



New England Fishery Management Council

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Council Receives Skate, Herring, Dogfish, and EBFM Updates

The New England Fishery Management Council began its December 3-5, 2019 meeting in Newport, RI by receiving numerous reports and updates from its own committees, as well as partner agencies. Here are a few highlights.

SKATES: The Council's Skate Committee, Plan Development Team (PDT), and Advisory Panel (AP) continue to work on Amendment 5 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The amendment is being developed to consider creating limited access permits for the skate wing and/or skate bait fisheries. The PDT is working to provide data to help the the Skate Committee and AP better understand the fisheries and fishermen using the skate resource. In other skate news, the Council was informed that:

- The [2019 Skate Annual Monitoring Report](#), which covers fishing year 2018, had been finalized; and
- [Framework Adjustment 8](#) to the FMP, which contains 2020-2021 specifications for the skate wing and bait fisheries, appeared to be on schedule for approval and implementation by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS/NOAA Fisheries) in time for the May 1 start of the 2020 fishing year.

ATLANTIC HERRING: The Council discussed two items related to herring.

- The first pertained to Atlantic herring spawning activity on Georges Bank. The Council contracted the Gulf of Maine Research Institute to develop a discussion document that pulled together all pertinent historical and current scientific research plus related information about spawning activity on Georges Bank. The Council was briefed on preliminary findings at its September meeting, at which time it [initiated an action](#) to address offshore spawning of Atlantic herring. Now that the [final discussion document](#) is complete, work on the action will continue.
- The Council also received a summary of the [final report](#) for the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Debrief that reviewed the process used to develop a range of alternatives for an acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rule for Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring FMP. The

Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan

Management Strategy Evaluation Debrief Final Report



Prepared by the
New England Fishery Management Council

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Council used MSE to provide greater upfront discussion of the control rule’s objectives and to weigh tradeoffs between the alternatives. Since this was the first time the Council used MSE, it took a step back to review benefits and/or drawbacks of the process and cover “lessons learned.” The debrief addressed questions such as:

- Was the purpose and need clear? Was the education process about MSE sufficient?
- Did stakeholders find utility in using MSE in balancing tradeoffs? And, among other questions,
- How did the MSE process compare to the Council’s standard practice for developing alternatives?

Stakeholder responses to all of the question and additional input obtained from outside of the debrief process are contained in the final report.

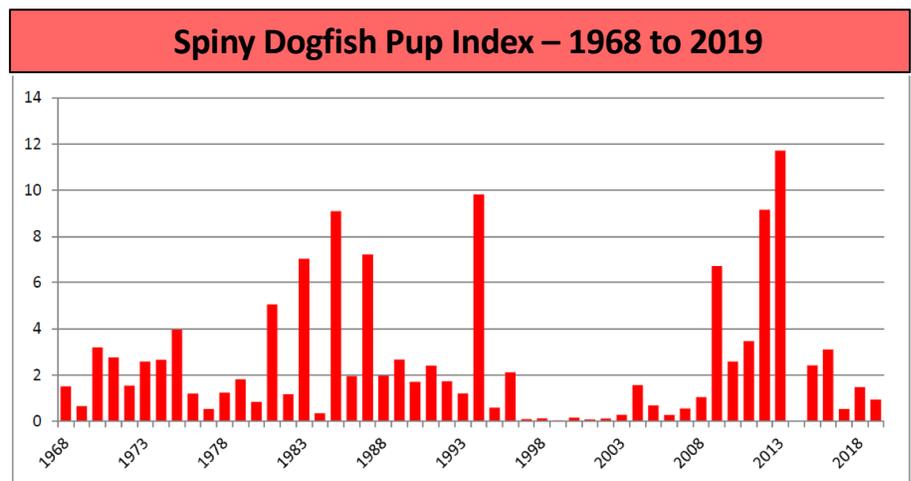
SPINY DOGFISH: The New England Council manages spiny dogfish jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Council. In 2018, the Councils approved fishing year (FY) 2019-2021 specifications for the fishery, which included the following commercial quotas:

- FY 2019 – 20,522,832 pounds
- FY 2020 – 23,194,835 pounds
- FY 2021 – 27,421,096 pounds

The 2019 fishery is ongoing. In October, the Mid-Atlantic Council reviewed 2020 specifications after considering input from its Scientific and Statistical

Committee, the joint Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel, and the Spiny Dogfish Monitoring Committee. The New England Council also reviewed 2020 specifications during its December meeting here in Newport. Given the current status of the stock, coupled with feedback received from the various advisory bodies, both Councils made no changes to the specifications. As such, the commercial quota will increase 13% in 2020 over the 2019 level. The Councils also made no changes to the 6,000-pound federal trip limit. Stock status wise, pup production remains low, but given that dogfish landings have been below the quota since 2012 and the market for dogfish at present is fairly weak, the Councils determined that status quo was warranted. Additional materials are available at [spiny dogfish](#) and [MAFMC](#).

ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT (EBFM) – The Council is continuing to explore EBFM. Up to now, the Council’s work has focused on developing a draft example Fishery Ecosystem Plan ([eFEP](#)) for Georges Bank, as well as establishing a Management Strategy Evaluation [Steering Committee](#) to help



Above, estimated swept area biomass (in metric tons) of total pups, defined as spiny dogfish less than or equal to 35 centimeters in length, captured in the Northeast Fisheries Science Center’s spring bottom trawl survey from 1968 through 2019. – Northeast Fisheries Science Center graphic



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determine how to best focus public input on EBFM overall and on the eFEP. In September, the Council asked the Steering Committee to:

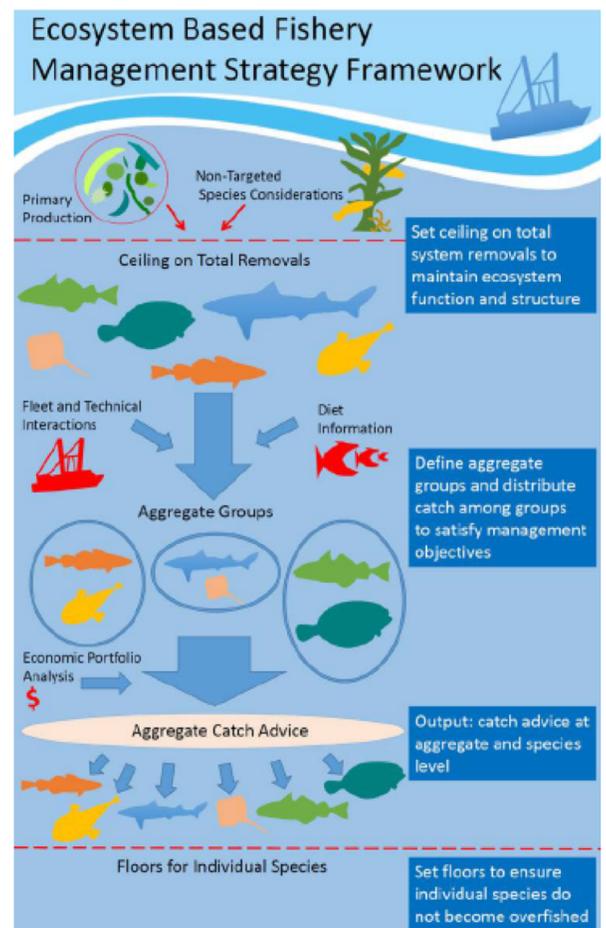
- Advise the Council on how to develop a “less technical and publicly digestible document” with examples that focus on a core EBFM approach; and
- Offer suggestions for how to structure and conduct public information workshops that will bring together stakeholders, gather feedback, address questions, and identify people who are willing to engage in an MSE process.

The MSE Steering Committee then met three times and formulated a package of [recommendations](#) for how to proceed. At this December meeting, the Council approved the recommendations and directed the EBFM Committee, the EBFM PDT, and Council staff to use the list to develop the desired materials and a plan for public information workshops that focus on EBFM for the Georges Bank ecosystem. The Council intends to engage the services of a science communicator and an outreach facilitator to help with the effort.

Additional Reports on December 3 in Newport, RI

The Council also:

- Received a report on the 41st Annual Meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization ([NAFO](#)), which met in September in Bordeaux, France and was attended by three Council members;
- Supported the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s determination that Virginia is [out of compliance](#) with the Atlantic Menhaden Interstate FMP;
- Received an overview of the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel’s [November](#) meeting;
- Reviewed NMFS’s Draft National Standard 1 Technical Guidance for Carry-Over and Phase-In Provisions within ABC Control Rules and approved [draft Council comments](#);
- Received a presentation from the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement on [groundfish misreporting](#) in the Carlos Rafael criminal case and a presentation from the Coast Guard on broader misreporting issues and implications; and
- Reviewed NMFS’s Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018 Report to Congress – the [Modern Fish Act](#) – and approved draft Council comments.



The flowchart above represents the “core approach” to Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management.

– Amanda Hart, UMass Dartmouth graphic