

Risk Policy Implementation (Beta)

2026 Workplan (Updated April 2, 2026)

Project Title and Brief Summary: Risk Policy Revisions and Implementation (Beta)

On September 25, 2024, the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) voted to adopt a revised Risk Policy Statement and new Risk Policy concept. The statement and concept took effect on January 1, 2025, and the Council tasked the Risk Policy Working Group to continue to refine the concept based on simulation testing by contractors at the University of Maine (UMaine).

The use and further development of the Risk Policy has been carried out in two concurrent phases (Alpha and Beta). The Alpha phase focuses on applying of the Risk Policy statement qualitatively. The Beta phase includes the refinement of factors, scoring and weighting process, data flows, and connection to harvest control rules. The Beta phase is expected to culminate with an approval of revisions to the Risk Policy Concept in June 2026 alongside a weightings exercise by the Council. Following the Beta update, the Risk Policy will be ready for quantitative implementation. A quantitative application of the Risk Policy can be used in conjunction with harvest control rules, or the quantitative output can be used to qualitatively assess a preferred level of risk tolerance in decision making.

Project Owner:

Risk Policy Working Group, Staff lead: Jonathon Peros. Contract support: Angelia Miller (Maris Collaborative)

Risk Policy Working Group Members	
Megan Ware, ME, Chair	Dr. Lisa Kerr (SSC)
Dan Salerno, NH, Vice-Chair	Jonathon Peros (Council Staff)
Dr. Jonathan Deroba (NEFSC)	Dr. Naresh Pradhan (Council Staff)
Moira Kelly (GARFO)	Dr. Kevin St. Martin (SSC)
Melanie Griffin, MA	Dr. Joe Carracappa (NEFSC)
Dr. Jason McNamee (SSC)	Geoff Smith, ME
Bill Lucey, CT	Dr. Gareth Lawson (SSC)

Timeline:

Start Date: January 1, 2025 (Revised Risk Policy Takes Effect with anticipated refinement)

Key Date: June 2026 (Risk Policy Concept v2 document is approved by the Council)

1. Objectives & Goals:

The purpose of the Beta Phase project is to refine, revise, and approve changes to the Risk Policy Concept that will enable a quantitative application of the Risk Policy with Harvest Control Rules for stocks managed by the New England Fishery Management Council. The following text comes from the current Risk Policy Concept:

- The Risk Policy aims to:

- 1) Better integrate changing environmental conditions into the Council’s assessment of risk.
 - a. Factors in the revised risk policy allow for consideration of climate change and the dynamic environment in the Council decision process.
- 2) Develop a clear path to incorporate social and economic considerations.
 - a. Factors in the revised risk policy allow for consideration of socioeconomic concepts in the Council decision process.
 Establish a process that integrates the consideration of risk throughout the Council’s decision-making process, rather than at the end.
 A clear policy on risk tolerance can guide the development of catch advice and management measures before final decisions. A scoring and weighting method increases transparency in how the Council assesses risk, increases efficiency, and reduces time delays resulting from remands.
- 3) Support implementation of a revised risk policy with available Council resources.
 The 2016 Risk Policy Roadmap relied on management strategy evaluations (MSE) to quantify risk. This approach was not successful due to the limited resources and the time-intensive nature of completing MSEs. The Council believes that the 2024 Risk Policy will better match available resources.

2. Key Deliverable:

Deliverable	Description	Due Date	Owner	Status
Updated Risk Policy Concept document (v 2.0 Beta)	Revised RP Concept 2.0 document will add/change/correct information in the current Concept document and set up the Risk Policy for future integration and use ABC control rules.	June 15, 2026	RPWG	In progress
Appendices	Provide instructions for scoring, weighting, PDT use, and documentation of mechanics.	June 15, 2026	RPWG	In progress
Outreach and Use	Engagement with Council bodies, share revisions to Risk Policy – PDTs, APs, SSC. SSC use of the Risk Policy.		RPWG + CESC	

3. Milestones

The project is partially through key milestones. Early milestones established need to revise the Risk Policy (evaluation and demonstration) and demonstrated weighting concepts. Current efforts are concentrated on updating the policy, developing worked examples, and clarifying how risk factors, scoring, and weighting function in practice—particularly in relation to ABC control rules. The current and upcoming milestones emphasize translating the conceptual policy into clear, usable guidance through quantitative evaluation, examples, and revisions to the Risk Policy Concept document, followed by Council review, approval, and engagement with Council bodies to ensure the updated Risk Policy is well understood and ready for application.

Milestone	Target Date	Dependencies	Status
Revised Risk Policy Takes effect	1/1/2025	Council Vote	Complete
Demonstration of Weighting	4/15/2025	Staff / RPWG prep	Complete
Evaluate the Council’s updated Risk Policy and demonstrate factor scoring and integration with ABC Control Rules.	10/20/2025	IRA#1 Objective #1. Completed by UMaine.	Draft white paper delivered to RPWG.
Develop a worked example of Risk Policy with ABC CRs (SSC, Council). Draft updates and appendices for Council review.	3/30/2026	Draft guidance for mechanics, assumptions for scoring, and links to ABC CR	Complete
Based on UMaine evaluation and other feedback, update Risk Policy Concept document and appendices (factors, scoring, weighting).	4/15/2026	RPWG makes changes based on white paper and feedback.	Starting
Council votes to update revised Risk Policy Concept document at June meeting.	6/15/2026	Council receives draft of revised Concept.	Upcoming
Council Completes Weighting for 2026.	6/15/2026	Council approves revised Risk Policy Concept.	Upcoming
Engagement with Council bodies, share revisions to Risk Policy – PDTs, APs, SSC.	9/1/2026	Council receives draft of revised Concept.	Upcoming

4. Tasks & Activities

Within this section of the project plan, focus will be on tasks associated with non-completed Milestones.

4.1 Evaluate the Council’s updated Risk Policy and demonstrate factor scoring and integration with ABC Control Rules. (IRA #1, UMaine Project, Complete)

Tasks Associated with IRA 1, Objective 1 (UMaine Project).

- Task 1: Qualitatively and quantitatively evaluate the Council’s identified risk factors and the proposed source materials for weighing and scoring those factors.
- Task 2: Summarize the Council’s existing ABC control rules, consider how the updated Risk Policy can be integrated into each one, and characterize the degree of modification required to integrate the updated Risk Policy.
- Task 3: Prepare a white paper summarizing the findings from Task 1 and Task 2.
- Task 4: Prepare for presenting the white paper to the RPWG (at November meeting).

These tasks have been completed, and feed into the next steps of the RPWG.

4.2 Based on UMaine evaluation, update Risk Policy Concept document (factors, scoring, weighting) for quantitative use with ABC CRs.

4.2.1 Factors and Scoring

Task	Description	Assigned To	Start Date	End Date	Status
Review Factors	Confirm goals and objectives of each factor	RPWG	11/10/25	1/23/26	Complete
Review Factors	Review factors for use in 2026 update.	RPWG, Sub-group work	11/16/25	1/23/26	Complete (5 factors).
Review Data, updated guidance	Confirm data to be used in scoring factors.	RPWG, staff implementation team, sbu-groups	11/16/25	5/15/26 (Updated)	Ongoing, more work needed.
Review shape of logistic curve	UMaine report, consider shape.	RPWG, technical group	11/16/25	3/15/26	Complete
Review range of score for each factor.	See feedback from UMaine team, white paper	RPWG, technical group	11/16/25	3/15/26	Complete.
Consider scaling sensitivity	See feedback from UMaine team, white paper	RPWG, technical group	11/16/25	3/15/26	Complete.

4.2.2 Council Weighting Process

Task	Description	Assigned To	Start Date	End Date	Status
Draft weighting guidance appendix	Description and guidance based on April 2025 demo	RPWG	3/9/26	5/15/26	Ongoing (draft available)
Finalize Weighting process	Feedback from Council, UMaine project	RPWG	4/17/26	5/15/26	Starting
Council Weights Factors	Universal weighting. Needs to be done after/when the factors are updated.	Council staff, Council, RPWG		April or June 2026	Upcoming

4.2.3 (Use of Risk Policy Concept) Preparation of Quantitative Approach

Task	Description	Assigned To	Start Date	End Date	Status
Toolkit Score Factors	Online tool for PDTs to score factors	Angelia Miller and Council Staff	1/23/26	6/15/26	Ongoing
Toolkit - Calculate Z-Scores	Online tool for calculating Z-scores based on scores and weights	Angelia Miller and Council Staff	1/23/26	6/15/26	Ongoing
Guidance for PDT use	Appendix outlining scoring instructions	RPWG, input from the SSC	3/9/26	5/15/26	Ongoing
Define Risk Zones for qualitative application	Defined risk zones based on shape of curve, Z-score.	RPWG	3/30/26	5/15/26	Ongoing
Guidance for SSC use of BETA in 2026	Documentation of Risk Policy outputs and SSC use relative to the	RPWG, input from the SSC, Council		9/1/26	

5. Contingencies with Other Projects (and Related Work)

Related Project	Dependency Type	Impact on Timeline	Point of Contact	Mitigation Strategy
IRA#1 – UMaine simulation testing and ABC CR project	Sequential task completion.	Address White Paper input, take WG into 2026.	Robin Frede (Lisa Kerr, Roger Brothers)	N/A
Groundfish FW68	Regulatory Alignment	Consider the timing of Risk Policy Concept update	Robin Frede	
Risk Policy Staff Implementation	Sequential task completion. (Update Risk Policy)	Ability to implement Risk Policy after adoption	Jonathon Peros Andy Applegate Julian Garrison Lia Miller Cate O’Keefe	
CESC, Communications sub-group	Sequential task completion. (Update Risk Policy)	CESC Comms sub-group should wait for Concept update in April 2026.	Michelle Bachman	Early comm.
Automation of Reports	Sequential task completion. (Update Risk Policy)		Lia Miller, Julian Garrison, Andy Applegate	
Performance Report (linked to Risk Policy scoring)	Sequential task completion.	Consider the timing of Risk Policy Concept update	Rachel Feeney, (SSC’s SSS)	
Combine Risk Policy with ABC CR	Online toolkit to integrate Risk Policy with ABC CRs	TBD		

6. Risk Assessment

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Plan
Delay in UMaine project	N/A. Complete	High. Updates to Risk Policy and GF ABC CRs based on project outcomes.	Support UMaine work in 2025.
Delay in revising Risk Policy Concept	Low/Moderate. There are several tasks that need to be completed to update the concept, update document and appendices.	High. Council using Risk Policy in Alpha mode until Beta is complete. This is the quantitative application of the RP with HCRs. Beta is quantitative, but can be used qualitatively.	Number of factors has been reduced. Focus on Risk Policy as independent tool. Linkages to HCR can be developed over time. Action in September, but this leaves little time for SSC to work on use, and would delay FW68.
Delay of Council completing universal weightings	Low/Moderate. Dependent on revisions to Risk Policy Concept.	High. Inability to fully apply Risk Policy Concept quantitatively.	No substitute for this. Early planning for weighting.
Challenges accessing information to complete scoring.	Low (hopefully). Changing assessment products from NEFSC.	Inability to fully apply Risk Policy Concept quantitatively, or unable to score a factor.	Develop contingencies of what to do in this scenario (if needed) such as alternative data sources, or conditions when to drop a factor.
Clear guidance on implementation inhibits use of BETA (qualitatively or quantitatively)	Moderate.	High. Risk Policy is not consistently applied. Confusion and erosion of confidence in the tool and the process.	Develop outreach plans immediately following April Council meeting.
Delay of Groundfish FW68	Moderate/High. Final action on FW68 could be delayed by other groundfish priorities.	Use current ABC CRs for specs in 2026. Continue to develop ABC CR, delay in direct integration of the Risk Policy with ABC CRs, use in specs for 2028+	Share options for how RP interacts with ABC CRs before they are approved.

7. Communication Plan

Following the April Council meeting, the Working Group will consider input provided by the Council shape the next phase of Risk Policy development and communication. Building on that feedback, the Working Group will begin developing plans to engage industry members and the broader public on how the Risk Policy can be used qualitatively or quantitatively to inform catch advice and management decisions, with an emphasis on transparency and practical understanding. Risk Policy use will be discussed at an August meeting of the Scientific and Statistical Committee. The working group plans to coordinate with the Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee on communication as well.

Stakeholders:

- New England Fishery Management Council
 - Science and Statistical Committee
 - Plan Development Teams
 - Advisory Panels
 - Committees
 - Council
- Federal Partners – NOAA Fisheries, MAFMC
- State Partners – ASMFC
- Interested parties
 - Fishing industry
 - NGOs
 - General public