



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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New England Fishery Council Moves Forward on Ecosystems Approaches

Portland, ME The New England Fishery Management Council took an important step today in developing new ways of managing fisheries off the New England coast. The concept, called ecosystem-based management, is a developing discipline in fisheries management where scientists and managers work together to include impacts from, and impacts on, all the parts of the marine ecosystem in the management decision-making process. The Council agreed with the advice of its Scientific and Statistical and Social Sciences Advisory Committees and approved the development of a fishery ecosystem plan as a priority for next year.

The idea that commercially-fished species exist together in a complex web of interactions may sound like common sense, but requires a high degree of scientific understanding that, in years past, may not have been available. The Council believes the time is now right to begin the important process of examining the range of factors that affect marine fisheries resources and incorporate that information into its management plans.

Rather than addressing fisheries one at a time, managers using ecosystem-based management may set objectives on a wider range of species. The Council believes that important issues that indirectly affect fishery resources such as LNG operations, coastal pollution and invasive species will be more effectively considered when setting its goals and objectives.

A New England Council Ecosystem Pilot Project was initiated last year to explore such issues. During October and November Council staff held a series of ten workshops along the coast from Maine to Connecticut. Participants noted especially the need to simplify management and slow the pace regulatory change, incorporate ecological interactions into scientific advice, and to expand the range of factors considered in assessing the health of fish stocks to include non-fishing effects such as coastal pollution. Their input provides the Council with valuable advice on how to best proceed with an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management. Details on the Council's **Ecosystems Pilot Project**, can be found on the Council's website (www.nefmc.org) by following the "Ecosystems Pilot Project" link.

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