

# US/Canada Transboundary Resources Steering Committee Spring Meeting May 13, 2026 – Webinar 1:00 PM (EDT)/2:00 PM (ADT)

## SUMMARY

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### Overview

The US/Canada Transboundary Resources Steering Committee held its spring meeting to review US and Canadian fishery and management updates, review outcomes from the 2026 TMGC Spring Intersessional meeting, plan for 2026 US/Canada activities, and discuss a TMGC/ISATS process review.

### Participants

- Steering Committee:
  - Mike Pentony (US Co-Chair) and Doug Wentzell (Canadian Co-Chair)
- Advisors and Staff:
  - Cate O’Keefe (TMGC US Co-Chair), Alain d’Entremont (TMGC Canadian Co-Chair), Kathy Cooper-MacDonald, Spencer Talmage, Jon Hare, Jen Ford, Mike Simpkins, Tara McIntyre, Marianne Randall, Maggie, Bunbury
- Several TMGC members and members of the public attended the virtual meeting

### Opening Remarks and Management Updates

Mike Pentony welcomed participants and expressed optimism for a productive year for the US/Canada management process. He noted TMGC member John Pappalardo’s departure from the Council and Andy Lipsky’s new role supporting bilateral issues for the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. He also thanked the New England Fishery Management Council staff for assuming logistical responsibilities for the TMGC and Steering Committee process.

Mr. Pentony reviewed recent and ongoing US groundfish management actions. Framework 69 established specifications for multiple groundfish stocks for fishing years 2025–2027 and was implemented on March 8, 2026. Amendment 25, which integrates the four Atlantic cod stocks into the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan and establishes status determination criteria and catch limits for fishing years 2026 and 2027, has been approved and implementing regulations are under development. Framework 72, which addresses specifications for fishing years 2026–2028, is currently under review and default allocations are currently in place for stocks lacking finalized specifications.

Mr. Pentony also provided encouraging updates related to North Atlantic right whales (NARW). Twenty-three calves were born during the season, the highest number recorded since 2009. Of the identified mother-calf pairs, twenty were returning mothers, and thirteen had previously calved in 2021 or 2022, indicating shorter intervals between births and

suggesting improved reproductive trends closer to healthy historical levels. While participants acknowledged cautious optimism regarding the apparent benefits of management measures designed to reduce mortality and serious injury, they emphasized the importance of continued monitoring and long-term evaluation of population trends.

Doug Wentzell provided updates from the Canadian perspective, noting that right whales had begun entering Canadian waters and that protective fishery management measures for 2026 were already in effect. Transport Canada has implemented vessel management zones, particularly in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and acoustic monitoring has detected whales at multiple buoy locations, resulting in four fishery closures to date, one of which has since reopened. Monitoring efforts and protective measures will continue through the spring and summer months.

Mr. Wentzell also reviewed Canadian survey operations noting that the 2026 winter survey completed 92 successful fishing sets, including extensive coverage on Georges Bank. He highlighted the importance of maintaining the long-running survey time series, which has been conducted since the mid-1980s, and recognized the survey team for achieving approximately 96% spatial coverage, including cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder strata.

### **TMGC Updates and ISATS Process Discussion**

The Steering Committee received a summary of the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC) Intersessional Meeting held on May 7, 2026. TMGC updates focused on fishery performance metrics and planning for the 2026 US/Canada process.

The TMGC Co-Chairs summarized the discussion about the 2025 Integration of Science Advice for Transboundary Species (ISATS) process and outlined plans for 2026. Participants emphasized that the first implementation of ISATS in 2025 represented a learning experience and that expectations among participants had varied considerably. They noted the need to balance the provision of adequate scientific information for management decisions without recreating the former TRAC process or imposing excessive workload demands. Participants agreed that continued refinement of the ISATS framework would be necessary moving forward, and the Science Co-Chairs requested written feedback by May 22, 2026 to help refine the process.

The Steering Committee supported the proposal to allow TMGC members to observe Technical Science Coordination (TSC) meetings in a listen-only capacity and submit written questions afterward. Participants viewed this approach favorably because it could streamline the process, eliminate an additional meeting, and involve TMGC members earlier in scientific discussions. The 2026 TSC meeting will be held virtually in July.

## **Fall 2026 Meeting Planning**

The Steering Committee discussed scheduling and logistics for the Fall 2026 TMGC and Steering Committee meetings. Participants generally agreed that mid-October would be preferable to September because of scheduling conflicts, consultation requirements, and holidays in both countries. The proposed schedule would include a travel day on October 13 followed by meetings from October 14–16.

Potential complications associated with a possible lapse in US federal appropriations beginning October 1 were acknowledged; however, participants noted that the Council would be able to continue supporting meeting coordination if necessary. The group also discussed meeting duration and agreed that two full days for TMGC discussions followed by a half-day Steering Committee meeting would likely provide sufficient time, especially given that the summer ISATS process should reduce the need for lengthy scientific presentations during the fall meetings. Cate O’Keefe, Marianne Randall, and Maggie Bunbury agreed to coordinate logistics for the fall meetings.

## **Planning for a 2027 ISATS Review Workshop**

The Steering Committee endorsed moving forward with planning for a broader 2027 ISATS review workshop. The workshop would examine the evolution of the ISATS process following the dissolution of TRAC and evaluate how effectively the current framework supports management decision-making. Participants recognized the importance of considering meeting format, location, resource needs, workload, and stakeholder expectations as planning proceeds. Both Mike Pentony and Doug Wentzell voiced support for continuing workshop planning discussions during the Fall 2026 TMGC meeting.

## **Closing Remarks**

The meeting concluded with both Co-Chairs expressing appreciation to participants and to the New England Fishery Management Council staff for organizing the meeting. Participants noted they were looking forward to reconvening in person during the fall meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 1:57pm EDT.