National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Annual Guidance Memorandum



2022-2023





OUR VISION

Exceptional science and service for a changing Atlantic

OUR MISSION

Provide the scientific information and tools necessary for productive, sustainable, and healthy marine ecosystems and coastal communities in our region

OUR VALUES

The NEFSC values people, science, and service as we carry out our mission

Photo Credits

Cover (center): Black sea bass, a harbinger of climate change off the Northeast U.S. Credit: Robert Michelson.

Cover (bottom, left to right): 1) Atlantic surfclam, ocean acidification research at Nobscussett Harbor, Dennis, Massachusetts. Credit: NOAA Fisheries. 2) Offshore wind turbine off Southern New England photographed from the R/V *Gloria Michelle* during work to test alternative fishery survey methods. Credit: NOAA Fisheries. 3) North Atlantic right whale, Gulf of St. Lawrence, a new summer foraging ground for some animals. Credit: NOAA Fisheries/NEFSC Aerial Survey Team.

Inside front cover: Mola mola photographed in deep waters of the Gulf of Maine. Credit: NOAA Fisheries/ROPOS.

Page 4: Jon Hare, headed for an interview about drifters at Ocean Race 2023, Newport, Rhode Island. Credit: NOAA Fisheries/Teri Frady.

Page 5: Prototype ropeless cages in development to reduce risks of entangling wildlife in commercial nearshore cage aquaculture operations. Credit: NOAA Fisheries.

Page 6: HabCam 4 on the deck of the R/V Hugh R. Sharp. Credit: NOAA Fisheries.

Page 7: At left, Atlantic salmon and other anadromous fish crossing a dam by fish ladder in Maine. Credit: NOAA Fisheries. At right, prototype ropeless lobster pot gear in development to reduce risks of entangling large whales in trap/pot gear. Credit: NOAA Fisheries.

Page 8: Some students from the InFish class of 2022. Credit: NOAA Fisheries/Heather Soulen.

Back cover: Deep sea corals and a pollock in the Gulf of Maine. Credit: NOAA Fisheries/ROPOS.



Jon Hare

NEFSC,

We have been working for several years to implement the 2020–2023 New England and Mid-Atlantic Geographic Strategic Plan and we have now come to the end of that cycle with many accomplishments. We are developing our next New England and Mid-Atlantic Geographic Strategic Plan for 2023–2026 using the <u>NOAA Fisheries 2022–2025</u> <u>Strategic Plan</u> to guide our programming. We are also using the NOAA Fisheries strategic plan to shape our 2023 Annual Guidance memo.

Similar to last year, this Annual Guidance Memorandum describes the priorities for implementing our strategic goals over the remainder of the fiscal year. Under each goal, you will find a select list of highlighted priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. We've described these priorities with a short narrative statement that highlights areas of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) work and collaboration with our key partners. The priorities listed are not all inclusive—much of our work continues or builds upon past efforts—this memo instead provides focal points. Next year we will summarize our accomplishments from FY23 in the FY24 Annual Guidance Memo in order to track progress, share our diverse portfolio, and showcase the impacts we have in the region.

Our key priorities for FY23 at the NEFSC are: *understanding climate change in the New England and Mid-Atlantic region, adapting to wind energy development in Federal waters and understanding the impacts of wind energy development in our region, and managing and understanding the many challenges the North Atlantic Right Whale* faces. We will strive to embody our <u>cultural norms</u> in order to best serve our stakeholders and partners, external and internal. I hope you will join me in continuing to improve our workforce, fostering sustainable fisheries while protecting at-risk marine species, better understanding their habitat and how the marine ecosystem functions, supporting domestic aquaculture production, and using technology and our partnerships to their fullest potential. You should be proud of the important science, service, and stewardship our network of laboratories has provided to NOAA and the Nation.

Jon Hare Science and Research Director Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Strategic Goal 1

Adaptively manage fisheries for sustainability and economic competitiveness

- Manage stocks for optimum yield and 1.1 build climate and economic resilience in U.S. seafood and fishing sectors
- 1.2 Advance climate science and ecosystembased fishery management (EBFM) to increase the sustainability of marine fisheries
- 1.3 Mitigate and adapt to climate-driven changes in fisheries habitat
- 1.4 Diversify our data collection technologies and expand/modernize data products and services
- 1.5 Ensure equity and accessibility for tribal, indigenous, and underserved communities
- 1.6 Counter IUU fishing activity



2023 Priorities for Goal 1

The NEFSC will focus on providing the science needed to integrate climate change considerations into an ecosystem approach to fisheries management and to model and forecast the effects of changing ocean conditions and habitats on fish stocks. We will use our economic tools to promote sustainable industry growth for fishery communities throughout the region. We will support marine aquaculture research to help supplement U.S. wild-caught fisheries while promoting business and employment opportunities. Additionally, the siting, construction, and operation of offshore wind facilities will require scientific and social analyses in addition to the adaptation of our current surveying and monitoring programming in the Exclusive Economic Zone. Throughout Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 we will:

- Support the fisheries management process by stock assessment scientists and interdisciplinary research track working groups collaborating to complete stock assessments agreed to by the Northeast Region Coordinating Council and provide results to fishery management partners.
- Identify and promote research necessary to inform future research track assessments to improve the quality of scientific advice from stock assessments, including the development of standardized catch per unit effort indices.
- Conduct field and laboratory work to complete our various fishery independent data research projects in order to advance climate science and ecosystem-based fishery management (EBFM) to increase the sustainability of marine fisheries using advanced technology in order to support regulatory decisions.
- Provide biological, economic, and socio-cultural scientific advice in the context of climate and ecosystem changes in collaboration with internal and external partners in order to develop approaches to support EBFM in both commercial and recreational fisheries and guide regulatory decisions.
- Conduct laboratory and field experiments to project the response of populations and ecosystem dynamics in order to better understand and parameterize the effects of ocean acidification on marine species.

- Continue development of our capacity to operate <u>HabCam</u> for fisheries and habitat research, optimize data acquisition, management, and delivery systems.
- Investigate how environmental interactions influence aquaculture production in the laboratory and field to inform aquaculture practitioners and management decisions in order to support sustainable seafood production.
- Provide scientific advice regarding potential negative and positive impacts of wind development by conducting interdisciplinary research on biological, ecological, social, and economic effects of wind development on commercial, recreational, and protected

species, habitat, and the communities and industries that rely on those resources.

- Prepare for and adapt to potential changes with advanced technologies in all of our assessment, research and monitoring surveys, and data collection as a result of wind development; including evaluating the impacts of various changes in data collection methods on critical analytical products like stock assessments and marine ecosystem monitoring.
- Ensure consistency and quality of data used to inform both scientific and management actions, including the newly developed Catch Accounting and Monitoring System that will be finalized and moved to operation by both NEFSC and GARFO by the end of the fiscal year.



Strategic Goal 2

Safeguard protected species and propel their recovery

- 2.1 Implement actions to recover listed endangered and threatened species
- 2.2 Model and predict the effects of climate change on protected species to improve conservation outcomes
- 2.3 Expand the use of advanced and innovative technologies
- 2.4 Protect and restore important habitats necessary for the recovery of endangered marine species
- 2.5 Protect marine species while supporting ocean-based economic growth



2023 Priorities for Goal 2

The NEFSC will focus on advancing our scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change on marine species and their habitat to propose science-based solutions to conserve and recover them. The North Atlantic Right Whale population will continue to be a priority for us this year. We will continue to conduct research to assess, evaluate, and monitor protected species populations, their health, and the human impacts they face. Throughout FY 2023 we will:

- Support conservation and recovery of endangered species. Protected species and social science scientific staff will work with internal and external partners, including our Canadian counterparts and other nations for transboundary species, to monitor the status of those species and implement mitigation strategies, particularly the endangered Atlantic salmon and North Atlantic right whale.
- Collaborate with internal and external partners, with a focus on fishermen engaged in fixed gear fisheries, to develop, test, and integrate ropeless fishing technologies, including developing a geolocation system to view ropeless gear on the seafloor in order to mitigate the threat of North Atlantic right whale entanglement in vertical lines.
- Support the conservation and recovery of marine mammals; protected species staff will monitor the status of all marine mammals within NEFSC purview and update MMPA Stock Assessment Reports on the established schedule.



Strategic Goal 3

Diversify our workforce, promote equity and environmental justice, and improve our mission performance through organizational excellence

- 3.1 Ensure total worker wellness
- 3.2 Improve workforce diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
- 3.3 Develop workforce skills for the future
- 3.4 Embrace a new paradigm for the workplace
- 3.5 Adaptively manage infrastructure
- 3.6 Optimize resources
- 3.7 Expand internal and stakeholder communications
- 3.8 Implement an Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy (EEJ)



2023 Priorities for Goal 3

The NEFSC will focus on people, infrastructure, and business processes. The success of our mission relies on the expertise and commitment of our diverse and talented employees and partners. We will implement diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programming along with our wellness and learning programming to support our current and future workforce. We will manage our infrastructure and technology with consideration of a hybrid working environment to optimize our resources. We will leverage our communication across the agency, our constituents, and external partners to improve coordination on the progress of our mission. Implementing transparent strategic resource management and using diverse funding sources will allow us to focus on our highest priorities. Throughout FY 2023 we will:

- Complete the New Normal transition at all NEFSC facilities by restructuring space and establishing reservable workstations. Staff will organize facilities, including; Net Loft, Narragansett Warehouse, and Milford buildings.
- Expand and build upon the use of virtualization, clustering, cloud, and containers by providing IT infrastructure, support, and security to all NEFSC staff members to ensure the scientific mission can be completed.
- Establish a formal Data Governance Lead and identify Data Managers in every division in order to maintain timely access to NEFSC data and information to support our scientific mission.
- Provide training opportunities, including modern technologies and Agile via multiple platforms. We will consistently train IT staff, so they can provide IT support and security to NEFSC staff, to support our scientific mission.
- Continue to collaborate with GARFO staff to implement the Northeast Regional Learning Implementation Plan to develop workforce skills for the future and foster a growth mindset at the NEFSC.
- Continue to support the growth of Mindful NOAA through full time support of one FTE in a Mindful NOAA detail in order to establish a long term Mindful NOAA program supporting the wellness of all NOAA employees.

- Recruit and support 15 students through IN FISH, our Inclusive NOAA Fisheries Internship Program and collaborate with mentors throughout NOAA Fisheries to support students and promote inclusive work environments for them.
- Develop and implement a regional EEJ Strategy to best serve stakeholders equitably by engaging underserved communities in the science, conservation, and management of our region's ocean resources and their habitat. Identify and recognize underserved communities, as well as address access barriers they face and more equitably and effectively serve all communities.
- Enhance communication of the importance of our fisheries, protected species, and aquaculture research and monitoring in the region using various platforms. Continue to engage with Tribes, State, Industry, Academic, and NGO partners at the grassroots and national level throughout our scientific enterprise in order to improve the quality of scientific advice and enhance trust in that advice from our scientific and communications staff.
- Host the Northeast Cooperative Research Summits to share ongoing cooperative research, identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration with external stakeholders, develop new partnerships, and identify research priorities for the future. We will also host regular observer round table events that include the fishing industry, observers, USCG

and OLE to communicate challenges, policy changes, upcoming regulatory changes and identify any action items.

- Continue to foster collaboration within the NEFSC and the commercial fishing industry through the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel to support management track and research track assessments outlined in Goal #1.
- Directly support the aquaculture industry in our region by developing industry-ready methodologies and technologies to improve effectiveness of aquaculture operations.
- Support the operation and functionality of NEFSC's scientific mission with administrative oversight and execution to maintain the systems and facilities.
- Optimize resources to support all of the NEFSC's Divisions in allocating funds by managing direct, temporary, and reimbursable funds, and analyzing variances between plans and actual expenditures.
- Guide and assist staff to complete documents needed to obligate federal funds via contracts, grants, and agreements to ensure our scientific mission can be met.
- Support aircraft and vessel operations along with employee and facility safe operations and environmental compliance oversight.
- Initiate many capital improvement projects to ensure the scientific mission can be completed using Deferred Maintenance & Repair funding in order to support the NEFSC mission.

Implementing FY 2023 Programming

This Annual Guidance Memo will serve as primary guidance for planning, budgeting, and execution for FY23. Expected Outcomes and Performance Metrics will be developed to focus execution on these strategies and to track progress, and key performance indicators will provide evidence of success.



U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo

Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere Dr. Richard W. Spinrad

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries Janet Coit

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