



Vessel Baseline Restrictions Evaluation

Joint Meeting of Advisory Panels

Webinar meetings:

- Thursday, May 21, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
- Thursday, May 21, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
- Tuesday, May 26, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

<https://www.nefmc.org/library/vessel-baselines-restrictions-evaluation>

<https://www.mafmc.org/actions/vessel-baseline-restrictions>

Agenda



- Welcome and introductions
- Staff presentation: timeline, background information, and summary of preliminary analysis
- Questions from AP members, then public
- Comments and discussion by AP members, then public
- Next steps and adjourn

Meeting Norms

- Meeting is co-chaired by Council staff.
- AP quorum not required.
- No motions/consensus statements; rather, discussion and brainstorming.
- “Raise hand” to be recognized.
- Questions and comments will be received from APs first, followed by the public.
- Give name, primary fisheries and port(s), and which AP(s) you are a member of.
- Keep your microphone muted when not speaking.
- Share the floor, allow time for others to speak. Listen respectfully and engage constructively. Ridicule and threats will not be tolerated.



Introductions

Vessel Baselines Workgroup

- Julia Beaty, MAFMC staff
- Hayden Dubniczki, MAFMC staff
- Rachel Feeney, NEFMC staff
- Travis Ford, GARFO/SFD
- Ted Hawes, GARFO/APSD/Permits

With assistance from Michael Lanning and Carolyn Iwicki at NOAA.

NEFMC Advisory Panels

- Atlantic Herring
- Atlantic Sea Scallops
- Habitat
- Monkfish
- Northeast Multispecies
- Skate Complex
- Small-mesh Multispecies

MAFMC Advisory Panels

- Bluefish
- Communication and Outreach
- Ecosystem and Ocean Planning
- Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish
- Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel
- River Herring and Shad
- Spiny Dogfish
- Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass
- Surfclam and Ocean Quahog
- Tilefish

Meeting Purpose

- Councils are evaluating vessel baseline restrictions to inform whether to prioritize a future management action to consider possible modifications.
- Some industry participants have reported challenges acquiring replacement vessels or engines that meet the current restrictions.
- Councils want to hear from AP members on experiences with and thoughts on these restrictions.

Timeline

2026

- Jan - May: Workgroup formed and begins analysis
- **May 21 & 26: Advisory Panel meetings** ← **We are here**
- June: Updates at MAFMC (June 16-18) and NEFMC (June 23-25) meetings
- June - August: Workgroup finalizes evaluation
- Sept and Oct: NEFMC (Sept 15-17) and MAFMC (Oct 6-8) meetings to review final report, consider next steps
- Dec: NEFMC (Dec 8-10) and MAFMC (Dec 14-17) finalize their 2027 priorities

2027 (and beyond)

- Develop management action, if prioritized by Councils

Current Vessel Baseline Restrictions

Regulations: [50 CFR 648.4](#)

- **Vessel replacements/upgrades cannot exceed 10% of the length and 20% of the horsepower of the permit's baseline vessel.**
- Applies to most limited access commercial fisheries managed by the Councils.
- The year defining the baseline varies by FMP.

Baseline Year	
Northeast multispecies (except Handgear A permit)	1994
Atlantic sea scallop	
Red crab	1999
Summer flounder	
Scup	
Black sea bass	
Longfin squid (except Tier 3)	
<i>Illex</i> squid	
Butterfish	2000
Maine mahogany quahogs	
Monkfish	
Atlantic herring	2007
Atlantic mackerel	2011

GARFO Permits Not Subject to Baselines

All open access permits

- All for-hire recreational permits
- All private recreational permits
- Commercial IFQ/ITQ fisheries
 - Surfclams, ocean quahogs, golden tilefish
- Other commercial open access permits
 - MAMFC: bluefish, blueline tilefish, spiny dogfish, and incidental permits for golden tilefish, Atlantic mackerel, longfin squid, *Illex* squid, and butterfish
 - NEFMC: skate, herring category D

Some limited access permits

- General category scallop
- Northeast multispecies handgear A
- Longfin squid tier 3
- Lobster

Origins

- 1977 - first restrictions on length in surfclam/ocean quahog fishery (later rescinded under ITQs).
- 1994 - baselines implemented for Northeast multispecies and scallop fisheries with creation of limited access programs.
- Implemented for other limited access fisheries in subsequent years.
- Implemented when effort controls were the primary tools to limit catch, prior to use of annual catch limits (ACLs).
- Aimed to control potential increases in fishing capacity.
- Also served to help preserve the size diversity of the fleets.

Original Restrictions Varied By Fishery

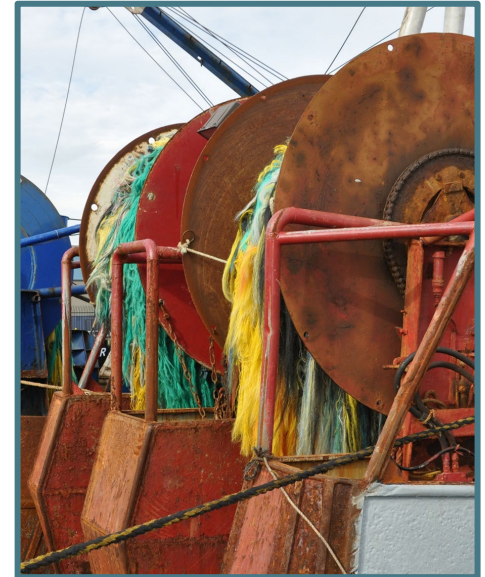
- Original vessel size/hp restrictions varied by fishery.
 - By 1997, 4 different sets of restrictions could apply to a single vessel, depending on the permit suite.
 - Compliance and administration challenges.



Credit: Bonnie Brady

Convergence

- **1999 Omnibus Consistency Amendment**
 - Standardized vessel baselines restrictions across all limited access fisheries managed by the two Councils.
 - One-time up to 10% increase in vessel size (length overall, gross registered tons, or net tons).
 - One-time up to 20% increase in HP.
 - Later limited access programs used the same requirements.



Additional Simplification

- **2015 Omnibus Vessel Baseline Amendment**

- Eliminated:
 - Tonnage restrictions - most variable of the restrictions, lesser impact on limiting capacity.
 - One-time limit on increases in length, HP.
- Retained 10% length, 20% HP restrictions.
- Simplified documentation and administration of baselines.



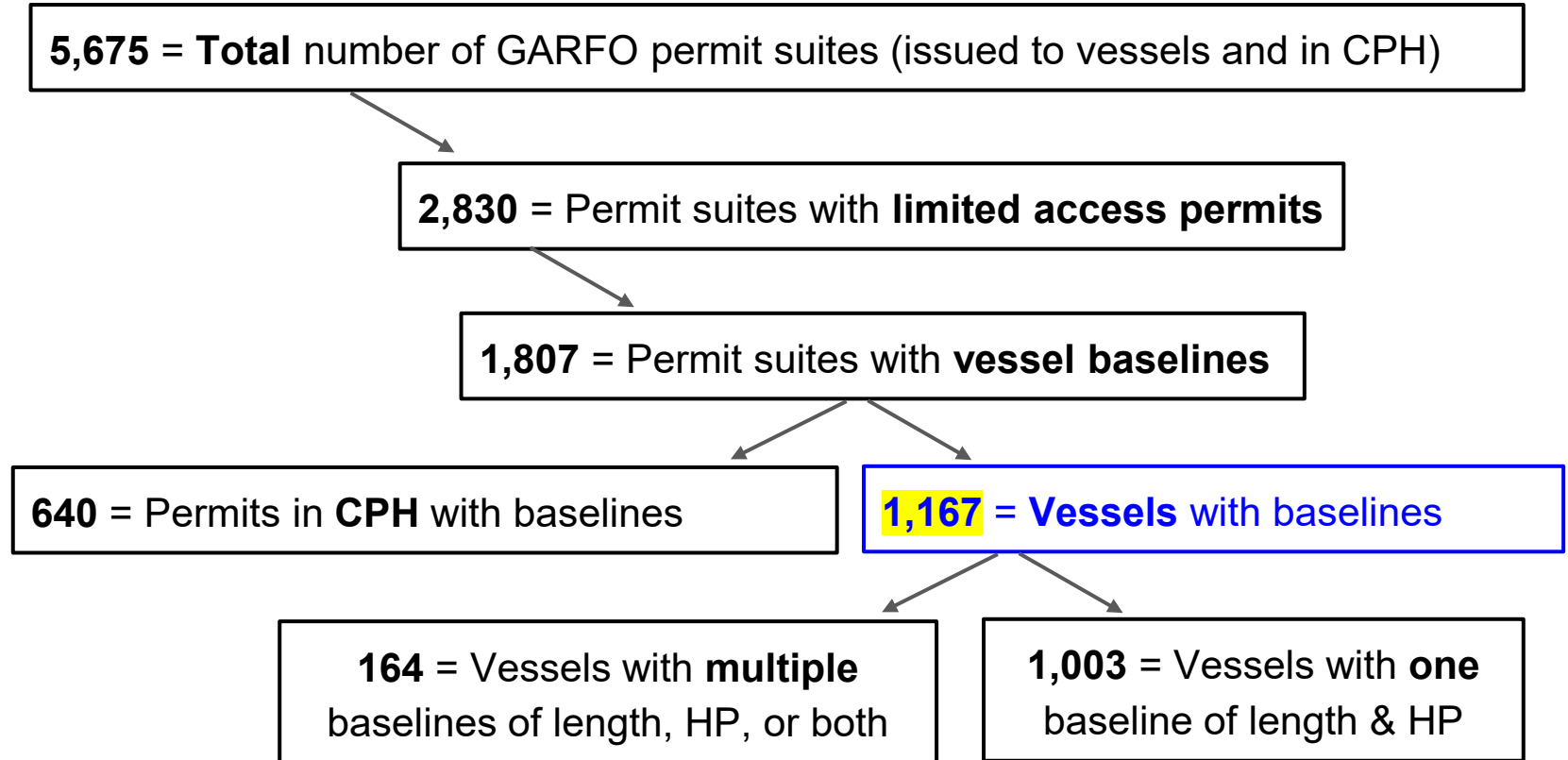
Other Management Changes

- **2007 Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act**
 - Required annual catch limits (ACLs) and “measures to ensure accountability.”
 - Councils subsequently developed amendments to implement ACLs and accountability measures (AMs).
 - AMs are automatic responses triggered when ACLs are exceeded, often requiring paybacks of overages.
- ACLs and AMs reduce the need for vessel baselines as a conservation measure.
- Baselines still play a role in preserving the size diversity of the fleets.

Remaining Challenges

- Can sometimes be difficult to find replacement vessels/engines that meet required baselines, especially for smaller vessels.
- Vessel can have multiple baselines when multiple permits were previously associated with multiple different vessels.
 - Most restrictive baseline applies.
- Only way to eliminate a baseline is to sell/permanently relinquish the permit.
- Vessel owners can purchase new permits with different baselines, but can be difficult and costly.
- Administrative burden for NMFS to track and ensure compliance with baselines.

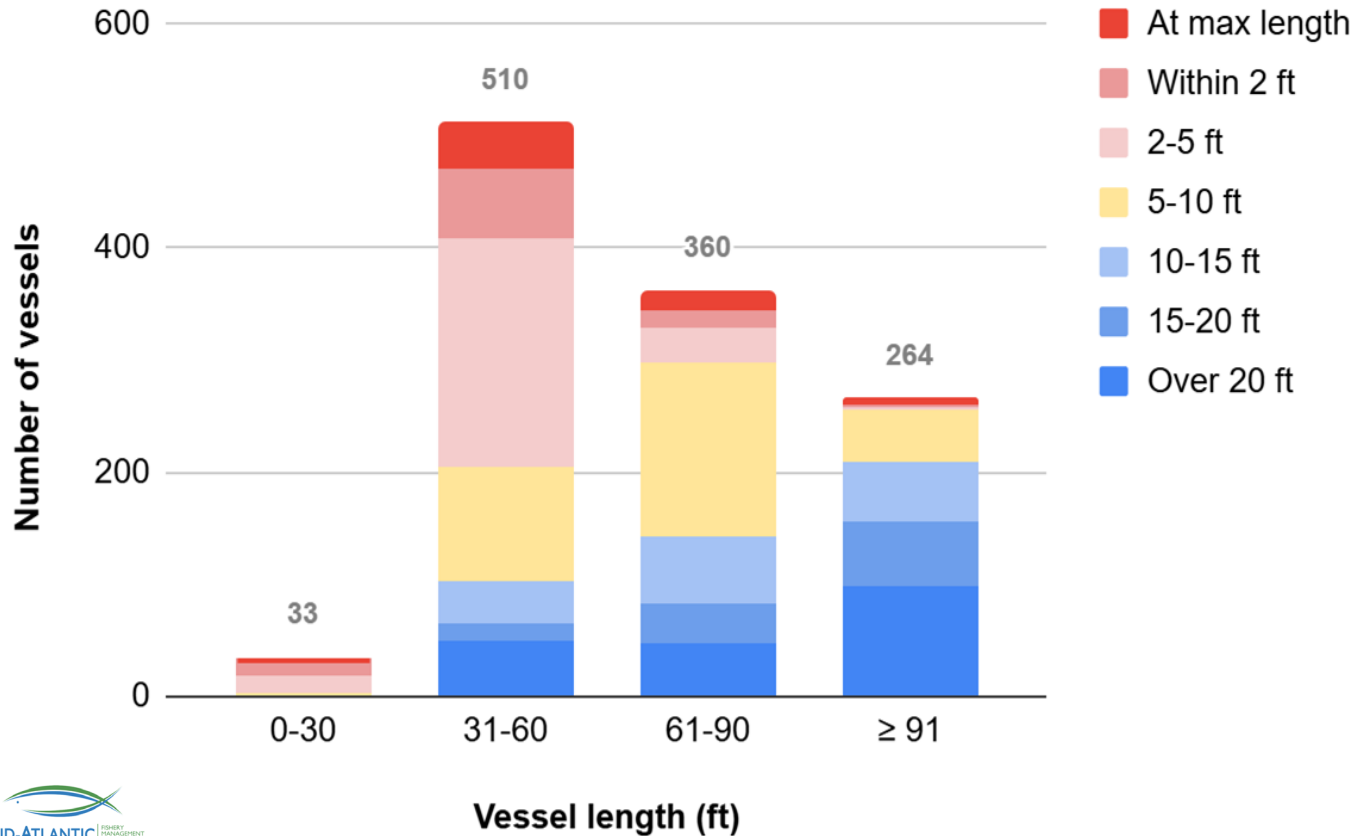
Permit Data - 2025



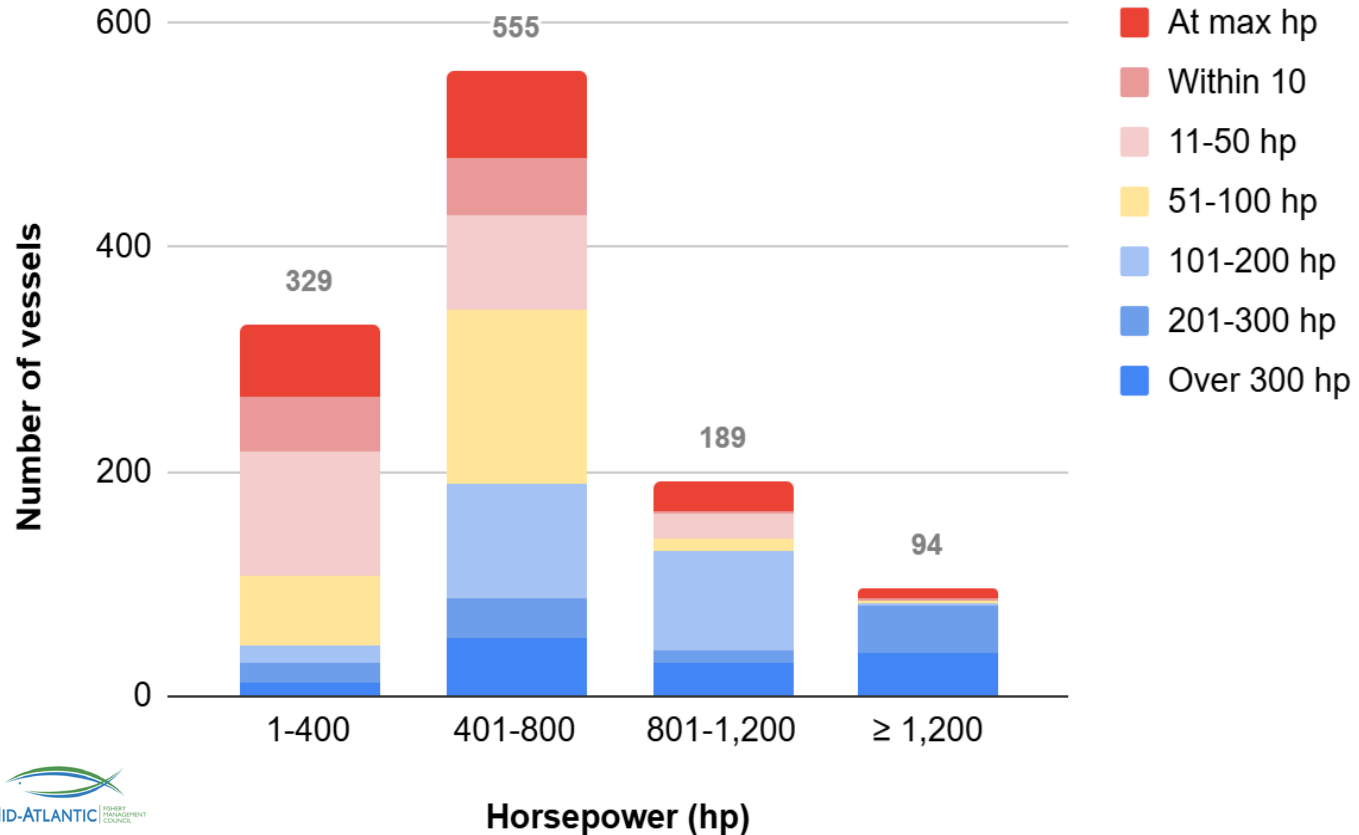
Vessels Relative to Original Baseline

MRI permits by fishery, % relative to baselines (1,167 permit suites)	Number of vessels issued MRI permits	Vessel Length		Vessel Horsepower	
		% of vessels under/at original baseline	% of vessels above original baseline	% of vessels under/at original baseline	% of vessels above original baseline
Atlantic Red Crab	5	80%	20%	20%	80%
Mahogany Quahog	15	67%	33%	33%	67%
<i>Illex</i> Squid	65	77%	23%	29%	71%
Atlantic herring	74	77%	23%	27%	73%
Atlantic Mackerel	115	82%	18%	23%	77%
Butterfish	268	82%	18%	40%	60%
Longfin Squid (Tiers 1 & 2)	268	81%	19%	41%	59%
Sea Scallop	346	79%	21%	49%	51%
Monkfish	486	81%	19%	38%	62%
Scup	529	78%	22%	41%	59%
Black Sea Bass	585	78%	22%	41%	59%
NE Multispecies	626	79%	21%	38%	62%
Summer Flounder	656	81%	19%	43%	57%

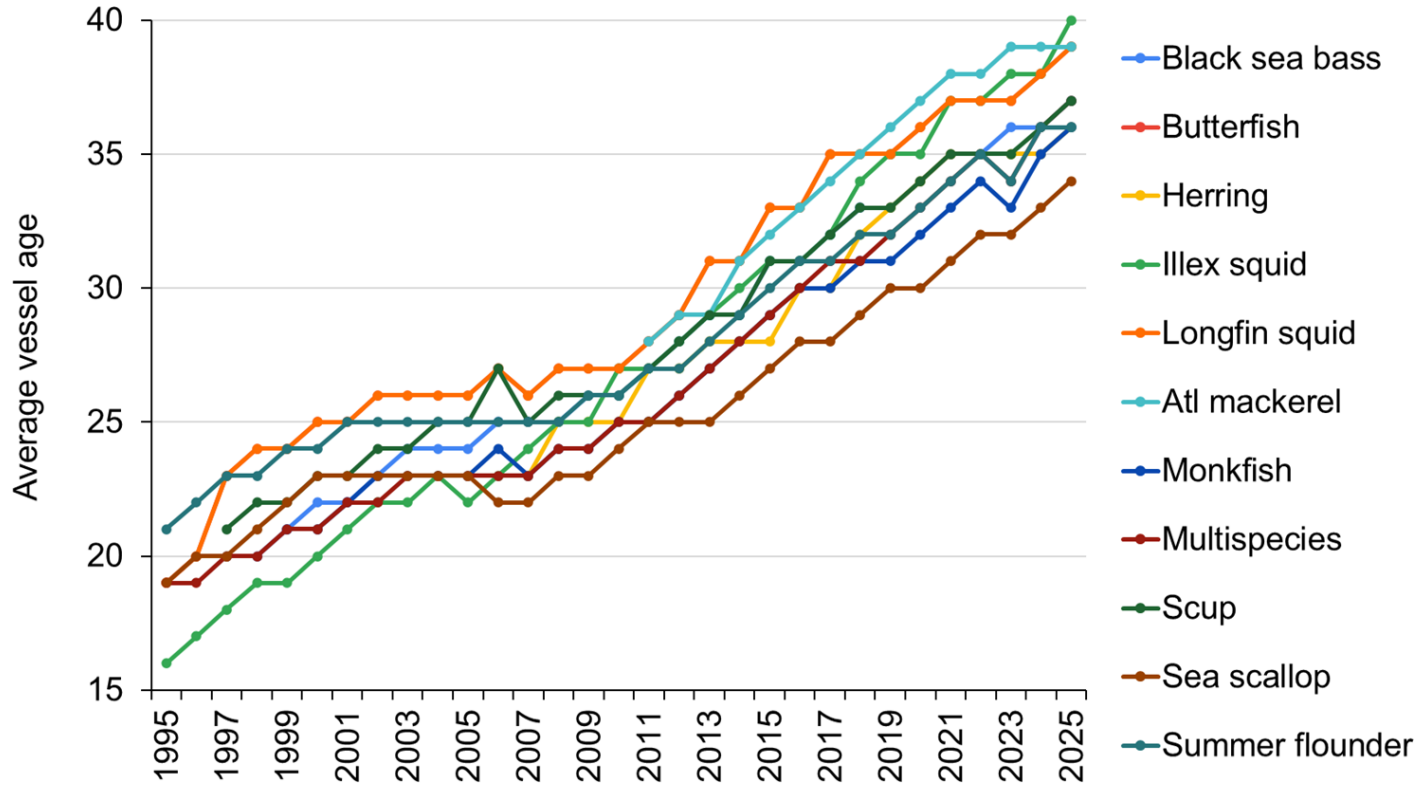
Vessels Relative to Maximum Length



Vessels Relative to Maximum Horsepower



Average Vessel Age By Permit Type Over Time



Note: Red crab and Maine mahogany quahog not included

Additional Potential Analysis

- Additional evaluations of changes over time.
- Additional characterizations by fishery/permit type.
- Additional summaries based on permit suites.
- Additional evaluations of vessels with multiple baselines.
- Trends in relinquishing permits - are permits with more restrictive baselines more likely to be relinquished?
- Evaluations of landings to consider which vessels are most active in the fisheries.
- Comparisons with fleets not subject to baseline restrictions.

Questions

1. Have you personally faced challenges related to your vessel baselines when making business decisions?

For example, purchasing a new vessel or engine, or obtaining or relinquishing permits.



Questions

2. What cost/benefit trade off considerations are made to determine if a vessel or engine upgrade is worthwhile?
3. How close would a vessel be to its maximum length/horsepower that you realistically would not pursue an upgrade?
4. To your knowledge, are suitable vessels/engines that fit within your baseline restrictions readily available on the market today?



Questions

5. Are there benefits to the current baseline restrictions? Describe.
6. What else should the Councils consider in determining whether to initiate an action to potentially revise vessel baseline restrictions?



Discussion

- Written comments are welcome, but we encourage you to share your input during these meetings so other AP members can hear your perspective and to help facilitate discussion.
- First, we will take clarifying questions on the presentation, then comments and discussion.
- AP members will get a chance to speak before members of the public.
- When speaking, please give your name, primary fisheries and port(s), and which AP(s) you are a member of.

1. Have you personally faced challenges related to your vessel baselines when making business decisions (e.g., purchasing a new vessel or engine, or obtaining or relinquishing commercial fishing permits)?
2. What cost/benefit trade off considerations are made to determine if an upgrade is worthwhile?
3. How close would a vessel be to its maximum length/horsepower that you realistically would not pursue an upgrade?
4. To your knowledge, are suitable vessels/engines that fit within your baseline restrictions readily available on the market today?
5. Are there benefits to the current baseline restrictions? Describe.
6. What else should the Councils consider in determining whether to initiate an action to potentially revise vessel baseline restrictions?

Next Steps

- Staff will compile a summary of AP meetings and written comments.
 - Written comments due **May 29**. Send to comments@nefmc.org.
- Both Councils will receive brief updates during their June meetings.
- Councils will review the final evaluation and discuss next steps during their Sept (NEFMC) and Oct (MAMFC) meetings.

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