

Comments on: A Review of the New England Fishery Management Process**Dave Preble**

1. The primary mission of the U.S. "National Fishery Management Program" is to end overfishing and both recover and maintain viable fish stocks to support sustainable harvest. This is clearly stated in MSA Title III SEC 301 (a) (1), National Standard 1.
2. National Standard 8 now requires that economic and social considerations be "taken into account" in "conservation and management measures". But it also *requires* all such measures to be "consistent with...the prevention of overfishing and rebuilding of overfished stocks". The requirements of N.S.8 are thereby made secondary to the primary mission outlined in N.S.1.
3. Accomplishing the goals of National Standard 1 will largely eliminate the economic and social problems addressed by National Standard 8.
4. From the beginning of my tenure on the NEFMC I have encountered an entrenched culture of failure that pervades all three entities (NERO, NEFSC, NEFMC). Every new idea is met with a barrage of reasons why it can't be done. That the failure is inherent to the system in place and not specific individuals is obvious since so many very good people are caught up in it. I am gratified that this problem was identified throughout the report and stated on p18.
5. Fishery Management in New England became a confused and inefficient mess through a half-century evolution that arose as a natural outgrowth of single-species management. The fundamental logical flaw that brought us to this mess was the presumption that stasis could be attained in a system that is both dynamic and homeostatic. Managers partitioned the ocean by species and stocks, leading to a plethora of FMPs with "little consistency and standards" (p.16).
6. Every item in the list of NEFMC "challenges" on p.16 is the result of the plethora of FMPs. The resulting segmentation and redundancy have become insupportable. Skilled and experienced staff are bogged down in separate little worlds doing separate EISs and EAs for management actions all of which are (or should be) related and that are applied to the same piece of ocean. It is as if I were going to build a shopping center on a piece of land and was required to do separate EISs for the oaks, maples, pines, bugs, etc. Perfectly ridiculous. We can and must do better.
7. I agree with the short term Report recommendations to the FMP problem as outlined on p.4, 3rd bullet point at the bottom of the page, and on p.11, #3. We must find some latitude to quickly reduce redundancies in the FMP process enough to allow us breathing room to design and apply a legitimate long-term solution to the longstanding flaws that led us into the mess in the first place.

8. The long-term solution to the FMP problem is the adoption of productivity-based ecosystem management consistent with the recommendations presented to the NEFMC over the past few months by Dr. Michael Fogarty. This would reduce us to three plans that would incorporate all current FMPs, thereby eliminating our current segmentation and permanently slashing redundancies. It would also be a much better fit to NEPA requirements. But we need to get started.
9. The “performance management system” described on pp. 5, 12, & 15 is an excellent idea and should become part of NEFMC operating procedure.
10. The “strategic planning process” described on p.17 should be a part of converting from our current maze of FMPs to three ecosystem plans. The need for it is made obvious by our ridiculous annual exercise in “priority setting”. We have no strategy for success.
11. Although NERO, NEFSC, and NEFMC are all included in the report, I am not competent to comment on recommendations pertaining to the first two. Therefor, except for noting the culture of failure that pervades all three, I have restricted my comments to the NEFMC.
12. It is important to recognize that the current problems arose from decisions that were made in good faith by many people who were mostly trying to do the right thing. That there were many errors is no surprise, given the complexity of marine ecosystems, and I am pleased that the Report recognizes (p.9) “that no one is either wholly at fault or faultless”. The road ahead may be difficult, but we now know the way. There will be no excuse for continued failure.