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**New England Fishery Management Council**

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C.M. "Rip" Cunningham, *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director***MEMORANDUM**

DATE: August 8, 2013
TO: Council
FROM: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Summary of June 17, 2013 Executive Committee Meeting

The Executive Committee met on June 17, 2013 at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, ME. Messrs. Cunningham, Stockwell, Blount, Dempsey and Preble participated in the meeting. Messrs. Nies, Bullard, Dr. Karp and Mr. Kellogg also attended. The committee discussed the following agenda items.

Executive Director Report

Budget overview - Mr. Nies reported that the Council budget would result in unspent funds at the end of the current five-year grant period in 2014 under the current spending commitments and asked for guidance about how the funds might be spent to support Council priorities or research needs. The committee provided advice on possible funding opportunities that will be explored by Mr. Nies. Suggestions included using part of the funds for collaborative research activities.

Personnel management – Mr. Nies reported that he directed a committee of staff members to provide him input on the staff personnel evaluation process and that he would be considering changes to the personnel evaluation process in the assessment cycle.

Management Action Timelines

Mr. Kellogg reviewed the timelines for ongoing and upcoming Council actions and reported to the Council that the timelines had not changed since the April Council meeting with the following exceptions. The timeline for Monkfish FW 8 had been extended because the SSC asked the PDT to provide additional analyses for a meeting to be held in August before recommending Monkfish ABCs for fishing years 2014-2016. The presentation of the performance review of the limited access general category scallop fishery has been delayed from the June to the September Council meeting to include more recent data on vessel ownership changes.

The timeline for the SBRM amendment had been extended to allow the SBRM Fishery Management Action team to further develop alternatives for the upcoming Council meeting.

Mr. Nies explained that development of additional alternatives by the Groundfish and Habitat Committee in consideration of information provided by the Closed Area Technical Team (CATT) and the Habitat PDT made it very unlikely that the DEIS for the amendment would be ready for Council approval in September and therefore the Habitat timeline was not shortened. He added that to complete the DEIS by the November Council meeting would require close cooperation between the NERO staff and the Habitat PDT.

Sturgeon Biological Opinion

Mr. Kellogg reported that NMFS published the draft batch Biological Opinion in May which concluded that northeast multispecies, monkfish, northeast skate and dogfish fisheries, among others, posed “no jeopardy” for Atlantic sturgeon. The proposed RPMs are for NMFS to: 1) minimize stress on sturgeon that were caught; 2) conduct research on and implement gear modifications to reduce sturgeon takes; 3) review available data on interactions with fishing gear; and 4) ensure that monitoring and reporting programs detect any adverse effects on sturgeon, detect any non-compliance with take restrictions and collect data from individual encounters. Because the RPMs do not require greatly reducing the number of existing level of sturgeon takes, the committee decided to recommend the Council cancel the June 26 Sturgeon committee meeting unless the meeting was needed after the Council had discussed the Biological Opinion.

ABC Control Rule Working Group

Mr. Kellogg reported that NERO, the NEFSC and the SSC provided names of individuals to serve on the ABC Control Rule Working Group and that the Working Group should be able to develop a work plan to present to the Council in September. The plan would recommend a process for how the Council might use the Risk Policy Workshop findings for incorporating the Council’s risk preferences into ABC control rules as well as a timeline for doing so.

Electronic Monitoring (EM) Working Group

Mr. Nies reported that several working groups have been formed to consider a range of electronic monitoring issues both regionally and nationally and that the NRCC suggested that the focus of the EM Working Group proposed by the Council in April to deal with groundfish sector monitoring issues be expanded to address other regional electronic monitoring issues as well. He also explained that he was concerned that following this recommendation would dilute the focus on the Council’s original concerns about sector monitoring. The Executive Committee decided that the focus of the Council’s EM workgroup should be on groundfish sector monitoring and directed the staff to move ahead with forming the group as described in the April Council motion.

The committee agreed to name Hank Soule and Geoff Smith to the Working Group as members from the advisory panels. Mr. Nies reported that representatives from the NERO, NEFSC and Council staff had been named and the staff was in the process of soliciting two industry members who are not on Council advisory panels.

Tiger Team Report

Mr. Nies reported that Council staff had reviewed the New England Fisheries Tiger Team Report and that the report contained a lot of good suggestions, but there were some issues that needed to be resolved such as the process for approving timelines for Council action, the proposed NERO plan implementation teams and improving the document review process that could slow down the development and implementation of Council actions. There were also recommendations about how the Council should limit priorities that might be of concern to Council members. The committee agreed that these issues of concern should be resolved before the Council adopts those particular recommendations and delegated Mr. Nies to meet with the Regional Administrator and the Science Center Director to finalize points of agreement.

Closed Session – Monkfish Advisory Panel Assignments

The Committee reviewed the Monkfish Committee recommendations for new Advisory Panel members and appointed Eric Hansen, Michael Karch, Richard LaRocca, Randall Morgan and James Nash. The committee designated Paul Parker as a replacement should an advisor resign from the panel.