

# **New England Fishery Management Council**



## **RISK POLICY**

### **Appendix II**

## **COUNCIL WEIGHTING**

**Date/Version**

**Risk Policy Working Group**

**June 3, 2026**

Weightings are a policy decision made by the Council that signifies the level of importance of a particular factor. It is the Council's policy to utilize the following guidance to conduct weightings for the Risk Policy, unless otherwise specified.

### **1. Eligibility to participate in weightings**

It is the Council's policy that only voting Council members (members) will be eligible to participate in the Risk Policy weighting process, and participation is compulsory.

### **2. Process for weighting**

A polling process at a meeting of the Council will be used to identify the importance of factors. At the Council meeting, identification of the weightings would occur during a dedicated agenda item. The Council will be supplied with meeting materials to support the weightings process, such as the most recent State of the Ecosystem report, or National Standards. In addition, a template of the weightings poll will be provided to Council members in materials to encourage consideration of the weights prior to the meeting

Each voting member will weight all factors on a scale of 0-4.

- A weight of "0" indicates the factor is not important at all, while a weight of "4" indicates the factor is very important.
- The weights provided by each Council member will be counted equally.
- Individual responses will be anonymous.
- Responses from Council members will be averaged for each factor, and then divided by the sum of the averages to calculate the weighting for each factor. This ensures that the weightings add up to 1.
- A full description of how weights are combined with factor scores to determine a Z-score can be found in Appendix III.

Like other agenda items, written comments from the public will be accepted and provided to the Council as part of meeting materials. Weightings may be done in a closed session. After staff have calculated the weights for each factor, weights will be presented to the Council and public during the Council meeting. The Council will approve weights through motion before the full Council. This will be the opportunity for public comment and discussion between Council members about the weights. To be used as part of the Risk Policy, weights must be accepted by the Council by a simple majority vote or through consensus.

### **3. Frequency of Weightings**

It is recommended that the Council complete the weightings process every three years. It is not expected that weightings would dramatically change from year to year.

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### **Weightings Exercise for Voting Council Members:**

The New England Fishery Management Council's Risk Policy utilizes data and Council member input to characterize the Council's risk tolerance for its managed resources.

As a voting Council member, you will be assigning *weights* to each factors. Unlike the scoring of factors, which is conducted by the PDT and based on objective data, weightings are a policy choice. Weightings signify the level of importance of a factor in the Council’s assessment of risk. For example, for the factor “Climate Vulnerability”, the weighting process is not asking whether a species is vulnerable to climate change impacts; this is the purpose of scoring. Instead, the weighting process is asking how important the topic of ‘climate change impacts’ is to the Council’s risk tolerance for that species or stock.

The table below lists the factors you will weight. It also outlines the goal of each factor, and differences between what is evaluated during the objective PDT scoring process and what you should consider as a Council member when weighting each factor, which is a policy choice.

<b>Factor / Goal</b>	<b>Scoring – Objective</b> <i>Completed by the PDT</i>	<b>Weighting – Policy Choice</b> <i>Completed by Voting Council Members</i>
<u>Biomass/Stock Status:</u> acceptable level of risk based on the current productivity of a stock	Considers SSB relative to SSB targets, and direction of stock trends (5-years) when stock status is unknown.	Consider how important the level of spawning stock biomass and stock trends are to your risk tolerance for a managed resource.
<u>Recruitment:</u> the risk to the population associated with uncertainty in future recruitment	Considers recruitment over the last five years.	Consider how important recruitment trends are to your risk tolerance for a managed resource.
<u>Climate Vulnerability:</u> to assess the risk associated with climate change	Considers climate vulnerability of the stock/species and expected directional effect of climate change from Hare et al (2016).	Consider how important climate change impacts are to your risk tolerance for a managed resource.
<u>Recreational Fishery Characterization:</u> to assess the socioeconomic health of the recreational fishery	Considers sub-ACL utilization, recreational fleet diversity from SOE report, trends in angler trips, level of percent standard error (PSE) in total catch estimates, and changes in recreational regulations, AP input.	Consider how important recreational fishing considerations are to your risk tolerance for a managed resource.
<u>Commercial Fishery Characterization:</u> to assess the socioeconomic health of the commercial fishery	Considers catch target utilization, fishing communities, revenue trends, operational constraints, AP input	Consider how important commercial fishing considerations are to your risk tolerance for a managed resource.

When assessing weights for the factors, it may be helpful for you to think about the relative importance of the factors compared to one another. Some questions to help you think about weighting are:

- Is there a factor that you feel should have the most influence on the Council’s decision making? Is there a factor that you feel is least important?
- When you have made past decisions at the Council, what has been the primary driver of whether you were willing to accept an option of higher or lower risk? And what had little influence on your decision?
- When considering a factor’s level of importance, it may be helpful to consider whether it is already being accounted for in a stock assessment or existing management process.

Following the weighting exercise, the average of the Council members’ weightings for each factor are combined with each factor’s score. Scores and weights from all factors as used to calculate a Z-score to assess a level of risk tolerance.

### Weighting Exercise

Complete the grid below by assigning a weight to each factor using a whole number between 0 and 4. A weighting of 0 indicates the factor holds the lowest relative importance in determining the Council’s risk tolerance for that managed resource, while a 4 indicates it is critically important. **You may only designate a maximum of two factors as "Critically Important (4)."**

<b>Factor</b>	<b><i>Least Important</i> 0</b>	<b><i>Slightly Important</i> 1</b>	<b><i>Important</i> 2</b>	<b><i>Highly Important</i> 3</b>	<b><i>Critically Important</i> 4</b>
Biomass/Stock					
Recruitment					
Climate Vulnerability					
Recreational Fishery Characterization					
Commercial Fishery Characterization					