



Resilient Fisheries Initiatives





Acceptable Biological Catch Control Rules for Northeast Multispecies

IRA 1 Project Overview

Description

This project will modify the current Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) control rules for Northeast Multispecies (groundfish) stocks through an adjustment to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). It will include contracted simulation testing of different control rule options within the context of the Council's recently revised Risk Policy, focusing on select stocks with diverse assessment types and management considerations. Testing will be followed by Scientific and Statistical Committee review and a Council action.

Objectives

1. Evaluate Risk Policy scoring factors and existing groundfish ABC Control Rules.
2. Modify an existing MSE model framework to make it suitable for evaluating alternative ABC Control Rules in the context of the updated Risk Policy and conduct simulation testing for representative groundfish stocks.
3. Use results of simulation testing to inform management plan revisions.

Management Applications

1. Updated ABC control rules for groundfish stocks
2. Knowledge that can be applied to updating ABC control rules in other Council FMPs

Project Oversight Team

Contractor: Lisa Kerr, Roger Brothers, and Jamie Behan, University of Maine

Oversight Team: Robin Frede, Gareth Lawson, Angelia Miller, Jonathon Peros

Project Timeline

2025

CONTRACTED SIMULATIONS

- ✓ **Jan.** - Request for proposals released.
- ✓ **Feb.** - Proposals reviewed and contractor selected.
- ✓ **Mar.** - Project Oversight Team formed
- ✓ **Apr.** - Kickoff Project Oversight Team meeting with contractors
- ✓ **Aug.** - Evaluate risk policy and demonstrate factor scoring and integration with control rules
- ✓ **Sep.** - Develop Management Strategy Evaluation Modeling Framework
- Oct.-Nov.** - Co-develop scenarios and conduct simulation testing
- Dec.** - Present results of factor scoring to SSC and Council

2026

COUNCIL ACTION

- Mar.-Apr.** - Present results of simulation testing to SSC, Council
- May-Nov.** - Draft ABC Control Rule alternatives with Groundfish Committee
- Dec.** - Final Council action

2027

IMPLEMENTATION

- Implement at start of 2027 fishing year



Atlantic Cod Management Transition

IRA 2 Project Overview

Description

This project will address fishery allocation issues and consider new measures to protect Atlantic cod spawning in the face of changing conditions. The project will include facilitated meetings and engage the Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee and SSC.

Objectives

1. TBD
- 2.

Management Applications

New or revised management approaches for Atlantic cod or other groundfish stocks, specifically:

1. Changes to the Sector management system, including possible changes to sector allocations, commercial/recreational allocations, historical bases for quota allocations, etc.
2. New or revised spawning protection measures for Atlantic cod.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Robin Frede, TBD

Contractor: TBD

Project Timeline

2026

**ANALYSIS AND
PUBLIC
ENGAGEMENT**

TBD

2027

COUNCIL ACTION

TBD

2028

IMPLEMENTATION

TBD



Integrating Ecosystem Considerations into Management Decisions

IRA 3.1 Project Overview

Description

The purpose of this project is to continue developing ecosystem approaches for fisheries management and move towards EBFM with explicit consideration of climate drivers and dynamic environments. Building on previous work, this project seeks to directly connect ecosystem information to management decisions. This project will engage the Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee, the SSC / SSS, and the Risk Policy Working Group. This work is directly linked to IRA 1, which evaluates Acceptable Biological Catch Control Rules for Northeast Multispecies.

Objectives

1. Building upon indices provided in the annual State of the Ecosystem Report, work with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to source data that can be used to support factor scoring for the Council's updated Risk Policy.
2. Map the Council's action development processes and identify specific on-ramps for climate and ecosystem information.
3. Automate preparation of Annual Monitoring Reports and work towards providing consistent information across FMPs. Ensure Council staff have the necessary resources to prepare these reports for each FMP.

Management Applications

1. Risk Policy implementation.
2. Improved information flow into specifications setting process.
3. Modernized monitoring reports.

Project Team

Project Team: Andy Applegate (staff lead), Jonathon Peros (Risk Policy), Michelle Bachman (CESC Coordinator) others as assigned

Project Timeline

2025 ► ANALYSIS

- ✓ **Jan.-Nov.** - Automate development of Annual Monitoring Report (Small Mesh example)
- ✓ **Feb.** - First meeting of Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee
- ✓ **Mar. - Jul.** - Risk Policy staff rollout and feedback
- ✓ **Apr.** - Risk Policy factor scoring pilot with Council
- Dec.** - Present Small Mesh Annual Monitoring Report to the Council (prototype for future fishery performance / Risk Policy factor summary reports)

2026 ► ANALYSIS AND COMMUNICATION

Continued risk policy factor development and rollout, fishery performance report development, and process mapping work

Outreach and information sharing via CESC

2027 ► IMPLEMENTATION

Risk Policy implementation for 2027 fishing years.



Dynamic Reference Points

IRA 3.2 Project Overview

Description

Reference points in fisheries stock assessment and management are an essential tool for understanding the condition of a resource relative to a desired state. Dynamic reference points, unlike static ones, are allowed to change through time in response to non-stationarity in fish populations. Scientific approaches to define dynamic biological reference points are currently being developed, but practical mechanisms to introduce them into regional fishery management plans are lacking. This project will develop best management practices and guidelines for integrating dynamic reference points into management via a workshop of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Objectives

1. Identify work required to operationalize concepts and issues discussed during recent, related workshops for New England fisheries management (SCS 8, CINAR)
2. Host workshop to explore these ideas and develop a work plan for the SSC and Council

Management Applications

1. Facilitate use of phased harvest control rules.
2. Evaluation of scientific and management uncertainty buffers.
3. Performance review of projection methods.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Jamie Cournane, Rachel Feeney, Lisa Kerr, Ed Camp, Jon Deroba

Facilitator: TBD

Project Timeline

2025

WORKSHOP PLANNING

Sep. - Form Steering Committee

Nov. - Issue Request for Proposals for workshop facilitator

Dec. - Proposals reviewed and facilitator selected

Identify objectives, begin to develop agenda, identify speakers

2026

HOST WORKSHOP

Jan.-Apr. - Workshop planning

May. - Hold workshop

Jul. - Finalize Workshop Proceedings

Sep. - Present to Council

2027

COUNCIL ACTION

TBD

2028

IMPLEMENTATION

TBD



Ecosystem Component Species

IRA 3.3 Project Overview

Description

This project will establish management strategies for ecosystem components in the New England region. The concept of ecosystem component (EC) species is outlined in the Magnuson Stevens Act. Currently, none are formally identified in NEFMC management plans. However, climate-driven changes in distribution, abundance, and productivity indicate that evaluation of EC status is warranted for several resources. These include species currently managed in FMPs and those that may benefit from conservation measures due to their ecosystem importance. This project includes desktop analysis and collaboration with science and management partners.

Objectives

- Analyze factors described in the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the National Standard 1 Guidelines to determine criteria and thresholds for a range of potential EC species in the New England region.
- Apply joint species distribution models to examine alignment among climate drivers, ecological relationships and FMP structure.

Management Applications

1. Council policy with criteria for when EC species should be considered, a process for how they are added to FMPs, and guidelines for ongoing analyses following designation.
2. Revisions to Council FMPs to designate Ecosystem Component species. Consider management measures for these species as appropriate.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Julian Garrison (lead), Michelle Bachman, Robin Frede, Mark Grant, Chris Haak

Contractor: Angelia Miller, Maris Collaborative

Project Timeline

2025

PLANNING AND ANALYSIS

- ✓ **Jul.** - Request for proposals released, proposals reviewed, and contractor selected. Project initiation and planning.
- ✓ **Aug.** - Initial analysis of management considerations and selection of focal species
- ✓ **Sep.** - Focal species review and planning with Climate and Ecosystem Steering Committee
- Sep.-Dec.** - Develop and implement necessary joint modeling approaches

2026

DEVELOP GUIDANCE AND EVALUATE CANDIDATE SPECIES

- Mar.** - Draft guidance document, develop species evaluation matrix, develop outline for species evaluation reports
- Jun.** - Provide both the evaluations of initial focal species and reporting / implementation framework to the Council
- TBD** - Council recommendation for management actions related to one or more EC species

2027

IMPLEMENTATION

TBD



Cross-Jurisdictional Governance

IRA 4.1 and 4.2 Project Overview

Description

Improving cross-jurisdictional governance in a time of increasing uncertainty and complexity is a cornerstone of the East Coast Coordination Group's (ECCG) ongoing work. Two specific areas of interest are the structure and use of advisory bodies and consistency and clarity of processes for maintaining joint or cooperative management plans. This project will combine the results of coordinated baseline evaluations at each of the three East Coast councils with a series of two workshops to explore solutions. Following these workshops, the East Coast Coordination Group will identify specific actions that will enable more consistent approaches across organizations.

Objectives

- Evaluate advisory body structure, use, and decision-making; consider representativeness of membership given shifting species distributions.
- Evaluate joint management approaches and consider the need to more clearly document and revise them.
- Evaluate opportunities to combine fishery management plans within or across Councils and consider the benefits and costs of doing so.
- Collaborate with partner organizations to develop regionally consistent approaches where possible.

Management Outcomes

- Revisions to SOPPs and Operations handbook.
- Potential management actions to combine plans.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Michelle Bachman (lead), Jamie Cournane, Jenny Couture, Rachel Feeney, Mark Grant, Jonathon Peros

Contractors: The Parnin Group (advisory body and joint management structures), Chris Haak (species distribution shifts)

Project Timeline

2025

PLANNING AND ANALYSIS

- ✓ **Jul.** - Project Oversight Team formed
 - ✓ **Aug.** - ECCG approves terms of reference for workshop #1; MAFMC hires facilitator for both workshops; workshop steering committee established.
 - ✓ **Sep.-Oct.** - The Parnin Group develops and circulates questionnaire for staff and committee leadership.
 - Oct.-Dec.** - Develop workshop #1 agenda and sessions; establish logistics for workshop #2.
- Prepare background information and analyses to support workshop #1, in collaboration with The Parnin Group.

2026

GOVERNANCE WORKSHOPS

- Feb** - Hold workshop #1
- Mar.-Jun.** - Plan workshop #2
- Jul.-Oct.** - Hold workshop #2
- Sep.-Dec.** - Discuss workshop outcomes with Council

2027

IMPLEMENTATION

- TBD** - ECCG Planning Exercise
- TBD** - Initiate Council management action(s), approve changes to operations handbook and SOPPs



Regional Operating Agreements

IRA 4.3 Project Overview

Description

This project will update the 2014 operating agreement between NEFMC and three offices of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), and NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE). The project will include a review of the existing agreement, a workshop to consider changes, and development of a revised agreement. NEFMC and MAFMC have separate agreements but development should be coordinated where possible given shared NOAA resources. Work will be completed through the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC).

Objectives

- Review terminology, general roles, and specific roles, and consider revisions as needed.
- Consider and incorporate recent changes to NEPA regulations and guidance.
- Consider the current political, funding, and resource landscape, and how to make the operating agreement robust to future changes.

Management Outcomes

- Modernized Regional Operating Agreement

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Jonathon Peros (lead), others TBD

Contractor: TBD

Project Timeline

2025 ► PLANNING

Consider alignment with and timing in relation to other East Coast Coordination Group efforts

2026 ► PLANNING

Month. - Task

Month. - Task

2027 ► WORKSHOP AND IMPLEMENTATION

Month. - Task

Month. - Task



Portfolio Analysis

IRA 4.4 Project Overview

Description

Portfolio analysis helps estimate and manage risk across resources. This project will evaluate the species managed by the Council to identify opportunities for increased yield and revenue while minimizing risks, considering biological and sustainability constraints. The project will focus on New England or Mid-Atlantic Council managed species of recent commercial importance. The goal is to enhance previous work and improve accessibility and utility for the Council, utilizing desktop modeling and stakeholder engagement to identify key challenges and solutions. This project will be followed by management actions in one or more fishery management plans, as appropriate.

Objectives

1. Examine ecological and technical interactions between harvested species using dynamic factor analysis and species distribution models.
2. Evaluate different portfolio compositions under historical and present management and permitting structures, and estimate optimal harvest weights between species.
3. Recommend next steps that the Council might take to adjust permits and optimize yield across species.

Applications

1. Adjustments to the permit system in one or more New England fisheries.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Jenny Couture (lead), Geret DePiper, Chris Haak, Kathy Mills, Naresh Pradhan

Contractor: Lauran Brewster and Connor Coscino, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Project Timeline

2025

PLANNING AND PROJECT DESIGN



Jan. - Request for proposals released.



Feb. - Proposals reviewed and contractor selected.



Apr.-Jul. - Form Project Oversight Team, hold kickoff meeting, and obtain data

Jul.-Dec. - Examine ecological and technical interactions between species

2026

MODELING

Dec 2025 - May - Update models with relevant biological constraints

May - Aug. - Sensitivity analysis, estimate optimal harvest weights

Aug. - Nov. - Prepare outreach materials

2027

RECOMMEND ACTIONS

Nov. 2026 - Jun. - Present results to Scientific and Statistical Committee and Council prepare technical documentation, share code

Jun. - Dec - Council identifies solutions and FMP adjustments



Holistic Strategic Plan

IRA 5 Project Overview

Description

This project will develop a holistic strategic plan to address overarching challenges associated with management uncertainty and ecosystem changes. The strategic plan will directly focus on near- and long-term Council initiatives that can support resilient and responsive fisheries management. Resources developed for this project will be applied to the governance and participatory processes projects as well.

Objectives

- Document and review fishery management approaches currently used by the Council.
- Identify key drivers of successful vs. unsuccessful approaches.
- Identify improvements to programs, policies, and practices that would foster efficiency while meeting management and conservation objectives.
- Develop the holistic strategic plan, including an implementation roadmap and performance metrics.

Outcomes

A Holistic Strategic Plan that the Council can use to build dynamic fisheries management systems that improve fishing community resilience.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Jonathon Peros (lead), Michelle Bachman, Connor Buckley, Emily Bodell, Travis Ford, Emilie Franke, John Pappalardo, Mary Sabo, Mike Simpkins

Contractor: Brett Wiedoff, Flor Auzl Lorenzo, Duncan Wood, The Parnin Group; Thomas Remington, Christopher Hawkins, and Sarah Pautzke, Lynker Corporation

Project Timeline

2025

DISCOVERY AND ANALYSIS

- ✓ **Jan.** - Request for proposals released.
- ✓ **Feb.** - Proposals reviewed and contractor selected.
- ✓ **Mar.** - Project Oversight Team formed
- ✓ **Apr.** - Kickoff Project Oversight Team meeting with contractors
- May-Nov.** - Conduct gap analysis and benchmarking
- Jun.-Nov.** - Focus groups and constituent interviews
- ✓ **Oct.** - Share initial discovery phase results with the POT
- Dec.** - Draft the strategic plan

2026

PREPARE PLAN

- Jan.** - Council member workshop to review and revise strategic plan
- Mar.** - Final Holistic Strategic Plan
- Apr.** - Final project report, present final plan to Council

2027

IMPLEMENTATION

TBD



Enhancing Participatory Processes

IRA 6 Project Overview

Description

This project will develop tools for enhancing participatory process under a rapidly changing environment. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiative (IRA 6.1) recognizes that successful management is data-intensive and requires integrating diverse information. Advanced technologies will allow us to more efficiently and effectively analyze and share information with participants in the Council process. The public communications initiative (IRA 6.2) aims to create new channels for sharing information and remove barriers to communication with fishing communities. The project will include training for staff.

Objectives

1. Sustained application of efficient strategies in activities and actions
2. Integration of modern tools to visualize climate-resilient options
3. Streamline processes to reduce barriers and complexity
4. Align our services with community characteristics
5. Streamline routine tasks and save time for complex work

Applications

1. Streamline preparation and facilitate use of written materials such as FMP documents, white papers, and meeting materials.
2. Updates to webpage and other digital resources.
3. Refined or new communication channels.

Project Oversight Team

Oversight Team: Rachel Feeney (lead), Emily Bodell, Connor Buckley, Alex Dunn, Julian Garrison, Sherie Goutier, Chandler Nelson

Contractors: Angelia Miller, Maris Collaborative; The Parnin Group

Project Timeline

2025

PLANNING AND RESEARCH

- ✓ **Feb.** - Consider training needs and opportunities
- ✓ Assign staff to project and form Artificial Intelligence and public communications work teams
- ✓ **Sep.** - Identify range of social media options and consult with other Councils

Aug.-Nov. - Identify potential uses of AI, attend initial training session, and recommend next steps

Arrange AI training for staff.

Working with The Parnin Group, explore public sentiment around current communications

Develop climate webpage

2026

IMPLEMENTATION

Jan. - Mar - Develop and implement social media plan

Mar.- May - Launch website revisions