New England Fishery Management Council

Resilient Fisheries Initiatives

Summary of projects

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Updated January 16, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Acceptable Biological Catch Control Rules for Northeast Multispecies

IRA 1 Project Overview

Description

This project will modify the current Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) control rules for Northeast Multispecies (groundfish) stocks through an adjustment to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). It will include contracted simulation testing of different control rule options within the context of the Council's recently revised Risk Policy, focusing on select stocks with diverse assessment types and management considerations. Testing will be followed by Scientific and Statistical Committee review and a Council action.

Objectives

1. Evaluate Risk Policy scoring factors and existing groundfish ABC Control Rules.
2. Modify an existing MSE model framework to make it suitable for evaluating alternative ABC Control Rules in the context of the updated Risk Policy and conduct simulation testing for representative groundfish stocks.
3. Use results of simulation testing to inform management plan revisions.

Management Applications

1. Updated ABC control rules for groundfish stocks
2. Knowledge that can be applied to updating ABC control rules in other Council FMPs

Project Oversight Team

Contractor: Lisa Kerr, Roger Brothers, and Jamie Behan, University of Maine

Oversight Team: Robin Frede, Gareth Lawson, Angelia Miller, Jonathon Peros

Project Timeline

2025 — CONTRACTED SIMULATIONS

- **Jan.-Apr.** - Request for proposals released, proposals reviewed and selected, Project Oversight Team formed, kickoff POT meeting
- **Aug.** - Evaluate risk policy and demonstrate factor scoring and integration with control rules
- **Sep.** - Develop Management Strategy Evaluation Modeling Framework
- **Oct.** - Begin to co-develop scenarios for simulation testing
- **Nov.** - Present results of factor scoring to RPWG

2026 — PROJECT RESULTS & COUNCIL ACTION

- **Jan.** - RPWG considers modifications from risk policy demonstration and evaluation
- **Mar.-Apr.** - Present results of simulation testing to SSC, Groundfish Committee, Council
- **Jun.** - Final project results
- **Mar-Jun.** - Draft ABC Control Rule alternatives with Groundfish Committee
- **Sep.** - Final action on ABC CRs

2027 — IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation for 2027 specifications cycle

Updated January 16, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Northeast Multispecies Groundfish Management Transition

IRA 2 Project Overview

Description

This project will convene a series of facilitated visioning sessions / focus groups to help the Council consider opportunities to modernize the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to accommodate ongoing challenges and be resilient to ecosystem changes. Atlantic cod management transition is an impetus for considering these changes, but there are multiple issues worthy of exploration in the groundfish fishery.

Objectives

- Solicit feedback from groundfish industry members using a structured approach but separate from specific management actions
- Guide Council planning for future management actions.

Management Applications

Potentially, new or revised management approaches for groundfish stocks:

1. Sector management system, including possible changes to sector allocations, commercial/recreational allocations, historical basis for quota allocations, etc.
2. Spatial management measures designed for spawning protection, habitat management areas, or to support exempted fishery operations.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Robin Frede, Mark Grant, Jonathon Peros, Michelle Bachman

Contractors: Angelia Miller, Maris Collaborative, Facilitator TBD

Project Timeline

2026 — GROUNDFISH INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

Refine goals for and scope of facilitated sessions, in collaboration with Groundfish Committee and CESC

Issue RFP and hire facilitator

Plan facilitated sessions including development of briefing information and identification of participants

Compile feedback received and provide structured guidance for planning and development potential Council actions

2027 — COUNCIL ACTION

Begin development of management actions based on project ideas and outcomes

2028 — IMPLEMENTATION

Potential first year for implementation of management adjustments

Updated January 16, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Integrating Ecosystem Considerations into Management Decisions

IRA 3.1 Project Overview

Description

The purpose of this project is to continue developing ecosystem approaches for fisheries management and move towards EBFM with explicit consideration of climate drivers and dynamic environments. Building on previous work, this project seeks to directly connect ecosystem information to management decisions. This project will engage the Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee, the SSC / SSS, and the Risk Policy Working Group. This work is directly linked to IRA 1, which evaluates Acceptable Biological Catch Control Rules for Northeast Multispecies.

Objectives

1. Building upon indices provided in the annual State of the Ecosystem Report, work with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to source data that can be used to support factor scoring for the Council's updated Risk Policy.
2. Map the Council's action development processes and identify specific on-ramps for climate and ecosystem information.
3. Automate preparation of integrated fishery information reports and work towards providing consistent information across FMPs. Ensure Council staff have the resources to prepare reports by FMP.

Management Applications

1. Risk Policy implementation.
2. Improved information flow into specifications process.
3. Modernized and integrated reports that contain fishery information to support decisions.

Project Team

Project Team: Andy Applegate (staff lead), Jonathon Peros (Risk Policy), Michelle Bachman (CESC Coordinator)

Contractor: Angelia Miller (Maris Collaborative)

Project Timeline

2025 — ANALYSIS

- **Jan.-Nov.** - Automate development of Annual Monitoring Report (Small Mesh example)
- **Feb.** - First meeting of Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee
- **Mar. - Jul.** - Risk Policy staff rollout and feedback
- **Apr.** - Risk Policy factor scoring pilot with Council
- **Dec.** - Present Small Mesh Annual Monitoring Report to the Council (prototype for future fishery performance / Risk Policy factor summary reports)

2026 — ANALYSIS AND COMMUNICATION

Continued risk policy factor development and rollout, fishery performance report development, on-ramp identification, and process mapping work

Outreach and information sharing via CESC including communication about Risk Policy implementation

2027 — IMPLEMENTATION

Risk Policy implementation for 2027 fishing years.

Updated January 16, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Dynamic Reference Points

IRA 3.2 Project Overview

Description

Reference points in fisheries stock assessment and management are an essential tool for understanding the condition of a resource relative to a desired state. Dynamic reference points, unlike static ones, are allowed to change through time in response to non-stationarity in fish populations. Scientific approaches to define dynamic biological reference points are currently being developed, but practical mechanisms to introduce them into regional fishery management plans are lacking. This project will develop best management practices and guidelines for integrating dynamic reference points into management via a workshop of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Objectives

1. Identify work required to operationalize concepts and issues discussed during recent, related workshops for New England fisheries management (SCS 8, CINAR)
2. Host workshop to explore these ideas and develop a work plan for the SSC and Council

Management Applications

1. Facilitate use of phased harvest control rules.
2. Evaluation of scientific and management uncertainty buffers.
3. Performance review of projection methods.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Jamie Cournane, Rachel Feeney, Lisa Kerr, Ed Camp, Jon Deroba, Tara Dolan

Facilitator: Laura Singer, SAMBAS; Hannah MacDonald; Willy Goldsmith, Pelagic Strategies

Project Timeline

2025 WORKSHOP PLANNING

- **Sep.** - Form Steering Committee
- **Nov.** - Issue Request for Proposals for workshop facilitator
- **Dec.** - Proposals reviewed and facilitators selected

2026 HOST WORKSHOP

- **Jan.-May.** - Workshop planning: Identify objectives, develop agenda, identify speakers
- **June 1-2.** - Hold workshop
- **Jul.** - Finalize Workshop Proceedings, present to CESC
- **Sep.** - Present to Council

2027 COUNCIL ACTION

TBD

2028 IMPLEMENTATION

TBD

Updated January 16, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Ecosystem Component Species

IRA 3.3 Project Overview

Description

This project will establish management strategies for ecosystem components in the New England region. The concept of ecosystem component (EC) species is outlined in the Magnuson Stevens Act. Currently, none are formally identified in NEFMC management plans. However, climate-driven changes in distribution, abundance, and productivity indicate that evaluation of EC status is warranted for several resources. These include species currently managed in FMPs and those that may benefit from conservation measures due to their ecosystem importance. This project includes desktop analysis and collaboration with science and management partners.

Objectives

- Analyze factors described in the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the National Standard 1 Guidelines to determine criteria and thresholds for a range of potential EC species in the New England region.
- Apply joint species distribution models to examine alignment among climate drivers, ecological relationships and FMP structure.

Management Applications

1. Council policy with criteria for when EC species should be considered, a process for how they are added to FMPs, and guidelines for ongoing analyses following designation.
2. Revisions to Council FMPs to designate Ecosystem Component species. Consider management measures for these species as appropriate.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Julian Garrison (lead), Michelle Bachman, Robin Frede, Mark Grant, Chris Haak

Contractor: Angelia Miller, Maris Collaborative

Project Timeline

2025 **PLANNING AND ANALYSIS**

- **Jul.** - Request for proposals released, proposals reviewed, and contractor selected. Project initiation and planning.
- **Aug.** - Initial analysis of management considerations and selection of focal species
- **Sep.** - Focal species review and planning with Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee
- **Sep.-early 2026 -** Develop and implement necessary joint modeling approaches

2026 **DEVELOP GUIDANCE AND EVALUATE CANDIDATE SPECIES**

- **Mar.** - Draft guidance document, develop species evaluation matrix, develop outline for species evaluation reports
- **Jun.** - Provide both the evaluations of initial focal species and reporting / implementation framework to the Council
- **TBD** - Council recommendation for management actions related to one or more EC species

2027 **IMPLEMENTATION**

- **TBD**

Updated January 16, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Cross-Jurisdictional Governance

IRA 4.1 and 4.2 Project Overview

Description

Improving cross-jurisdictional governance in a time of increasing uncertainty and complexity is a cornerstone of the East Coast Coordination Group's (ECCG) ongoing work. Two specific areas of interest are the structure and use of advisory bodies and consistency and clarity of processes for maintaining joint or cooperative management plans. This project will combine the results of coordinated baseline evaluations at each of the three East Coast councils with a series of two workshops to explore solutions. Following these workshops, the East Coast Coordination Group will identify specific actions that will enable more consistent approaches across organizations.

Objectives

- Evaluate advisory body structure, use, and decision-making; consider representativeness of membership given shifting species distributions.
- Evaluate joint management approaches and consider the need to more clearly document and revise them.
- Evaluate opportunities to combine fishery management plans within or across Councils and consider the benefits and costs of doing so.
- Collaborate with partner organizations to develop regionally consistent approaches where possible.

Management Outcomes

- Revisions to SOPPs and Operations handbook.
- Potential management actions to combine plans.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Michelle Bachman (lead), Jamie Cournane, Jenny Couture, Rachel Feeney, Mark Grant, Jonathon Peros

Contractors: The Parnin Group (advisory body and joint management structures), Chris Haak (species distribution shifts)

Project Timeline

2025 PLANNING AND ANALYSIS

- **Jul.** - Project Oversight Team formed
- **Aug.** - ECCG approves terms of reference for staff-to-staff; MAFMC hires facilitator for both workshops; workshop steering committee established
- **Sep.-Oct. -** The Parnin Group develops and circulates questionnaire for staff and committee leadership
- **Oct.-Jan. 2026. -** Develop workshop #1 agenda and sessions; establish logistics for fall governance workshop
- **Dec.-Jan. 2026** - Prepare background information for staff-to-staff

2026 GOVERNANCE WORKSHOPS

- **Feb** - Hold staff-to-staff workshop
- **Mar.** - Report evaluating joint monkfish/skate processes available
- **TBD** - Identify next steps for skate/monkfish coordination
- **Sep.-Nov.** - Hold fall workshop
- **Dec.** - Discuss workshop outcomes with Council

2027 IMPLEMENTATION

ECCG planning & prioritization exercise to identify near-term next steps for action based on workshop outcomes, focusing on cross-council activities

Initiate NEFMC management action(s), approve changes to operations handbook and SOPPs

Updated January 16, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Regional Operating Agreements

IRA 4.3 Project Overview

Description

This project will update the 2014 operating agreement between NEFMC and three offices of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), and NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE). The project will include a review of the existing agreement, a workshop to consider changes, and development of a revised agreement. NEFMC and MAFMC have separate agreements but development should be coordinated where possible given shared NOAA resources. Work will be coordinated by the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC).

Objectives

- Review terminology, general roles, and specific roles, and consider revisions as needed, building on outcomes from governance workshop series.
- Consider and incorporate recent changes to National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, etc. regulations and guidance.
- Consider the current political, funding, and resource landscape, and how to make the operating agreement robust to future changes.

Management Outcomes

- Modernized Regional Operating Agreement

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Jonathon Peros (lead), others TBD

Contractor: TBD

Project Timeline

2025 — PLANNING

- ✓ Consider alignment with and timing in relation to other East Coast Coordination Group efforts

2026 — PLANNING

- Issue RFP and hire facilitator
- Staff work to understand current NEPA guidance and compliance requirements
- Consider vision and goals of new holistic strategic plan and relationship to operating agreement changes
- Plan workshop to update Regional Operating Agreement, including review of existing agreement

2027 — WORKSHOP AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Hold workshop
- Finalize updated Regional Operating Agreement

Updated January 14, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Portfolio Analysis

IRA 4.4 Project Overview

Description

Portfolio analysis helps estimate and manage risk across resources. This project will evaluate past patterns of commercial fisheries harvest by gear type within the northeast region, i.e., harvest portfolios. The intent is to identify opportunities for increased yield and revenue while minimizing risks, considering biological and sustainability constraints. The project will focus on New England and Mid-Atlantic Council managed species of recent commercial importance. The goal is to enhance previous work and improve accessibility and utility for the Council, utilizing desktop modeling and stakeholder engagement to identify key challenges and solutions. This project will be followed by management actions in one or more fishery management plans, as appropriate.

Objectives

1. Examine ecological and technical interactions between harvested species using dynamic factor analysis and species distribution models.
2. Evaluate different portfolio compositions under historical and present management and permitting structures, and estimate optimal harvest weights between species.
3. Recommend next steps that the Council might take to adjust permits and optimize yield across species.

Applications

1. Adjustments to the permit system in one or more New England fisheries.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Jenny Couture (lead), Geret DePiper, Chris Haak, Kathy Mills, Naresh Pradhan

Contractor: Lauran Brewster and Connor Coscino, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Project Timeline

2025 — PLANNING AND PROJECT DESIGN

- **Jan.** - Request for proposals released.
- **Feb.** - Proposals reviewed and contractor selected.
- **Apr.-Jul.** - Form Project Oversight Team, hold kickoff meeting, and obtain data
- **Jul.-Dec.** - Examine ecological and technical interactions between species

2026 — MODELING

- **Dec 2025 - May** - Update models with relevant biological constraints
- **May - Aug.** - Sensitivity analysis, estimate optimal harvest weights
- **Aug. - Nov.** - Prepare outreach materials
- **Fall -** Present results to Scientific and Statistical Committee and Council

2027 — RECOMMEND ACTIONS

- **Jan. - Jun. -** Prepare technical documentation, share code
- **Jun. - Dec** - Council identifies solutions and FMP adjustments, focusing on NEFMC-managed species / permits

Updated January 16, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Holistic Strategic Plan

IRA 5 Project Overview

Description

This project will develop a holistic strategic plan to address overarching challenges associated with management uncertainty and ecosystem changes. The strategic plan will directly focus on near- and long-term Council initiatives that can support resilient and responsive fisheries management. Resources developed for this project will be applied to the governance and participatory processes projects as well.

Objectives

- Document and review fishery management approaches currently used by the Council.
- Identify key drivers of successful vs. unsuccessful approaches.
- Identify improvements to programs, policies, and practices that would foster efficiency while meeting management and conservation objectives.
- Develop the holistic strategic plan, including an implementation roadmap and performance metrics.

Outcomes

A Holistic Strategic Plan that the Council can use to build dynamic fisheries management systems that improve fishing community resilience.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Jonathon Peros (lead), Michelle Bachman, Connor Buckley, Emily Bodell, Travis Ford, Emilie Franke, John Pappalardo, Mary Sabo, Mike Simpkins

Contractor: Brett Wiedoff, Flor Auzl Lorenzo, Duncan Wood, The Parnin Group; Thomas Remington, Christopher Hawkins, and Sarah Pautzke, Lynker Corporation

Project Timeline

2025 **DISCOVERY AND ANALYSIS**

- **Jan.** - Request for proposals released.
- **Feb.** - Proposals reviewed and contractor selected.
- **Mar.** - Project Oversight Team formed
- **Apr.** - Kickoff Project Oversight Team meeting with contractors
- **May-Dec.** - Conduct gap analysis and benchmarking
- **Jun.-Nov.** - Focus groups and constituent interviews
- **Oct.-Dec.** - Share initial discovery phase results with the POT and Council

2026 **PREPARE PLAN**

- **Jan. -** Council member workshop to begin drafting the strategic plan, including vision, goals, implementation strategy, and evaluation metrics
- **Apr.** - Council reviews completed draft of Holistic Strategic Plan
- **Jun.** - Final project report, present final plan to Council

2027 **IMPLEMENTATION**

Use Holistic Strategic Plan to guide workplans; begin to implement strategies to meet goals

Updated January 16, 2026

New England Fishery Management Council

Enhancing Participatory Processes

IRA 6 Project Overview

Description

This project is developing tools for enhancing participatory process under a rapidly changing environment. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiative (IRA 6.1) recognizes that successful management is data-intensive and requires integrating diverse information. Advanced technologies will allow us to more efficiently and effectively analyze and share information with participants in the Council process. The public communications initiative (IRA 6.2) aims to create new channels for sharing information and remove barriers to communication with fishing communities. The project includes training for staff.

Objectives

1. Sustained application of efficient strategies in activities and actions
2. Integration of modern tools to visualize climate-resilient options
3. Streamline processes to reduce barriers and complexity
4. Align our services with community characteristics
5. Streamline routine tasks and save time for complex work

Applications

1. Streamline preparation and facilitate use of written materials such as FMP documents, white papers, and meeting materials.
2. Updates to webpage and other digital resources.
3. Refined or new communication channels.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Rachel Feeney (lead), Emily Bodell, Connor Buckley, Alex Dunn, Julian Garrison, Sherie Goutier, Chandler Nelson

Contractors: Angelia Miller, Maris Collaborative; The Parnin Group

Project Timeline

2025 **PLANNING AND RESEARCH**

- **Feb.** - Consider training needs and opportunities
- Assign staff to project and form Artificial Intelligence and public communications work teams
- **Sep.** - Identify range of social media options and consult with other Councils
- **Aug.-Nov.** - Identify potential uses of AI, attend initial training session, and recommend next steps
- **Dec.** - Plan climate webpage updates

2026 **IMPLEMENTATION**

Jan. - Mar - Arrange AI training for staff.

Working with The Parnin Group, explore public sentiment around current communications

Mar.- May - Launch website revisions

Develop and implement social media plan

Updated January 16, 2026