

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Habitat/Marine Protected Areas/Ecosystems

I. STATUS

A. MEETINGS

Committee/Advisory Panel/Plan Development Team: The habitat oversight committee met jointly with the habitat advisory panel and PDT on April 1 and 2 (draft summary is attached). During the first day, the group reviewed the SASI model structure and outputs. Some important points about the model are attached for reference. On the second day, the group discussed how to move forward with the development of alternatives to minimize the adverse effects of fishing on EFH to the extent practicable. The committee passed five motions, tasking the PDT to evaluate current and potential EFH measures, current and proposed HAPCs, and possible deep-sea coral protection areas.

Plan Development Team: The PDT met in on February 22-23 to discuss how to address habitat committee tasking using SASI model outputs. Many PDT members also attended the joint April 1-2 meeting.

B. ONGOING WORK

Currently, the PDT is finalizing the vulnerability assessment, model coding, and assembly of fishing effort data layers. The next steps are to: (A) update/finalize all fishing-effort-independent vulnerability outputs and maps (the simulated outputs/maps), and (B) to produce the fishing-effort-dependent outputs and maps that show previously realized (1) area swept and (2) adverse effects of fishing on EFH. The team is developing methods to analyze these outputs, particularly the vulnerability/simulated outputs, to address committee motions from April 2. These motions ask the PDT to identify which areas are vulnerable to one or more types of fishing, and to provide guidance to the committee on management alternatives that could be used to protect those areas. The PDT will also evaluate existing management areas, including the EFH closed areas, in terms of whether or not they encompass vulnerable habitats. Pursuant to a committee motion, practicability metrics will be developed to aid the committee and the Council in their decision making.

The PDT is also working to evaluate existing Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, including those approved by the Council in Habitat Omnibus Phase 1. These areas will be evaluated against the criteria set forth for HAPCs in the EFH final rule: (1) importance of the ecological function provided by the habitat, (2) the extent to which the habitat is sensitive to human-induced environmental degradation, (3) whether, and to what extent, development activities are stressing the habitat type, and (4) the rarity of the habitat type. SASI model, outputs will be used in these evaluations to the extent possible.

Finally, the PDT is working to compile information on deep-sea corals, specifically, (1) their vulnerability to fishing, (2) their distribution, and (3) the overlap between their distribution and the distribution of fishing effort. This information will be used to generate a list of areas that might be suitable as coral protection zones.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

None.

III. INFORMATION

1. Key points about the vulnerability assessment and SASI model
2. Committee meeting summary dated April 1-2, 2010 (DRAFT)
3. PDT meeting summary dated February 22-23