



New England Fishery Management Council

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Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 27, 2026

TO: Risk Policy Working Group

FROM: Dr. Cate O'Keefe, Executive Director, NEFMC

SUBJECT: Completion of Risk Policy Terms of Reference, and Transition to an FMAT Structure

As we look ahead to the full completion of Risk Policy Terms of Reference (TORs) that were approved on April 20, 2023, and approval of the Risk Policy Concept, we are reaching the successful conclusion of the Working Group's primary directives. I am writing to extend my deep appreciation for your dedication and hard work since the reconstitution of the Risk Policy Working Group (RPWG). Your expertise has been instrumental in reviewing our Risk Policy Statement, developing a new Concept, and guiding the incremental implementation of the policy.

Please be advised that upon the final approval of the Risk Policy Concept by the Council, the RPWG efforts will be completed and the working group will be discontinued. You will have successfully fulfilled your mandate, and the Council is incredibly grateful for the foundational work you have provided.

Moving forward, the Council will transition the ongoing procedural and technical responsibilities related to the Risk Policy to a Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) approach. An FMAT is a specialized, interdisciplinary team formed by the Council (often used jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council) to provide technical analysis in support of specific Council actions. Unlike a working group, which is often convened for high-level conceptual development or policy scoping, an FMAT is technically focused. Membership is expected to be like a PDT, and include scientists, managers, and other subject matter experts drawn from Council staff, NOAA Fisheries (GARFO), the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), state marine fisheries agencies, non-government organizations, and academic institutions. By shifting to an FMAT approach, the Council will be well-positioned to operationalize the Risk Policy Concept through detailed technical review and updates of the data that supports scoring Risk Policy factors, along with integration into our broader fishery management plans. An FMAT would be formed in response to the Council prioritizing work on the Risk Policy. The Council's Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee (CESC) would continue to support communications around the Risk Policy.

Thank you once again for your outstanding service on the Risk Policy Working Group. Your efforts have ensured a stronger, more resilient risk framework for managing New England's fisheries.