



New England Fishery Management Council

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Council Discusses Climate Change, Research Priorities, EBFM, Sturgeon, Right Whales, and Equity & Environmental Justice

The New England Fishery Management Council met [June 28-30, 2022](#) and received numerous updates over the course of its three-day hybrid meeting in Portland, Maine. Here are a few of the highlights.

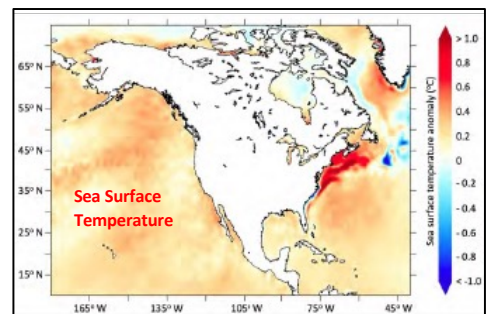
CLIMATE CHANGE: The Council received a [presentation](#) from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center on the [Draft Northeast Climate Regional Action Plan](#), which is out for public comment through [July 29, 2022](#). Version 1 of the plan was in place from 2016 to 2021. The current draft – Version 2 – will be used by NOAA Fisheries to implement the agency’s Climate Science Strategy in 2022-2024. The document contains information on warming ocean temperatures (see graphic at right) and much more. The Council [received input](#) from its Scientific and Statistical Committee ([SSC](#)) on the draft action plan and will be submitting its own [written comments](#) in advance of the deadline.

The Council also received a [progress report](#) on the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning [initiative](#). The overarching questions are:

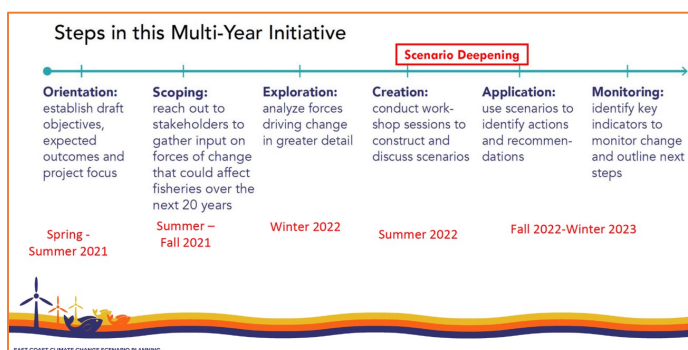
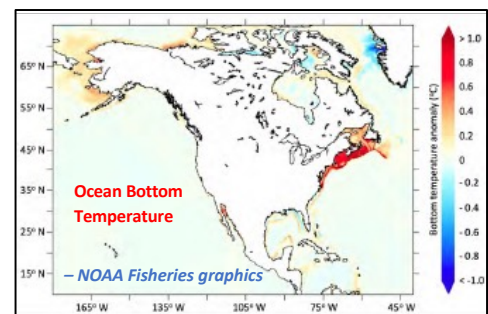
- How might climate change affect stock availability and distribution, as well as other aspects of East Coast marine fisheries, over the next 20 years; and
- What does this mean for effective future governance and management across multiple jurisdictions? What tools are needed to provide flexible and robust management strategies to address uncertainty in an era of climate change?

The Core Team working on this initiative hosted a June 21-23, 2022 [Scenario Creation Workshop](#) where participants developed scenarios

Warming Temperatures on U.S. Northeast Shelf



NOAA Fisheries data indicate the Northeast Region is warming at a faster rate than other parts of the country. Above, sea surface temperature, and below, ocean bottom temperature, based on the average temperature from 2010-2019 relative to the historical climatology from 1993-2019.



The East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning initiative is in the “Scenario Deepening” phase.



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or stories describing eight alternative futures under climate change. Next, the Core Team will review and edit inputs from the workshop to create a draft set of scenarios for further discussion and feedback during three scenario deepening webinars in mid-August. These webinars will be open to the public. The Council will have an in-depth discussion of the scenarios during its [September 27-29, 2022](#) meeting and provide feedback to the [Core Team](#) on next steps.

Here are the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning member organizations.



The Council also reviewed correspondence from NOAA Fisheries on [proposed climate governance](#) for regional councils and noted that the Council Coordination Committee [recommended postponement](#) of the policy until after the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning work is completed.

2022-2026 RESEARCH PRIORITIES: The Council annually updates its five-year list of research priorities. Over the past spring, the Council's plan development teams, advisory panels, and committees reviewed the 2021-2025 list of research priorities and suggested additions, deletions, and refinements. The [SSC](#) then [provided comments](#) on the recommended revisions. The Council reviewed this [collective input](#) and, after considerable [discussion](#), approved an updated list.

➤ The Council's list of all 105 research priorities for 2022-2026 is posted [HERE](#).

ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT (EBFM): The Council will be holding six EBFM public information workshops later this fall using [presentations and outreach materials](#) already developed by the Council. These introductory workshops are intended to help fishermen and other stakeholders better understand what EBFM is all about and begin learning how the Council is using EBFM in its example Fishery Ecosystem Plan ([eFEP](#)) for Georges Bank. The two-to-three-hour facilitated sessions will be a precursor to a more extensive, multi-day deep dive workshop in 2023. Learn more about the Council's [educational tools](#).

In preparation for the introductory workshops and to encourage attendance, the Council contracted [Oceanvest](#) to engage in conversations with a wide range of stakeholders, including many who fish on Georges Bank. The feedback is being used by the Council as it [develops the agenda](#) for the workshops.

The Council received a [progress report](#) on all of this during its June meeting.



Watch the five-minute EBFM introductory video on stakeholder perspectives. Here are the easy steps. Click [HERE](#). Fill out your name and email address. Click on "Join Webinar." And the video will begin.



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ATLANTIC STURGEON: The Council received a [presentation](#) on NOAA Fisheries' [Draft](#) Action Plan to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch in Federal Large Mesh Gillnet Fisheries. Impacted fisheries include monkfish, groundfish, skates, and dogfish. A [2021 Biological Opinion](#) required the agency to convene a working group to develop this plan to reduce bycatch [by 2024](#). The Council had an [extensive discussion](#) (continued [here](#)) and agreed to: (1) submit written comments on the draft; and (2) discuss this issue in detail as it considers 2023 work priorities. Following the Council meeting, a [federal court declared](#) the Biological Opinion to be "invalid" while ruling on a right whale case. In mid-July, it was unclear if this would impact the sturgeon timeline as remedies are pursued.

RIGHT WHALES: The Council received an [update](#) on the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team ([ALWTRT](#)). The team is working on modifications to the [take reduction plan](#) to reduce entanglements of right whales in fishing gear. [Phase 2](#) of the work, which covers gillnet fisheries, among others, is underway. The Council then received a [presentation](#) on recent cooperative research to advance [ropeless fishing](#), also called "on-demand fishing," as an [approach](#) to reducing vertical lines in the water column that can entangle whales.

EEJ: The Council received a [presentation](#) on NOAA Fisheries' Draft Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) [Strategy](#), which is focused on advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities. The Council reviewed a [draft comment letter](#) and agreed to refine its comments and submit the letter prior to the [August 31, 2022 deadline](#).

WHAT ELSE: Here's what happened with [scallops](#) and [Atlantic herring](#). More to come on groundfish, habitat, and monkfish.



On June 28, 2022, the Council extended its thanks to two departing members who were attending their last full Council meeting. Pictured above is Dr. Mike Sissenwine of Massachusetts, who has served three consecutive three-year terms on the Council, which is the maximum allowed. He is flanked by Council Chair Eric Reid (left) and Executive Director Tom Nies (right). Mark Godfroy of New Hampshire, who was participating remotely, has served two terms on the Council.

In his tribute to Dr. Sissenwine, Chair Reid said, "You brought a level of scientific understanding to the table that is unparalleled in Council history, and you willingly took on some of our more amorphous and challenging assignments." Of departing member Godfroy, Chair Reid said, "You have always recognized the value of good data collection in both recreational and commercial fisheries management, which was an attribute you brought to the Council table from day one."

That same day, NOAA Fisheries announced [2022 appointments](#) to all eight of the nation's regional fishery management councils. For the New England Council, Eric Hansen of Massachusetts was appointed to fill the seat being vacated by Dr. Sissenwine, and Peter Whelan was appointed to fill New Hampshire's obligatory seat, which is being vacated by Mark Godfroy. – NEFMC photo