

CORRESPONDENCE



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary
175 Edward Foster Rd Scituate, Massachusetts 02066

March 23, 2026

Cate O'Keefe
Executive Director, NEFMC
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Re: Sand Lance Projections for the Climate & Ecosystem Steering Cmte

Dear Director O'Keefe:

NOAA's Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) is sharing recent work on species distribution modeling products for the Gulf of Maine that may be useful for the Climate & Ecosystem Steering and Habitat Committees and their work related to ecosystem components, habitats, and predator/prey interactions. These new products were developed by the Fisheries and Climate Toolkit (FaCeT) team, in collaboration with SBNMS staff. Of particular interest to SBNMS are FaCeT's sand lance focused products; these products could support and inform the Council's work on the framework for sand lance as an Ecosystem Component.

FaCeT is an ongoing National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Ecological Conservation project that seeks to support a better understanding of the impacts of changing conditions in the ocean. FaCeT develops a wide range of products with management applications using the fundamental principles of dynamic ocean management to generate innovative, transformative, and actionable science. Currently, FaCeT is collaborating with three protected areas in the Northwest Atlantic: SBNMS, Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, and the proposed Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary. Working directly with staff from these areas, and in collaboration with the Northeast Regional Ocean Council, FaCeT is developing new data visualizations and tools to support management efforts across the areas. FaCeT focuses on a range of indicator species including tunas, sharks, billfish, forage fish, marine mammals, and seabirds.

FaCeT's data visualization tools are designed to track current and future changes in spatial distributions, changes in temporal distribution or phenology, and refugial capacity of marine protected areas and surrounding areas. Because FaCeT tools and products track species responses to decadal changes in ocean conditions and episodic marine heat waves, they may be useful information for fisheries and habitat management. Through our project with FaCeT, we've found these products as informative tools for marine area management, and we think they may



provide useful information to support the Council's work.

If you have any questions regarding this input, please contact me at 781-635-0163 or at Pete.DeCola@noaa.gov.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Captain Peter DeCola
U.S. Coast Guard (retired)
Superintendent
Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

cc:

Mike Pentony, NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

Dr. Jon Hare, NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Dr. Rebecca Lewison, San Diego State University

Dr. Camrin Braun, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution