

Risk Policy Beta Implementation

2026 Workplan (Updated March 23, 2026)

Project Title and Brief Summary: Risk Policy Beta Implementation

On September 25, 2024, the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) voted to adopt a revised Risk Policy Statement and new Risk Policy concept. The statement and concept took effect on January 1, 2025, and the Council tasked the Risk Policy Working Group to continue to refine the concept based on simulation testing by contractors at the University of Maine (UMaine).

The use and further development of the Risk Policy has been carried out in two concurrent phases (Alpha and Beta). The Alpha phase focuses on applying of the Risk Policy statement qualitatively. The Beta phase includes the refinement of factors, scoring and weighting process, data flows, and connection to harvest control rules. The Beta phase is expected to culminate with an approval of revisions to the Risk Policy in June 2026 alongside a weightings exercise by the Council. Following the Beta update, the Risk Policy will be ready for quantitative implementation.

Project Owner:

Risk Policy Working Group, Staff lead: Jonathon Peros. Contract support: Angelia Miller (Maris Collaborative)

| Risk Policy Working Group Members | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Megan Ware, ME, <i>Chair</i> | Dr. Lisa Kerr (SSC) |
| Dan Salerno, NH, <i>Vice-Chair</i> | Jonathon Peros (Council Staff) |
| Dr. Jonathan Deroba (NEFSC) | Dr. Naresh Pradhan (Council Staff) |
| Moira Kelly (GARFO) | Dr. Kevin St. Martin (SSC) |
| Melanie Griffin, MA | Dr. Joe Carracappa (NEFSC) |
| Dr. Jason McNamee (SSC) | Geoff Smith, ME |
| Bill Lucey, CT | Dr. Gareth Lawson (SSC) |

Timeline:

Start Date: January 1, 2025 (Revised Risk Policy Takes Effect with anticipated refinement)
Key Date: June 2026 (Risk Policy Concept v2 document is approved by the Council) TARGET
End Date: October 10, 2026 (Quantitative implementation of Risk Policy by SSC as part of specifications).

1. Objectives & Goals:

The purpose of the Beta Phase project is to refine, revise, and approve changes to the Risk Policy Concept that will enable a quantitative application of the Risk Policy with Harvest Control Rules for stocks managed by the New England Fishery Management Council. The following text comes from the current Risk Policy Concept:

- The Risk Policy aims to:

- 1) Better integrate changing environmental conditions into the Council’s assessment of risk.
 - a. Factors in the revised risk policy allow for consideration of climate change and the dynamic environment in the Council decision process.
- 2) Develop a clear path to incorporate social and economic considerations.
 - a. Factors in the revised risk policy allow for consideration of socioeconomic concepts in the Council decision process.

Establish a process that integrates the consideration of risk throughout the Council’s decision-making process, rather than at the end.

A clear policy on risk tolerance can guide the development of catch advice and management measures before final decisions. A scoring and weighting method increases transparency in how the Council assesses risk, increases efficiency, and reduces time delays resulting from remands.
- 3) Support implementation of a revised risk policy with available Council resources.

The 2016 Risk Policy Roadmap relied on management strategy evaluations (MSE) to quantify risk. This approach was not successful due to the limited resources and the time-intensive nature of completing MSEs. The Council believes that the 2024 Risk Policy will better match available resources.

2. Key Deliverable:

| Deliverable | Description | Due Date | Owner | Status |
|---|--|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Updated Risk Policy Concept document (v 2.0 Beta) | Revised RP Concept 2.0 document will add/change/correct information in the current Concept document and allow for use and integration of the Risk Policy with ABC CRs. | June 15, 2026 | RPWG | In progress |
| Appendices | Provide instructions for scoring, weighting, PDT/SSC use, and documentation of mechanics. | June 15, 2026 | RPWG | In progress |
| Outreach and Use | Engagement with Council bodies, share revisions to Risk Policy – PDTs, APs, SSC | | RPWG + CESC | |

3. Milestones

| Milestone | Target Date | Dependencies | Status |
|---|-------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Revised Risk Policy Takes effect | 1/1/2025 | Council Vote | Complete |
| Demonstration of Weighting | 4/15/2025 | Staff / RPWG prep | Complete |
| Evaluate the Council’s updated Risk Policy and demonstrate factor scoring and integration with ABC Control Rules. | 10/20/2025 | IRA#1 Objective #1. Completed by UMaine. | Draft white paper delivered to RPWG. |
| Develop a worked example of Risk Policy with ABC CRs (SSC, Council) | 3/30/2026 | Clear guidance for mechanics, assumptions for scoring and ABC CR | In progress |
| Based on UMaine evaluation, update Risk Policy Concept document and appendices (factors, scoring, weighting). | 4/15/2026 | RPWG makes changes based on white paper and feedback. | Starting |
| Council votes to update revised Risk Policy Concept document at June meeting. | 6/15/2026 | Council receives draft of revised Concept. | |
| Council Completes Weighting for 2026. | 6/15/2026 | Council approves revised Risk Policy Concept. | |
| Engagement with Council bodies, share revisions to Risk Policy – PDTs, APs, SSC | 8/1/2026 | Council receives draft of revised Concept. | |

4. Tasks & Activities

Within this section of the project plan, focus will be on tasks associated with non-completed Milestones.

4.1 Evaluate the Council’s updated Risk Policy and demonstrate factor scoring and integration with ABC Control Rules. (IRA #1, UMaine Project, Complete)

Tasks Associated with IRA 1, Objective 1 (UMaine Project).

- **Task 1:** Qualitatively and quantitatively evaluate the Council’s identified risk factors and the proposed source materials for weighing and scoring those factors.
- **Task 2:** Summarize the Council’s existing ABC control rules, consider how the updated Risk Policy can be integrated into each one, and characterize the degree of modification required to integrate the updated Risk Policy.
- **Task 3:** Prepare a white paper summarizing the findings from Task 1 and Task 2.
- **Task 4:** Prepare for presenting the white paper to the RPWG (at November meeting).

These tasks have been completed, and feed into the next steps of the RPWG.

4.2 Based on UMaine evaluation, update Risk Policy Concept document (factors, scoring, weighting) for quantitative use with ABC CRs.

4.2.1 Factors and Scoring

| Task | Description | Assigned To | Start Date | End Date | Status |
|--|--|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Review Factors | Confirm goals and objectives of each factor | RPWG | 11/10/25 | 1/23/26 | Complete |
| Review Factors | Review factors for use in 2026 update. | RPWG, Sub-group work | 11/16/25 | 1/23/26 | Complete (5 factors). |
| Review Factor Data, updated guidance | Review and confirm data to be used in scoring factors. | RPWG, staff implementation team | 11/16/25 | 5/15/26 (Updated) | Ongoing, more work needed. |
| Review shape of logistic curve | See feedback from UMaine team, consider shape. | RPWG, technical group | 11/16/25 | 3/15/26 | In review, on track. |
| Review range of score for each factor. | See feedback from UMaine team, white paper | RPWG, technical group | 11/16/25 | 3/15/26 | In review, on track. |
| Consider scaling sensitivity | See feedback from UMaine team, white paper | RPWG, technical group | 11/16/25 | 3/15/26 | In review, on track. |

4.2.2 Council Weighting Process

| Task | Description | Assigned To | Start Date | End Date | Status |
|----------------------------|---|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Finalize Weighting process | Feedback from Council, UMaine project | RPWG | | 5/15/26 | Starting |
| Council Weights Factors | Universal weighting. Needs to be done after/when the factors are updated. | Council staff, Council, RPWG | | April or June 2026 | |

4.2.3 (Use of Risk Policy Concept) Preparation of Quantitative Approach

| Task | Description | Assigned To | Start Date | End Date | Status |
|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|------------|---------------|----------|
| Toolkit Score Factors | Online tool for PDTs to score factors | Angelia Miller and Council Staff | 1/23/26 | June 15, 2026 | Ongoing |
| Toolkit - Calculate Z-Scores | Online tool for calculating Z-scores based on scores and weights | Angelia Miller and Council Staff | 1/23/26 | June 15, 2026 | Ongoing |
| Combine Risk Policy with ABC CR | Online toolkit to integrate Risk Policy with ABC CRs | TBD | | | |
| Guidance for PDT and SSC use | Appendix outlining instructions and bounds of interaction with Risk Policy (and ABC CRs) | RPWG, input from the SSC | 3/9/26 | 5/15/26 | Starting |

5. Contingencies with Other Projects (and Related Work)

| Related Project | Dependency Type | Impact on Timeline | Point of Contact | Mitigation Strategy |
|--|--|---|---|---------------------|
| IRA#1 – UMaine simulation testing and ABC CR project | Sequential task completion. | Address White Paper input, take WG into 2026. | Robin Frede (Lisa Kerr, Roger Brothers) | N/A |
| Groundfish FW68 | Regulatory Alignment | Consider the timing of Risk Policy Concept update | Robin Frede | |
| Risk Policy Staff Implementation | Sequential task completion. (Update Risk Policy) | Ability to implement Risk Policy after adoption | Jonathon Peros Andy Applegate Julian Garrison Lia Miller Cate O’Keefe | |
| CESC, Communications sub-group | Sequential task completion. (Update Risk Policy) | CESC Comms sub-group should wait for Concept | Michelle Bachman | Early comm. |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| | | update in April 2026. | | |
| Automation of Reports | Sequential task completion. (Update Risk Policy) | | Lia Miller, Julain Garrison, Andy Applegate | |
| Performance Report (linked to Risk Policy scoring) | Sequential task completion. | Consider the timing of Risk Policy Concept update | Rachel Feeney, (SSC's SSS) | |

6. Risk Assessment

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation Plan |
|---|---|---|---|
| Delay in UMaine project | Low. | High. Updates to Risk Policy and GF ABC CRs based on project outcomes. | Support UMaine work in 2025. |
| Delay in revising Risk Policy Concept | Low/Moderate. There are several tasks that need to be completed to update the concept, and the document needs to be updated to reflect the changes. | High. Council using Risk Policy in Alpha mode until Beta is complete. This is the quantitative application of the RP with HCRs. | Considering streamlining number of factors being used (e.g. 5?). |
| Delay of Council completing universal weightings | Low/Moderate. Dependent on revisions to Risk Policy Concept. | High. Inability to fully apply Risk Policy Concept quantitatively. | No substitute for this. Early planning for weighting. |
| Challenges accessing information to complete scoring. | Low (hopefully). Changing assessment products from NEFSC. | Inability to fully apply Risk Policy Concept quantitatively, or unable to score a factor. | Develop contingencies of what to do in this scenario (if needed) such as alternative data sources, or conditions when to drop a factor. |
| Delay of Groundfish FW68 | Moderate. Final action on FW68 could be delayed by other groundfish priorities. | If final approval of the Risk Policy Concept happens before FW68 final action, then no impact on project. | Review project timelines. Share options for how RP interacts with ABC CRs before they are approved. |

7. Communication Plan

Coordination with the Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee.

Stakeholders:

- New England Fishery Management Council
 - Science and Statistical Committee
 - Plan Development Teams
 - Advisory Panels
 - Committees
 - Council
- Federal Partners – NOAA Fisheries, MAFMC
- State Partners – ASMFC
- Interested parties, public
 - Fishing industry
 - NGOs