

# Help Shape the Future of NEFMC Fishery Management



New England  
Fishery Management  
Council

## **An open invitation to Commercial Pelagic Fishermen and Recreational Anglers**

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 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 possibly providing greater flexibility for fishermen to choose when to fish, what to fish for, and how to fish.

## How Does It Work?

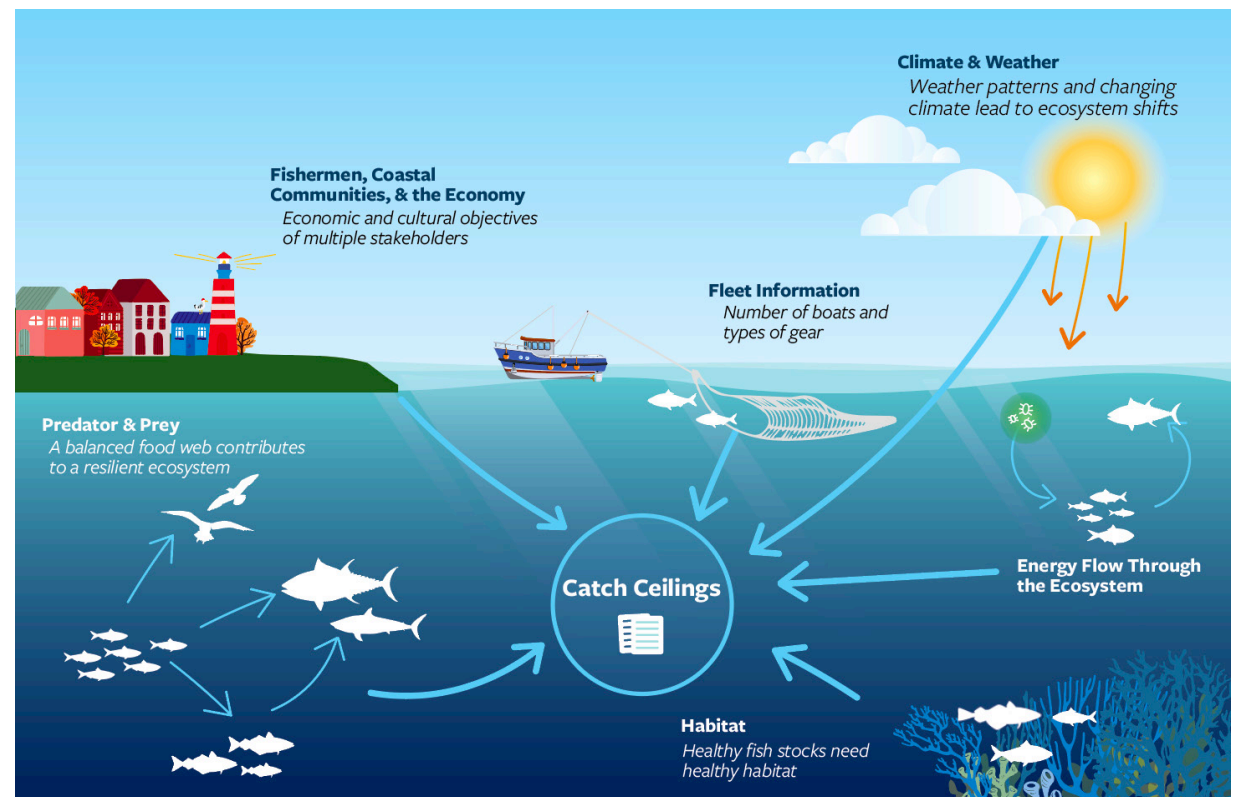
In EBFM, management objectives and multiple factors of ecosystem health are considered before management decisions are made. Scientists analyze these factors and provide advice to managers who then make decisions

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.

## 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. A key element of the New England Fisheries Management Council's EBFM process is to be transparent and inclusive with all stakeholders. As part of this effort, we describe some of the potential benefits that EBFM may offer for Commercial Pelagic Fishermen and Recreational Fishermen (pelagic and groundfish) and



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list below 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 account for trends caused by climate change and other factors.



### **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. One objective could be how the management program performs to provide adequate forage for other key species of fish and marine mammals.



### **EBFM offers the potential for greater availability of fish at sizes targeted by anglers**

By preventing overfishing and setting limits that are sustainable and intended to achieve a healthier ecosystem, more and larger fish such as cod could become more abundant.

## Stakeholder Concerns



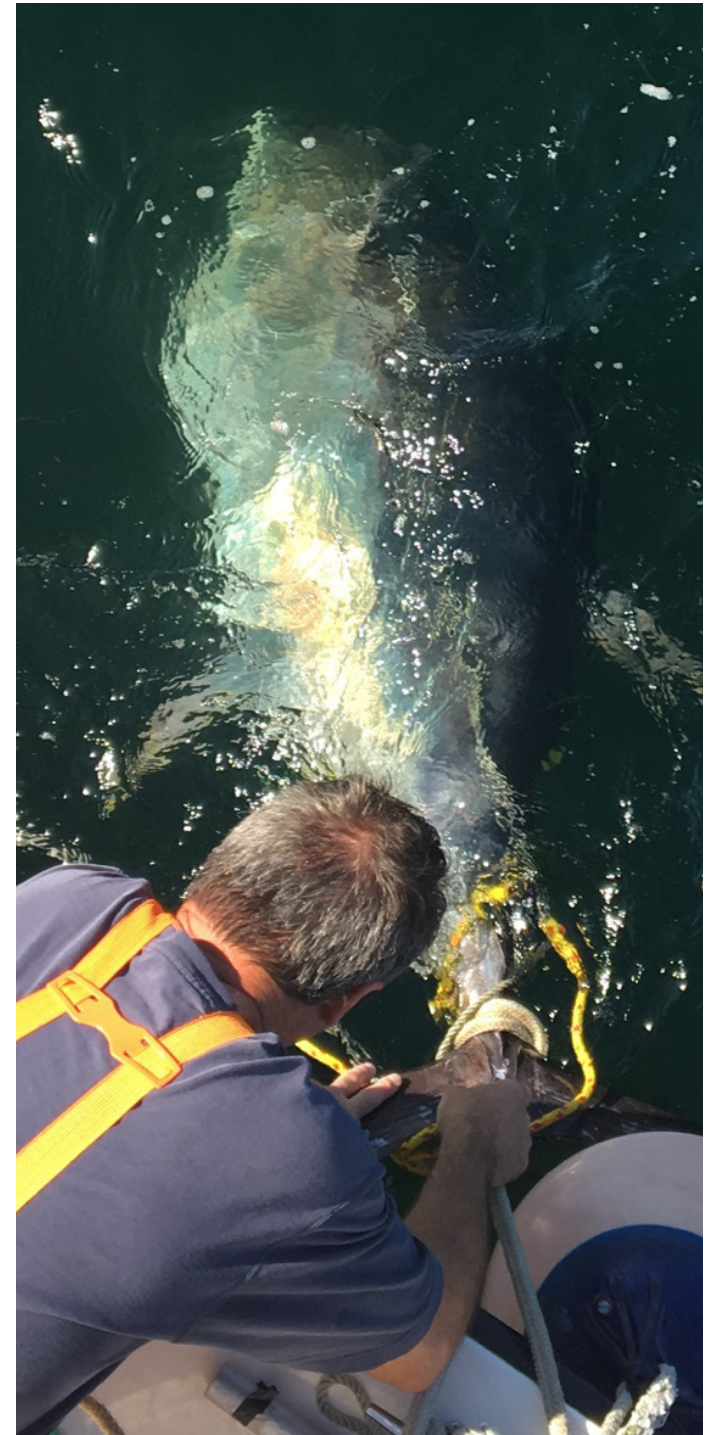
### **Management using a new catch framework**

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 will be evaluated via the MSE process. It may or may not include pelagic fish, but herring are managed by the Council serve as key forage for pelagic species.

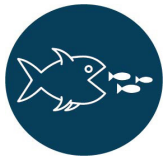


### **Data collection & monitoring**

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, stock availability, and productivity. Several approaches will be discussed at the stakeholder engagement workshops.







### Forage and target species

Forage or bait fish are an important concern for fishermen. Healthy stocks of forage fish mean that there is adequate prey for the larger pelagic fish commonly targeted by Commercial pelagic and recreational fishermen. Under EBFM, a key management goal is to maintain ecosystem balance. For example, harvest control rules for forage fish such as herring, mackerel, and squid can be different from other species to achieve this objective.



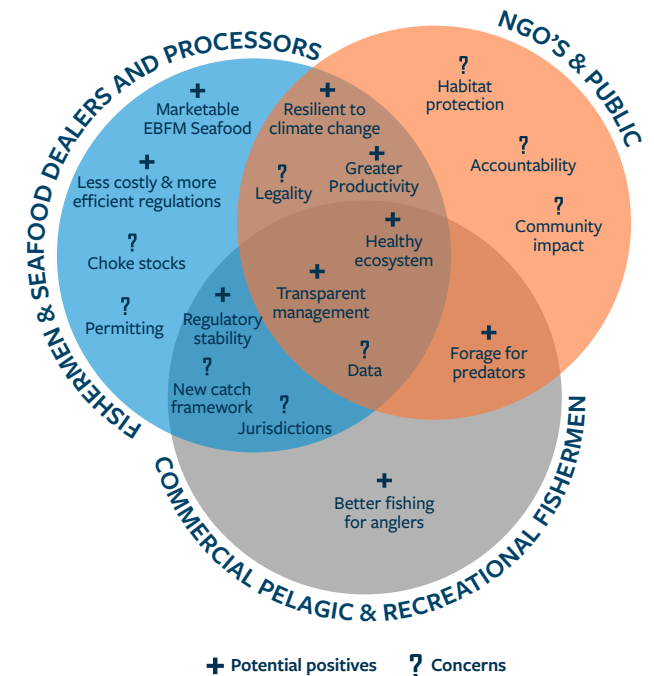
### Jurisdictional issues

Under EBFM, the Georges Bank EPU would be managed separately from other areas. However, many of the fish caught are managed by organizations other than the New England Fisheries Management Council. A possible solution is to develop a cooperative and collaborative approach with other management agencies and set ceilings for the portion caught on Georges Bank. Alternatively, the Council could manage Georges Bank fishing activity only for stocks that it is authorized to manage, but still account for predation and forage needs 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 to the right, 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 the knowledge base about EBFM to provide constructive input on the MSE.