not limited to, fishery dependent and independent data collection systems and resulting stock assessments. This has contributed to instability in catch advice and fishery yield (e.g., substantial up and down swings in catch advice year over year), impacts to markets and price (e.g., volatile lease prices, reduced supply chains and depressed ex-vessel revenue), loss of community value and infrastructure (e.g., reduced processing capacity, shifts in employment opportunities, loss of reliable and competent crew, and loss of recreational fishing opportunities), and ultimately a trajectory towards substantial decline of the region's fishing industry. Furthermore, recent reduced capacity at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) due to staff and budget reductions threatens to undermine the entire stock assessment enterprise.

Action: NOAA Fisheries and NEFSC should prioritize sustained support for fisheries monitoring and scientific programs (e.g., fishery-independent surveys and increased use of Industry-Based Surveys, at-sea monitoring programs including electronic monitoring systems and observer coverage, port biological sampling, processing of age samples, etc.) and enhance the use of advanced technologies to ensure that stock assessments and science advice meet the needs of fishery management to support robust and sustainable domestic fisheries.

Rationale: Sustained investment in monitoring and research efforts is necessary to identify opportunities to increase harvest and reduce undue burdens on domestic fisheries while maintaining long-term sustainability in changing environmental and fishery conditions. Prioritizing federal support for these programs will enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of U.S. fisheries by ensuring management decisions are grounded in the best available science.

4.3 Recreational Bioeconomic Model

Issue: The Bioeconomic Model was developed by the NEFSC to predict the effect of proposed recreational measures (bag limit, size limit, season) on angler satisfaction, fishing effort, and recreational harvest and discards. The Bioeconomic Model has been used in the development of recreational measures for cod and haddock and recently underwent updates as the NEFSC developed a cloud-based Decision Support Tool (DST), which automates the bioeconomic model process. Introduced for use in the development of fishing year 2025 measures, this new process allows primary users (i.e., Recreational Advisory Panel and Groundfish Committee members) to directly run the model and explore possible measures. The Council supports the use of the bioeconomic model in the development of additional Council-managed recreational stocks. The DST-integrated Bioeconomic Model allows recreational measures to be developed and analyzed more efficiently and helps to streamline the decision-making process. The model, including the integrated cloud tool, requires continued maintenance and funding in order to be used in the management process.

Action: NOAA Fisheries should continue to prioritize funding and support for the Bioeconomic Model including the associated cloud-based tool.

Rationale: The Bioeconomic Model provides a mechanism to evaluate the impacts of changes in recreational measures on angler welfare and number of trips. This helps the Council to develop recreational measures that provide the greatest socioeconomic benefits while maintaining harvest and catch within the required levels.

4.4 Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative

Issue: Changing ocean conditions have impacted distribution and migration patterns, productivity, and predictive capability of marine resources. Under such dynamic environmental changes and static management regimes, domestic fisheries have lost access to historic target species and lack the ability to adapt to new fishing opportunities. The Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) is a cross-NOAA effort to build the nation-wide, operational ocean modeling and decision support system needed to reduce impacts, increase resilience, and support the economic viability of the U.S. fishing industry.

Action: NOAA Fisheries and NEFSC should continue to invest in and support CEFI, in particular the continued development and updates to the Modular Ocean Model 6 (MOM6) forecasting tools.

Rationale: The forecasting models developed as part of CEFI have the potential to provide fishermen and managers with valuable tools to support more efficient and productive fishing trips, enable more responsive management, and minimize interactions with protected resources and other non-target species.

4.5 Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act

Issue: Most Council plans require frequent actions to set specifications and other measures. Often, Environmental Assessments (EAs) or Supplemental Information Reports (SIRs) are prepared. However, there may be circumstances when a Categorical Exclusion from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) could be considered. Recently, NOAA proposed revisions to its existing Categorical Exclusions and solicited public comments.

Action: NOAA should continue collaborating with the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) to provide clarification about the types of Council actions that would qualify for a Categorical Exclusion.

Rationale: This approach would allow for more efficient document preparation, review, and implementation, as well as enhance public accessibility of information through shorter, more easily understandable documents.

The Council appreciates the opportunity to provide these recommendations and looks forward to receiving updates on the progress of its recommendations when available. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cate O'Keefe".

Cate O'Keefe
Executive Director

Attachments: Appendices 1 and 2

CC: Mr. Sam Rauch, Ms. Kelly Denit, Mr. Michael Pentony, Dr. Jon Hare, NOAA Fisheries

Appendix 1: NEFMC EO 13921 Response - October 2020

Council(s)	Priority Number	Action type (e.g. Changes to Regulations, Orders, Guidance Documents, Other Similar Agency Actions)	Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50 (if applicable)	Description of recommended action(s)	Rationale of how the recommended action(s) reduces burdens on domestic fishing and increases production within sustainable fisheries	Proposal for initiating each recommended action (s) within 1 year of the date of this order (i.e., by May 7, 2021)
NEMFC	1	Other Similar Agency Action	N/A	Recommend creating a seafood marketing branch in NMFS that encourages Americans to buy/cook American caught seafood.	A nation-level program that emphasizes the sustainable products produced by the U.S. fishing industry would increase demand and help reduce the seafood trade deficit.	NMFS to coordinate development of a national seafood marketing effort, partnering with industry.
NEMFC	2	Other Similar Agency Action	N/A	Recommend establishing federal policy that imports of seafood, including HMS products, should meet or exceed the same standards of harvest, for example in terms of the gear used and impacts on protected species, and sustainability as fish landed in the U.S.	U.S. seafood products have higher harvest standard as a result if the MSA and other applicable law. These standards impose a cost on the fishery. Products from countries with lower standards have a price advantage as a result. Insisting on similar standards would make U.S. products more competitive in the marketplace and would also promote sustainable practices worldwide. This would be in addition to MMPA (section 101(a)(2) import provisions.	NMFS convene a working group to identify the steps necessary to implement this policy.
NEFMC (GARFO)	3	Order	50 CFR 648.59(b)(3)(ii)	Develop tools/website to allow online exchange of Atlantic Sea Scallop fishery access area trips.	Currently, each exchange of an access area trip must be requested on an individual form. The agency response can take as long as 15 days. An online process would simplify submission and should speed the agency's approval process. This will increase the flexibility of scallop fishermen to maximize their fishing opportunities. Note that a similar program that allows LAGC IFQ vessels to transfer quota is already in place and transfers occur essentially in real time.	GARFO to hire contractor by May 1, 2021 to make necessary changes to IT system. No regulatory action needed.
NEMFC	4	Order	N/A	Modify LAGC closure noticing.	Closures of the LAGC fishery must be announced by Federal Register Notice. Because of the time needed to prepare, submit, and approve these notices, the closures must be based on a forecast. The risk is that the forecast may be in error. Usually this leads to an underharvest, but it could also lead to an overharvest. Developing a notice process that shortens the forecast period will reduce these errors.	GARFO to identify ways to modify the notice process. If possible, these should be adopted through agency action. If Council action is needed, this could be considered addressed in an annual framework action/.

Appendix 2 - NEFMC EO 14276 Response - September 2025

Council(s)	Priority Number	Action type (e.g. Changes to Regulations, Orders, Guidance Documents, Other Similar Agency Actions)	Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50 (if applicable)	Updated description of recommended action(s)	Rationale of how the recommended action(s) stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent closures	Proposed plan and schedule for implementation
NEMFC	1.1	Regulation	50 CFR Part 648 Subpart F	<u>Northeast Multispecies Framework Adjustment 69</u> : This action includes increased catch limits for certain stocks, which were intended to be in place by May 1, 2025, for the Northeast Multispecies fishery.	Implementing this action as soon as possible would reduce burdens on domestic fishing, increase production, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent or lift closures.	Approved by the Council and submitted to NOAA Fisheries for review and rulemaking.
NEMFC	1.2	Regulation	50 CFR Part 648 Subpart K	<u>Atlantic Herring 2025-2027 Specifications</u> : This action includes increased catch limits, which were intended to be in place as expeditiously as possible following final submission of the Atlantic Herring 2025-2027 specifications that occurred on May 6, 2025.	Implementing this action as soon as possible would reduce burdens on domestic fishing, increase production, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent or lift closures.	Approved by the Council and submitted to NOAA Fisheries for review and rulemaking. A proposed rule published and comment period closed. Pending final rule.
NEFMC	2.1	Regulation	50 CFR Part 648 Subpart A; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart D; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart F; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart K; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart M; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart O	<u>Omnibus Management Flexibility Amendment</u> : An omnibus action to modify certain administrative measures across the Council's fishery management plans to increase management flexibility and consistency. Recent events, including Executive Orders, changes to federal agency structure and staffing, and pauses in the regulatory advancement of management actions, have highlighted the need for the Council to consider increased flexibility in management and regulatory processes.	Implementing this action would expand tools to prevent fishery delays, improve planning of Council final actions throughout the year, allow the ability to respond to new information in a timelier way, and improve allocation of staff resources.	Approved by the Council at its September 2025 meeting and preparing submission to NOAA Fisheries for review and rulemaking.
NEMFC, MAFMC	2.2	Regulation	50 CFR Part 648 Subpart F; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart O	<u>Actions to Set Specifications for Monkfish and Skates</u> : An action to provide multiple years of specifications for monkfish and skates and align their timing.	To increase flexibility, reduce burdens on domestic fishing, enhance economic profitability, and stabilize markets.	Approved by the Council at its September 2025 meeting and preparing submission to NOAA Fisheries for review and rulemaking.
NEMFC, MAFMC	2.3		50 CFR Part 648 Subpart L	<u>Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment for Accountability Measures and Specifications</u> : A joint action by the MAFMC and NEFMC to modify accountability measures and set fishing year 2026 and 2027 specifications.	Avoid undue socioeconomic impacts on commercial fishing operations by reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens associated with payback accountability measures and promoting the sustainable and economically viable harvest of U.S. fisheries.	To be considered by the MAFMC at its October 2025 meeting and the NEFMC at its December 2025 meeting; prepare submission to NOAA Fisheries for review and rulemaking.
NEFMC	2.4	n/a	n/a	<u>Sea Scallop Strategic Plan</u> : Developing a long-term strategic plan to guide the future management of the Atlantic sea scallop fishery over the next 3-5 years. The plan will inform the long-term sustainability, economic viability, and management of the scallop fishery.	Identify priority issues to enhance management of the scallop fishery, including measures that prevent closures, enhance economic profitability, increase production, and reduce burdens on domestic fishing.	Council work priority for 2025.
NEFMC	2.5	n/a	n/a	<u>Ecosystem Component Evaluation</u> : Establish management strategies for ecosystem components in the New England region.	Identify stocks that may be removed from regulatory requirements for conservation and management to alleviate undue burdens of bycatch limits, prevent closures, and increase efficiency of available staff and funding resources.	Council work priority for 2025.
NEFMC, MAFMC	2.6	n/a	n/a	<u>Modernizing Approaches to Governance</u> : Evaluate organizational and operational performance, in coordination with east coast partner organizations.	To improve efficiency and effectiveness of management approaches to provide timelier actions, increase public accessibility of information, and reduce burdens on domestic fishing.	Council work priority for 2025.

Council(s)	Priority Number	Action type (e.g. Changes to Regulations, Orders, Guidance Documents, Other Similar Agency Actions)	Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50 (if applicable)	Updated description of recommended action(s)	Rationale of how the recommended action(s) stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent closures	Proposed plan and schedule for implementation
NEFMC, MAFMC	3.1	Regulation	50 CFR 648.4	<u>Modifications to Vessel Baseline Restrictions:</u> The NEFMC, in coordination with GARFO, would evaluate the current baseline restrictions and consider initiating a joint management action with the MAFMC to explore potential modifications to these requirements. Current regulations require that a replacement vessel or an upgrade made to an existing vessel must be within 10 percent of the length and 20 percent of the horsepower of the permit's baseline vessel. The purpose of these restrictions is to limit potential increases in the harvest capacity of the fleet. However, industry participants have reported challenges in acquiring suitable replacement vessels or engines that meet these specifications, particularly in cases where comparable options are not reasonably available with the existing limits.	Revising vessel baseline restrictions could provide greater flexibility for permit holders seeking to upgrade or replace aging vessels, without compromising the Council's ability to manage overall fleet capacity. This would support safer and more efficient fishing operations while reducing regulatory barriers that may prevent modernization of the fleet.	Add to 2026 Council list of work priorities.
NEFMC	3.2	Regulation	50 CFR 648.11(m)(7)	<u>Atlantic Herring Slippage Measures:</u> The Council would evaluate the necessity and utility of this regulation and consider including a deregulatory measure in a future Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan action. Under existing regulations, if a herring vessel releases any fish from its nets for reasons of mechanical problems, vessel safety, or because the fish cannot be pumped aboard (e.g., if there are large numbers of dogfish in the catch), the vessel must relocate (i.e., "move along") to a fishing area at least 15 nautical miles from its location. If a vessel releases fish for any other reason (e.g., the vessel is not allowed to retain the species), the vessel must terminate the trip and return to port.	The events that would trigger the "move along" requirement, including mechanical failure, dogfish encounters, and conditions impacting vessel safety, are beyond the control of the vessel and crew. Additionally, the need for slippage restrictions does not appear to have a strong biological or operational basis. Removing the slippage and consequence requirements would support safer and more efficient fishing operations and reduce regulatory burdens that impose costs on the herring fishery.	Add to 2026 Council list of work priorities.
NEFMC	3.3	Regulation	50 CFR Part 648 Subpart F, 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart D	<u>Monkfish Management Modifications:</u> The Council would develop a white paper to evaluate how the monkfish fishery interacts with other fisheries to consider approaches that may decouple monkfish from groundfish and scallop regulations. Current regulations specify the absolute number of Days-At-Sea (DAS) that can be used in the northern and southern management areas, as well as bind monkfish DAS to Northeast multispecies (groundfish) and sea scallop DAS. These measures can result in limiting the areas that monkfish vessels can access in a single trip and increase reporting requirements associated with declarations of the type of DAS used.	Modifications to the monkfish regulations could reduce unnecessary restrictions, improve access to the fishery, and support more efficient resource use.	Add to 2026 Council list of work priorities.

Council(s)	Priority Number	Action type (e.g. Changes to Regulations, Orders, Guidance Documents, Other Similar Agency Actions)	Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50 (if applicable)	Updated description of recommended action(s)	Rationale of how the recommended action(s) stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent closures	Proposed plan and schedule for implementation
NEFMC	3.4	Regulation	50 CFR Part 648 Subpart A; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart D; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart F; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart K; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart M; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart O	<u>Revisions to Reactive Accountability Measures:</u> The Council would evaluate the effectiveness of pound-for-pound paybacks in preventing overfishing with consideration of the Spiny Dogfish Accountability Measures Framework Adjustment as an example to be applied across multiple Fishery Management Plans. Several NEFMC plans include "pound-for-pound payback" when annual catch limits are exceeded in one year by reducing the catch limit in a future year. If a stock is above its biomass target (>100% BMSY), paybacks could be considered unnecessary and overly burdensome to meet conservation and management goals.	Modifications to reactive accountability measures could minimize negative socioeconomic disruptions while continuing to maintain sustainability of Council-managed resources.	Add to 2026 Council list of work priorities.
NEMFC	3.5	Regulation	50 CFR Part 648 Subpart A; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart D; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart F; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart K; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart M; 50 CFR Part 648 Subpart O	<u>Fishery Management Plan Revisions:</u> The Council would remove outdated and irrelevant regulations through planned Framework Adjustments, a standalone FMP action, or through a rule-making package. Several NEFMC plans include outdated regulations that have not been removed due to oversight, focus on other priority topics, or lack of application. The PDTs conducted an evaluation of existing regulations in each of the Fishery Management Plans and identified several provisions that are no longer deemed necessary or effective, as well as regulations that could be streamlined to improve access and reduce burdens on the fishing industry.	Removing unnecessary and overly restrictive regulations could reduce burdens on the fishing industry, increase access, and enhance economic profitability.	Add to 2026 Council list of work priorities.
NEFMC, MAFMC	3.6	Regulation	50 CFR 648.80(b)(7)	<u>Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area Management Revisions:</u> The Council would evaluate the Southern New England Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area to 1) expand the season and 2) add bluefish and black sea bass to the exempted species list for the area. Following the evaluation, the NEFMC may decide to develop an action to modify the exemption area provisions.	The timing and location of migrations of spiny dogfish and other species like bluefish and black seabass are changing. These modifications to the exemption area would increase access for the inshore fishing fleet.	Add to 2026 Council list of work priorities.
NEFMC, MAFMC	4.1	Other Similar Agency Action	n/a	<u>Seafood Marketing and Promotion:</u> NOAA Fisheries and other federal agencies should expand and enhance efforts to promote U.S. seafood through coordinated marketing campaigns, public education initiatives, coordination with sub-national and state initiatives, and support for regional branding strategies that highlight the nutritional importance, sustainability, quality, and economic value of domestic seafood products. This effort must move beyond a non-interactive website to include initiatives that engage the public and reach broad audiences with methods to track progress and performance. The Council supports expansion of USDA purchasing programs. This section updates the response to EO 13291.	Increasing consumer awareness and demand for U.S. seafood is critical to supporting the long-term competitiveness of domestic fisheries. Enhanced marketing and promotion can help differentiate U.S. seafood in the marketplace, build trust and confidence among consumers, and increase the value of landings for fishermen and seafood businesses. By investing in the visibility and marketability of U.S. seafood, we can strengthen coastal economies, reinforce the value of science-based management, and support food security through a more resilient domestic seafood supply chain.	Recommendation to NOAA Fisheries.

Council(s)	Priority Number	Action type (e.g. Changes to Regulations, Orders, Guidance Documents, Other Similar Agency Actions)	Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50 (if applicable)	Updated description of recommended action(s)	Rationale of how the recommended action(s) stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent closures	Proposed plan and schedule for implementation
NEFMC, MAFMC	4.2	n/a	n/a	<u>Fisheries Monitoring and Scientific Programs:</u> NOAA Fisheries and NEFSC should prioritize sustained support for fisheries monitoring and scientific programs (e.g., fishery-independent surveys including the Bottom Trawl Survey, Scallop Dredge and Habcam Survey, Longline Survey, and increased use of Industry-Based Surveys, at-sea monitoring programs including electronic monitoring systems and observer coverage, port biological sampling, processing of age samples, etc.) and enhance the use of advanced technologies to ensure that stock assessments and science advice meet the needs of fishery management to support robust and sustainable domestic fisheries.	Sustained investment in monitoring and research efforts is necessary to identify opportunities to increase harvest and reduce undue burdens on domestic fisheries while maintaining long-term sustainability in changing environmental and fishery conditions. Prioritizing federal support for these programs will enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of U.S. fisheries by ensuring management decisions are grounded in the best available science.	Recommendation to NOAA Fisheries.
NEFMC	4.3	n/a	n/a	<u>Recreational Bioeconomic Model:</u> NOAA Fisheries should continue to prioritize funding and support for the model and cloud-based tool. The model was developed by the NEFSC to predict the effect of proposed recreational measures (bag limit, size limit, season) on angler satisfaction, fishing effort, and recreational harvest and discards of cod and haddock in the Gulf of Maine. The Council supports the use of the bioeconomic model in the development of additional Council-managed recreational stocks. The DST-integrated Bioeconomic Model allows recreational measures to be developed and analyzed more efficiently and helps to streamline the decision-making process. The model, including the integrated cloud tool, requires continued maintenance and funding to be used in the management process.	The Recreational Bioeconomic Model provides a mechanism to evaluate the impacts of changes in recreational measures on angler welfare and number of trips. This helps the Council to develop recreational measures that provide the greatest socioeconomic benefits while maintaining harvest and catch within the required levels. Without the Bioeconomic Model and Integrated Decision Support Tool, the Council would be unable to predict the impacts of changes in recreational measures on angler welfare and number of trips and would lose a critical tool in the development of recreational measures.	Recommendation to NOAA Fisheries.
NEFMC, MAFMC	4.4	n/a	n/a	<u>Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative:</u> NOAA Fisheries and NEFSC should continue to invest in and support CEFI, in particular the continued development and updates to the Modular Ocean Model 6 (MOM6) forecasting tools. Changing ocean conditions have impacted distribution and migration patterns, productivity, and predictive capability of marine resources. Under such dynamic environmental changes and static management regimes, domestic fisheries have lost access to historic target species and lack the ability to adapt to new fishing opportunities.	The forecasting models developed as part of CEFI have the potential to provide fishermen and managers with valuable tools to support more efficient and productive fishing trips, enable more responsive management, and minimize interactions with protected resources and other non-target species.	Recommendation to NOAA Fisheries.
NEMFC	4.5	Guidance Document	n/a	<u>Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act:</u> NOAA should provide clarification about the types of Council actions that would qualify for a CE. Most NEFMC plans require frequent actions to set specifications and other measures, and there may be circumstances when a CE could be considered.	This approach would allow for more efficient document preparation, review, and implementation, as well as enhance public accessibility of information through shorter, more easily understandable documents.	Recommendation to NOAA Fisheries.