



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Council Approves 2020-2024 List of Research Priorities and Data Needs; Identifies Many Items as “Urgent”

During its late-June webinar meeting, the New England Fishery Management Council reviewed and approved a list of research priorities and data needs for 2020-2024. The Council developed this list for two primary reasons.

1. It clearly identifies and rates the information the Council needs to best manage the fisheries within its jurisdiction; and
2. It complies with a provision in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act asking regional fishery management councils to provide the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS/NOAA Fisheries) with Council priorities to inform the agency of each Council’s needs. The agency then uses this information as it develops budgets and sets its own research priorities.

The Council submitted the 2020-2024 list, which contains 108 items, to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) of NOAA Fisheries.

Council Executive Director Tom Nies said he hopes biologists, gear specialists, and other scientists at research institutions, universities, and state fisheries agencies also will view the list as a valuable tool and use it when developing research proposals.

“We go through this exercise to highlight the broad categories of information that are most important to the Council’s operations,” he said. “The Council relies heavily on high-quality data and solid research to make decisions that impact all of the fisheries it manages. We hope everyone who’s involved in fisheries-related research will consider the Council’s priorities during their own research planning processes.”

The Council’s five-year research priorities are rated as follows:

- **URGENT (essential)** – These items are considered essential for compliance with federal requirements or identified as necessary to aid decision-making.
- **IMPORTANT (near term)** – These items describe issues related to obtaining new data or research results to aid in the evaluation of a “near term or ongoing management goal.”
- **STRATEGIC (future needs)** – These items cover research that is valuable but not associated with an immediate need or near term Council action, generally meaning less than five years.

Download a Copy of  
the Council’s 2020-2024  
Research Priorities  
and Data Needs  
[HERE](#)

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Two Formats Available!



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The Council’s list is presented in a spreadsheet format and can be viewed either as a [PDF file](#) or a sortable [Excel spreadsheet](#). **NOTE:** The Excel file downloads automatically onto your device when you click on it.

Of the 108 priorities, 24 are identified as “urgent” needs. The table below is a subset of these items, which are data needs the Council considers to be essential but is unaware of any work being done on them to date. Five of these are brand new priorities in 2020.

This latest list of research priorities was developed with input from the Council’s species committees, advisory panels, plan development teams, and Scientific and Statistical Committee.

## Subset of 2020-2024 “Urgent” Research Priorities/Data Needs Lacking Work to Date to Address Issues

#*	Title	Note
9	Enhance herring fishery sampling (portside, at-sea observers and monitors) to track spawning activity on Georges Bank	New in 2020
10	Further investigation into understanding the low recruitment of Atlantic herring and possible drivers	New in 2020
30	Develop guidance for rejecting stock assessments and next steps, including how to set new biological reference points if an assessment/model is rejected	Identified in 2019 as urgent; no work completed to date
43	Research and/or policy analysis study to move towards recommendations for how the Council addresses environmental justice, including the nexus with data collection and repeatability, and process recommendations for engagement	New in 2020
68	Identify gears and/or methods that would reduce bycatch and/or improve discard survival of unwanted catch of red hake discards in small-mesh fisheries	Identified in 2019 as urgent; no work completed to date
80	Evaluate other human dimensions data sources to supplement NEFSC crew/industry survey data	New in 2020
81	Advance efforts to incorporate new data and concepts into the development, review, and update of social science indicators	New in 2020

\* The numbers in the first column in the table above match the number of that item in the spreadsheet containing 108 items.

**Questions?** Feel free to contact Dr. Rachel Feeney, who coordinated the Council’s research priority-setting effort, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 110, [rfeeney@nefmc.org](mailto:rfeeney@nefmc.org).