



New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chair* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Habitat Plan Development Team

December 16, 2021

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Agenda

The PDT discussed (1) a workplan for approved 2022 work priorities and (2) final work on the Northern Edge white paper.

Meeting attendance

PDT members included Michelle Bachman (Chair), Peter Auster, Sharon Benjamin, Jessica Coakley, Jenny Couture, Geret DePiper, Rachel Feeney, Moira Kelly, Julia Livermore, Dave Packer, David Stevenson, and Alison Verkade. Other attendees included Sam Asci, Christopher Schillaci, Travis Ford, and Kelly Whitmore.

Discussion

2022 Council priorities

First the team discussed work priorities for 2022.

- Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Habitat Committee (HC) participation is generally a Council staff activity, but the PDT expressed interest in making connections to the work of this committee; staff will work to communicate ASMFC HC activities and products to the PDT.
- Offshore wind comment opportunities will be numerous next year; staff are willing to coordinate with members writing similar comments for their agencies if there is interest. We already discuss these issues with NOAA Fisheries staff.
- Salmon aquaculture action – if the Council does not act, this doesn't necessarily prevent culture of salmon by Blue Water Fisheries – there is sufficient ambiguity in the regulations that the project might be able to move forward regardless.
- The Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NHRA) team will be wrapping up assessment products this spring and early summer for rollout in summer and fall. Staff indicated that there might be opportunities for the PDT or individual PDT members to provide feedback (some PDT members are already NHRA team members).
- Habitat Area of Particular Concern for Southern New England – the team discussed some considerations for this action including:

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- How to define the area?
 - Areas that juveniles recruit to, also spawning grounds
 - What are habitat types in known spawning grounds?
 - Not necessarily complex habitat
- Are habitat data gathered to support offshore wind development available for use in this action?
 - Look into data sharing pilot project
- Should look at maps of glacial moraine
- What are impacts of concern?
 - Acoustic – both construction and operational noise
- Habitat changes due to scour protection

Northern Edge White Paper

The PDT agreed that the simplified document was an improvement; much of the material was moved to appendices since the previous call.

The PDT discussed whether a recent webinar related to cod and haddock habitats should be incorporated into the document. The group did not feel that it was critical to incorporate this work right now, but staff will follow up on this issue for later consideration.

Regarding the two research set aside projects summarized in the white paper, the PDT agreed that they were quite different in terms of field and analytical methods so they are hard to directly compare.

In terms of an overall message, the PDT felt it was important to convey that good habitat quality should be maintained, regardless of fish stock status. This was raised in the context of whether to put greater emphasis on habitat conservation for overfished stocks.

Follow up items – staff will:

- Follow up with Ryan Morse on his cod and haddock habitat related webinar in relation to Northern Edge issue,
- Poll for a conference call in January,
- Complete remaining white paper revisions,
- Send white paper out for final PDT review.

PDT members will:

- Complete a final review of the white paper prior to Committee distribution.

No other business was discussed, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.