



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Council Engages in Initial Discussion on 2024 Work Priorities and Next Steps for East Coast Climate Coordination

The New England Fishery Management Council began planning its work priorities for the year ahead when it met in Plymouth, Massachusetts [September 25-28, 2023](#). It also covered a series of other important topics ranging from East Coast climate change, fishery independent surveys, whiting, skates, strategies for avoiding conflicts with on-demand fishing gear, and much more. Here's a brief rundown of what took place.

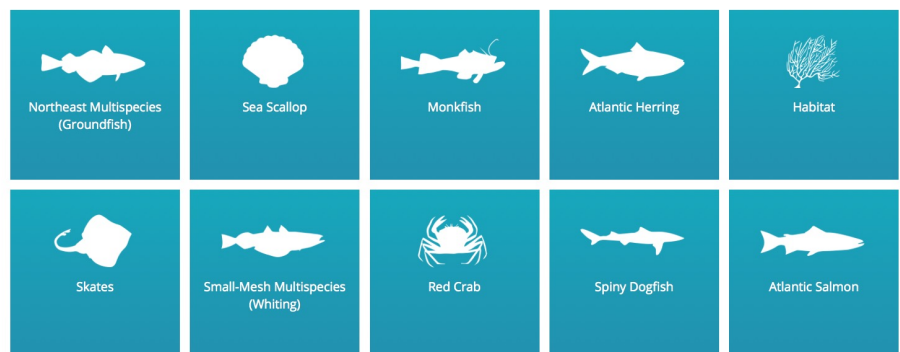
**2024 COUNCIL PRIORITIES:** The Council annually goes through a detailed, two-step exercise to establish work priorities for the following year. First, the Council engages in an initial discussion on priorities, which occurs in September. Second, the Council takes final action on work priorities during its December meeting. Priorities are [divided into three categories](#): (1) required actions for which the Council has no discretion over and must do; (2) accepted actions the Council previously approved but need continued work; and (3) new proposals. Given the limitations on staff time and Council resources, the Council needs to carefully review the list of new proposals to identify its top priorities for future actions. The Council discussed the initial list of potential 2024 priorities as outlined [in this document](#), and it added a few additional items. Council members currently are in the process of ranking new proposals in order of importance. The Executive Committee will review the results of the rankings and develop recommendations on final 2024 priorities for full Council consideration in December. Here is the [audio](#) of the September discussion.

### CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATION:

The Council has been working with its East Coast partners since 2020 on climate change scenario planning. The planning phase culminated with a [February 2023 summit](#). The Core Team working on the project then developed a [Potential Action Menu](#) to steer the implementation of actions to help fishing communities prepare for an era of climate change. The two groups leading these next steps are:

- The **East Coast Climate Coordination Group**, which is a leadership-level body made up of

### Previously Released News for Atlantic Herring, Groundfish, Scallops, Monkfish, Deep-Sea Red Crab, and Council Officers



*The Council previously sent out news releases for: (1) scallops, [posted here](#); (2) groundfish, [posted here](#); (3) Atlantic herring, [posted here](#); (4) monkfish, [posted here](#); (5) deep-sea red crab, [posted here](#); and (6) the annual election of officers and swearing in of new and reappointed members, [posted here](#).*



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New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Council executive directors, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) executive director, and NOAA Fisheries leaders from the regional offices and science centers. This group will oversee implementation of climate change actions. And,

- The **East Coast Climate Core Team**, which is a staff-level group with representation from the East Coast fishery management councils, ASMFC, and the NOAA Fisheries regional and headquarters offices and science centers. This group will provide relevant information and suggestions to help guide the coordination group's work.

The New England Council received a [progress report on next steps](#) during its September meeting and engaged in a productive [discussion](#). The East Coast Climate Coordination Group will hold its first meeting on [November 7, 2023](#) in Gloucester. The New England Council will receive a report on this meeting in December. The history of the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative is [documented here](#). A [Scenario Planning Toolkit](#) also is available to assist other organizations with climate change planning efforts.

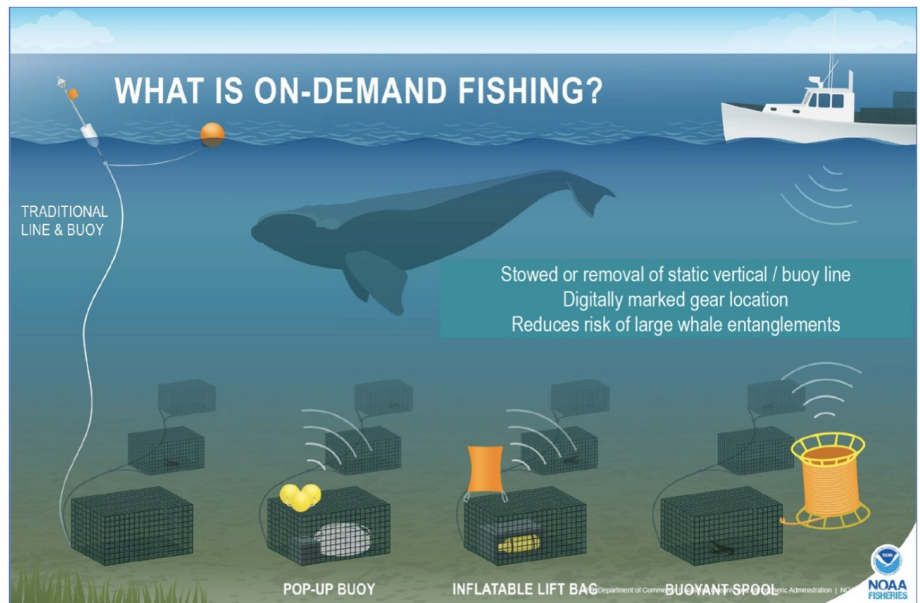
**PROCEDURAL DIRECTIVE ON MSA 304(f):** The Council received a [presentation](#) from NOAA Fisheries on [guidance](#) for preparing fishery management plans for stocks that extend across the geographic area of more than one fishery management council. Documents related to this discussion are [posted here](#).

## FISHERY INDEPENDENT SURVEYS:

The Council received a [presentation](#) from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center on its fishery independent surveys. The report focused on past survey performance, [2023 survey season issues](#), contingency plans for future surveys, and upcoming scheduling for the *NOAA Ship Henry B. Bigelow* bottom trawl surveys and *R/V Hugh R. Sharp* scallop surveys.

The Council also received survey-related input from the [Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel Working Group](#), which is known as NTAP.

**SKATES:** The Council has been working on [Framework Adjustment 12](#) to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which will set specifications for the 2024 and 2025 fishing years and address possession limit issues for



*The Council received an [update from NOAA Fisheries](#) on the timeline for future modifications to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan to reduce entanglements between Northern right whales and other large whales with fishing gear. The Council also received an [update](#) from its On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group and then approved [terms of reference](#) to guide the group's work. For more information about the working group, visit [this webpage](#).*





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barndoor and smooth skates. The Council received [brief skate-related updates](#) and a progress report on Framework Adjustment 12. Final action on the framework is scheduled for the [December meeting](#).

**WHITING:** The Council received an overview of the preliminary [2020-2022 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation \(SAFE\) Report](#) for the small-mesh multispecies fishery, which is often referred to as the whiting fishery. Here is the [presentation](#) with highlights from the draft report.

**RISK POLICY:** The Council received a progress report from its [Risk Policy Working Group](#), which is working to revise the Council's Risk Policy statement. The statement is augmented by a [roadmap](#). Here is the [presentation](#) viewed by the Council, and all materials related to this discussion are [posted here](#).

**OTHER AGENDA ITEMS:** The Council covered [other items](#), including [ecosystem-based fishery management](#). Meeting materials for all topics are [posted here](#), and the audio for the meeting is [available here](#).



*Pictured above are the New England Fishery Management Council's 2023-2024 members. Seated in the front row from left to right: Council Executive Director Cate O'Keefe, Megan Ware (Maine), Daniel Salerno (New Hampshire), Scott Olszewski (Rhode Island), Renee Zobel (New Hampshire designee), Jackie Odell (Massachusetts), Togue Brawn (Maine), and Alan Tracy (Maine). Middle row from left to right: Mitch MacDonald (NOAA General Counsel), Lowell Whitney (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Council Chair Eric Reid (Rhode Island), Mark Alexander (Connecticut), Geoff Smith (Maine), Council Vice Chair Rick Bellavance (Rhode Island), Melanie Griffin (Massachusetts), Peter Whelan (New Hampshire), Mike Pierdinock (Massachusetts). Back row from left to right: Mid-Atlantic Council Liaison Peter Hughes, NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator Mike Pentony, John Pappalardo (Massachusetts), Eric Hansen (Massachusetts), Northeast Fisheries Science Center Director Jon Hare, and U.S. Coast Guard Captain Jamie Frederick. Absent: Peter Aarrestad (Connecticut) and Cheri Patterson (New Hampshire). A list of Council members and state/federal agency designees is [posted here](#). – NEFMC photo*