



## New England Fishery Management Council

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## MEETING SUMMARY

### Management Strategy Steering Committee for EBFM (MSE SC)

Hyatt Place, 50 Forbes Rd., Braintree, MA 02184  
September 4, 2019

The MSE SC held its first meeting on September 4, 2019 to begin work on developing recommendations on an MSE process, which is expected at the December 2019 Council meeting. A progress report will be given to the Council at its September 2019 meeting, providing an opportunity for Council feedback and guidance.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** Dr. Matthew McKenzie (Chair), Mr. John Pappalardo, Mr. Scott Olszewski, Ms. Libby Etrie, Dr. Sarah Gaichas (substitute for Dr. Scott Large), Dr. Lisa Kerr, Mr. David Plumb, Mr. Chris McGuire, and Mr. Andrew Applegate. In addition, Mr. Michael Ruccio and Ms. Emily Kieley (GARFO), Dr. Rachel Feeney (NEFMC staff), and two members of the public attended, including George LaPointe (Fishery Survival Fund) and Jocelyn Runnebaum (The Nature Conservancy), and Dr. Gavin Fay (UMASS Dartmouth, EBFM PDT). Steering Committee member Mr. Chris Roebuck was absent.

Presentations and background documents are available on the Council's EBFM web page (<https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/sep-4-2019-ebfm-mse-steering-committee-meeting> )

#### **KEY OUTCOMES:**

- The Committee received presentations on and discussed the MSE process, lessons from other MSE processes in the region, an overview of the intended purpose of the example Fishery Ecosystem Plan (eFEP) draft, and a proposed MSE project plan.
- Recognizing that the eFEP is a complex, high-concept document, the Committee had concerns about engaging the public with all of it through an MSE process at this time. Instead, the committee recommended that the Council develop an internal workshop for Council participation focused on developing more detailed goals and objectives, as a way to become more familiar with the new Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM) and MSE concepts.

**Motions:** The Committee made no motions during the meeting, but developed the following recommendation by consensus:

- 1) The eFEP is valuable as an informative document for advancing the EBFM concept. The Steering Committee believes that EBFM is a valuable tool to address management concerns in many of our Fishery Management Plans and supports the further development of EBFM.
- 2) We are however concerned that it is premature today to go out to broader stakeholders with an MSE process around the eFEP in its entirety. As a complex high-concept document (as intended), it's not sufficiently tangible to engage productively in an MSE process.
- 3) To advance EBFM, the Steering Committee recommends that the Council conduct a process internally to develop further the EBFM concept, ahead of a broader MSE process. We will develop concrete recommendations for the steps the Council should take, but in general we see the following:
  - a) To help the Council advance the EBFM concept and educate itself, we recommend doing one or more workshops for Council members (similar to the recent workshop structure used by the NPFMC). To model a good stakeholder process and do a "dry run" of a future MSE, we recommend using the language and concepts of a stakeholder-engaged MSE.
  - b) During these internal conversations, focus on and prioritize real challenges and problems in existing management that might be addressed by EBFM
  - c) Identify discrete opportunities to implement EBFM processes in management decisions in the short- or medium-term.
  - d) As part of this, refine the approach to developing goals, objectives, and related performance objectives, prioritizing and showing tangible examples. It is also an opportunity to refine scientific interpretations and visualizations.
- 4) After these steps, if appropriate, develop a wider public MSE process including refinement of goals and objectives to address one or more discrete opportunities to implement an EBFM. By this time, the council has already refined the EBFM concept before opening it up to the general public.

Going forward, the MSE SC will develop more detailed recommendations by December about how to conduct this "pre-MSE" phase of the council's work, and initial ideas for a potential MSE process that could follow.

### Introduction

Dr. McKenzie began the meeting by discussing the purpose and agenda. This was the first meeting of the MSE SC that followed the EBFM Committee review of the eFEP document. The Council created the MSE SC and its charge in the following motion that the Council passed in January 2019:

*"To recommend that the Council begin MSE planning with the establishment of a steering committee to develop strategies for soliciting input and evaluation of management strategies consistent with ecosystem management."*

After becoming more acquainted with the MSE process and lessons learned from other MSE programs in the region, the expected meeting outcome outlined by the Committee Chair was to agree on Terms of Reference, relevant questions that the MSE SC could address as part of its recommendations, and the committee work plan to produce its recommendations by the December Council meeting. An MSE SC progress report was scheduled on the September Council meeting agenda to present the committee plan for feedback and guidance. Mr. Applegate explained this timeline and suggested that the committee could schedule one or two meetings during this period, with a few conference calls interspersed as needed.

The committee chair explained that the Committee and Council are facing two new concepts that are under development. One new concept is a new system of fishery management (i.e. EBFM) that integrates management of different fisheries in a specific area, accounting for biological and technical interactions to achieve a wider range of goals and objectives than are usually considered. The second new concept is the MSE process itself. Council members and some public are familiar with or participated in previous MSE processes, but these previous MSEs were more narrowly focus on a specific set of management questions.

The meeting memo, presentations, and related documents were available on the NEFMC meeting web page.

### Presentations

The following presentations were made in the morning and the committee asked questions to develop better understanding after each presentation.

- The MSE concept focusing on the use and interpretation of operating models to support MSE by Dr. Gaichas
- Lessons learned about stakeholder engagement in the Herring MSE by Dr. Feeney
- Summary of the Atlantic Bluefin tuna MSE process by Dr. Kerr
- The Council's example Fishery Ecosystem Plan (eFEP) framework intended purpose by Mr. Applegate
- Draft MSE processes and timelines by Mr. Applegate

### Discussion

The committee discussed the difference between an MSE focused on evaluating catch management procedures under various conditions, aka operating models or states of nature. With EBFM, the range and types of potential management procedures is much more diverse than those addressed by a traditional MSE process. The committee felt that the high-complex document with a complicated EBFM framework could backfire. Although the document was developed as it was intended, many committee members found it difficult to understand the eFEP or its application and would therefore find it difficult to explain it to others. The committee also recognized that the new concepts could face negative reactions because people would think that they could lose existing opportunities to fish.

The committee also felt that the candidate list of goals and objectives in the eFEP were not yet sufficiently developed by managers. A key first step of the conceptual MSE process presented by Dr. Gaichas was a phase for managers and stakeholders developing goals and objectives. Although the Council had approved a tentative goals and objectives list for the document and it was intended for this development to be part of the MSE process itself, the committee thought that there would be value in having the Council do this in a series of workshops that include only Council members. It would allow the Council to become more familiar with both the EBFM and the MSE concept and processes.

In lieu of agreeing on Terms of Reference and relevant questions to answer about an MSE process for EBFM management procedures focusing on Georges Bank, the committee recommended an interim step to help develop the EBFM concept better with tangible examples. The committee thought that the NEFMC could use as a template a similar process recently conducted by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. An overview of this process can be found at <https://www.npfmc.org/ecosystem-research-workshop/> and the final report is available at <https://www.npfmc.org/ecosystem-workshop-report/>.