

#4e

Captain Howard, here are my responses to the report. There is much to digest here and I am not totally aware of some of the specifics that were outlined but I will do my best to comment on what I have learned in my short time on the council. I will respond to each statement that I have copied here individually.

Respectfully submitted,

Glen Libby

## Specific Findings

### New England Fisheries Management Council Findings

The following are specific findings for each organization:

#### Positives

The Council has pockets of high-performing staff.

Agreed

Preparation leading up to Council meetings is strong.

Agreed

Council meetings are professional and open.

Agreed

#### Challenges

Council staff may have a tendency to take ownership of a plan and overstep their authority by guiding policy instead of supporting an objective review. *Note:* This is connected to the council and committee members' struggle to read and process all the information prior to meetings, so they may often rely on staff to share their opinion.

There is an inordinate amount of data to assimilate by council members. Much of it is useful but due to the timeliness of receiving the data and the redundancy of some of the reports it is likely that some key points could be overlooked by folks that struggle to find time to go through all the data. Relying on staff opinion is sometimes the only way that certain nuances that may have been overlooked will be recognized. Not sure how we fix this but a more concise ( if it is possible) executive summary could help.

There are pockets of low-performing Council staff. A number of interviewees suggested that staff have become complacent. It was believed that there are no performance criteria or standards that staff must meet.

I have little knowledge of this.

The Council governance is too complicated; there are too many committees and groups.

Disagree , being on committees make decisions at council meetings, specific to those committees much more informed and easier for me personally.

The Council gives poor guidance to committees, and then down to the PDTs. Consequently, PDTs spend time developing misguided actions.

Agree that this happens sometimes, the council should be encouraged to make clear statements when there is ambiguity.

Council members are asked to process far too much information for efficient decision-making.

Some members seem to relish the volumes of data but personally I find it hard to glean the important points from the large volume of data at times. Again, serving on a committee helps to identify the key points.

There is no vision or strategic plan guiding decision-making.

The issues are so variable that it seems like it would be hard to have one size fits all approach to this.

There is no sense of unity among Council members, or among the three organizations.

I do not get the sense of disunity but there are definitely competing interests. It is my perception that this is how a council is supposed to work, with diverse representation and different points of view. If we always agreed with each other I believe the process would not work.

Collaboration and constructive dialogue are lacking during meetings. Certain members are cited as "filibustering" their points, making meetings run late into the night, and impacting the quality of decisions.

Some members do get a little long winded at times when a clear concise statement would suffice. Sometimes a difficult decision however demands a long debate.

The Council avoids making difficult decisions, or decisions are often put off until further information is gathered.

Agree that sometimes things are put off but if more information or development of an idea is needed then it is probably a good thing so the correct result is generated. Tough decisions are made all the time , sometimes they just take a while to get it right.

There is little consistency and standards across FMPs, PDTs, Councils, Advisory Panels (APs), etc.

Not sure how to respond to this one

PDTs do not share best practices across teams; interviewees suggested that staff rarely collaborate with each other across PDTs.

Not sure how to respond to this one.

## Recommendations

Redesign Council meetings:

- Provide more time on the agenda for collaborative working sessions with active participation and dialogue.

Audience participation, as long as it is constructive and not just a rant, is extremely helpful when making decisions.

- Have a shorter decisional meeting at the end.

Not sure if this would work

- Provide coffee.

YES!

- Change the meeting layout and format to be more collaborative.

Not sure how to do this but it seems like it may be positive.

○ Bring in a facilitator to prevent “filibustering” and to encourage full participation from the Council members and audience.

I always assumed that the Chair had this role but if we need a facilitator then maybe this would help.

Develop a strategic plan for New England fisheries. New England should begin a collaborative strategic planning process that will help them define priorities and activities over the next 5 years.

Agreed but the plan would have to be very flexible to account for the unexpected.

Drastically simplify reading and decisional material for Council members.

Please, changing to the CD format was a good first step, the missing data aspect is problematic at times , meaning, we do not get important data sometimes until the day of the discussion.

Hold weekly Council staff meetings and encourage more cross-PDT collaboration between staff.

Sounds reasonable but I know firsthand how trying it can be to have meetings all the time when there is work to be done.

Clarify roles and responsibilities of staff on PDTs; define expectations and link performance reviews to the completion of those expectations.

No comment

Eliminate redundant activities between NEFSC SAW/SARC and SSC.

Agreed where possible, redundancy is expensive and inefficient but if it is part of a review process it may have merit.

Eliminate redundant activities between Council Staff/PDTs and NERO/SFD.

As above

## **Northeast Regional Office**

### **Positives**

NERO has pockets of very helpful staff.

NERO is making incremental progress toward improved stakeholder engagement (e.g., Sector Managers' workshops) and implementing a number of internal projects to improve collaboration and customer service. Liaisons and port agents are having a positive impact in the field.

Agree with both

### **Negatives**

Poor data management:

- Redundant data management activities exist between NEFSC and NERO.

No comment

- Data management systems highly fragmented, ineffective, and overly burdensome for end users and back-office managers.

No comment

- There is poor compliance from end users.

I assume this means fishermen, if it does then simplifying things as much as possible will help, one example is the need to mail in VTR's, why not fax them in?

- Considerable time is spent on cleaning and correcting poorly entered data.

Some of the corrections, like transposing a number, or a code for gear or fish could be corrected in house but are sent back, via mail, to fishermen for correction, this is slow and inefficient.

- External stakeholders have limited access to data.

I once asked for some observer data that would have been helpful for the haddock bycatch for the MWT fleet issue, was told I could not have it. Not sure if this applies but it was frustrating.

- There is no overarching enterprise architecture that encompasses all the data entry, processing, and management systems.

There should be

Too many steps and protocols are required for stakeholder communications:

- Communications must pass through headquarters approval, creating considerable delays.

No comment

- NMFS is seen as unresponsive to stakeholder requests.

No comment

- Communications material is complicated and ineffective; the general public does not read publications.

Agreed, far too technical.

Internal collaboration, communications, and coordination between NERO offices at the manager level are poor. Many managers and staff expressed frustration around the lack of communications and

coordination occurring among offices within NERO. This challenge escalates during changes in management practices (e.g., shift to sectors) and during FMP reviews.

No comment

### **Recommendations**

Improve internal NERO collaboration and coordination at the manager level.

Sounds reasonable

Improve NERO and NEFSC coordination around data management and communications.

Efficient data management is the key to any successful enterprise.

Increase collaboration with PDTs during the creation of frameworks, amendments, and plans.

No comment

Shift the culture and posture of NMFS from “no, we cannot do that” to “here are some ideas that could work.”

These types of approaches are always appreciated by me at council meetings, the we cannot do this approach is very frustrating.

Overhaul data management and IT architecture.

Absolutely, technology can be utilized to streamline everything that pertains to data management from Vessels to office, ours should be world class.

Bring data management under one organization.

Sounds reasonable but this is not my area so I do not know the complexities involved.

## **Northeast Fisheries Science Center**

### **Positives**

Stock assessments are produced using a very formal and professional process.

The SAW/SARC is considered an industry best practice.

NEFSC has pockets of very talented and dedicated staff.

Agree to all

### **Negatives**

There is a void in leadership, lack of clear direction on management priorities and philosophy, and poor collaboration with external partners.

No comment

Staff morale is declining.

No comment

There is distrust from external stakeholders:

- o There is distrust in the science.

Only from those who do not take the time to learn, my opinion

- o There is distrust in the research funding process.

No comment

### **Recommendations**

Increase leadership outreach to external partners to improve working relationships.

No comment

Increase transparency into decision-making around the RSA program.

We need more RSA programs for all fisheries.

Increase industry participation across programs.

Industry that is engaged is much more aware of what is going on and will feel ownership of the process/ research

Increase the use of socioeconomic data in decision making.

It is important to consider this and work toward an equitable distribution of a percentage of stock growth to try to grow jobs in the industry, not promote consolidation as the only answer. I think this is already starting to happen to a degree. Much more needs to be done as time goes on and the results of the new sector system are analyzed to see if the effects of quota management are positive.