



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 24, 2021
TO: Council
FROM: EBFM MSE Steering Committee
SUBJECT: **Guidance and recommendations for EBFM Public Information Workshops**

After the [MSE Steering Committee](#) (MSE SC) [recommended that the Council engage stakeholders with public information workshops](#) and utilizing a science communicator develop [communication products and tools](#) based on the [example Fishery Ecosystem Plan \(eFEP\)](#), the Council asked the MSE Steering Committee to develop and present additional guidance on the planned workshops. It is recognized that these workshops will be held late in 2021, after the Council begins again to routinely hold in-person meetings.

The MSE SC has concerns about stakeholders developing meeting fatigue and meetings facing poor attendance because of it. During this year, there are workshops planned for groundfish MSE, climate change scenario planning, and potentially wind farm development and mitigation. To the extent possible, the EBFM public information workshops should be coordinated with these other activities, possibly holding workshops in tandem or in a coordinated fashion. Some aspects of EBFM overlap with these other workshops. MSE and adaptation to climate change, including the concept of stock complexes and coordination with other management authorities, are both cornerstones of the proposed EBFM approach in the eFEP document.

EBFM public information workshops are different from an MSE process, representing somewhat of a precursor to MSE, laying the groundwork and identifying key concepts. Although some may desire more specificity, we should be realistic about the level of specificity that is possible before a formal plan with management alternatives is developed.

The MSE SC met on [March 30](#), [May 20](#) and [May 27](#) to recommend the following guidance on the best way to engage and communicate with stakeholders about the potential for Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM). We broke the guidance down to address three logistical phases for the workshops.

Workshop purpose and outcomes

The purpose of the workshops is to engage with and educate fishery stakeholders, using the eFEP and communications materials that have been developed, about the concepts of EBFM and promote stakeholder participation in further development of EBFM.

Workshops should build:

- Understanding of EBFM in the region, how it could work, its potential benefits and drawbacks
- Understanding of where stakeholders see opportunities for improvement in the management system (e.g., if we could address choke species, I would be able to ...)
- Better understanding of EBFM and gauge whether it would be appropriate for their fishery and how it would be utilized
- Alignment between fishers' understanding of ecosystem processes and how EBFM might be implemented
- Understanding of the MSE process and how it might be applied to EBFM
- Opportunity for all voices to be heard
- Identification of key issues/bottlenecks/challenges to moving EBFM forward in the region
- Listening as be key to identifying short-term wins and direction for long-term strategy

Workshops should have specific goals, such as:

- Identification of objectives for EBFM
- Identification of areas of agreement, disagreement, and confusion/uncertainty
- Identification of people or groups that would be willing to fully participate in an MSE process
- Identification of how, how much should be included and also how broadly focused the Council's EBFM development should be.
- What types of management approaches should the Council pursue?
- Measuring how have perceptions changed, what has been learned, what is still confusing or uncertain (possibly via a Post workshop survey)

Analysis of the workshop should include an objective measurement and evaluation of how perceptions about EBFM have changed as a result of the workshop. One approach would be to conduct a pre- and post-survey about understanding of the concepts (i.e. what stakeholders continue to not understand). A post-workshop survey could also be used to develop ideas for objectives for EBFM and actionable concepts.

The workshop should produce a summary of stakeholder's input on objectives for EBFM and their thoughts on actionable concepts and management approaches.

Initial rollout and engagement

Before conducting workshops, the Council should make a concerted effort to communicate with stakeholders about the importance of their participation. This effort should include both personal and online engagement utilizing a variety of methods. A simple notice of public information workshops on the Council webpage would be insufficient"

Key Aspects of Communication with Stakeholders

It will be important to communicate with stakeholders with

- A crisp workshop purpose statement, telling stakeholders why the workshops will be important to them
- A clear explanation of why they (as stakeholders) are a part of the process and how their input will be used

- A clear explanation of what type of contributions they (as stakeholders) are needing to bring to the process
- A clear explanation of roles and responsibilities of those who are a part of the process
- A commitment from participants to contribute and be engaged throughout the process
- Allow stakeholders to ask questions and get answers

Outreach Strategies:

The committee feels that it is important to engage with stakeholders using the following methods. It would be best to plan this effort with the help of a communication strategist, who might also serve as the facilitator for the workshops and possibly help analyze the workshop results.

- Directed engagement with stakeholders thru sector managers, committee members, Council members, associations and organizations etc. This initial engagement could take the form of a Q&A session at an association or sector meeting, with representatives from the Council, GARFO, and the NEFSC.
- Distribution of flyers/infographics, some through non-traditional places such as fuel docks, net makers, commercial marine supply stores. These flyers and brochures should address stakeholders, explaining how EBFM could affect them and possibly present best and worst case scenarios. The Council has already developed these products.
- Port liaisons/agents could be effective to get word out and generate interest. They should be given training, instructions, and possibly some funding.
- Social media program and online gateway to communication materials
- Interactive online tools. The Council has already developed two of these products, one showing how trophic interactions influence changes to biomass at different mortality rates and another comparing single stock and stock complex sustainable catch limits

Workshop structure and format

Workshops should begin with a concise overview of EBFM to explain the concept in simplified terms. The different aspects could then be discussed in the workshops. Final workshop would end with another overview with applied information gathered.

The Committee recommends that workshops should be held as regional meetings focusing on specific facets of EBFM for the Georges Bank EPU. The workshops could begin with short ¾-day workshops at selected ports (e.g: Rockland, Portland, Gloucester, Cape Cod, New Bedford, Pt. Judith, Montauk) to solicit stakeholder views (augmented with a survey) and describe the concept of EBFM. These initial meetings should be regionally focused and at least one online, virtual meeting for stakeholders outside of the region to participate. This initial set of meetings should be followed by a centralized, multiday workshop that delves into the details of the EBFM worked example (eFEP document).

The workshops should culminate with an all-hands (two or more) session that summarizes the results and solicits stakeholder recommendations for objectives to be used in management strategy evaluation during a subsequent phase of EBFM development. The workshops should be recorded and made available online, so that new participants can “catch up” with the issues discussed at previous meetings. Workshop materials should distribute links to recordings to prior workshops.

Short topical workshops would be more difficult to maintain continuous engagement with stakeholders, but longer workshops could create fatigue and be less effective. Some committee members feel that regional, port-focused workshops would be better with smaller bites each day, but this would be difficult to get sufficient participation by invited experts. Regional meetings however could focus on local concerns. The recommendations above are a combination of the two approaches.

Many stakeholders cannot commit to several days in a row (unless its during a lengthy northeaster). In either case, the workshops should be recorded and made available for playback to attendees to review the material or for others that cannot attend to follow along. Coffee and food should be offered.

Facilitators that the Council hires should be impartial and present a neutral position but should also be well versed in fishery management. We recommend that the facilitators should not be associated with GARFO or the NEFSC. A facilitator should strive to build understanding of how EBFM differs from status quo management and identify stakeholder perspectives of pros and cons. The agenda should be flexible and responsive to the direction the discussion goes. The facilitator should consider conducting test runs of format and content before a workshop is held.

Invited experts/Presenters can be from GARFO, NEFSC, academic institutions, fishing associations and organizations, Council members, and Council staff. The invited experts should have good representation across science, stock assessment, management, and regulatory/policy/legal expertise to answer stakeholder questions on the spot. Presentations should be available a week in advance of a workshop and should be vetted by a committee to make the presentation concise and clear.

Workshops should include presentations to discuss and clarify the concepts of EBFM and potential approaches that the Council may pursue. These presentations may be needed at each workshop to accommodate new people in attendance. The workshops should include one or more sessions that demonstrate the interactive tools and allow people to “turn the knobs” and ask questions.

Included in the draft workshop outline (attached), the Committee recommends topics and issues should address:

- Economic outcomes from EBFM
- Concerns of fishing interests including,
 - Permit holders (equity from life’s work)
 - Fishermen Current earnings
 - Sectors (ACE management, monitoring, Reporting)
 - Broader communities (Resilience, Intergenerational transfer of fishing rights)

Proposed Workshop structure

- Introduction to EBFM – Module 1
 - Short regional meetings
- Deeper dive into EBFM topics
 - Two longer workshops in central locations
 - Scientific support – Module 2
 - Two topically focused meetings
 - Worked example – Module 3
 - A few small meetings; two online?
 - Management issues – Module 4
 - Two general meetings and/or one remote?
- Final meeting
 - Wrap up, lessons learned

Module 1

• Introduction to EBFM

- What does EBFM mean to me (video)?
 - Stakeholder perceptions and expectations (brochures)
 - Stakeholder profiles (outreach material)
- Concepts and application (Sections 3 and 5, infographic 1 & presentation)
- Terminology (Section 11, glossary)
- State of the Ecosystem (2020 Report)
- The Georges Bank Ecosystem Production Unit (Section 10, infographic 2 & presentation)
- Operational framework (Section 7, presentation)
 - Ecosystem Reference Points
- Goals and objectives (Section 4)

Module 2

- **Scientific support (Section 9.8)**
 - Modernize data collection systems (Section 9.8.1)
 - Catch monitoring (Section 9.8.2)
 - Ecosystem data collection (Section 9.8.3)
 - Ecosystem research needs (Section 9.6.2 and 9.8.4)

Module 3

- **Worked example**
 - What is a stock complex? (Section 6.4)
 - Catch ceilings and determination (presentation)
 - Tools and lessons (Tangible Worked Example)
 - Biological interactions (predation and competition)
 - Technical interactions (Fish commonly caught together)
 - Tangible Worked Example tools (outreach materials)
 - Harvest control rules (Section 9.1)
 - Forage fish
 - Apex predators
 - Overfished stocks
 - Potential economic outcomes for fishers and other stakeholders
 - Effects on earnings of owner, captains, and crew
 - Management Strategy Evaluation (Section 8, MSE user guide)
 - Stakeholder input
 - Role of scientists
 - Types of models and their capabilities
 - Results and interpretation

Module 4

• Management issues

- Scope (Section 6, outreach materials)
 - Spatial extent, stocks, and fisheries
- Jurisdiction (Section 9.4)
 - Cooperative management
 - Resource sharing agreements
- Limited access and permitting (Section 9.5)
 - Permit ownership and equity
- Role of Groundfish Sectors
- Community effects
 - Port resilience and fishing rights
- Incentive based measures (Section 9.2)
- Special priority management
 - Forage species (Section 9.3.1)
 - Fishery impacts on ecosystem and spatial management (Section 9.6)
 - Area and gear restrictions, landings prohibitions (Section 9.3.2 and 9.3.3)