



Memorandum

Date: May 14, 2026
To: Advisory Panels
From: Staff
Subject: Vessel Baselines Evaluation

The Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils are working on an evaluation of vessel baseline restrictions to inform whether to prioritize a future management action to consider possible modifications.

Vessel baseline restrictions apply to most commercial limited access fisheries managed by the Councils. These restrictions require that vessel replacements or upgrades must be within 10% of the length and 20% of the horsepower of the permit's baseline vessel ([50 CFR 648.4](#)). The baseline vessel is the vessel that had the relevant permit during the specified baseline year, which varies by permit type. For most permit types, the baseline year is more than 20, and in some cases, more than 30 years ago. Some industry participants have reported challenges in acquiring suitable replacement vessels or engines that meet their baseline specifications, particularly for smaller vessels.

To help inform the ongoing evaluation, both Councils will jointly hold three public webinar meetings this May for all Advisory Panels (APs). The dates and times of these meetings are listed below.

- **Thursday, May 21 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm**, register for the webinar [here](#)
- **Thursday, May 21 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm**, register for the webinar [here](#)
- **Tuesday, May 26 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm**, register for the webinar [here](#)

During each meeting, Council staff will briefly present on the baseline regulations, fishing vessel data, and questions to prompt discussion. The meetings will then open to answer questions and receive input from AP members and the public.

The same background information will be covered during all three meetings; therefore, it is not necessary to attend all three. A quorum of AP members will not be necessary at any given meeting. The meetings will be run by Council staff. Formal AP recommendations will not be made at this preliminary stage.

Questions for Advisory Panel Members

1. Have you personally faced challenges related to your vessel baselines when making business decisions (e.g., purchasing a new vessel or engine, or obtaining or relinquishing commercial fishing permits)?
2. What cost/benefit trade off considerations are made to determine if an upgrade is worthwhile?
3. How close would a vessel be to its maximum length/horsepower that you realistically would not pursue an upgrade?
4. To your knowledge, are suitable vessels/engines that fit within your baseline restrictions readily available on the market today?
5. Are there benefits to the current baseline restrictions? Describe.
6. What else should the Councils consider in determining whether to initiate an action to potentially revise vessel baseline restrictions?

Written comments

Members of APs and the public may submit written comments, which will be summarized with comments provided during the AP meetings. Comments should be addressed to: Cate O’Keefe, PhD, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill #2, Newburyport, MA 01950; and sent by postal mail or by email: comments@nefmc.org. Please note on your correspondence: “Vessel Baseline Comments.” Written comments will be accepted through **Friday, May 29, 2026**.

Comments will be shared with both Councils. It is not necessary to send separate comments to the Mid-Atlantic Council.

Next Steps after Advisory Panel Meetings

Both Councils will receive a short update during their June meetings, including a summary of the AP input. The evaluation will be completed in time for the September 2026 New England Council meeting and the October 2026 Mid-Atlantic Council meeting. If the Councils agree to initiate a management action to consider revisions to the vessel baseline restrictions, there will be additional opportunities for AP and public input in the future. These initial AP meetings in May will be very valuable for the Councils to better understand how the vessel baseline restrictions are impacting the fisheries and inform their consideration of possibly initiating a management action.

More information on the ongoing evaluation is available at:

<https://www.nefmc.org/library/vessel-baselines-restrictions-evaluation> and <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/vessel-baseline-restrictions>.