



# New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 30, 2025

PRESS CONTACT: Alex Dunn  
978-465-0492 ext. 112; [adunn@nefmc.org](mailto:adunn@nefmc.org)

## The Council Responds to Executive Order 14276; Pauses the Gear Marking Framework and Approves a Management Flexibility Amendment

The New England Fishery Management Council met in Gloucester, MA from [September 23 – 25, 2025](#). Notable outcomes are summarized below.

### COUNCIL FINALIZES RESPONSE TO EXECUTIVE ORDER 14276 ON SEAFOOD COMPETITIVENESS

At its September meeting, the New England Fishery Management Council finalized its response to [Executive Order \(EO\) 14276](#), “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness.” The letter, developed in coordination with NOAA’s Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), lays out a work plan to reduce regulatory burdens, increase fishery production, improve economic returns, and help prevent unnecessary closures. The Council submitted its recommendations to NOAA Fisheries on September 30, 2025.

To shape its response, the Council sought broad input from all Advisory Panel members and Plan Development Teams. Based on this input, the Executive Committee drafted a list of recommendations for new and ongoing actions and submitted this to the Council for approval. The list contains four key areas:

1. **Council Actions in the NOAA Fisheries Rulemaking Process:** urged timely implementation of Northeast Multispecies Framework Adjustment 69 and the Atlantic Herring 2025–2027 specifications.
2. **Council Actions Currently Under Development:** continue work currently underway related to increases in management flexibility, specifications for monkfish and skates, reduced burdens in the dogfish fishery, and a scallop strategic plan.
3. **Possible New Council Actions:** the Council will consider updates to vessel baseline restrictions, herring slippage rules, monkfish management, accountability measures, gillnet exemption areas, and outdated regulations.
4. **Non-Council Actions:** that call on federal agencies to expand seafood marketing, strengthen science and monitoring, support recreational management tools, invest in climate-ready fisheries, and streamline NEPA reviews.

The full list of recommended actions is available [here](#).

## COUNCIL APPROVES OMNIBUS MANAGEMENT FLEXIBILITY AMENDMENT

The Council unanimously approved an [omnibus amendment](#) to improve flexibility and consistency across its fishery management plans (FMPs). This action would enable the Council to be more responsive to changing resources.

### Key measures include:

- **Specification Frequency:** Allows fishery specifications to be set for one to five years, with flexibility to revisit them if new information becomes available.
- **Specification Process:** Allows specifications to be set through a “specs action,” not a framework, for the Northeast Multispecies, Skate, and Monkfish FMPs. Adds status determination criteria for the Northeast Skate Complex FMP.
- **In-Season Adjustment Authority:** Expands this authority across all FMPs, enabling NOAA Fisheries to adjust specifications or measures during the year in consultation with the Council.
- **Annual Review Requirements:** Removes certain annual reporting requirements to reduce administrative workload.
- **Framework Adjustment Items:** Expands the list of measures that can be updated through the streamlined framework versus an amendment.

Together, these changes give the Council more adaptive tools to respond more quickly to changing conditions, reduce delays, and improve transparency in decision-making. The amendment will now be submitted to NOAA Fisheries for review and final approval.

## ON-DEMAND FISHING GEAR CONFLICT WORKING GROUP - ALTERNATIVE GEAR MARKING

During the On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group (ODWG) [report](#) the Council voted on two related items. First, members unanimously approved the ODWG’s [Terms of Reference 3B Report](#), which includes recommendations for reducing gear conflict between on-demand fishing gear used in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries and other types of fishing gear.

Second, the Council **voted to postpone final action** on the [Joint Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework Adjustment](#), citing industry concerns about cost and safety, particularly regarding the technology needed to locate traps without buoy lines, and the considerable industry turn out. The Council heard numerous public comments from a range of constituents prior to the vote. The postponement will allow time for additional stakeholder input and information gathering on alternative gear marking and visualization technology through a forthcoming NMFS Request for Information.

**What this Framework Adjustment would do:** If approved, this would revise gear marking regulations, opening up closed areas for the use of alternative surface markings, allowing for fishing in areas previously closed to persistent buoy lines under the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan.

It would also:

- Open certain areas to fishing with alternatively-marked fixed gear, such as on-demand gear.
- Make it easier for fishermen to use alternative gear-marking methods in closure areas, by deregulating and bypassing the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) process.
- Have no effect on the use of any current gear-marking methods outside of closure areas.
- Not require universal adoption of alternative gear-marking or on-demand gear.

### Next steps

Because this is a joint action, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) will review the framework and consider final action at its [October](#) meeting. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will also receive an update in [October](#). The NEFMC will hear updates from both bodies at its [December](#) meeting and consider next steps. Looking ahead, NOAA Fisheries plans to issue a Request for Information (RFI) in 2026 to solicit data, comments, and public input to inform its decision-making.



*The alternative gear marking report drew huge interest from the lobster industry, both at the September Meeting in Gloucester (pictured above), and through public comment letters. American Lobster is managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. - NEFMC photo*