

Help Shape the Future of NEFMC Fishery Management



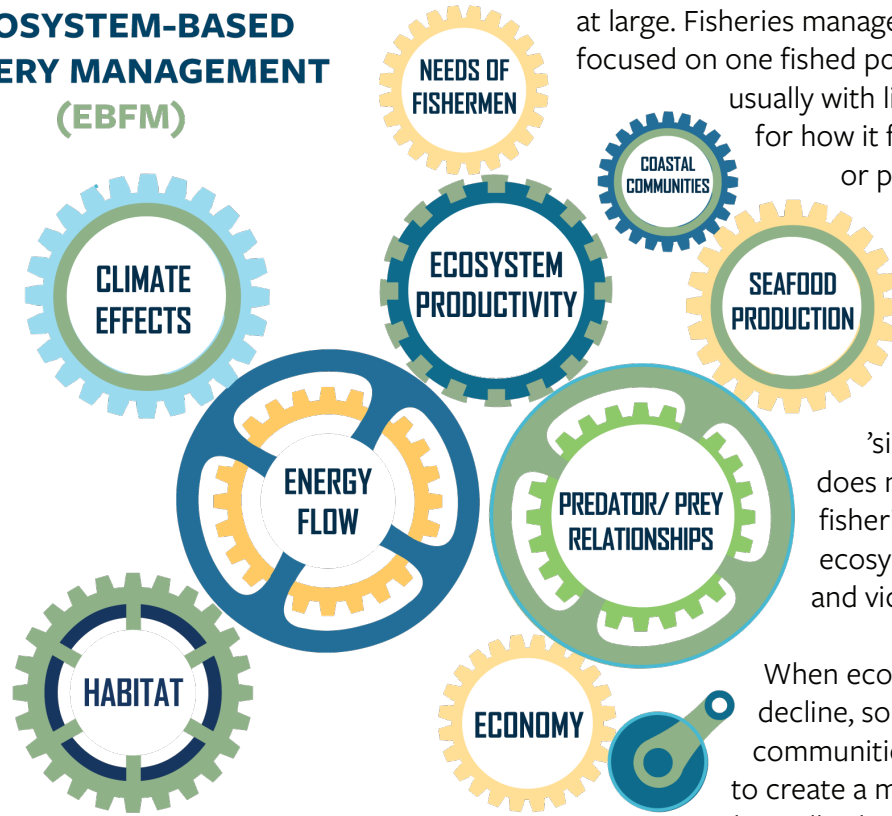
New England
Fishery Management
Council

An open invitation to Environmental Organizations and the General Public

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.



ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT (EBFM)



The graphic above shows many of components of a successful and functioning EBFM system. If one of the components is missing or not working properly, the system will not function well.

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 the New England Fisheries and the ecosystem

at large. 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 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 and the ecosystem. However, because it is new, it also raises concerns with the stakeholders who have an interest in New England fisheries and the larger ecosystem. A key element of the New England Fisheries Management Council's EBFM process is to be transparent and inclusive with all stakeholders.

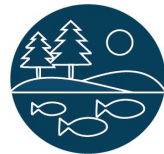
As part of this effort, we describe some of the potential benefits that EBFM may offer that will be of interest to the general public and groups whose mission involves protecting the coastal marine ecosystem. We also list some of the concerns that these groups have with EBFM. We will address and discuss potential solutions for these concerns in our outreach workshops and through the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process that follows.

Potential Stakeholder Benefits



EBFM 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. Grouped by their role and trophic relationships, stock complexes are expected to be more stable than individual stocks would be, although their species composition is likely to change.



EBFM could allow for a healthier ecosystem

When properly implemented, EBFM will result in a more productive and robust ecosystem. This can result in improved forage for whales, other marine mammals, and seabirds.



EBFM offers more transparency in the management decision making process

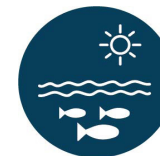
A core component of the proposed EBFM framework will be Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). MSE will be conducted prior to development of a formal Fishery Ecosystem Plan as well as on an ongoing basis thereafter as a way of evaluating the success of EBFM and informing managers of any adjustments needed.

Stakeholder Concerns



Data Collection & Monitoring

In addition to setting an ecosystem cap related to system productivity, collection and monitoring of environmental data could make EBFM more responsive and to change. EBFM offers more possibilities for data collection and monitoring that will provide more information about the environment, stock levels, and productivity.



Habitat Protection

The Georges Bank ecosystem is home to several important habitat types. Maintaining the health of these habitats is critical to the long term health and productivity of the ecosystem and is of concern to environmental groups and the general public alike. The proposed Fisheries

Ecosystem Plan includes recognition and potentially greater protection of habitat that is critical to the productivity of juvenile fish and the ecosystem.

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.

How will EBFM be assessed if implemented?



A critical part of implementing and evaluating any fishery management strategy is the management strategy evaluation (MSE) process. MSE takes place not only prior to implementing the new strategy but also after implementation on a periodic and ongoing schedule to ensure the strategy is effective.

How will coastal communities be impacted?



Coastal communities are reliant on thriving fishing, tourism, and recreation industries which help drive the regional economy.

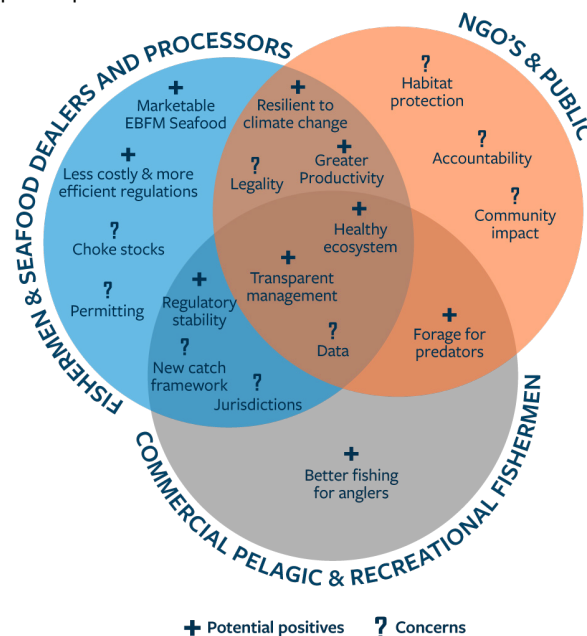
There is understandable concern that changes to fishery management could have negative impacts which will cascade throughout the economy. One of the factors that is evaluated during the MSE process is the financial impact of potential management decisions, including financial impacts to the economy and coastal communities. Because local stakeholders will be involved in the MSE, this will help ensure that the

needs of coastal communities and the public are considered.

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 below, 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.