

Risk Policy Working Group

Webinar
August 21, 2025



New England
Fishery Management Council

Risk Policy Working Group

- **Today's Meeting:**
 - Use of the Risk Policy in 2025 and 2026 – Alpha Phase and Matrix
 - Risk Policy Factors, Data, Scoring Review and Recommendations (ongoing)
 - Update on Simulation Testing (L. Kerr)
- **No Report at the September Council meeting.**
- Aiming to meet again prior to the December Council meeting.



Use and Development in 2025 & Beyond: Alpha and Beta Phases

Risk Policy Use and Development

- New Risk Policy became effective on January 1, 2025.
- Two phases (use and development) are happening concurrently.

USE – ALPHA Phase

- Risk Policy Concept as approved in Sept. 2024.
- Statement and Stability.
- 7 factors, and guidelines.
- Risk Policy matrix completed by PDTs.
- Qualitative application.

Development – BETA Phase

- Simulation testing.
- Weightings exercise.
- Incorporate input.
Adjustments to factors and data.
- Connection to harvest control rules.
- Quantitative application for 2027.

Alpha Phase: Risk Policy Use by PDTs & SSC

- Use of the Risk Policy focus on completion of Risk Policy Matrix and data assembly, forego scoring.
- Aiming for consistent application, and delivery (especially to the SSC). Alpha should look and feel similar to the approach the Council used with the last Risk Policy, but with a different set of data assembled for the matrix.
 - AP and Committees – Orientation to the new matrices.
 - Value in having a dogfish Risk Policy matrix. Reg flex omnibus action matrix.
- Interest in maintaining momentum of Risk Policy changes.
- Use documentation and updated matrix provided as meeting materials.

Beta Phase: Risk Policy Development

- The Beta Phase responds to the Council's tasking to continue to refine elements of the concept while the Risk Policy is in use (Alpha Phase).
- Beta phase is expected to include updates to the Risk Policy factors and guidelines for scoring (e.g. questions, data), weighting of factors by the Council, outcomes from the simulation testing, and the linkage of the Risk Policy with updated groundfish ABC control rules. These changes are anticipated to occur no earlier than 2026.
- Changes or adjustments to the Risk Policy will not be made on a rolling basis unless explicitly instructed by the Council.

Beta Phase - Development

- Risk Policy is being discussed in several venues, and feedback is coming from multiple sources. Fluid timing of projects and processes with forward progress (vs. contingencies). Overlap in personnel.
- Council, SSC, CESC, IRA ABC Control Rules Project Oversight Team, SSC-SSS, direct input.
 - Suggestions on how to best manage input from a range of sources?
 - BETA implementation connected to Groundfish Framework 68, then an off-ramp or a slow down.
- Staff, CESC Chair, RPWG Chair, to continue to explore opportunities for Steering Committee engagement in Risk Policy implementation.



Use and Development in 2025 & 2026: Risk Policy Matrix

Revised Risk Policy Matrix

- Supporting information is grouped by Risk Policy theme and factor. Also includes a section on additional information.
- Council Technical Staff meeting in July to discuss populating the matrix.

	A	B	C	D
1	Group Theme	Factor	Supporting Information	
2	Stock Status and Uncertainty	Biomass Stock Status	Overfished? Rebuilding?	
3			Overfishing?	
4			SSB Relative to SSB-Target?	
5			Recruitment	
6		Assessment Type and Uncertainty	Recent trends and how recruitment is accounted for in assessment	
7			Assessment model, type, terminal year	
8			Availability of biological data/missing years of data?	
9			Retrospective pattern?	
10	Climate and Ecosystem	Climate Vulnerability	Major sources of assessment uncertainty	
11			Climate impacts and incorporation into assessment	
12		Fish Condition	Trophic interactions	
13			Does the fishery rely on quota of another species?	
14	Economic and Community Importance	Commercial Fishery Characterization	Trends in fish condition	
15			Commercial fishery trends (e.g. landings, revenue, LPUE, DAS usage, price)	
16			Management uncertainty in comm fishery	
17			Vessels, permits, dealers, processors	
18		Recreational Fishery Characterization	Commercial fishing communities	
19			Recreational fishery trends (e.g. catch, angler trips)	
20			Management uncertainty in rec fishery	
21			Recreational fishing communities	
22	Additional Information	Other Economic/Social Considerations		
23		Reference Points	OFLs	AMs
24		Harvest Control Rule	ABCs	Significant source of catch outside the directed federal fishery?

Instructions for Populating the Matrix

- Focus on assembly of data. Striving for consistency and acknowledge that matrices will vary by stock and species.
- Risk Policy Factors: Where instructions focus on scoring in the Risk Policy Concept document, focus only on the data being assembled prior to the scoring step.
 - No scoring by staff or PDTs!
- Leverage information from existing reports (stock assessments, AMR, SAFE, AE, etc) when possible.

Matrix Layout & Instructions

Table 1. Data Dictionary

Column	Definition
Group Theme	Risky policy themes that characterize a given factor(s); also included in the risk policy matrix
Factor	The risk policy factor that is scored and weighted; also included in the risk policy matrix
Supporting Information	Qualitative information to support the scores and weights for consideration; also included in the risk policy matrix
Source Document / Information	Document or resource to find the information
Guidance	Suggestions and tips for how to present the information and specifics on what to include

Matrix Instructions - Example

Table 2. Sources and guidance to complete the risk policy matrix by group theme and factor

Group Theme	Factor	Supporting Information	Source Document / Information	Guidance
Stock Status and Uncertainty	Biomass Stock Status	Overfished? Rebuilding?	Most recent stock assessment	For stocks using an empirical approach, report data over last five years
		Overfishing?	Most recent stock assessment	Highlight data points in time series
		SSB Relative to SSB-Target?	Most recent stock assessment	Report point estimates
	Recruitment	Recent trends and how recruitment is accounted for in assessment	Depending on assessment type - Most recent stock assessment	If recruitment information is accounted for in the stock assessment model, report this
				Report any recent changes in recruitment
				When recruitment data streams are not available, state this.
				Note any highlights that the PDT feels relevant
				State the timing of last assessment, and consider reporting other data
	Assessment Type and Uncertainty	Assessment model, type, terminal year	Most recent stock assessment AOP Meeting Report FMP	For stocks using an empirical approach, other options may be available as time allows (e.g.Age-1 or length frequency plots from surveys)
				Include the start of time series for awareness and in cases where only a data update has been provided since the last assessment
				State if the assessment is analytical or empirical.
		Availability of biological data/missing years of data?	Most recent stock assessment	If need be
		Retrospective pattern?	Most recent stock assessment	If need be
		Major sources of assessment uncertainty	Most recent stock assessment	Comment if there is missing data. For empirical approaches, note if there is missing survey data in the most recent three years.
				When reporting on retrospective patterns, state if a rho adjustment was made. If applicable, state if the retrospective pattern was described as “major” or “minor” in the assessment report.

Recent Examples

- Several examples of the revised Risk Policy Matrix.
- Monkfish and Skate matrices prepared for August 18th SSC meeting.
- Ocean Pout and White Hake matrices prepared with some modifications for discussion purposes.
- Seeking Working Group input on the matrices and potential adjustments for use in Alpha phase.

Format Suggestions & Questions

- Changes to the layout of the matrix to promote readability.
- How do we handle the new data update process (non-assessment)?

Stock:

Ocean Pout

Factor	Supporting Information
Stock Status and Uncertainty	
Biomass Stock Status	Overfished; Rebuilding target: 2029
	Overfishing is not occurring
	Biomass proxy = 0.263 kg/tow (5% of SSBMSY proxy = 4.94 kg/tow)
Recruitment	Assessment does not account for recruitment due to its empirical nature
Assessment Type and Uncertainty	Exploitation ratio, empirical, 2021
	The 2020 spring NEFSC survey year was treated as missing.
	Exploitation ratio does not allow estimation of a retrospective pattern
	In spite of the no possession limit, stock size has not responded to low levels of catch.
Climate and Ecosystem	
Climate Vulnerability	high climate exposure + high biological sensitivity = high climate vulnerability negative directional effect of climate change
	13 prey categories of marine invertebrates such as sea stars, brittle stars, sea urchins,

Cover Sheet Suggestions & Questions

- Repetition of information in every matrix → consider a consolidated summary as a cover sheet?
- Recreational fisheries: reporting at the FMP level vs. the stock/species level. Species specific information goes into the matrix.

Economic and Community Importance	
Commercial Fishery Characterization	<u>Overall decline in landed groundfish pounds, groundfish revenue, and groundfish ex-vessel prices:</u> <i>Total groundfish landings:</i> 36.88 million pounds in FY2021; 33.26 million pounds in FY2022; 32.53 million pounds in FY2023 <i>Average groundfish ex-vessel prices:</i> \$1.38/lb in FY2021; \$1.34/lb in FY2022; \$1.28/lbs in FY2023 Ocean pout is managed as a zero-possession stock; there is no commercial groundfish revenue or ex-vessel price data available.☐
	<i>Total catch of Ocean Pout:</i> 44.9 mt in FY2021; 55.5 mt in FY2022; 41.9 mt in FY2023
	<i>Commerical groundfish fishery catch of Ocean Pout:</i> 24.6 mt in FY2021; 32.4 mt in FY2022; 33.7 mt in FY2023
	A management uncertainty buffer of 7% was applied to the commercial groundfish fishery in FY2025.
	<u>Overall downward trend in FY2023:</u> 811 commercial groundfish permitted vessels (33% inactive); 533 reported landings (active vessels landing any revenue across common pool and sectors); 46 dealers reported buying groundfish, and 79 dealers reported buying any species on groundfish trips.



Questions?