



New England  
Fishery Management  
Council

## **EBFM WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT**

**Prepared under  
Contract # FNA20HMF4410001 by:**

**Oceanvest, LLC  
Gloucester, MA**

**Thomas P. Balf  
Samual D. Cleaves**

**January 30, 2022**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New England Fishery Management Council hosted six workshops/listening sessions in various northeast fishing ports to introduce and discuss Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management, or EBFM. Oceanvest assisted in conducting outreach and facilitating the sessions. These workshops, which included presentations by experts and facilitated discussions, were attended by over seventy (70) interested parties. These sessions: confirmed some of the benefits of an EBFM approach, in lieu of single species fishery management; identified environmental factors that could be considered under such an approach; validated concerns held by fishermen and other stakeholders that were identified previously during outreach activities; and provided chances for the public and interested parties to identify new factors, such as disagreement with the current, draft delineation of the Georges Bank Ecological Production Unit and perceptions of potential winners and losers if a Fisheries Ecosystem Plan (FEP) option were implemented. The workshops/listening sessions provided valuable insight in the further evaluation of an EBFM approach in managing fisheries on Georges Bank.



## POTENTIAL OUTCOMES FROM THE EBFM INITIATIVE

A modification of current plans  
to include ecosystem  
considerations  
or  
A Fisheries Ecosystem Plan  
or  
An EBFM strategy for NEFMC  
managed species

## BACKGROUND

The New England Fishery Management Council held six workshops in various New England fishing ports to hear and discuss the potential for regulating fisheries on Georges Bank using Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM). A 7<sup>th</sup> workshop, in Manahawkin, NJ, was cancelled due to logistical and registration considerations. The workshop schedule was as follows:

Tues. October 25, 2022 from 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. - Gloucester, MA

Wed. October 26, 2022 from 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. - Portland, ME

Tues. November 1, 2022 from 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. - Chatham, MA

Wed. November 2, 2022 from 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. - New Bedford, MA

Tues. November 8, 2022 from 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. - Point Judith, RI

Wed. November 9, 2022 from 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. - Montauk, NY

## PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOPS

Per the [Press Release](#) announcing the workshops, the sessions were designed to cover: 1) how EBFM can be used as a tool to assess and manage fisheries in general; and 2) more specifically, how EBFM could potentially be used to regulate fisheries on Georges Bank.

Attendance by fishermen and interested parties in these historic and active fishing ports was encouraged to gain a fuller understanding of EBFM and how it might be applied, ask questions for clarification, and gain appreciation for some of the options being considered in an EBFM framework. For example, the October 11<sup>th</sup> Press Release identified two examples of types of questions that might be asked at a workshop:

*What opportunities do you see to use EBFM to improve existing assessment and management systems?*

*What do we stand to gain or lose in shifting towards an EBFM approach?*

The workshops and the purpose were guided by a June 21, 2021 Memo from the EBFM Committee, which described potential workshop structure, format, and purpose. This guidance recommended:

- Hosting initial ½ day meetings or workshops that are regionally and port-focused.
- Using experts/presenters from GARFO, NEFSC, academic institutions, fishing associations, and organizations, Council members, and Council staff. Presentations should be vetted/practiced prior to workshop presentation.
- Soliciting stakeholder recommendations for objectives to be used in a prototype EBFM Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE).
- Recording the workshops and make available online.

- Using a facilitator(s) to help curate the conversation, build understanding of how EBFM differs from status quo management, and identify stakeholder perspectives of pros and cons.
- Devising a flexible agenda/format that can be responsive to the direction of the discussion and the unique concerns of selected fishing ports.
- Relying on presentations to discuss and clarify the concepts of EBFM and potential approaches that the Council may pursue. These presentations may be needed at each workshop to accommodate new people in attendance. The workshops should include one or more sessions that demonstrate the interactive tools and allow people to “turn the knobs” and ask questions.

In general, we met those goals, with the exception that workshop recordings will not be available due to some technical challenges and the interactive tools will be demonstrated at future “deep dive” workshops.

The workshops included 3 “core” presentations:

1. Introduction to EBFM
2. Management Framework and Approach under EBFM
3. The Science behind EBFM

These 20-25 minute presentations were provided by “expert presenters” who have been involved in the Council’s EBFM initiative, as part of the EBFM Committee or its Plan Development Team (PDT). Expert presenters included the following:

<b>Core Presentation</b>	<b>Expert Speaker</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Introduction to EBFM	Alan Tracy	Council Member, EBFM Committee Member
Introduction to EBFM	Mike Pierdinock	Council Member, EBFM Committee Member
Introduction to EBFM	John Pappalardo	Council Member, Chair of EBFM Committee
Management Framework	Dr. Geret DePiper	Former EBFM PDT Member, Economist at NEFSC
Management Framework	Andy Applegate	Staff, NEFMC
Management Framework	Dr. Gavin Fay	PDT Member, Lead PI on EBFM Prototype MSE Initiative
Science Behind EBFM	Dr. Jake Kritzer	NERACOOS

	Dr. Michael Sissenwine	Former Council Member, former Director NEFSC, former member of EBFM Committee
--	------------------------	---

The presentations were designed to be the same/similar at each workshop. However, presenters were allowed to tailor the core presentation to their expertise and perspective, and it was expected that the discussion would vary depending on the port and the stakeholders in the room. Each presenter completed a “practice run” with Andy Applegate and Tom Balf to ensure quality and consistency. Selected presentations were also recorded for potential use at workshops, or for posting on the [EBFM Outreach webpage](#) in the future.

The workshops were facilitated by Oceanvest. At the first four sessions, Tom Balf played the role of active facilitator and his colleague Sam Cleaves served as notetaker and flip chart recorder. At the final two sessions, where advanced registrations were smaller, Tom Balf served as both facilitator and note-taker.

The workshop agenda was designed to potentially use breakouts or group exercises, following presentations, to spur discussion and generate input that could help us assess the core questions, concerns, and objectives for EBFM.

For example, we asked each participant to complete the following sentence: “In ten years, I would like the fishery management system on Georges Bank to \_\_\_\_\_.” Or, we simply asked them to express their “management objective(s)” for a Georges Bank EBFM. Another example of a considered breakout group exercise was to discuss each of the 3 types of catch caps (ecosystem, stock complexes, biomass floors) and identify positives, negatives, and challenges for each. Exercises were designed to encourage participation and to elicit feedback.

In general, workshop participants actively voiced their opinions. While the fill-in-the-blank question was used at the workshops (see Management Objectives section of this report), breakout groups were not used as the groups were generally small, familiar, and expressive. The facilitator – while not trying to guide to any anticipated outcome – focused on moving the conversation along, making sure all voices were heard, and ensuring that messages from the interested parties were received and acknowledged.

In total, at least 73 people attended and participated in the workshops. Some participants may not have signed the attendance sheets that were circulated at the workshops.

**WHAT WE HEARD AT THE WORKSHOPS**

The following record of “what we heard” is the sole responsibility of Oceanvest, an independent contractor. As described earlier in this report, the conversations were recorded via flip charts, note-taking, or both.

Each port workshop discussion was unique. In part, this was due to each port’s distinctive issues – areas fished, types of fish typically caught or landed, permits, technical interactions, and culture. However, the discussion, in some circumstances, simply took a certain path based on an issue raised which engaged multiple parties in the room and generated a robust conversation.

Many of the comments and themes we heard were consistent with previous outreach conducted by the Council. Stakeholder feedback and comments are documented in the following NEFMC documents:

- EBFM Introductory Video – Stakeholder Perspectives
- Stakeholder Brochures
- EBFM Outreach in Support of Upcoming NEFMC Workshops (August ’22 Report)

These materials, and other excellent communication tools, infographics, slide presentations, and worked examples are on the [EBFM Outreach page](https://www.nefmc.org/library/ebfm-public-information-workshops-and-outreach-materials) at <https://www.nefmc.org/library/ebfm-public-information-workshops-and-outreach-materials>.

The August ’22 Stakeholder Outreach Report Summary Table is presented below.

<p><b>POSITIVE VIEWS</b></p> <p><i>The management of groups of similar fish species makes sense to me.</i></p> <p><i>I think the current science data is better aligned with the EBFM approach than it is with the species by species approach.</i></p> <p><i>There is great value in a place-based approach.</i></p> <p><i>EBFM promotes the harvesting of the more abundant species.</i></p> <p><i>Embrace the disruptive, but make sure that science and the law are on your side.</i></p> <p><b>NEGATIVE VIEWS</b></p> <p><i>EBFM is too academic and too associated with simulation and modeling to relate to the world on the water.</i></p> <p><i>I don’t want to be anyone’s test case or pilot ever again after going through Amendment 8 for the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan.</i></p> <p><i>I’m frustrated that the Council has yet to figure out the legal and jurisdictional issues necessary to move this proposal forward.</i></p> <p><i>This is a sound, place-based, scientific approach to fishery management that will feed into a purely political body that will ultimately make decisions about this approach. That scares me.</i></p> <p><i>I’d rather focus on fixing the discrete issues inherent in the current system.</i></p> <p><b>SKEPTICAL QUESTIONS</b></p> <p><i>I need to understand the trade-offs to form an opinion about EBFM</i></p> <p><i>It will create a new set of winners and losers, which makes change difficult.</i></p> <p><i>Need to better understand how an EBFM approach will impact the “business” of fishing.</i></p> <p><i>How will this change/improve the stock assessment approach?</i></p> <p><i>EBFM will take a long time, and a great amount of energy and resources to move this through the Council process. Does it have the budget and the political will?</i></p>
--

*What was often heard at the workshops/port listening sessions was generally consistent with what we have heard previously:*

- it's challenging to understand how this would work in practice;
- concerns about the legal underpinnings of an EBFM approach;
- skepticism of the science; and
- management doubts about the necessary guardrails for species deemed "overfished" when fish will be grouped into clusters.

*We also heard support for some of the core goals* of the initiative; namely, considering predator/prey interactions, reducing bycatch, aligning harvesting with the current state of the ecosystem, building adaptive management capacity to a changing ocean, and focusing on the stability of the system and the seafood supply chain.

*What we heard at the port listening sessions that was different was collective voices calling our attention to:* the fatigue of ever changing regulations and management, and threats to fishing from "other" issues; how hard and long it takes to execute an initiative through the Council. In addition skepticism was expressed regarding the MSE process, based on the most recent herring initiative. There was a distinct feeling in some ports of going with the "devil you know" even in the face of regulatory dissatisfaction and recognized weaknesses with the current system.

*New concerns were also raised* regarding geo-political issues that question the Ecological Production Unit (EPU) delineation for Georges Bank, which could pit the fishing communities of Southern New England against Northern New England ports, fleets, and sectors; unique concerns in southern fishing ports about permits and allocations under an EBFM framework; and questions from groundfish fleets as to the future of sectors.

It is also important to mention that the intention of these "listening post" workshops was to provide an introduction into the basics of EBFM, present the worked example for Georges Bank, and solicit feedback to inform next steps. We peeled only the first few layers of the onion. Some questions were challenging for expert presenters to answer at this time because it is too early in the process to settle some issues. Many times, Mr. Applegate added clarification about the options that are discussed in the eFEP which the Council may consider. However, the existence of a draft example Fisheries Ecosystem Plan (eFEP) posed a challenge as some in the audience focused solely on this plan as the outcome -- as a fait accompli -- rather than the EBFM initiative being a process in which the value of this approach is being considered and the eFEP is one option.

## **THE WORKSHOPS**

The following reports include the # of interested parties at the workshop, the presenters, our perception of the tone of the workshop, and our key take-aways. We have strived to limit these to 10-12 inputs. These inputs include: voices that sounded unique to the meeting or port;

comments that resonated with the attendees; or questions seeking clarity. These summaries are not intended to be a complete record of all questions raised and discussed, and the bulleted messages are not presented in any particular order.

**Gloucester**  
**October 25, 2022**

Twelve stakeholders participated in the Gloucester workshop, not including speakers, staff, and contractors. Of those, 4 or 5 were fishermen. The presenters at the Gloucester meeting were Alan Tracy, Andy Applegate, and Jake Kritzer, Ph.D.



The tone of the Gloucester meeting began with deep skepticism and many questions, but over the course of the conversation there were many thoughtful, fundamental questions asked that centered around how this concept could work for the Gloucester fishing community. Some of the take-away messages heard in Gloucester were:

- Skepticism about the existing science and whether a better or different management system can address the science issues.
- Interest in a system that encourages the harvest of a greater variety of fish and helps create stability in the system through greater flexibility and harvest capacity.
- Need to align shoreside seafood processing and supply system with an approach that could bring stability (of catch volume) and variability (type of fish harvested) to the dock.
- Would transitioning to EBFM be explored as a pilot that works parallel to the current system, or would an EBFM initiative integrate with or add more layers to the current system?
- Questions were asked about how EBFM management would work with sectors, assuming the sector system stays in play? (Note: We did not explore a range of options, but some Gloucester fishermen are concerned about how sectors would work with stock complex catch management.).
- A series of questions by fishermen regarding “What could trip up a new EBFM management system?” Examples cited included:
  - fishermen fishing in Georges Bank, but who also fish outside of the area;
  - winners and losers in the current permits and sectors framework;
  - fish that move in and out of Georges Bank;



- whether the fishery could be shut down if fishermen harvest large quantities of fish, such as dogfish, that are not highly marketable?
- Are biomass floors defined differently or do they impact a fishery any differently than the current system for defining “choke” or overfished species? Participants believed that the MSE should look at these kind of questions/trade-offs.
- Many fishermen expressed support for moving away from closures, except for spawning closures.
- A fishermen articulated a benefit of a community based sector system, rather than a place-based framework. He described that the community knows when they’re up against a “ceiling” and can modify fishing/fleet behavior accordingly. How would such a timely understanding work with EBFM when many people, from many areas, are fishing on Georges Bank?
- An EBFM approach should also factor in human-caused effects including pollution, such as ocean plastics and stormwater run-off impacting coastal habitats.
- Supportive of an alternative system that doesn’t place the entire burden of “overfishing” on the fishermen.

***Portland, ME***  
***October 26, 2022***

Six stakeholders participated in the Portland workshop, not including speakers, staff, and contractors. Of those, none were active fishermen. The presenters at the Portland meeting were Alan Tracy, Andy Applegate, and Jake Kritzer, Ph.D.

The tone of the Portland meeting was cordial and friendly. Most attendees and presenters knew each other and the setting was small and informal. While most remarked that they were there to learn about EBFM, all but one was familiar with the Council’s EBFM thinking and approach.

The conversation was measured, with many of the questions being centered around how the system would work and, specifically, how the integration of predator-prey relations would be factored into an EBFM framework. For example, one of the “management objectives” defined by an attendees was to “build a system to set catch limits and manage fisheries in a way that accurately accounts for changes in stock productivity driven by predator/prey relationships and changing environmental conditions.”

Some of the take-away messages heard in Portland were:

- Recognition by those familiar with the Council’s regulatory and MSE process about the challenge of marshalling resources and focus to generate a new fishery plan in a timely manner.
- How do you change what one attendee called “the chokiness” of a species, by accounting for other variables, but ensuring that a ceiling and floor approach provides

adequate protections to prevent the depletion of the most valuable or vulnerable fish species?

- Recognition by this group of the need to better understand potential flexibility under Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) and National Standard 1, and what can't be done without statutory change.
- At its core, a recognition by the group that EBFM also presents a cross-cutting permitting and allocation issue. These are two separate issues that need to work together. What are the options? How would this work? How do you do it in a way that is most equitable? Questions for the MSE to evaluate.
- The group thought that EBFM might offer an opportunity for vested fishers to enter new fisheries, as well as opportunities for new entrants. Some stakeholders expressed the sentiment that it is currently too hard to get into "other" fisheries even when the fish are there.
- Some attendees had familiarity with the herring MSE and were discouraged by that experience.
- Stock assessments currently look at mortality and factor in other variables in arriving at a mortality factor. Would EBFM be able to look at predator/prey relationships in a more accurate or precise manner? How might that work?
- How do you deal with migratory fish and cross-boundary stocks, like whiting or silver hake, that swim in and out of Georges Bank?
- One attendee questioned the value of the Ecosystem Catch Cap. How- and toward what end – could it be used from a management perspective (rather than a science perspective)?
- Words of advice to the EBFM Committee, PDT, and Council - Don't overpromise and be clear about objectives.
- Some suggested that a pilot program would be beneficial,, but were uncertain how a pilot or a transition period would work
- How will externalities – pollution – be factored into management ceilings or floors?
- One attendee asked how you can manage and create "stability" in an unstable environment? (Note: We had some good conversation about different ways of framing stability, ranging from stability of the volume and consistency of the harvest to stability being defined by the capacity of the fishery to adapt to a changing ocean.)

***Chatham, MA  
November 1, 2022***

Ten stakeholders participated in the Chatham workshop, not including speakers, staff, and contractors. Of those, half were fishermen or fishing organization representatives. The

presenters at the Chatham meeting were John Pappalardo, Geret DePiper, Ph.D., and Michael Sissenwine, Ph.D.

The tone of the Chatham meeting was constructive. Fishers asked pointed questions about the application of a Georges Bank EBFM framework. The conversation was fisher-focused on how this alternative system could work, and how it could provide greater flexibility and harvest stability in the face of a changing ocean.

Some of the take-away messages heard in Chatham were:

- The seesaw effect of stock assessment has been disruptive. If EBFM could add stability to the management of the fishery resource that would be helpful for fishermen, shore-side businesses, and ultimately for economic growth of the fleet and ports.
- The question arose as to why Nantucket Shoals is being considered as part of the Georges Bank EPU, as from the perspective of fishers it is a very different environment from Georges Bank.
- Some felt that current species-focused fishery management plans can work against each other.
- There was interest in how predator/prey relationships might be factored into the assessments, and how this would apply to “choke species.”
- Fishers supported more sensible regulations and recognized that trophic level management offers more stability, in terms of assessment and prediction, than single-species management.
- A stakeholder recommended that this initiative -- any initiative -- should follow the KISS rule – Keep it Simple Stupid.
- Support for some of Dr. Sissenwine’s messaging – EBFM management may be less demanding for data despite system complexity and EBFM management may be better aligned with the current data.
- Questions included how would EBFM work if apex predators (i.e. tunas, marine mammals, sharks, etc.) are left out? How do unmanaged finfish fit into EBFM?
- Concerns about jurisdiction and interactions between regions. What does success look like? Is the intent of the Council to expand this concept to the Gulf of Maine?
- An EBFM approach could incentivize fishers to pursue a wider variety of fish.
- A question was posed as to whether everyone, under an EBFM framework, should go to mobile gear to maximize options for fishing?
- There was interest in building a better fishery management system that anticipates a situation where a fish shows up in significant quantities on Georges Bank and nobody in New England has a permit to fish for it.

- The good and bad of time-series data. It was recognized that it is good that we have 50 years of time series, but it can also constrain rebuilding thinking and management in light of a rapidly changing ocean.

***New Bedford, MA  
November 2, 2022***

There were 13 stakeholders at the New Bedford workshop, not including speakers, staff, and contractors,. Of those, only four were fishers or fishing organization representatives. The presenters at the New Bedford meeting were John Pappalardo, Gavin Fay, Ph.D., and Michael Sissenwine, Ph.D.



The tone of the New Bedford meeting was generally reserved. There were fewer questions posed than at other port meetings, although the conversation toward the end of the meeting was particularly engaging when we discussed whether the MSA law allowed for an EBFM approach. Beyond the discussion of this fundamental legal question, we did not get into a deep dive conversation about how an EBFM approach would integrate with or impact the scallop fishery.

Some of the take-away messages heard in New Bedford were:

- The need to add fishers and fishing ports as “factors” to consider in managing ocean resources.
- Interest in examples of the implementation of the EBFM approach in other fisheries, both domestically and internationally.
- We discussed that stock complexes could vary from EPU to EPU (e.g. Georges Bank vs Gulf of Maine) based on variations in the ecosystem including species, fishery habitat, and fleet behavior.
- One stakeholder thought that the only way to legally implement EBFM is to amend MSA and the option of using the “mixed use exemption” has no precedence or viability for implementing EBFM.
- Certain attendees in the room had institutional experience doing stock assessments and expressed interest in integrating aspects of EBFM (e.g., predator/prey) into their work
- Historical levels no longer offer as much value to future management. That ocean world has changed.
- How would one account for apex predators and unmanaged species as part of the ecosystem framework?

- Many felt that EBFM is not a panacea but moves us in the correct direction on certain core management issues
- Cooperative research – EBFM could better align fishery observations and fishery dependent data with allowable catch
- Would there be less need for sanctuaries under an EBFM approach?

**Narragansett/Pt Judith, RI  
November 8, 2022**

There were nine stakeholders at the Narragansett workshop, not including speakers, NEFMC staff, and Oceanvest contractors. Of those, half were fishermen or fishing organization representatives) participating at the Narragansett meeting. The presenters at the Narragansett meeting were Mike Pierdinock, Gavin Fay, Ph.D., and Michael Sissenwine, Ph.D.

The tone of the Narragansett meeting was engaged, with an interesting variety of opinions expressed about the pros and cons of EBFM. There were many questions, and opinions expressed, from a variety of points of view. Much of the most dynamic conversation centered on the delineation of the EPU and the potential for some Rhode Island fishermen to lose their equity positions in a new permitting and allocation scheme if an eFEP were pursued.

Some of the take-away messages heard in Point Judith/Narragansett, were:

- Recognition that the ecosystem is changing – fish are moving north and east -- and it would be preferable to align the fishery harvest system with what the ecosystem (e.g., Georges Bank) is providing.
- Concern that the geographic range of what is being considered Georges Bank, as currently presented, is different than what has been used/described before (in a 20 year old publication referenced by the stakeholder). Some stakeholders recommended that the Great South Channel, which separates Nantucket Shoals from Georges Bank, is a more natural and historic delineation line for the ecosystem.
- The southern New England fishery is different from fishing communities in the north, in terms of fishing practice, governing regulations, and ecosystem production of the areas fished.
- Concerns about the management implications, especially jurisdictional issues.
- Issues of allocation were recognized as critical. Two points of view were expressed: (a) this is a permit grab by groundfishers and others and RI fishers want to hold on to what they have and benefit from their hard work and investment in limited access fisheries; or (b) use EBFM to not only harvest more fish but distribute fishing rights to more New England fishing communities, and bring more and younger fishermen into the fleets.

- It was recognized that the MSE will be very important in evaluating the legality of EBFM, and the potential options to prevent overfishing. There were concerns expressed about MSE, based on past experiences (i.e. the Herring MSE).
- With climate change, there is a need for continuous data monitoring because we don't currently have good temporal information and the system is changing rapidly.
- A "cleaner" less wasteful fishery, with reduced by-catch, would be a good goal (and messaging) for this EBFM initiative.
- There was also engagement with regard to the concept of keeping focus on the energy of the system (e.g., ecosystem ceiling) and sustaining the overall energy of the Georges Bank ecosystem.
- Concern about the effects of climate change and wind farm impacts.

**Montauk, NY**  
**November 9, 2022**

There were 23 stakeholders at the Montauk workshop not including speakers, NEFMC staff, and Oceanvest contractors. Of the attendees, all were fishers or fisher family members. The presenters at the Montauk meeting were Mike Pierdinock, Andy Applegate, and Michael Sissenwine, Ph.D. Andy did not have an opportunity to present his slide deck, as stakeholder concern about permitting and jurisdiction was raised frequently.



The tone of the Montauk meeting was engaged and leaning toward the enraged, albeit civil. Attendees were fearful about how the EBFM framework and concept would affect access to their traditional resources and fisheries. The engaged audience continuously shared their questions, concerns and opinions, which left presenters with little opportunity to walk through their presentations. While the facilitator prioritized listening to the expressed concerns, requests to allow the speakers to present their work did not curtail the questions and expression of opposition voiced by the audience. Fundamentally, the attendees expressed displeasure at their loss of access to certain Georges Bank fisheries over the past decade or more. They compared the EBFM approach to "redistricting", in which their prized Southern New England fish would be accessed by others and the value of Montauk fishermen's current permits would diminish significantly. No amount of attempted explanation nor our description of the inclusion of other jurisdictional entities in this EBFM exploratory work satisfied their belief that they had much to lose.

Some of the take-away messages heard in Montauk were:

- Strong disagreement with including Nantucket Shoals as part of the Georges Bank ecosystem, citing a 20-year old publication about NMFS programs and maps that do not

include Nantucket Shoals as within “Georges Bank”. Their recommendation was to stay with traditional Georges Bank delineations and if EBFM goes forward, apply it only east of the Channel, and only to groundfishers. (Of note, the eFEP describes the Nantucket Shoals area as having different fishery characteristics within the Georges Bank Ecosystem Production Unit that might be managed differently.)

- There was greater concern and opposition to offshore wind than we heard at other workshops. This raised core questions about whether and how EBFM would contemplate the impacts of off-shore wind.
- An acknowledgement by the attendees that the existing system was broken, but that they’re more comfortable with the “devil they know”. Montauk stakeholders looked through the lens of winners and losers and they perceived themselves as losers if an EBFM framework were to be implemented.
- Rethinking the current fishery management challenges. One stakeholder responded “perhaps it’s worth it to go to counseling rather than start looking for a new wife.”
- They described how they already have enough issues to worry about -- offshore wind, potential for sturgeon to be subject to the Endangered Species Act, the stagnant price of fish, pollution, seals – none of which they see as being addressed under an EBFM framework
- Many are skeptical of MSE and expressed the opinion that it is only as good as the stakeholders involved.
- There is concern that northern boats with multispecies groundfish permits operating in sectors will gain access to their limited access permits which they (Montauk fishers) earned and/or paid for while simultaneously losing their groundfish and scallop permits/quota.
- Some would like greater flexibility to harvest and land state-permitted fish in different states/ports, however, the Montauk fishers are of the opinion that there is little likelihood that states or the Mid-Atlantic Council will cede management to the NEFMC.

## **INFORMING THE MSE – EXPRESSED WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES**

At some workshops, stakeholders were explicitly asked to express their objectives for the EBFM initiative in one of two exercises. They were either asked by the facilitator to write down their management objective (s) for the EBFM initiative, or they were asked to express an aspirational objective to define the Georges Bank fishery in ten years. These responses could help inform the 2023 deep dive workshops, and the prototype MSE initiative. The stakeholder objectives are summarized below.

- Seek more stability and predictability in the fishery.

- Achieve a closer match between harvests and available biomass by species as species mix changes; reduce mismatch & discards; shift from a single species to a functional whole system.
- A well-managed sustainable New England fishery that supports fishermen, local communities, and fish stocks in a more predictable manner.
- Build a system to set catch limits and manage fisheries in a way that accurately accounts for changes in stock productivity driven by predator/prey relationships and changing environmental conditions.
- Build a management system that is more robust to changing conditions.
- Build a management system that is less reactive, more strategic, and forward thinking.
- Focus the system on improving yield.
- Improve profit margins for crew at a time when fuel expense and inflation are affecting revenue.
- Reduce by-catch and increase value of all species harvested.
- Remove the concept of “choke species.”
- Enable the landing of NJ state fluke in whatever state is most cost-effective for the individual fisher.
- Provide a faster response to science.
- Enable expanded access to fish resources that are healthy.
- Provide flexibility to manage individual fishing, taking into consideration personal business models.
- Examine behavior of species and community interaction using tech advances (IoT, sensors, UW cameras) to help get a better understanding of the ecosystem. Get a "real time snapshot" of the ecosystem.
- Harvest a greater diversity of fish species.
- Stop off-shore wind turbines.
- Cycle/recycle lost permits to allow access.
- Retain all species harvested.
- Increase overall biomass and productivity of the Georges Bank Ecosystem by restoring the balance of species at all trophic levels.
- Support family fishing across generations and growing their business, based on historical and traditional species.
- Provide a more flexible regulatory structure.
- Separate distribution of the huge stocks beyond traditional users as our ecosystem. currently produces huge biomasses of certain species.



- Have a fisheries management system that is species neutral and oriented towards resilience of the whole system (coupled socio-ecological system) rather than unrealistic micromanagement of single species.
- Provide scallop ITQ permits for NY boats with any historical quota (all incidental permits returned).
- Increase growth into fisheries for next generation.
- Ensure that the ceilings and floors approach provides adequate protections to prevent the sequential depletion of the most valuable fish species.

## **THE PATH FORWARD**

These workshops/listening sessions were helpful in validating core issues, understanding differences between fishing ports/fishers, and informing questions and trade-offs to consider in the Prototype MSE (pMSE) process. 2023 should be a critical year in advancing the exploration of regulating fisheries on Georges Bank using an EBFM approach. The pMSE process and deep-dive workshops will enable experts and interested stakeholders to evaluate options and better inform a process for pursuing EBFM outcomes that are foundational to the Council's desire to continue to improve fishery management in New England.