

Help Shape the Future of NEFMC Fishery Management

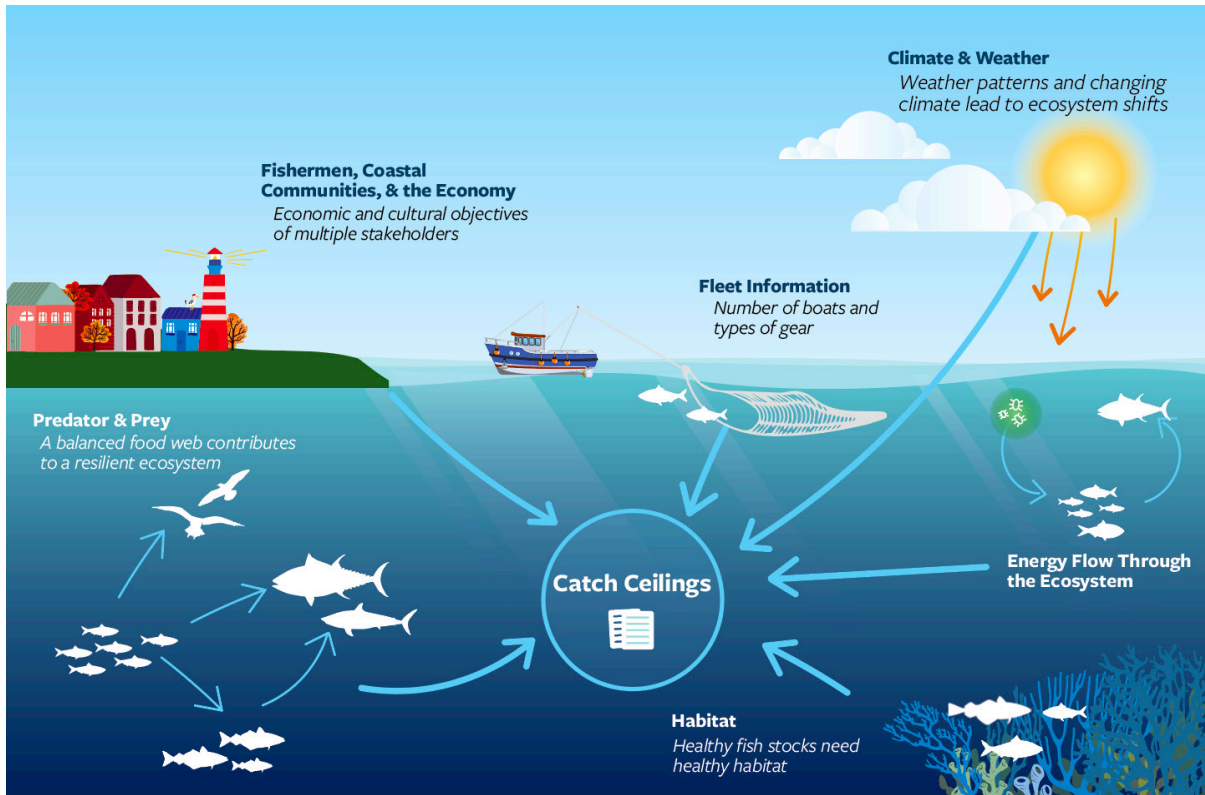


New England
Fishery Management
Council

An open invitation to Commercial Fisherman and Seafood Dealers and Processors

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 standard fishery management. 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 limited consideration for how it functions as a predator or prey. The goal has been identifying

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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: productivity and energy flow in the ecosystem, predator and prey relationships, habitat quality, climate change, and the needs of fishermen and important predator species,

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 similar habitat and are commonly caught together. In the EBFM framework NEFMC is considering, there will be three different harvest limits or catch ceilings.

Catch Ceilings

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

What Does It Mean For You?

EBFM presents a new and innovative approach to fisheries management. It has the potential to improve the health and function of New England's fisheries. However, because it is new, it also presents uncertainties to the stakeholders who have an interest in New England fisheries.

We describe below some of the potential benefits that EBFM may offer for Commercial Fishermen and Seafood Dealers and Processors as well as some of the concerns that these groups have with EBFM. We will address and discuss potential solutions for these concerns in our outreach workshops and through the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process that follows.

Potential Stakeholder Benefits



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

By accounting for biological factors and system productivity, EBFM can offer a more robust system of management and a healthier ecosystem. This could form a system that is more stable over time and also accounts for trends caused by climate change and other factors.



EBFM will allow us to be more resilient to climate change impacts

The ecosystem reference points and catch ceilings in the proposed EBFM framework are 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.



EBFM offers more transparency in the management decision making process

A core component of the proposed EBFM framework will be Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). MSE is a process to examine how various management strategies perform and will be conducted prior to development of a formal Fishery Ecosystem Plan as well as on an ongoing basis thereafter as a way of evaluating the success of EBFM and informing managers of any adjustments needed.



EBFM seafood is inherently marketable

Seafood that is harvested in a way that is seen as environmentally responsible and sustainable has broad appeal and helps establish acceptance of a wider variety

of New England seafoods.



Less costly and more efficient regulations

Current '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.

Stakeholder Concerns



Management using a new catch framework

As described above, under EBFM, fish are managed at the stock complex level. Harvest would be limited at the ecosystem and stock complex levels and individual species would not be allowed to decrease below threshold levels. The potential effect this framework could have on individual fishermen and others in the seafood industry will be evaluated via the MSE process.



Is EBFM legal?

Is the proposed stock complex catch framework legal under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA)?

In certain circumstances, National Standards 1 of the MSA provides for the management of Stock Complexes as well as components of the ecosystem.



Choke Stocks

Choke stocks are those that prevent harvest of other species due to regulations that curtail

fishing. While EBFM is intended as a more holistic and flexible form of management, Councils are still obligated to prevent stocks from becoming overfished and rebuild those that become so. This requirement will not go away with EBFM, but we expect to develop a more robust management approach that will make choke stocks less likely.



Data collection and monitoring

Because three separate thresholds are assessed in EBFM, fishermen are understandably concerned as

to how the data used to make these assessments is collected. EBFM offers more opportunities for fishermen to become part of the monitoring process to provide more information about the environment that influences stock availability and productivity.



Permitting and limited access

Fishermen have made significant financial investments in their current portfolio of permits and

are understandably concerned as to the validity

of these permits under a new management framework. The intent is not to disrupt or further limit existing fishery access to fish stocks on Georges Bank. Details can be found in the eFEP (page 84 of the Draft Example Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Georges Bank).



Jurisdictional issues

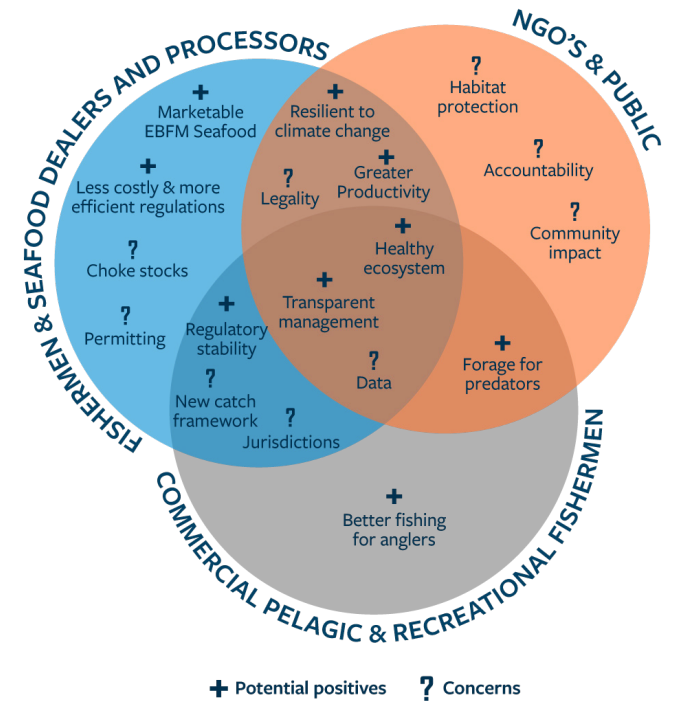
Under EBFM, the Georges Bank EPU will be managed separately from other areas. However, many

of the fish caught are managed by organizations other than the New England Fisheries Management Council. Possible solutions include developing a cooperative and collaborative approach with other management agencies or the Council could manage Georges Bank fishing activity only for stocks that it is authorized to manage, but still account for predation by stocks managed by other agencies.

Who Are the Stakeholders?

The community interested in the New England fishery is made up of a broad spectrum of stakeholders. They range from fishermen to seafood markets and consumers to coastal communities, conservation groups to the general public. All of these groups have concerns about EBFM and are interested in its potential benefits.

In the graphic above, we have grouped some of these stakeholders based on their common concerns as well as some of the potential benefits that these groups are looking for EBFM to provide. This graphic indicates that these seemingly different groups have common perceptions about EBFM.



The graphic above depicts the primary positive benefits and concerns of three fishery stakeholder groups. The graphic is intended to display where these concerns and benefits overlap among the three groups.

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 a knowledge base about EBFM to provide constructive input on the MSE.