



## New England Fishery Management Council

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# MEETING SUMMARY

## Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team

Webinar

December 15, 2025

The Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team (PDT) met on December 15, 2025 by webinar to discuss a work plan for 2026 Council priorities for Atlantic herring, river herring and shad, plans for the 2026 Management Track Stock Assessment for Atlantic herring, including supporting analysis the PDT may complete, an update on the state sampling program, and other business, as necessary.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** Dr. Jamie Cournane (PDT Chair), Emily Bodell (NEFMC); Carrie Nordeen, Ashley Ascii (NMFS/GARFO); Jon Deroba (NMFS/NEFSC); Emilie Franke (ASMFC), Matt Cieri (ME DMR); JA Macfarlan (RI DEM), and Jason Didden (MAFMC). In addition, about 12 other people attended.

The meeting began at 10:00 am.

### **KEY OUTCOMES**

- Discussed the work plan for 2026.
- Reviewed possible PDT analyses to support the 2026 Atlantic herring Management Track Stock Assessment.
- Received an update on the state sampling program.

### **MANAGEMENT UPDATES**

GARFO staff provided a brief management update. On November 17, the Area 1A Canadian weir fishery transfer was processed, reallocating 1,000 MT from the management uncertainty buffer to the Area 1A sub-ACL. The 2,000 lb possession limit for Area 1A was implemented on December 2. The final rule implementing the FY 2025-2027 Atlantic herring specifications was published on Thursday, December 11, which allowed for additional harvest in Areas 1A, 2, and 3, but not in Area 1B due to a catch overage earlier this year.

ASMFC staff relayed that following the 1,000 MT transfer, the states from Area 1A decided to open for one landing day on Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>. Just over 800 MT of Atlantic herring were landed and the Area 1A fishery closed at 6 pm on the 24<sup>th</sup>. After the implementation of the FY 2025-2027 specifications, the states scheduled a days out meeting for December 15<sup>th</sup> to discuss Area 1A landing days for the remainder of 2025.

### **AGENDA ITEM #1: WORK PLAN - 2026 COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

Council staff provided an overview of the 2026 Council priorities for herring, including: 1) action to set ABC/ACL for Atlantic herring stock for FY 2027-2031, develop measures to minimize interactions with

river herring and shad; 2) Herring Management Track Assessment; 3) Amendment 10: minimize user conflicts, achieve OY, and support rebuilding of the Atlantic herring resource; and 4) coordination with MAFMC/ASMFC for river herring/shad issues. Council staff also reviewed a draft outline of the upcoming specifications action and potential management measures to be included (see Attachment).

#### Discussion

Council staff noted that the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) was asked to develop five-year specifications for the first time this year and sought to develop criteria for those recommendations in a more consistent manner. SSC leadership will likely debrief on this process and continue to discuss how to make recommendations for five years. A PDT member asked about the PDT sub-groups formed to address Amendment 10 tasking. The group focused on analyzing and developing recommendations to improve the accuracy and precision of river herring and shad catch estimates completed their tasking but did not write a final summary due to the pause in Amendment 10 work. Once that summary report is completed, the PDT can reconvene the other sub-groups to work towards tasking. Another PDT member cautioned that five-year specifications for herring may be fairly precautionary in the out years.

#### ***AGENDA ITEM #2: PDT SUPPORTING ANALYSIS - 2026 MANAGEMENT TRACK STOCK ASSESSMENT***

Council staff shared some possible areas where the PDT can support the 2026 management track stock assessments, including evaluating Canadian catch and providing assistance with projections.

#### Discussion

The herring stock assessment scientist stated that they could use help from PDT members with commercial catch data, state survey indices, and CAMS catch updates. If the PDT is considering reevaluating Canadian catch, additional assistance may be needed to run projections. A PDT member noted possible tradeoffs with using a shorter timeframe for Canadian catch estimates – for example, if a 3- or 5-year window is used and there is one year with a large catch, the average can change substantially. They felt it is important for the PDT to include timeframes where there has been large Canadian catch and see how it may impact projections moving forward. Canadian catch estimates fall under management uncertainty and does not require peer review, but it would be included in projection runs. It would be best to have these prepared before projections are run but it is not urgent.

#### ***AGENDA ITEM #3: UPDATE ON THE STATE SAMPLING PROGRAM***

Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR) staff provided an overview of potential changes to the state sampling program. ME DMR has been sampling Atlantic herring from ME to New Jersey, supported first by an ACCSP grant then through ASMFC. However, ASMFC is looking to explore ways for states to collect and transport samples to ME DMR instead of ME also being responsible for sample collection. ME DMR would continue to conduct aging and biological workups of all samples. These samples are used to provide data for the stock assessment, but they also have many additional management applications. A PDT member noted that the current administration is prioritizing cooperative work for NOAA, which may support additional sampling.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 10:45 am.

**Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan  
Action: Framework Adjustment or Amendment**

**4.0 ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION – DRAFT OUTLINE**

**4.1 Action 1 – Atlantic Herring Specifications Process**

4.1.1 No Action

4.1.2 Specifications Process

- Remove certain outdated specifications items
- Revise to make the process regulations less prescriptive

**4.2 Action 2 – Atlantic Herring Specifications for 2027-2031**

4.2.1 No Action

4.2.2 Atlantic Herring Specifications for 2027-2031

- Based on 2026 management track stock assessment and recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)
- Evaluation of management uncertainty, including Canadian catch
- Identify status quo specifications
- Summarize in a table to compare combinations of the options, as appropriate

**4.3 Action 3 – Carryover of Unharvested Catch**

4.3.1 No Action

4.3.2 Modify Carryover Provisions

- Allow for flexibility to not allow carryover of unharvested catch
- Limit or suspend carryover of unharvested catch when the Atlantic herring stock is overfished or in a rebuilding plan

**4.4 Action 4 – River Herring and Shad Management Measures**

*Recommend for this section that a sub-panel of the SSC review PDT analysis/draft measures*

4.4.1 No Action

4.4.2 Modify Catch Caps and Catch Cap Areas

- Revise the reference period for the catch caps
- Scale the catch caps to changes in the Atlantic herring biomass
- Use biologically-based approaches for catch caps developed by ASFMC during the River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment as starting point

4.4.3 Establish Time/Area Closures within Atlantic Herring Management Areas 2 and 3

- Where aggregations of river herring and shad overlap with the directed Atlantic herring fishery
- PDT develops species distribution models

4.4.4 Remove River Herring/Shad Avoidance Areas

- Have not used these areas for management