

Attendance

Habitat Plan Development Team – Michelle Bachman, Rachel Feeney, Travis Ford, Marianne Ferguson, Geret DePiper, Jessica Coakley, Kathryn Ford, Doug Potts

Habitat Advisory Panel – Chris McGuire, Gib Brogan, Beth Casoni, Meghan Lapp, Jeff Kaelin, Ben Martens, Ron Smolowitz, Dave Wallace, John Williamson, Ben Haskell, Drew Minkiewicz

Audience – Katharine Deuel, Peter Hughes, Morgan Callahan, Dan Farnham, David Borden, Allison Lorenc, Eric Reid, Eric Heupel, Jeff Pike, Katie Almeida, Tom Alspach, Grant Moore, Louis Lagace, Allen Rencurrel

This was a joint meeting of the Habitat PDT and AP, chaired by Michelle Bachman and Chris McGuire. Only AP members made or voted on motions.

Deep-Sea Coral Amendment

Motion 1

Lapp/Wallace: That the AP recommend to the committee Option 6 as a preferred alternative (600 m minimum), as a closure to all bottom tending gears, with an exemption for red crab.

The motion carried on a show of hands, 6/1/2.

Rationale of those in favor:

- Looking at the PDT's VMS charts, there is effort (VMS polls) up to and sometimes over the line – there are problem areas in terms of close proximity to fishing along the edge of the shelf.
- There have not been observed interactions (NEFOP bycatch data) between soft or stony corals and fishing gear along the shelf break.
- Council should select an option that is practicable – don't create a problem where there is not a problem.
- New England region is different from Mid-Atlantic. Tide is harder to the east especially, and vessels drift during haulback and could end up over the boundary line with gear still in the water.
- Want to avoid interactions with enforcement if vessels are within the zone, to the extent possible.
- Offshore lobster fishery and emerging Jonah crab fishery are very important in New England, and mobile gears need to maneuver around these gear types.
- 600 m does more than freeze the footprint, based on historical effort.
- Do not want to put current fishing areas off-limits.
- Trawl gear fished in these areas is light on the bottom.

Rationale of those opposed:

Habitat PDT and AP - New Bedford, MA
AP motions and rationale, in brief

- Alternative 6 is not based on the best scientific information available. Alternative 7 better reflects coral data.
- Alternative 7 is simpler in that it has a smaller number of vertices.
- There is a small economic difference between the areas, notwithstanding a small number of vessels that might be more highly affected.
- Alternative 7 is more consistent with NOAA guidance on management strategies to protect deep-sea corals.

Notes on enforcement:

- Fishing vessels drift with the current during haulback and may drift over the line.
- Gear on the seafloor is distant from the vessel and the vessel could be in the coral zone while the gear is outside of it.
- There is enforcement of the MAMFC coral zone in that vessels are contacted when they go over the line.
- As presently drawn, Option 6 has more vertices/segments than Option 7. However, because it is deeper, expect fewer VMS polls inside Option 6 vs. Option 7, although Option 6 is a more complex boundary.
- To bring a violation, the MAFMC zone boundary, and these ones, will require a burden of proof unlikely to be met.

Clam Framework

Motion 2

Wallace/Kaelin: If the Committee wants to think about how to manage Nantucket or Georges Shoals, that they think about having the entire area open, with areas of highly complex habitats and low populations of clams to be closed. Areas should be enforceable.

Note: This motion assumes the Great South Channel and Georges Shoal Habitat Management Areas are designated via the Habitat Amendment and closed to hydraulic dredges.

The motion was voted, and four AP members were in favor and two abstained. Upon reflection that there was no longer a quorum present, the record was changed to note that the motion was supported by majority of members present.

Offshore wind

Consensus statement (note that John Williamson recused himself as he is a fishery liaison officer for Bay State Wind)

The AP recommends that the two Atlantic-coast Councils and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convene a committee to review fisheries stakeholder concerns related offshore wind. Tasks for this committee could include:

Habitat PDT and AP - New Bedford, MA
AP motions and rationale, in brief

- Asking the Secretary of Commerce with the Secretary of Interior to facilitate the engagement of fishery managers in the BOEM process,
- Participating in cumulative effects analysis (technical or advisory role or both), and
- Assembling a dedicated technical team to evaluate impacts and develop advice.

Also, the AP recommends continued Habitat AP, Habitat PDT, and Habitat Committee engagement on these topics. It would be productive to have meetings focused solely on this topic.