

Help Shape the Future of NEFMC Fishery Management

The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) is seeking your input on an advanced approach to managing fisheries - Ecosystem Based Fishery Management (EBFM). This is your opportunity to learn about what EBFM is, what it isn't, what it could mean for you, and to provide feedback at this early phase of the process.

What is EBFM?

EBFM is a more inclusive approach to fisheries management than previous efforts. EBFM considers physical, biological, economic, and social interactions between the various parts of the ecosystem that are related to fisheries. The process takes into account the diverse needs and pressures on fish, fish habitat, and the food web within a geographically specific area, while also considering the needs of fishermen, our communities, and the economy.

Fisheries management has typically focused on one fished population at a time, usually with little consideration for how it functions as a predator or prey. The goal has been identifying how many of these fish can we safely harvest and still leave enough so that we can fish in the future. This 'single species' approach does not consider how other fisheries and the larger ecosystem might be affected, and vice versa.

When ecosystems and fisheries decline, so do our fishing communities. NEFMC's goal is to create a management system that will achieve sustainable and productive fisheries and balanced ecosystems, while also providing greater flexibility for fishermen to choose when to fish, what to fish for, and how to fish.

How Does It Work?

In EBFM, management objectives and multiple factors of ecosystem health are considered before management decisions are made. Scientists analyze these factors and provide advice to managers who then make decisions about harvest limits. Factors analyzed include: Climate & Weather, Fishing Fleet Information (size and gear type), Energy Flow through the ecosystem, Predator and Prey relationships, Habitat Quality, and the needs of Fishermen, Coastal Communities, and the Economy. By considering all of these factors, managers and fishermen have a better understanding of if fish across the ecosystem are being harvested at levels that the ecosystem can support.

A unique feature of EBFM is that fish are not managed individually but in Stock Complexes. These complexes are groups of fish species that tend to share the same habitat and are caught in the same gear. In the EBFM framework NEFMC is considering, there will be three different harvest limits or **catch ceilings**. (This will include a graphic from the power points/infographic #1)

Catch Ceilings:

1. Ecosystem Catch Cap: Total catch from the ecosystem can not exceed a Cap related to annual productivity.
2. Stock Complex Ceilings: Assessments of the balance between predators and prey in the ecosystem will help determine Species Complex Ceilings (CC).
3. Species Biomass Floors: Total biomass of individual species can not decrease below threshold levels.

What Does It Mean For You?

[This is the section that will vary the most by brochure]

(Fishermen and Seafood Dealers & Processors / Pelagic & Recreational Fisherman and the General Public / Conservation NGOs)

Fishermen and Seafood Dealers & Processors (BROCHURE #1)

EBFM offers the potential for more stability to the industry and a healthy ecosystem

The goal of EBFM is to manage fisheries in such a way that fish stocks stay stable and that the ecosystem remains healthy. Stable fish stocks allow fishermen to make long term business plans because they have more confidence that their target species will be available in sustainable amounts. Healthy ecosystems are more resilient to short term impacts such as storm events, disease, or harmful algal blooms (NOT SURE IF THIS IS AN ISSUE IN NEW ENGLAND) and therefore help provide security for fishermen in the long term.

EBFM offers more transparency in the management decision making process

A core component of the proposed EBFM framework will be Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). In the MSE process, management strategies are evaluated using a suite of models that help determine the impacts and effectiveness of a proposed strategy. Stakeholders, such as Fishermen and Seafood Dealers & Processors, can participate in this process to offer their input and feedback. MSE will be conducted prior to any implementation of EBFM strategies as well as on an ongoing basis thereafter as a way of evaluating the success of EBFM and informing any adjustments needed.

EBFM seafood is inherently marketable

Seafood that is harvested in a way that is seen as environmentally responsible and sustainable way has broad appeal. If EBFM is implemented successfully in New England it has the potential to raise public perception of New England seafood and with it, the perception of New England fishermen and seafood distributors.

Less Costly and more efficient regulations

Under the current management framework, fishermen face a tangle of regulations as a result of catching fish that are managed under different plans and by different agencies. These 'technical interactions' result in increased fishing costs, discards, or other inefficient ways of fishing. By managing stock complexes we can potentially reduce these costly problems.

EBFM reduces the likelihood of choke species

A common frustration for fishermen are choke species; fish that may not be retained when caught targeting other species or that prevent fishing for other species in optimal ways. Because of its more holistic approach to management, EBFM potentially reduces the risk that species will become a choke stock.

Pelagic & Recreational Fisherman and the General Public (BROCHURE #2)

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EBFM can result in larger availability of forage species to support recreational fisheries and other ecosystem demands

Harvest control rules for forage fish such as herring, mackerel, and squid can be different from other species to achieve this objective. This approach would need to be balanced against other management objectives that rely on the harvest of forage species. These balanced objectives would be evaluated in the MSE process.

Conservation NGOs (BROCHURE #3)

EBFM offers the potential for more stability to fish stocks and a healthy ecosystem

The goal of EBFM is to manage fisheries in such a way that fish stocks stay stable and that the ecosystem remains healthy. Because fish stocks would be managed in a way that considers their role in the ecosystem, harvest control rules are more realistic in terms of what can be safely removed from the ecosystem. Healthy ecosystems are more resilient to short term impacts such as storm events, disease, or harmful algal blooms (NOT SURE IF THIS IS AN ISSUE IN NEW ENGLAND).

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EBFM will allow us to be more prepared for climate change impacts

The ecosystem reference points and catch ceilings in the proposed EBFM framework is meant to be more adaptive and recognize the effect of climate change impacts. Fish species will likely migrate out of and into the ecosystem over time, changing the composition of the stock complexes. However, the stock complexes themselves will remain as the ecosystem roles of these complexes are maintained.

Who are the other stakeholders?

Still working on how best to present this

Learn More and Provide Feedback

The NEFMC will be holding a series of workshops to introduce interested stakeholders to various aspects of the proposed EBFM management framework. These workshops will be your opportunity to learn more, ask questions, and provide feedback. Your participation in these workshops is important because the information you provide

NEFMC will help shape the final EBFM framework. It will also provide you with the knowledge base about EBFM to provide constructive input on the MSE.

[Links to additional resources and description of the workshops . . .](#)