



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492

Eric Reid, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

COUNCIL SOLICITING CONTRACT WORK

Atlantic Cod Management Transition Workshop Facilitation February 26, 2024

Project Description

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) requires the services of an independent contractor to facilitate public workshops that will discuss possible management options for the Atlantic cod management transition plan. This is a temporary independent contractor role, commencing on or about April 1, 2024, and expected to be completed by June 30, 2024. The contractor will work closely with the Council's Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) and the Groundfish Committee.

Background

Atlantic cod historically has been assessed as two biological units - Gulf of Maine cod and Georges Bank cod. An interdisciplinary working group led by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), with experts from the U.S. and Canada, concluded there are five distinct biological units of Atlantic cod in U.S. waters rather than two units. Building on this new understanding, a recent Research Track Stock Assessment, which was peer reviewed in July of 2023, produced four stock assessments for Atlantic cod, combining two of the five biological units. This resulted in separate cod stock assessments for Eastern Gulf of Maine, Western Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern New England. Updated assessments of the four cod stocks will occur in June of 2024. The results of these assessments will be used to determine stock status and catch levels for the fishery.

To address these profound changes in the science of Atlantic cod, the Council embarked on a multi-year effort to develop a transition plan for Atlantic cod management. This effort includes addressing allocation issues and considering potential new measures to protect Atlantic cod spawning. The transition plan includes two phases, as described below:

- Phase I – Implementation for Fishing Year (FY) 2025:
 - Adoption of new biological stocks in the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) aligned with the Research Track stock assessment biological stock units (Eastern Gulf of Maine, Western Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern New England).
 - Defined Overfishing Limits (OFL) and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) for the four Atlantic cod stocks.
 - Northeast Multispecies FMP Framework 69 management measures to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks, including the four Atlantic cod stocks.
 - Phase I is expected to be completed for implementation on May 1, 2025.

- Phase II – Development of long-term management measures for Atlantic cod:
 - Adoption of new management units associated with the four biological units; management units can be defined differently than biological units but must conform with Magnuson-Stevens Act and National Standard requirements for preventing overfishing and rebuilding overfished stocks.
 - Apportionment of cod resources across fishery users, including measures to ensure accountability.
 - Measures to protect Atlantic cod spawning.
 - Phase II is expected to be a multiyear effort with implementation after FY2025.

Phase I and Phase II will occur in parallel with a focus on the short and long-term management needs for Atlantic cod. Stakeholder input is critical to the development of both phases to meet management and fishery objectives. To ensure stakeholder engagement through the Atlantic cod management transition planning efforts, the Council approved the following priority for 2024 at its December 2023 meeting:

Conduct a focused workshop as part of the Atlantic cod transition plan in the first half of 2024 to identify challenges and develop alternatives for addressing Atlantic cod management, considering the new biological stock units.

Statement of Work – Services Required

The Council seeks a contractor to assist with planning and facilitation of three public workshops and preparation of a report summarizing the outcomes of the workshops. The workshops will consider changes in allocation of quota among fishery participants across the commercial and recreational sectors. Additionally, the workshops will address potential measures to enhance cod productivity by protecting spawning cod and consider future changes in stock distribution under climate drivers.

The contractor will assist with planning all phases of the workshops, attend and facilitate the workshops in April and May 2024, and draft a summary report. The workshops will be held at venues in Portland, ME, Gloucester, MA, and the Providence, RI area. All workshops will be held in-person with up to 60 participants each. The same agenda and format will be applied at all workshops with flexibility to adjust to meet specific regional needs.

The contractor will be required to complete the following tasks:

1. Working with a representative of the Council and the Groundfish PDT, support the execution of three full-day public workshops during April and May 2024. As part of this task, the contractor will:
 - a. Assist in developing a workshop agenda, format, and scope to be applied at all workshops, preparation of workshop materials, and organizing workshop logistics.
 - b. Serve as lead facilitator at the three workshops, including moderating discussions, ensuring meeting norms, and encouraging stakeholder engagement. Rapporteurs will be provided by the Council.
 - c. Prepare a brief summary of each workshop, including participant information, list of identified challenges, opportunities, and questions, and summary of

recommendations. Individual workshop summaries are to be delivered within one week of workshop completion.

2. In collaboration with Council staff and the Groundfish PDT, prepare a workshop report collating information from the three workshops. A draft report should be submitted by June 10, 2024, and the final report should be submitted by June 30, 2024.

Necessary office space and equipment will be provided by the contractor. Approved travel expenses will be reimbursed by the Council and need not be included in the contractor's proposal. The Council expects completion of this work by June 30, 2024.

Desired Experience and Demonstrated Skills

1. Demonstrated experience facilitating meetings with large groups holding diverse opinions.
2. Familiarity with the U.S. federal fisheries management system, including a basic understanding of the key relevant statute (e.g. Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act,.) and regulatory guidance. Familiarity with federal fisheries management in New England is preferred but not required.
3. General understanding of fishery management programs at the state and national levels.
4. Familiarity with the use of scientific information in the fishery management process. In particular, the successful candidate will have experience with analytic stock assessments and various fishery management measures (e.g., time/area-based measures).
5. Strong writing and speaking skills. Demonstrated ability to summarize complex policies and procedures in clear, easily read documents, or through concise verbal discussions.
6. Demonstrated ability to summarize conflicting information in an objective manner.
7. Candidates employed by advocacy organizations or by organizations that are parties in fishery lawsuits related to this issue will not be considered.
8. The successful candidate will not have a conflict of interest, defined as any financial or non-financial interest which conflicts with the actions or judgments of an individual because it:
 - a. Could impair the individual's objectivity;
 - b. Could create an unfair competitive advantage for any person or organization;
 - c. Could create the appearance of either item listed above.

Application Submission Instructions

Interested professionals are encouraged to submit a letter of interest, current resume or CV, examples of similar work completed for other organizations or publications, and a proposed budget with expected expenses. In addition, applicants should describe the approach that would be used to meet the requirements of this project, including deliverables. Travel expenses need not be included in the budget as approved travel will be reimbursed by the Council following the Council's travel authorization process.

Letters of interest and supporting materials should be received **no later than March 15, 2024**, and addressed to Executive Director Cate O'Keefe, NEFMC, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950, or by email at cokeefe@nefmc.org. Questions concerning this proposal should be directed to the same address.

This work will be funded under the New England Fishery Management Council Award #FNA20NMF4410001. Compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act (P.L. 109-479 as amended)

and the Council's standard contract terms and conditions will be expected. The Council's standard terms and conditions are available upon request.

NEFMC takes affirmative action toward ensuring equal opportunities; the Council encourages women-owned businesses, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities to submit letters of interest and other requested materials for consideration under this announcement. Disclaimer:

1. All costs associated with the preparation and presentation of the proposal will be borne by consultants submitting letters of interest.
2. Materials submitted will not be returned.
3. Respondents must disclose any relevant conflicts of interest and will be expected to comply with all federal grant contracting requirements.
4. The Council reserves the right to accept or reject any or all letters of interest received; negotiate with all qualified potential candidates; cancel or modify the RFP in part or in its entirety; and/or change the application guidelines, when it is in its best interests.