



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492

Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD *Executive Director*

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team Webinar

August 7, 2026

The Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team (PDT) met on August 7 at 10:00 am via webinar to discuss Atlantic herring specifications for 2027-2031, and other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Emily Bodell (NEFMC; Acting PDT Chair); Ashley Asci, Douglas Christel, Carrie Nordeen, Danielle Palmer, Marianne Randall (NMFS/GARFO); Dr. Matt Cieri (ME DMR); Dr. Micah Dean (MA DMF); Jon Deroba (NOAA/NEFSC); Jason Didden (MAFMC); Dr. Katie Drew, Emilie Franke, Toni Kerns (ASMFC); Kurt Gotschall (CT DEEP); Kevin Job (CT DEEP); JA Macfarlan (RI DEM) (PDT/TC members and supporting analysts); Dr. Rachel Feeney, Dr. Cate O'Keefe (NEFMC staff); Scott Sakowski (NOAA GC). In addition, about 16 other people attended.

KEY OUTCOMES

- The PDT reviewed an additional projection run to provide to the Scientific and Statistical Committee for their deliberations on the Atlantic herring overfishing limits and acceptable biological catches for 2027-2031.
- The PDT received an update on recent work regarding river herring and shad species distribution models.

Emily Bodell from Council staff served as the PDT Chair for the meeting as Dr. Cournane (Herring PDT Chair) was unavailable. The acting Chair opened the meeting at 10:00 am. There were no changes to the agenda.

AGENDA ITEM #1: MANAGEMENT UPDATES

ASMFC staff provided some management updates. The Atlantic Herring Management Board met on August 4, received an overview of the 2025 research track and 2026 management track assessments, and accepted the 2025 research track assessment for management use. The Commission will set Atlantic herring specifications at the annual meeting in November. Landing days in Area 1A started on July 19th and there had been no landings at the time of the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM #2: 2027-2031 ATLANTIC HERRING SPECIFICATIONS ACTION

Council staff reviewed the upcoming Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting agenda, provided an overview of the documents that were given to the SSC, and reviewed the contents of the staff presentation. Staff also reviewed an additional projection run to consider forwarding to the SSC. The new run modified the bridge year assumptions (75% US ACL caught, 5-year Canadian catch average) and included the 10-year average for recruitment.

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The PDT agreed to forward the new projection run to the SSC in addition to the runs that have already been completed, noting support for providing a suite of sensitivities and the original projections. A PDT member asked about capacity for running additional projections if the SSC is interested in looking at other factors (ex. modified bridge year with NAA transitions). Staff capacity to run projections during the meeting is limited but could be requested before the meeting or completed afterwards and reviewed via correspondence.

The PDT also discussed how the Canadian weir fishery is going so far, which could be a question from the SSC. GARFO staff noted that they request that data from DFO in Canada, generally towards the end of the summer in preparation for the October 1 transfer threshold date. GARFO staff offered to reach out to DFO Canada to get some preliminary information, and ME DMR staff also offered to provide some information as available.

AGENDA ITEM #3: RIVER HERRING AND SHAD MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Dr. Dean provided an update on river herring and shad species distribution modeling work. Since the last PDT meeting, updates included improved marginal effects figures, new model predictions and different units, adjusted closure algorithms, and simplified and expanded evaluation metrics.

A PDT member asked if the spatiotemporal random effects are interpreted as presence/absence or if they are indicative of abundance or density. There are spatiotemporal random effects for both. Another PDT member asked about interpreting the species distribution outputs, particularly whether the results reflect a likely scenario if environmental conditions were similar. Dr. Dean noted that variation from environmental factors appears to be less substantial than seasonal distribution changes. A PDT member also had some suggestions for revisions to the graphic depicting the relationship between predicted biomass and percent occurrence. Another PDT member suggested showing what good and bad model fits might look like to better understand model validation information.

There was a question about whether the relationship is stronger with percent occurrence than catch rates. Dr. Dean noted that this is not easily translatable, they are on different scales, and different visuals such as observed points overlaid with model predictions would get into confidentiality issues. A member of the public asked if the model takes the importances of areas with low occurrence into account equally, stating that an area of low occurrence could be a genetic stock that is in peril. Dr. Dean explained that the model is the same as the work presented in the past, but with a new way to visualize the results, essentially providing information to decide where to consider closure area boundaries while considering tradeoffs between river herring and shad conservation and providing access for the Atlantic herring fishery.

A PDT member asked if the closures would be imposed and change monthly to achieve a certain quantile. Dr. Dean noted that closures would also have the current closure areas taken out. The model outputs are associated with gear-specific percentages of catch from inside the closures. The PDT also discussed the management viability of a monthly changing closure and considering tradeoffs of various closures. The model output could be modified to include multiple months in a closure, and the boundaries can be adjusted if needed to make them less cumbersome for management and enforcement. There was a question about displacement of effort and whether that was calculated. Dr. Dean stated that while this is a challenging factor to account for, generally, effort would be relocated to an area with a lower river herring and shad catch rate rather than an unknown catch rate. A PDT member supported the polygon approach to developing potential closure areas and suggested some edits to various figures for upcoming presentations. The PDT also flagged that small-mesh bottom trawl trips are not always targeting herring. A PDT member discussed some thoughts about increasing genetics sampling.

Public Comments/Questions:

Bill Lucey – asked if it would be possible to conduct a mixed stock analysis of river herring, noting that there may be some areas that require additional protections based on the genetic stocks in the area. Dr. Dean noted that this would be challenging to address and described some of the difficulties with developing genetic analyses on smaller spatial scales, though there is some genetic information available. Mr. Lucey also stated that there are some historic genetic samples available in storage that could be processed.

Dr. Maria Abate – noted that the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah has completed some genetics work and is interested in working with the PDT to consider options that would protect river herring from their Tribal run.

Jeff Kaelin – asked if some of the river herring captured in pelagic fisheries originate from Canada and suggested considering Canadian genetics data if available. Mr. Kaelin also did not feel that an additional Gulf of Maine closure would be necessary.

With no other business, the PDT meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:55 am.



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DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team Webinar

August 31, 2026

The Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team (PDT) met on August 31 at 1:00 pm via webinar to discuss Atlantic herring specifications for 2027-2031, and other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Dr. Jamie Cournane (PDT Chair), Emily Bodell (NEFMC); Ashley Asci, Carrie Nordeen, Danielle Palmer, Marianne Randall, Ashley Trudeau (NMFS/GARFO); Dr. Matt Cieri (ME DMR); Dr. Micah Dean (MA DMF); Jon Deroba, Min-Yang Lee (NOAA/NEFSC); Jason Didden (MAFMC); Dr. Katie Drew, Emilie Franke (ASMFC); JA Macfarlan (RI DEM) (PDT members and supporting analysts); Peter Whelan (Herring Committee Chair); Mitch MacDonald (NOAA GC). In addition, about 14 other people attended.

KEY OUTCOMES

- The PDT discussed developing impacts analysis for the 2027-2031 specifications action alternatives and provided comments on an idea to potentially temporarily adjust management area sub-ACLs.

The PDT Chair opened the meeting at 1:00 pm. There were no changes to the agenda.

AGENDA ITEM #1: 2027-2031 ATLANTIC HERRING SPECIFICATIONS ACTION

The PDT Chair reviewed the draft presentation for the Herring Advisory Panel and Committee meeting, including the outcome of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting, draft specifications alternatives, draft biological and economic impacts, and a potential path forward for adjusting management area sub-ACLs. The Chair asked the PDT about how to describe the biological impacts of the action – in the past, the PDT has presented the results of the standard projections and included any additional information available about overfishing and other factors. The PDT could put the recommended specifications in the context of already completed projections, use the recommended ABC to run a sensitivity to present, or not complete any additional projections.

2027-2031 Specifications

A PDT member supported presenting a range of possibilities using the projections since they were approved through the research track. Since the SSC went back to the previous management track to set the optimum yield, it would be appropriate to run the OYs through some projections, perhaps using the most pessimistic and optimistic projections. The Chair noted that the projections provided for the SSC did provide some information and asked how the projections could be run. Another PDT member suggested specifying the ABCs and leaving them constant through the projection period. In the most pessimistic

projection, when the ABC control rule is applied, the ABC stabilized around 6,000 mt and the rebuilding probability was around zero. The Chair suggested running the two action alternatives using the standard projections and could hold the quota constant instead of applying the control rule for mobile fleet catch. The PDT also discussed what to use for the bridge year catch and suggested using the 75% ACL assumption given current in-season catch and recent year trends. The projections could be run for 10 years to cover the rebuilding period or could be run through 2031 given that in the standard projections, rebuilding occurs in a couple of years, and in the more pessimistic runs, rebuilding never occurs. The PDT decided to run the projections through 2031. A PDT member asked if the harvest control rule would be used after the specifications cycle, and the Chair noted that this has not been discussed since the control rule is based in part on values coming out of the old assessment model (ASAP). Finally, the PDT Chair flagged that a supplemental environmental assessment will be prepared to support the specifications action.

Management Area Sub-ACL Adjustments

Some PDT members were hesitant to support temporary changes to management area sub-ACLs. The sub-ACLs were implemented to protect spawning components, so moving unused quota from one area to another could reduce the effectiveness of those protections and could differentially affect smaller spawning components. The percentages are based on limited information from some time ago, but there is no better information available at this point. MA DMF is currently working on a herring genomics study that could provide new data about the sub-ACLs.

Canadian Weir Transfer

A PDT member noted that the threshold for transferring 1,000 mt from the Canadian weir fishery to the Area 1A sub-ACL is around two-thirds of the buffer. Under Alternative 3, if the full 1,000 mt was reallocated, it would approach the full management uncertainty buffer. The PDT Chair considered discussing the tradeoffs between the alternatives.

Public Comments/Questions:

Jeff Kaelin – stated that there was some industry opposition to potential sub-ACL adjustments and suggested including additional summary of recent AP and Committee discussion in the upcoming meeting presentation.

With no other business, the PDT meeting adjourned at approximately 1:50 pm.