



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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June 2026 Council Meeting Summary

The New England Fishery Management Council met from June 23-25, 2026, in Mystic Connecticut. The following is a summary of ongoing Council work priorities and future planning. All presentations, materials, and meeting [audio](#) recordings are available on the Council's [June 2026](#) meeting page. For an update on stock specific actions that took place at the June Meeting, please see the following [press release](#).

NOAA LEADERSHIP OPENS THE JUNE MEETING, MARKING 50 YEARS OF THE MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT

NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator, Genio Piñeiro-Soler, opened the June meeting with comments about the importance of regional fishery management councils and recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. He welcomed Council questions and feedback, which included continued support for Saltonstall-Kennedy funding for seafood marketing, support for a vessel buyback and new vessel purchasing program, and a call for focus on soliciting representative Council members.

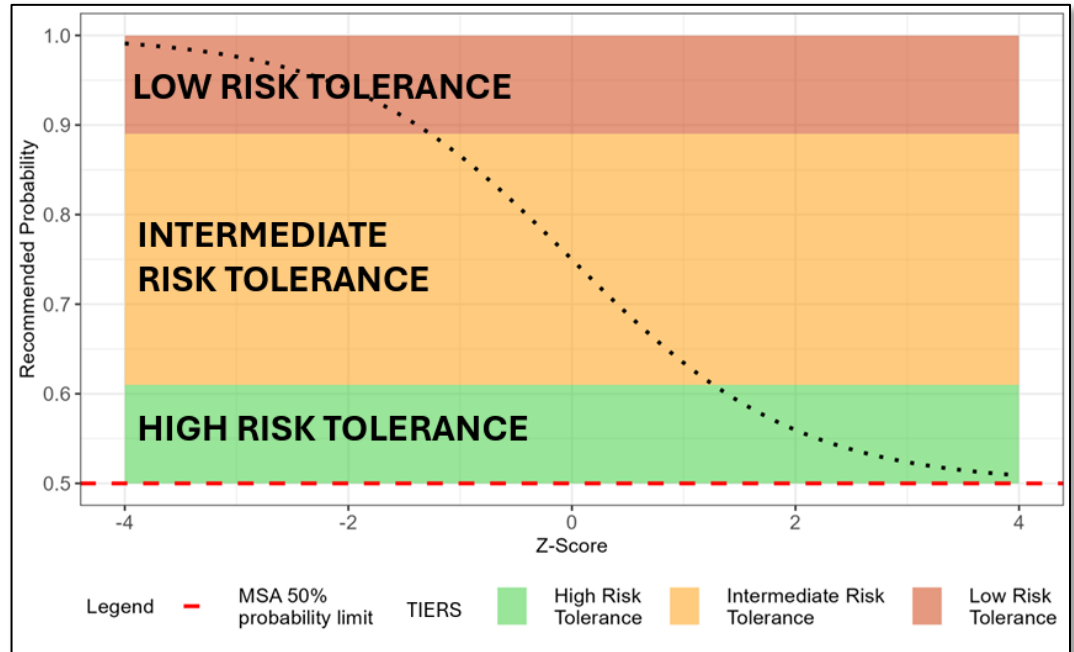
RISK POLICY APPROVED FOR USE BY COUNCIL

The Council approved revisions to its Risk Policy, establishing qualitative categories of low, medium, and high risk tolerance to support management decisions beginning in 2026. The Risk Policy is a decision support tool that complements the existing specification setting processes. Adoption of this policy sets New England as the first Fishery Management Council in the U.S. to consider tolerance of more risk, not just less. This bi-directional approach is designed to emphasize caution when stock conditions are poor, recruitment is low, and environmental conditions are unfavorable, and conversely allow fishery managers to increase catch limits for healthy stocks deemed eligible to tolerate more risk.

Weighting Exercise

The Risk Policy combines the Council's input about the importance of risk factors with technical scores related to managed resources. The policy preference was determined at the June meeting, when 18 voting Council members took the important step of assigning universal weights to five factors on a scale of 0-4, ranging from "least" to "critically" important. The five factors include: (1) Biomass/Stock Status, (2) Recruitment, (3) Climate Vulnerability, (4) Recreational Fishery Characterization, and (5) Commercial Fishery Characterization.

The [weights](#) from the June meeting will be combined with scores completed by each Plan Development Team and unique to each Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in the coming months. Combined weights and scores generate a qualitative Risk Tolerance level. Weights are recommended to remain in place for three years, at which time they are eligible for review.



Moving forward: In July and August, the Plan Development Teams (PDTs) for herring, scallop, groundfish and small-mesh multispecies will conduct scoring for each stock to update catch specifications. A public-facing, online tool is expected to launch in Fall 2026, which will visualize levels of risk tolerance for each FMP.

ECOSYSTEM COMPONENT SCREENING PROCESS

The Council received an update on the development of a screening process to evaluate species for potential designation as ecosystem components (EC). The process is intended to establish a consistent approach for identifying species that may be considered for EC status by evaluating ecological importance, including their role as prey, predators, competitors, or other components of the marine ecosystem, as well as factors such as commercial importance and management relevance. Sand lance and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNEMA) yellowtail flounder were presented as demonstration examples to illustrate how the screening framework could be applied; these examples were not intended as recommendations for EC designation. The work will help inform future Council consideration of species that contribute to ecosystem function while supporting a structured and transparent evaluation process.

VESSEL BASELINE RESTRICTIONS

The Council received a summary of stakeholder input from three Advisory Panel [webinars](#) held in May as part of the ongoing evaluation of vessel baseline restrictions. This is a joint evaluation between the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils with support from GARFO. The analysis will be finalized for consideration at both Council's Fall 2026 meetings and will inform 2027 priority setting. The review included more than 30 comments from over 50 Advisory Panel members and members of the public addressing vessel safety, particularly for smaller vessels and fisheries operating farther offshore, outdated vessel and engine standards, costs and feasibility of vessel modifications, limited U.S. vessel construction capacity, and administrative barriers affecting vessel replacement and upgrades.

ENFORCEMENT

Responding to a 2026 Council priority, the Enforcement Committee was reconstituted with members from state enforcement agencies, NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The Council received a report from the May 2026 Enforcement Committee meeting highlighting enforcement activities and issues related to the Northern Gulf of Maine scallop fishery and the Redfish Sector Exemption Program. The Committee is scheduled to meet again in the fall.

COUNCIL AND PARTNER UPDATES

Transboundary Management Guidance Committee: The Council has assumed the US organizational lead for the US/Canada transboundary management process, establishing a new Industry Advisory Group to inform upcoming transboundary stock negotiations and reaching scientific consensus on resource sharing for Georges Bank cod and haddock.

Council Coordination Committee Meeting (May 19–21, Homer, AK): Regional councils shared updates on Executive Order 14276 implementation, priorities, budgets, science, and management challenges. Key outcomes included continued regional prioritization efforts, improved understanding of regulatory review processes, and support for development of regional NEPA guidance.

Northeast Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC) Meeting (May 27–28, Providence, RI): The NRCC continued work on regional prioritization for science and management, a draft five-year stock assessment schedule, and potential process improvements related to data updates and Risk Policy implementation.

SSC Dynamic Reference Points Workshop (June 1–2, Boston, MA): Scientific advisors reviewed current approaches for dynamic reference points and identified methods applicable to New England-managed stocks. A report is expected later this year.

East Coast Coordination Group Meeting (June 5, Virtual): Partners received updates on IRA initiatives, climate change scenario planning, and planning for a 2027 East Coast Governance Workshop.

Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC): The new 2026 Marine Recreational Information Program ([MRIP](#)) recreational catch data is expected to be incorporated into the 2027 management track assessments. Data for priority stocks is expected to be released later this year.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) reported on ten regional meetings that will take place this summer as part of the Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive ([RAPID](#)). This NOAA-states partnership will “lead the transition from MRIP to a new, shared-governance data system co-designed with anglers, state agencies, interstate commissions, and management councils... and establish a state-federal data collection and delivery system that is regionally flexible, nationally consistent, and enhances scientific credibility and stakeholder confidence in recreational fishing statistics used for management.”

NEFSC Fishery Monitoring and Research Division (FMRD) representatives reported on the Industry Funded Scallop (IFS) program, the Groundfish Sector At-Sea Monitoring (ASM) and Electronic Monitoring (EM) programs, and the Port Biological Sampling Program (PBSP). They noted the ongoing review of the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) and provided updates on costs and federal funding support for all monitoring programs applied in New England.

LOOKING AHEAD

Holistic Strategic Plan Development: The Council received an update on development of the Implementation Charter to support the Council's Holistic Strategic Plan. The Executive Committee will meet over the summer to advance the Strategic Plan, and approval is scheduled for the September Council Meeting.

September 2026 Council Meeting: Will be held from September 15-17, 2026, in Plymouth, MA. Meeting materials and an agenda will be developed in the coming months and posted [here](#).

COUNCIL MEMBER RECOGNITIONS

The Council recognized and celebrated departing members whose terms expire on August 11, 2026.

John Pappalardo, Massachusetts At-Large member, is terming off the Council after an unprecedented 100 Council meetings over two terms spanning nearly 22 years. John is the CEO of the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance and has provided valued leadership and a strong commitment to New England's fishing communities.

Peter Aarrestad, Connecticut's designee to the Council, was recognized for nine years of service. With nearly 40 years of fisheries management experience as the director of the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection Division of Fisheries, Peter has brought valuable expertise, collaboration, and dedication to the Council's work.

Also, noted was the departure of Council staff, **Chandler Nelson**, a Fishery Specialist who worked on scallops.



Pictured left to right: Cate O'Keefe, John Pappalardo, Peter Aarrestad, Daniel Salerno, Melanie Griffin

