Framework to Narrow Scope of NMFS Management and Science

Executive Committee

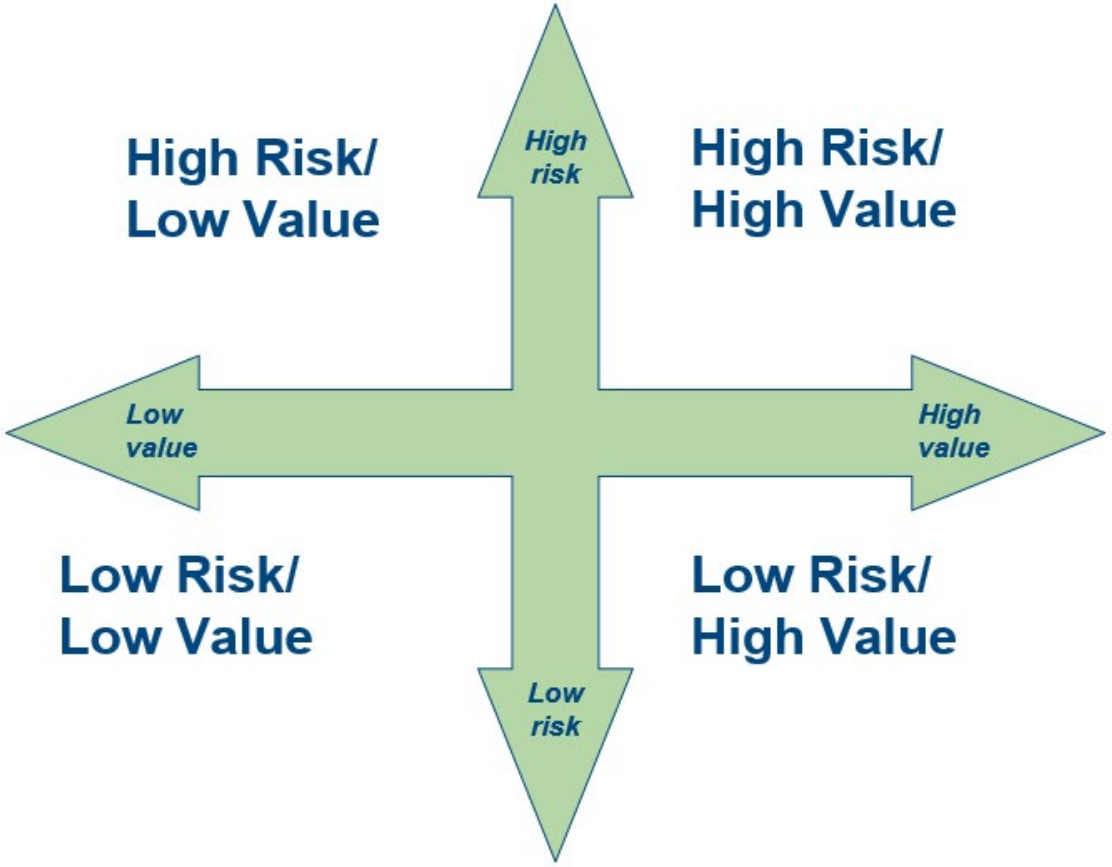
March 25, 2026

NOAA Risk/Value Matrix Process

- Goal:
  - Provide framework for narrowing the scope of NMFS management and science

- Baseline Assumptions:
  - NMFS cannot continue to manage the 500+ stocks/complexes currently in FMPs
  - There will be impacts to changing how NMFS manages fisheries
    - NOAA staff, Councils, fishing industry, and communities
  - Want to balance national consistency and interoperability with regional flexibility while maintaining accountability
  - Creation and application of regional Risk/Value matrices must be co-developed with Science Center, Regional Office, and Councils
    - Scientists involved with management changes; Managers involved with science changes

NOAA Risk/Value Matrix Process



- **Value Categories**
  - Commercial
  - Recreational
  - Social

- **Risk Categories**
  - Relative stock status – B/B target
  - Susceptibility to environmental phenomenon
    - Climate Vulnerability Analysis (CVA)
    - Probability & Susceptibility Analysis (PSA)
  - Proven impact on ecosystem
  - Effectiveness of management
    - Considered at end of process

NOAA Risk/Value Matrix Process

- 9 Steps in Applying Matrix
  1. Articulate objectives – narrow scope of NOAA science and management
  2. **Regional Working Groups** – acquire data, quantify risk and value (qualitative as needed)
  3. Place stocks/fishery in matrix – identify potential management changes
  4. Review and adjust for cultural value, international, management effectiveness
  5. Prioritize stock assessments and analytical approaches
  6. Calculate data requirements
  7. Prioritize data collection needs
  8. Submit results to NMFS
  9. Concurrently:
     a. Combine regional matrices to national matrix
     b. Councils and Regional Offices identify FMP/database changes needed

- **Complete submission by June 30, 2026**

Regional Risk/Value Matrix Process

- **Regional Working Group**
  - NRCC initial discussion – January Intersessional Meeting
  - Representation from all NRCC organizations
    - Moira Kelly, Jay Hermsen – Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
    - Mike Simpkins – Northeast Fisheries Science Center
    - Cate O'Keefe, Jamie Cournane – New England Council
    - Chris Moore, Brandon Muffley – Mid-Atlantic Council
    - Bob Beal, Toni Kerns, Pat Campfield – Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
  - Consider expertise and representation for value and risk categories
    - Management – policy and regulatory
    - Science – surveys, assessment, fishery information
    - Socioeconomics – risk policy, community impacts, cultural importance
  - Convene Working Group meetings, develop work plan, complete matrix
    - March – Working Group meetings, work plan, initial "investment" evaluation
    - Spring/Summer – complete matrix and submit to NOAA

Regional Risk/Value Meeting – March 4th

- Defined Scope
  - To determine priority level of all stocks to potentially drop some from management and reduce workload
    - Leveraging previous NRCC approaches to prioritize stock assessments
    - Considering outputs from methodology developed by NOAA HQ

- Discussion Summary
  - Concerns about required resources, consistency of matrix population across regions, potential bias towards “high/high” determinations
  - Discussion of the challenging scope of the exercise, including process for removing stocks or moving to Ecosystem Components, given potential legal hurdles
  - Identified point of contention was the ownership of the final product, is this a Council-endorsed product or a NOAA-mandated product?

Regional Risk/Value Approach

- Stepwise approach to consider qualitative and quantitative information
  - Step 1:
    - Current Investment Level
      - GARFO, NEFSC, NEFMC, MAFMC, ASMFC
      - None, Small, Moderate, High
      - Qualitative assessment for each stock of each organization's level of investment (time, resources, etc.)
      - Completed by 3/25
  - Step 2:
    - Value Considerations
      - Average $/lb, 2026 potential revenue, Average realized annual revenues, Average angler trips, For Hire trips/year, Other cultural value
      - Quantitative information for each stock from existing data sources

Regional Risk/Value Approach

- Stepwise approach to consider qualitative and quantitative information
  - Step 3:
    - Risk Considerations
      - Ecosystem Impact, Catch vs. Available Quota, Stock Status, NRCC Assessment Priority Rank, Overfishing Status
      - Qualitative rankings based on quantitative information for each stock
  - Step 4:
    - Quadrant Placement Summary
      - Combination of Value and Risk rankings to determine where the stock falls in the matrix
      - Iterative to consider if final rankings align with organizational/regional perspectives
      - Compare results with outputs developed by NOAA HQ

Risk/Value Perspectives

- CCC Letter to NOAA – February 2, 2026
  - Request for more information
  - Concerns about lack of transparency in objectives
  - Disappointment in development of approach without Council input
  - Awaiting response

- Media coverage of process at Pacific Council – March 18, 2026
  - “Burden [PFMC ED] said this discussion has been one of the most challenging of his tenure.”

- Press Release from Western Pacific Council – March 19, 2026
  - SSC Reviews Science Priorities as NOAA Funding Tightens
  - “SSC members noted differences between the Council and NMFS on where certain fisheries fall within the matrix, reflecting differing views of risk and value as well as ambiguity in the guidelines. “

Risk/Value Next Steps

- Regional Working Group Meeting March 25th
  - Review Step 1 - Investment Level results
  - Consider information from national Sustainable Fisheries discussions
  - Cross walk of Risk Level criteria with NRCC assessment priority factors
  - Discuss criteria for Risk and Value Levels

- New England Council presentation/discussion - April
  - Compare with outcomes of Mid-Atlantic discussions

- Executive Directors meeting for regional updates - April

- CCC Meeting May 19-21 – discussion with NOAA HQ