

New England Fishery Management Council Strategic Planning Workshop Report

On January 6th and 7th, 2026, the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) participated in a strategic planning workshop in Boston, MA. Participants included voting and non-voting members of the Council, key staff and a facilitator (see participants section). The workshop served as a catalyst to initiate the development of the region's first holistic strategic plan to improve Council operations and, in turn, the viability and sustainability of fisheries it manages. Participants were asked to first examine the recent [Discovery and Gap Analysis](#) presented to the Council in December 2025 (Item #12a), then work together to develop a plan of action. The outcome of the workshop is a draft framework for the strategic plan (see Mission, Vision, and Goals). Finally, Council staff identified the next steps with an estimated timeline for completion to ensure prompt finalization and implementation of the Plan.

Collective Focus

Participants recognized that the process to develop a holistic strategic plan is challenging. However, there was consensus among all attendees that this work is worthwhile, and there is a strong desire to co-develop solutions. Participants expressed a collective recognition of the need to proactively address concerns in a rapidly changing environment (i.e., ocean conditions and management resources), work to effectively engage all stakeholders, and rebuild trust among science, management, and industry partners. Through this workshop, participants shared their desire to transition from reactive management to a forward-thinking, dynamic framework. Participants identified the region's most pressing issues to guide the focus and development of the Council's strategic plan.

Workshop Goals

The 1.5-day session focused on the foundations of a strategic plan:

- **Mission:** Ensure a shared understanding of the Council's current mission statement (as prescribed by the Magnuson-Stevens Act) and supplement it as appropriate.
- **10-year Vision:** Develop a descriptive, aspirational future state for both the Council and the fisheries it manages.
- **Strategic Goals:** Create high-level goals that will focus the Council's improvement efforts over the next several years.
- **Success Measures:** Develop preliminary Key Performance Indicators to track progress toward identified goals and ensure accountability.

Mission Statement Development

Current Mission statement:

"The New England Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils established by federal legislation in 1976, is charged with conserving and managing fishery resources from three to 200 miles off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut."

Recommendation to incorporate text from MSA 303(a)(1)(A):

“...to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks, and to protect, restore, and promote the long-term health and stability of the fishery.”

Draft Revised Mission Statement:

“The New England Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils established by federal legislation in 1976, is charged with conserving and managing fishery resources from three to 200 miles off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks, and to protect, restore, and promote the long-term health and stability of the fisheries.”

Vision Statement Development

First Draft of a Council Vision Statement:

“We are a global leader in fisheries management and directly engage a broad array of stakeholders to provide a trusted, predictable, and well understood process that leads to successful and sustainable fisheries by applying flexible and efficient tools to address emerging and dynamic conditions.”

First Draft of a Fisheries Vision Statement:

“We have enduring and abundant fishery resources that support:

- a) adaptive, profitable, and globally competitive fishing industries;
- b) thriving recreational opportunities; and
- c) robust fishing communities.”

Strategic Goal Development

Draft strategic goals:

1. Build flexibility and adaptability into Fishery Management Plans and simplify the process of developing management measures.
2. Optimize capacity of fleets to reflect the size of the fishery resources and improve efficiency and safety of fishing fleets.
3. Grow and strengthen partnerships between science, management, and industry.
4. Improve accessibility, quality, and use of data to better inform decisions.

Assumptions for the development of goals (within 5-year period):

- Levels of available resources (e.g., financial, staff, organizational capacity) are not expected to increase.
- The Magnuson Stevens Act is unlikely to substantially change.
- Existing partnerships with external agencies (e.g., federal, state, and interstate fisheries commission), as well as academic, research, non-government organizations, and other regional, national, and international collaborators are likely to continue.

- Fewer and potentially more uncertain stock assessments should be expected.
- The number of species managed (28) and their grouping into Fishery Management Plans may change.
- There will be an increased dependence on alternative science and management approaches to meet objectives.

Timeline for Completion and Implementation

The Council is setting rigorous milestones to ensure that the mission and vision developed in Boston translate into tangible results on the water.

- Next iteration of Strategic Plan: The Parnin Group, key Council staff, and workshop participants will work together to finalize the mission, vision, goals and begin to develop Key Performance Indicators. The strategic plan will also include descriptions of its four primary goals along with potential strategies that support achievement of the Council's goals.
- Council review and approval: The Parnin Group will present the draft detailed strategic plan and our final report to the Council in April 2026. The final Parnin report will include assessment methods, findings across all phases, and all recommendations. The Council would approve the strategic plan at its June 2026 meeting.
- Implementation: The Council will work on an implementation plan between June 2026 and January 1, 2027, with some elements of the strategic plan starting in 2026.

Workshop Participants

Jason Didden	MAFMC-Staff	Geoff Smith	NEFMC
Matt Gates	NEFMC	Jackie Odell	NEFMC
Peter Aarrestad	NEFMC	John Pappalardo	NEFMC
Megan Ware	NEFMC	Melanie Griffin	NEFMC
Mike Pentony	NMFS-GARFO	Mike Pierdinock	NEFMC
Scott Sakowski	NOAA GC	Renee Zobel	NEFMC
Cate O'Keefe	NEFMC-Staff	Scott Olszewski	NEFMC
Michelle Bachman	NEFMC-Staff	Ted Platz	NEFMC
Jonathon Peros	NEFMC-Staff	Togue Brawn	NEFMC
Angelia Miller	Maris Collaborative	Travis Ford	NMFS-GARFO
Bob Beal	ASMFC	Moiria Kelly	NMFS-GARFO
Toni Kerns	ASMFC	Michael Simpkins	NMFS-NEFSC
Jon Hare	NMFS-NEFSC	Brett Wiedoff	The Parnin Group
Andy Dangelo	NEFMC	Winston Kelly	The Parnin Group
Bill Lucey	NEFMC	Flor Azul Lorenzo	The Parnin Group
Dan Salerno	NEFMC	Thomas Remington	Lynker
Eric Hansen	NEFMC	John Ryabik	The October Group