



New England
Fishery Management
Council



1. *Correspondence/Reports (June 23-25, 2026) M*

#8a1

Vessel Baseline Restrictions Evaluation

Update for June 2026 Council meetings

<https://www.nefmc.org/library/vessel-baselines-restrictions-evaluation>
<https://www.mafmc.org/actions/vessel-baseline-restrictions>

Outline

- Evaluation purpose
- Timeline
- Vessel baseline regulations
- Preliminary permit data
- AP and public comment
- Next steps



Purpose of Evaluation

- Evaluate current restrictions
- Inform whether to initiate a joint management action to consider revisions
- Consider:
 - Challenges in replacing vessels and engines under the current restrictions
 - Providing flexibility to upgrade/replace vessels (more efficient, safety) without compromising ability to manage overall fleet capacity



Timeline

2026

- Jan - May: Workgroup formed, began analysis
- May 21-29: Advisory Panel meetings, comment period
- June: Updates at Council meetings
- June - August: Workgroup finalizes evaluation
- Sept and Oct: NEFMC (Sept 15-17) and MAFMC (Oct 6-8) receive final report, consider next steps
- Dec: NEFMC (Dec 8-10) and MAFMC (Dec 14-17) finalize 2027 priorities

2027 (and beyond)

- Develop management action, if prioritized by Councils

Brief History

- Original goals:
 - One of many effort controls used to constrain catch in limited access fisheries, prior to annual catch limits
 - Control potential increases in fishing capacity
 - Help preserve the size diversity of the fleets
- Revised multiple times for consistency across fisheries, simplified documentation and administration
- Industry participants have reported ongoing challenges

Current Regulations

- **Vessel/engines cannot exceed the permit's baseline by more than 10% in length, 20% in horsepower**
- Year defining the baseline varies by permit type
- No limit on number of upgrades
- Most restrictive baseline applies when vessels have multiple permits previously associated with different vessels
- Only way to eliminate a baseline is to sell/permanently relinquish the permit

Baseline Year	
Northeast multispecies (except Handgear A permit)	1994
Atlantic sea scallop	
Red crab	1999
Summer flounder	
Scup	
Black sea bass	
Longfin squid (except Tier 3)	
Illex squid	
Butterfish	2000
Maine mahogany quahogs	
Monkfish	2007
Atlantic herring	2011
Atlantic mackerel	

GARFO Permits Not Subject to Baselines

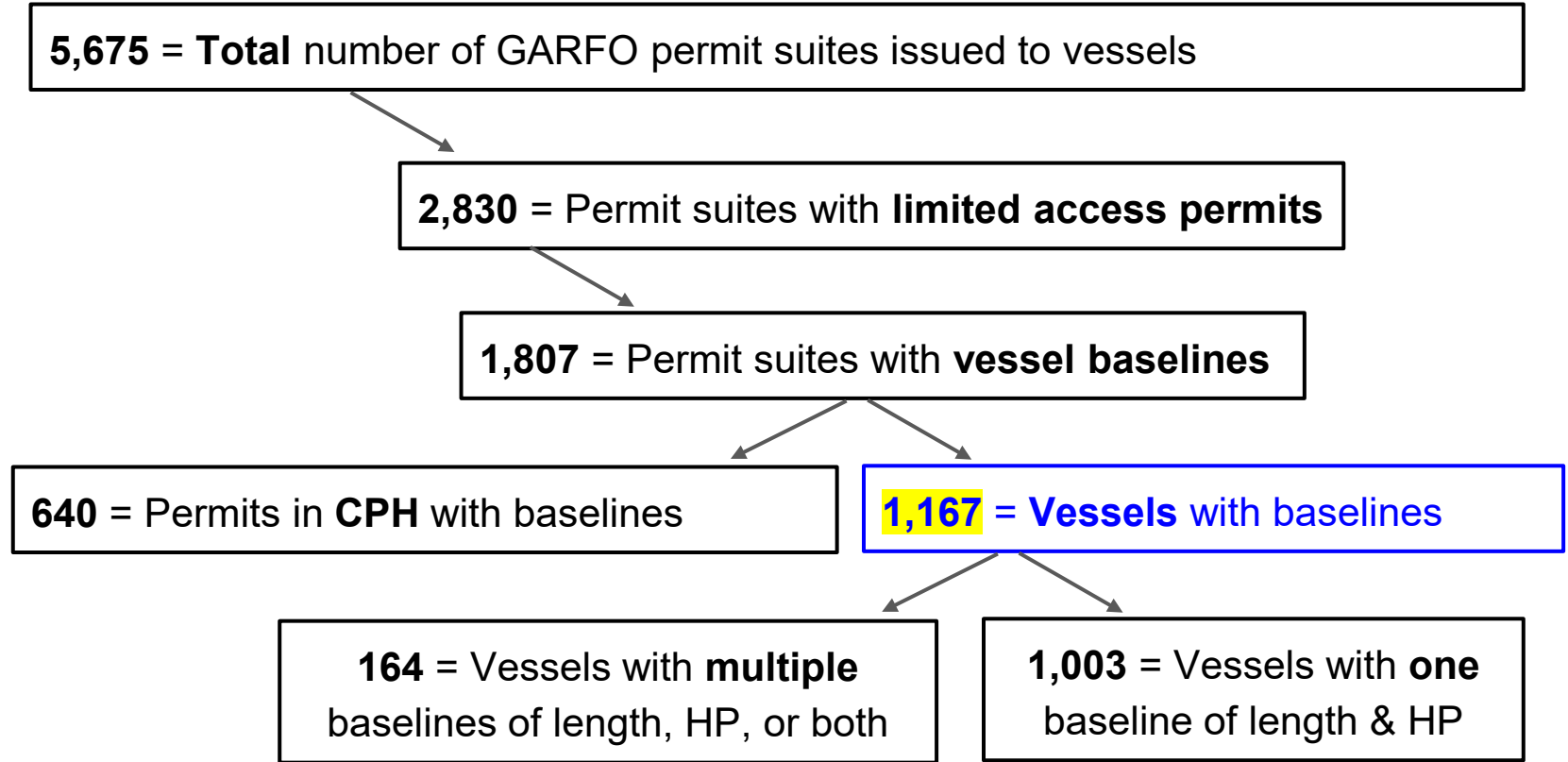
All open access permits

- Recreational permits (for hire, private)
- Commercial IFQ/ITQ fisheries
 - Surfclams, ocean quahogs, golden tilefish
- Other commercial open access permits
 - MAMFC: bluefish, blueline tilefish, spiny dogfish, and incidental permits for golden tilefish, Atlantic mackerel, longfin squid, *Illex* squid, and butterfish
 - NEFMC: skate, herring category D

Some limited access permits

- Limited Access General Category scallop
- Northeast multispecies handgear A
- Longfin squid tier 3
- Lobster

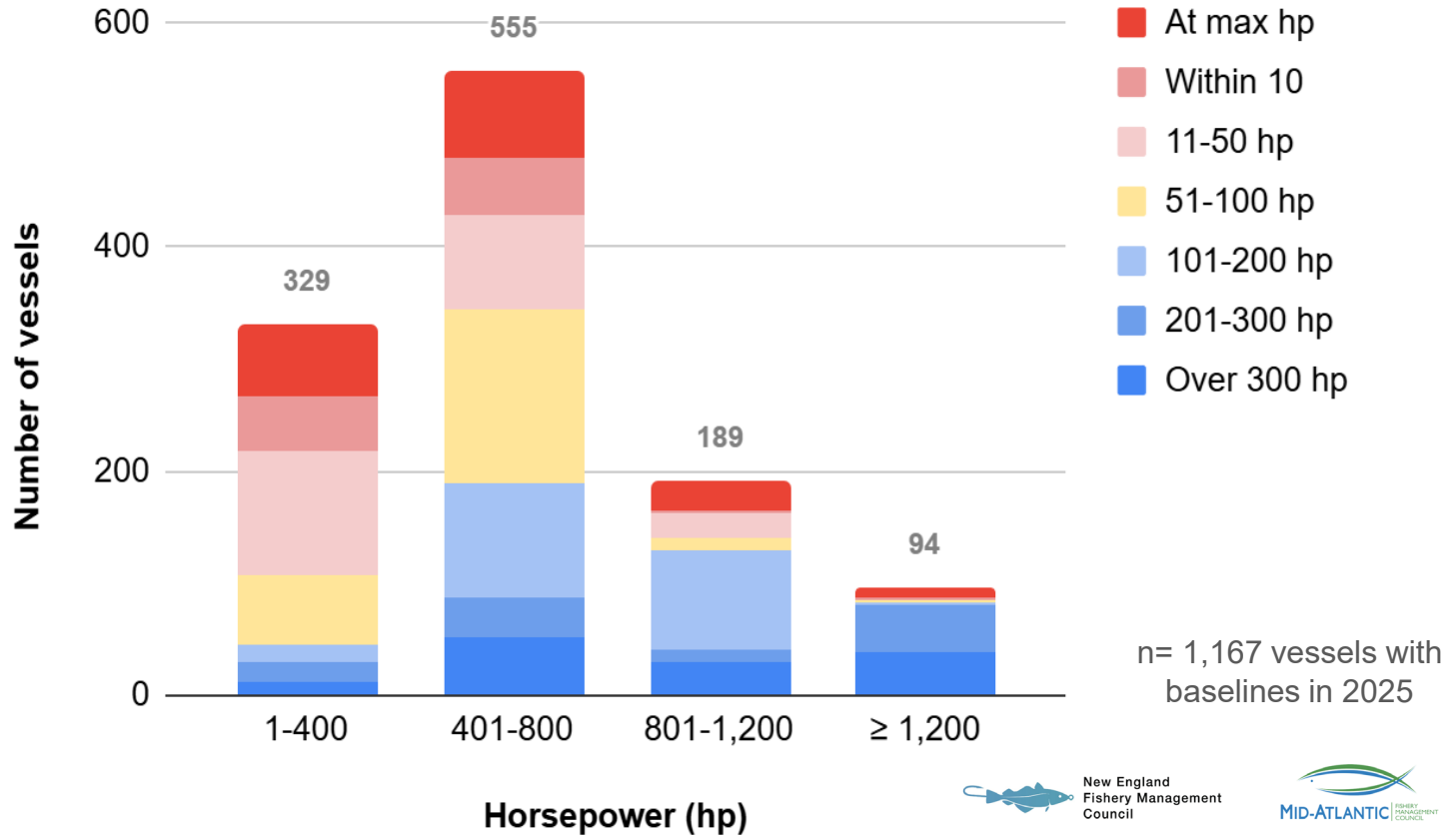
Permit Data - 2025



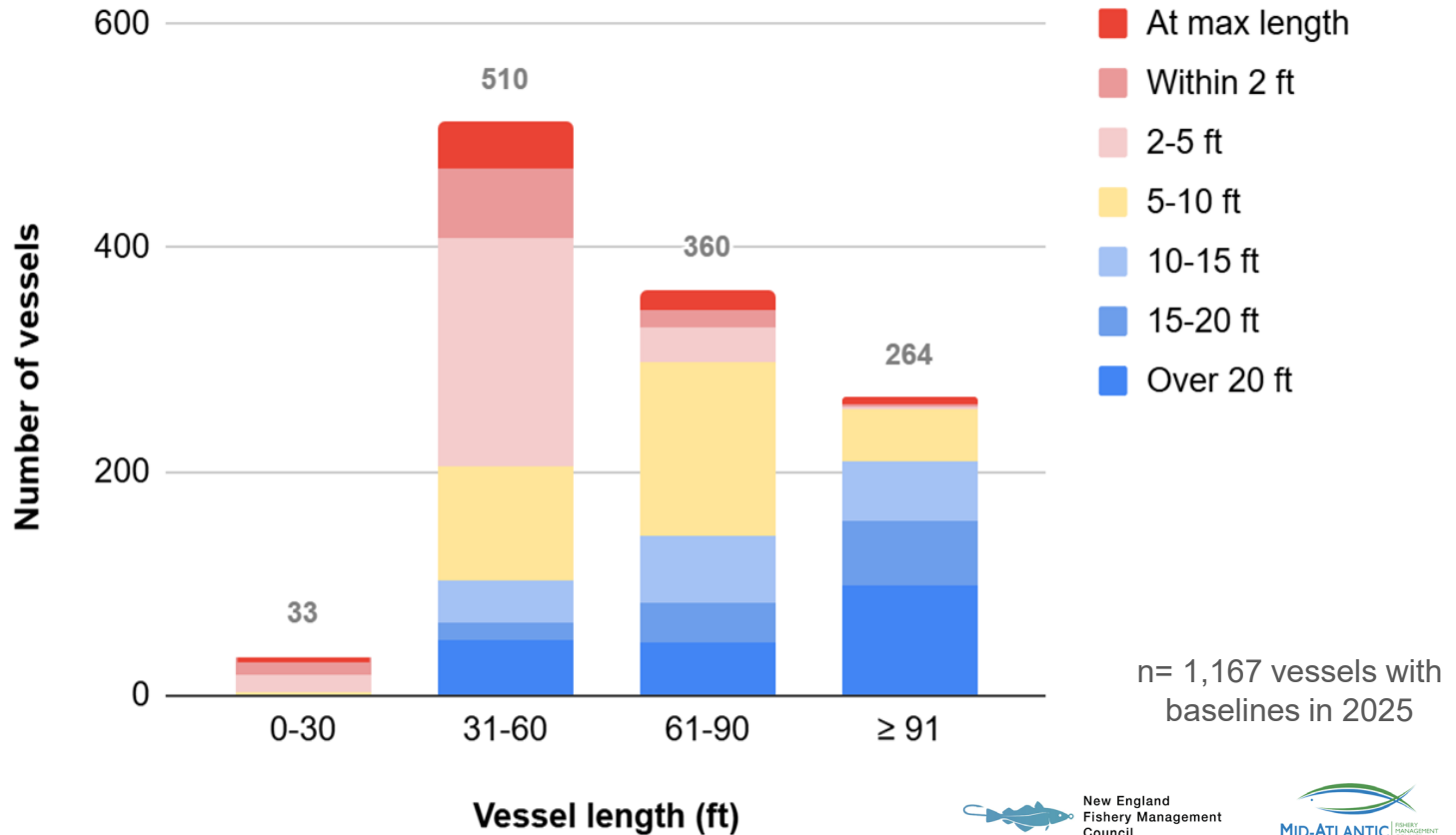
Vessels Relative to Original Baseline

Permit Type (1,167 permit suites)	Number of vessels	Vessel Length		Vessel Horsepower	
		% of vessels under/at original baseline	% of vessels above original baseline	% of vessels under/at original baseline	% of vessels above original baseline
Atlantic Red Crab	5	80%	20%	80%	20%
Maine Mahogany Quahog	15	67%	33%	67%	33%
<i>Illex</i> Squid	65	77%	23%	71%	29%
Atlantic herring	74	77%	23%	73%	27%
Atlantic Mackerel	115	82%	18%	77%	23%
Butterfish	268	82%	18%	60%	40%
Longfin Squid (Tiers 1 & 2)	268	81%	19%	59%	41%
Sea Scallop	346	79%	21%	51%	49%
Monkfish	486	81%	19%	62%	38%
Scup	529	78%	22%	59%	41%
Black Sea Bass	585	78%	22%	59%	41%
NE Multispecies	626	79%	21%	62%	38%
Summer Flounder	656	81%	19%	57%	43%

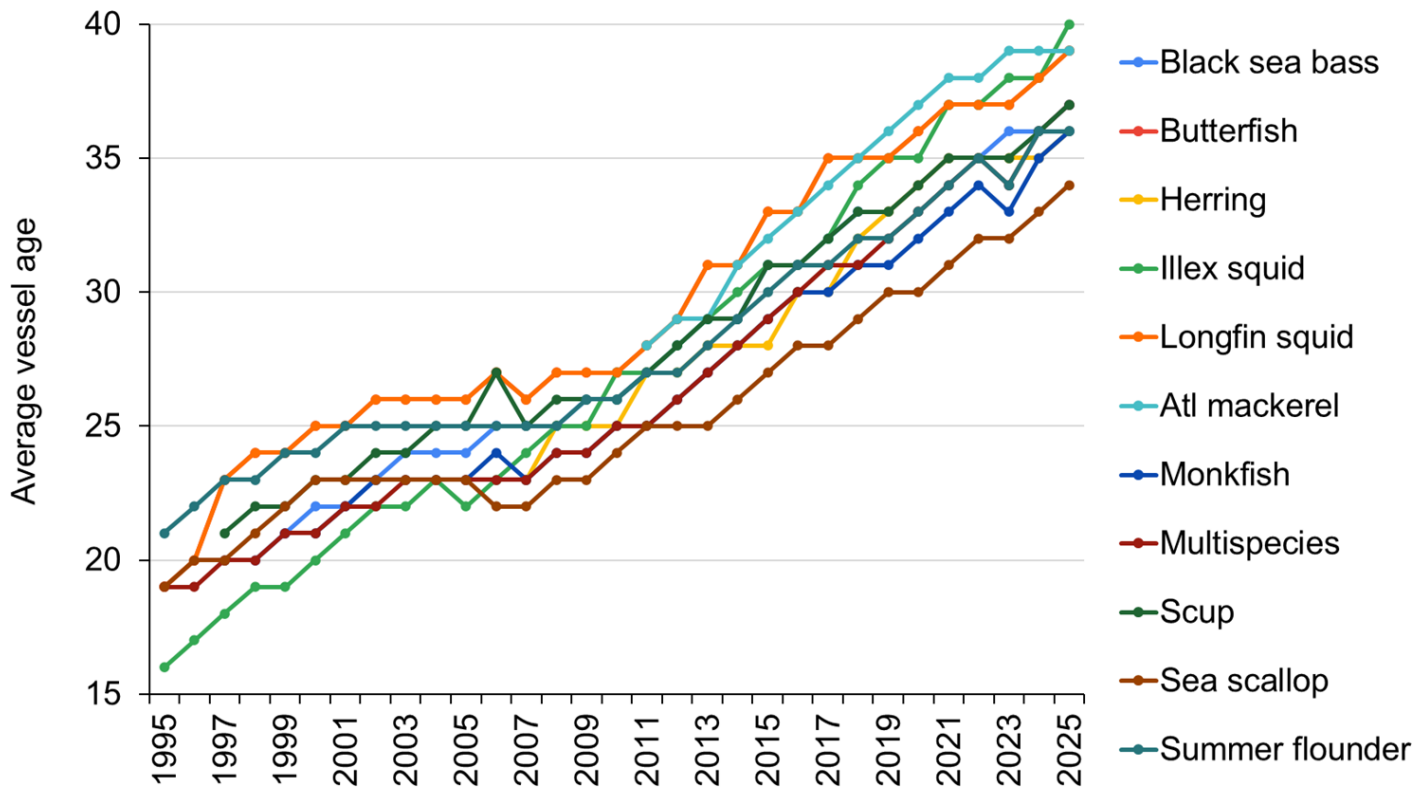
Vessels Relative to Maximum Horsepower



Vessels Relative to Maximum Length



Average Vessel Age By Permit Type Over Time



Note: Red crab and Maine mahogany quahog not included

n= 1,167 vessels with
baselines in 2025

Advisory Panels and Public Comment

**Late May: 3 joint AP meetings,
written comments**

- Attendance: 34 AP members,
23 public
- Verbal comments: 22 AP
members, 8 public
- Written comments: 4 AP
members, 1 public



Comments - Challenges

- **Safety at sea**
 - Especially for smaller vessels, lower HP engines
 - Some fisheries now take place further offshore
 - Multiple lives have been lost
- **Modifying or replacing vessels and engines**
 - Challenging and costly
 - Modern engines very different from when baselines were established
 - Very limited commercial fishery ship building in the U.S., regardless of baselines
- **Relinquishing permits**
 - Sometimes necessary in order to replace vessels
- **Administrative complications**
 - E.g., length/HP not always documented accurately



Comments - Benefits of Baselines

- **Permit value**

- Permits with larger baselines have a higher value
- Removing baselines would devalue some permits, negatively impact those who have invested heavily
- Permits with smaller baselines can be more affordable for new entrants

- **Prevent overcapitalization**

- Concern that without baselines, a few large vessels could quickly catch the full quota in some fisheries

- **Conservation**

- Still play a conservation role in some fisheries (scallop, squid)
- Removing baselines could increase catch rates, trigger AMs

Comments - No One Size Fits All Solution

- HP less meaningful for fixed gear compared to mobile gear
- Other measures (e.g., quotas, possession limits) constrain catch, but details vary by fishery
- Safety issues less of a concern for larger vessels



AP/Public Suggestions for Modifications

- Remove HP restriction, at least for some fisheries (e.g., fixed gear)
- Provide additional flexibility for smaller vessels, such as:
 - Exempting a certain size class from baselines
 - Allow smallest vessels to increase to a certain extent
- Allow permit splitting
- Allow the least vs the most restrictive baseline to apply
- Exempt hook and line fisheries from baselines (e.g., groundfish Handgear A permit)

Next Steps

- **TODAY:** Council to provide any guidance on evaluation
- **Summer 2026:** Staff to write report, planning to dig further into:
 - Changes over time, details by fishery
 - Characterize vessels with multiple baselines, trends in relinquishing permits
- **Fall 2026:** Councils review the final evaluation, discuss next steps during their Sept (NEFMC) and Oct (MAMFC) meetings

