# Draft Risk Policy Factor Scoring Instructions for Commercial and Recreational Fishery Characterization

March 6, 2026

Since the January Council meeting, individuals from the RPWG, Council, Council staff, and Northeast Fisheries Science Center worked to assess and develop factor scoring instructions for the Commercial and Recreational Fishery Characteristic factors that will be used by Plan Development Teams (PDTs). The RPWG will be asked to react to comments/recommendations. Scoring guidance will continue to be refined following the March 9, 2026 meeting.

## Recreational Fishery Characterization Discussion

Input on the recreational factor has come from several sources since the January Risk Policy Working Group and Council meetings. Following the January Council meeting, Jonathon Peros and Dan Salerno met with Mike Pierdinock to discuss the recreational fishery characterization questions. Council staff have also been working to consider sources of data for the recreational characterization question. Topics that emerged were:

- Quota-Like Utilization Metrics:
    - For recreational stocks with sub-ACLs, a metric analogous to quota usage could be included to mirror the commercial framework.
    - For stocks targeted recreationally but lacking sub-ACLs (e.g., pollock, Gulf of Maine/Southern New England winter flounder), recent trends in catch may be an appropriate alternative measure.
- Precision (PSE) Considerations
    - There was interest in examining PSE at finer scales (month, state, mode), where estimates often exceed the 30% threshold commonly referenced.
    - Management decisions, however, rely on rolled-up annual estimates.
- Community Participation
    - A desire was expressed to include a metric capturing community participation or engagement in the recreational fishery.
    - The concept remains undefined, and identifying a practical, measurable indicator will require further development.
- Incorporation of in-season Information
    - Mr. Pierdinock noted that the American Sportfishing Association collects information/data over the course of the year. Efforts like this could be a potential source of recent participation and effort information.

- To parallel commercial inputs and maintain relevance to current conditions, Advisory Panel feedback on real-time fishery performance could be used (add a question), and staff noted that the AP could review data and information from a range of sources versus using more data streams in the Risk Policy process.

- Consideration of "Choke Stock" Dynamics
  - There was interest in identifying a recreational analogue to the commercial choke-stock dynamic (e.g., the need to catch cod to access haddock).
  - There was discussion if including such a metric on the recreational side may double-count issues already captured in the commercial analysis; this concept may be more appropriately addressed within the commercial metrics framework.

## Recreational Fishery Characterization

**Goal:** To determine the risk associated with the socioeconomic status of a recreational fishery.

**Relationship to risk tolerance:** As socioeconomic stress increases, risk tolerance increases.

**Questions for scoring presented in January:**

1. Is recreation fleet Diversity from the SOE report decreasing over the last five years?
   a. Answering yes suggests socioeconomic stress in the recreational fishery, so increase risk tolerance.
2. Are the number of angler trips in New England which are not targeting striped bass or tuna decreasing?
   a. Answering yes suggests socioeconomic stress in the recreational fishery, so increase risk tolerance.
3. Is the PSE for total catch consistently below 30 in the last three years?
   a. Answering yes increases risk tolerance because MRI P estimates have lower uncertainty.
4. Has there been consistency in recreational regulations such that there was no change within the last 12 months that resulted in a 20% increase or decrease in projected catch?
   a. Answering yes increases risk tolerance because there is more certainty in catch projections.
5. Proposal to add a question for advisory panels.

## Commercial Fishery Characterization

Questions for scoring presented in January, updated as of February 11, 2026 based on input from RPWG and Council. Comments and recommendations are imbedded after each question:

1. **Quota Usage:** Has greater than 80% of the quota been caught in at least two of the last three years (left one space)?

For scoring guidance, need to consider what data sources will be used to evaluate the quota usage questions. Some time lags exist in year-end reporting. Should consider trade-offs of using in-season catch accounting. Consider focusing only on commercial utilization if recreational has a similar question.

In 2026, if specifications are being developed for the 2027 fishing year, the most recent available Year-End Catch Reports will, at best, reflect 2025 data—since 2024 summaries will not yet be finalized and the latest fully processed information currently available is from 2023. QCM outputs could be used in the scoring process as there would be predicted utilization for the 2026 fishing year.

Table 2- Groundfish stocks with predicted FY2026 utilization rates >90%; FY2024 reference period for QCM.

| Stock | Sub-ACL (mt) | Predicted Catch (mt) | Predicted Utilization |
|---|---|---|---|
| White Hake | 1,340 | 1,330 | 99.3% |
| Redfish | 5,567 | 5,380 | 96.6% |
| WGOM Cod | 294 | 283 | 96.3% |
| GB Cod | 134 | 121 | 90.3% |

2. **Fishing Community:** Has the number of either primary or secondary ports declined by any amount over the last 5 years (left one space), increased by any amount over the last 5 years (right one space), or no change?

Council staff recommend changing the question/data that is used to score this factor, and to score it "globally" for all stocks at the regional level (score is always applied the same way for each stock).

*Rationale:* There is not a standard method for determining primary /secondary ports. Primary/secondary port lists are not consistently used across FMPs (or at agreed upon intervals when they are developed). Anticipate difficulty scoring under the proposed guidance.

Considering analyses from State of the Ecosystem, re-engaging with members of the RPWG, and work with NEFSC SSB

3. **Value:** Has revenue in the fishery (FMP level) had a declining trend over the last five years (left one space). For groundfish, instead consider if stock revenue contributes to 10% or more of overall groundfish fishery revenue (left one space).

Revenue was not set up as a data point that could move a score to the right because this approach does not work for groundfish, where revenue is evaluated as a percentage of total fishery revenue. It would not make sense to shift a score right simply because a groundfish stock contributed less than 10% to overall groundfish revenue. To keep scoring consistent between groundfish and all other stocks, the revenue data point was structured so it could only shift scores to the left.

4. **Constraining stock within another FMP:** Is quota for this species limiting the execution of other fisheries (left one space)? Is there a sub-ACL, accountability measure, or inter-FMP interaction associated with this stock that limits the execution of another fishery?

Allocations/AMs that could impact other FMPs

   a. GB haddock → Atlantic Herring

   b. GOM haddock → Atlantic Herring

   c. GB yellowtail flounder → Sea Scallop, Small Mesh Fisheries

   d. SNE/MA yellowtail flounder → Sea Scallop

   e. N windowpane flounder → Sea Scallop

   f. S windowpane flounder → Sea Scallop

Allocations/AMs that could impact within FMP with gear/area Ams

   a. N windowpane flounder → Groundfish

   b. S Windowpane Flounder → Groundfish

   c. Atlantic Halibut → Groundfish

   d. Ocean Pout → Groundfish

   e. Wolffish → Groundfish

Fishery Allocations that have direct effect on effort measures

      a. GOM haddock & GOM cod → recreational fishery

Fishery Interactions recommended by Industry

      b. Skates → limiting S monkfish

Consider outputs from QCM, such as predicted percent utilization, or prediction of lease price (any amount) that would suggest some scarcity in the lease market.

5. **AP Input:** Do comments from the AP within the current fishing year suggest the above trends still hold (no change), socio-economic health in fishery has improved (move one to right), or socio-economic health in fishery has further declined (move one to left)?