



# *New England Fishery Management Council*

## *News Release*

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### ***NE Fishery Management Council to Attend the National Workshop on Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning***

NEWBURYPORT, MA The New England Fishery Management Council is pleased to announce its participation in a national workshop that will set the stage to implement a coherent policy to manage all uses of our nation's oceans and coastlines, including the Great Lakes. The three-day event will be held in Washington, DC on June 21-23. Its purpose is to consider next steps for regional implementation of the policy initiatives, including defining the roles and responsibilities of the regional planning bodies.

Hosted by the National Ocean Council (NOC), workshop activities will be based on an Executive Order signed by President Obama in July 2010. The order mandates protection, maintenance, and restoration of aquatic ecosystems and resources, and efforts to enhance the sustainability of ocean and coastal economies, in addition to other important issues such as understanding climate change and ocean acidification.

Of concern to the eight Fishery Management Councils is the status of their request for membership on their respective regional planning bodies. In New England, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council is poised to take on that responsibility, although a final decision has not yet been made. Nor has any decision been forthcoming about official NEFMC membership in the group, although a provision for "consultation on regional fishery-related issues" is explicit in the NOC's list of objectives as it proceeds with coastal and marine spatial planning.

Collectively, the Councils also have clearly identified their lengthy experience with regional governance, science-based processes, and collaborative partnerships, and in particular their extensive practical experience with marine spatial planning and a highly recognized public process that includes stakeholder involvement.

At this juncture, the region's fishermen are unclear and unsure of how they might effectively provide input into a system that is governed by the National Ocean Council's 27 Federal government agencies. Their fears have been exacerbated by the announcement of a single 3.5 hour listening session on June 27 in Exeter, NH. The intent of the conveners is to solicit stakeholder input on a strategic action plan to address pressing challenges facing the ocean's and its user groups.

The New England Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils established by federal legislation in 1976. It is charged with conserving and managing fishery resources from three to 200 miles off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

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