New England Fishery Management Council
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DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team Webinar

via Webinar
June 9, 2026

The Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team (PDT) met on June 9, 2026 at 2:00 pm via webinar to discuss development of a 2026 action and PDT analysis for Atlantic herring specifications for 2027-2031, river herring and shad measures, and other measures, and other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Dr. Jamie Cournane (PDT Chair), Emily Bodell (NEFMC); Dr. Daniel Hocking, Carrie Nordeen, Marianne Randall (NMFS/GARFO); Dr. Matt Cieri (ME DMR); Dr. Micah Dean (MA DMF); James Boyle, Dr. Katie Drew, Toni Kerns, Caitlin Starks (ASMFC); Kevin Job (CT DEEP); Jason Didden (MAFMC) (PDT/TC members and supporting analysts); Peter Whelan (Committee Chair). In addition, about 8 other people attended.

KEY OUTCOMES

- The PDT reviewed the outcomes of the June 8 joint Atlantic herring Advisory Panel and Committee meeting, including PDT tasking related to time-area closures.
- The PDT reviewed and discussed hypothetical time-area closures and draft evaluation metrics for the alternatives.

The PDT Chair opened the meeting at 2:00 pm. There were no changes to the agenda.

AGENDA ITEM #1: 2026 MANAGEMENT ACTION

Council staff provided an overview of the Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel and Committee meeting held on June 8th. The AP and Committee recommended prioritizing 2027-2031 specifications for the 2026 action, and the Committee tasked the PDT to continue work on river herring and shad measures, the specifications process, and carryover provisions. The Committee also tasked the PDT with developing time/area closures for herring management areas 1B, 2 and 3 to minimize river herring and shad catch to the extent practicable. The Committee outlined some recommendations for the PDT to consider as they develop these closure area alternatives.

The PDT discussed the term "to the extent practicable". The PDT can provide a range of options, and the Council can determine what is practicable. GARFO staff also consulted with NOAA General Counsel, who noted that a comparison/ analysis of the tradeoffs for time-area closures could be helpful. A PDT member asked if it is possible to assign river herring and shad catch and Atlantic herring catch, revenues, and/or trips to discrete squares. It may be challenging to determine the value of lost Atlantic herring catch, but the PDT can explore ideas based on available data. There has been revenue and landings spatial data compiled in the past that could be used to develop some qualitative estimates. A PDT member noted

that having more fishing effort may not have a substantial economic impact unless the fishery is not hitting the quota, though there could be costs incurred if vessels have to move around more. This could be difficult to characterize. Another PDT member stated that a similar analysis was conducted for a recent sturgeon action. A PDT member suggested that this may need to be an iterative process as effort increases and additional data is available – Council staff mentioned the AP and Committee discussion about building in a review process for the closure areas. Another PDT member noted similarities with an analysis they completed related to gillnet closures where they talked to industry about the ability/willingness to move to other areas. Since the model is based on abundance, it could be used to predict where the Atlantic herring fishery might move to. A PDT member pointed out that there has been underharvesting in one or more areas in recent years, so it is important to consider how the ability to move might impact the ability to harvest. They also suggested that a periodic review or update for time/area closures could be built into specifications, then updated as part of specifications actions in the future.

The PDT reviewed a few slides from Dr. Dean's presentation to the AP and Committee on the species distribution model work, including potential evaluation metrics for time/area closures. On the map showing percentiles of density, a PDT member suggested clarifying that the percentages are calculated across all months collectively and asked if an approach using 10-minute squares may help illustrate trends. Another PDT member suggested accounting for existing herring fishery closures when discussing tradeoffs of potential closure areas. A PDT member asked about the ability for the herring fleet to move around – another member noted that while developing closure areas with low impacts to the small-mesh bottom trawl fleet may be more complex due to overlaps with high densities of river herring and shad, there could be more opportunities for the midwater trawl fleet to move around. They also mentioned that the data currently includes any observed tows that caught any amount of herring, but the PDT/ Committee may want to define the fleet differently (ex. including only declared herring trips). PDT members suggested that feedback from the Advisory Panel would be helpful with the species distribution modeling work specific to Atlantic herring. The PDT discussed putting together a breakdown of total river herring and shad catch by gear type and by quarter.

Public Comment:

- **Jeff Kaelin (Lunds Fisheries, Herring AP) –** appreciated potential efforts to eliminate broad closures over times where they may not have an effect. To estimate the economic impacts of potential closures, the PDT could look at the impacts of past catch cap closures. It would also be helpful to review Atlantic herring abundance information as well as Atlantic herring catch. Mr. Kaelin noted that in Maine, there is a 5% bycatch allowance by volume for alewives, which creates an inequity for the Atlantic herring fishery. Finally, Mr. Kaelin stated that herring vessels often work on narrow margins, so a 20% reduction in catch is fairly impactful.
- **Suzannah Raber (F/V Providian, Herring AP) –** explained that it is difficult for the herring fleet to move around because the fish are in certain places at certain times of the year, so vessels cannot really move and hope the fish are elsewhere. Fishing activity is also dependent on the weather and season.

With no other business, the PDT meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:10 pm.