



Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee and Advisory Panel Meeting

Meeting Summary

July 7, 2023

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Ecosystem and Ocean Planning (EOP) Committee and Advisory Panel (AP) met jointly on Friday, July 7th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The EOP Committee and AP continued their comprehensive review of the Council's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) risk assessment. The group reviewed previous Committee and AP feedback on existing and potentially new risk elements and their definitions in order to refine the list of risk elements for possible inclusion in an updated risk assessment. The Committee and AP also provided input on the indicators that will be used to measure and track each risk element.

EOP Committee Attendees: M. Duval (Committee Chair), A. Nowalsky, S. Winslow (Committee Vice-Chair), T. Schlichter, E. Keiley, J. Cimino, P. Geer

EOP Advisory Panel Attendees: J. Deem, J. Firestone, F. Hogan, M. Lapp, C. LoBue, E. Bochenek, J. Kaelin, P. Himchak, W. Goldsmith, B. Brady, J. Weis

Other Attendees: S. Gaichas, G. DePiper, B. Muffley, G. DiDomenico, M. Waine

The meeting started with a review of the different components of the EAFM risk assessment (i.e., risk elements, definitions, indicators, and ranking criteria) and how the risk assessment has been used within the Council's ecosystem decision process. An overview of the pre-meeting feedback provided by the Committee and AP was also presented.

Prior to the meeting, Committee and AP members were sent a [Google Form](#) where participants were asked to review all (24 existing and 19 potentially new) risk element/definition combinations developed from previous input from the Committee and AP and select their preferred risk element option. Based on this feedback, a broad objective, the top definitions, a proposed definition, and a list of potential indicators were developed for each risk element. This information was the focus of Committee and AP discussion for feedback and continued development.

Below is a summary of the broader Committee and AP discussion and general recommendations (note: feedback on every risk element is not included).

Review of Ecological Elements:

- Agreement to retain the **Stock Assessment Performance**, **Fishing Mortality Status**, and **Stock Biomass Status** risk elements as they are currently considered. However, the group recommended updating relevant language referencing optimum yield (OY) and clarifying that maximum sustainable yield (MSY), or proxy, and associated targets and limits are more appropriate/accurate representation of these elements.
- The current risk assessment includes three different **Food Web** related risk elements (**Council Managed Predators**, **Council Managed Prey**, and **Protected Species Prey**) and the Committee and AP are also considering two additional Food Web related elements (**HMS and Seabird Interactions** and **Forage Base**).
 - Given the range of considerations and overlap across many of these different food web elements, the group discussed options to modify and/or combine different elements to ensure the elements are considering priority food web interactions while also being informative and utilizing data that can be tracked and evaluated over time.
 - The group suggested the following direction for the Food Web risk element(s) development:
 - Maintain the **Council Managed Predators** risk element but include a broader consideration of prey availability and not just focused on Council managed or Mid-Atlantic only prey.
 - Similarly, maintain the **Council Managed Prey** risk element but consider predators throughout the ecosystem and both Council managed and non-managed species.
 - Given these expanded definitions and broader considerations associated with these two risk elements, conducting a review the available data and a potential range of indicators (existing and new) should be done to determine if other food web interests (e.g., HMS predation and forage base function) might be appropriately accounted for within these two risk elements.
- For the **Ecosystem Productivity** risk element, the group identified additional/alternative indicators (e.g., deviations from historical norms/baseline) and expressed potential interest in modifying the scale (e.g., at the ecosystem or species level) used to evaluate this risk element.
- The group requested additional refinement to the definition(s) and potential indicator information/analysis for both the **Population Diversity** and **Ecological Diversity** risk elements. The group can then decide whether these elements could be combined, dropped, or considered within other risk elements (e.g., Ecosystem Productivity).
- The current risk assessment includes a **Climate** risk element that considers risks to species productivity due to projected climate change. The group supported retaining this risk element but with the inclusion of Ocean Acidification as part of the definition.
 - As part of this discussion, the group also supported the development of a potentially new risk element as part of the Management Elements that would consider missed harvest or emerging species opportunities due to climate change.
- The group supported the **Distribution Shift**, **Estuarine and Coastal Habitat**, and **Offshore Habitat** risk elements with some slight definition modifications. The Committee and AP also identified potential data sources and areas for continued development of possible indicators.
- The group recommended keeping the **Invasive Species** risk element for now, but suggested further exploration of the potential impacts, both positive and negative, and if risks might be captured in other elements.

Review of Socio-economic Elements:

- There was agreement to continue to retain the **Commercial Revenue** and **Marine Recreational Angler Days/Trips** risk elements as currently considered.
- There are a number of current and potentially new **Commercial Fishery Resilience** risk elements being considered (**Revenue Diversity, Capital, Insurance Availability, Emerging Markets/Opportunities, and Shoreside Support**). These elements consider the risk of reduced commercial fishery business resilience from a variety of factors.
 - The group supported combining a number of risk elements into a more comprehensive element that would include a number of relevant indicators that could be refined and updated in the future. Also, fewer commercial fishery resilience risk elements can reduce the potential for conflicting information across elements. There was some discussion about dropping some elements, but the group ultimately decided to retain the different commercial resilience elements until the next meeting and determine how best to handle the different elements and information.
- The EOP has also been considering similar resilience risk elements for the recreational fishery. **Recreational Fishery Resilience – Shoreside Support** is one potentially new risk element; however, the group felt, as currently developed, was insufficient to capture the risks across the range and diversity of recreational shoreside businesses. New/different indicators and data considerations were provided for further development. It was noted that data availability, particularly at some the scale and scope the EOP may be interested in including, may limit the type of indicators that could be developed.
- **Recreational Fleet Diversity** is another new risk element being considered by the EOP. The group was supportive of this risk element/definition and suggested some additional indicators to be considered (e.g., ratio of harvest to catch by mode) that might provide insight on any trends in how the fishery is operating (i.e., harvest versus catch and release).
- The Committee and AP suggested the **Community Vulnerability** risk element should be broad in its considerations and explore new/additional social and equity and environmental justice (EEJ) indicators that are available from the State of the Ecosystem report.
- The group supported expanding the **Commercial Seafood Production** risk element to include bait/non-consumptive landings (tracked separately). For **Recreational Seafood Production**, the group recommended the broad objective and definition be refined with greater detail and specificity. Alternative indicators (e.g., percent of seafood consumed or recreational price index) for further consideration and development were also identified.
- **Commercial and Recreational Employment** are potentially new risk elements and the group was generally supportive of retaining, for now, some version of these risk elements but felt additional refinement and re-focus of the broad objective and definition is needed. The scope and types of indicators available will be dependent on an updated and refined definition.

Management Elements:

- The group reviewed **Fishing Mortality Control** and **Technical Interactions** risk elements and, outside of some minor language tweaks, supported the suggested definition and indicators.

- Due to time constraints and the importance and interest in the remaining risk elements, particularly those related to **Other Ocean Uses** and **Offshore Wind**, it was decided not to continue the review of the remaining 10 risk elements.

Next Steps:

- The EOP Committee and AP will be meeting on Tuesday, August 22nd from 9:00 – 11:00 via webinar to finish the review and offer feedback on the 10 remaining Management risk elements.
- Staff will take the EOP feedback and update the list of potential risk elements, revise the definitions, review available information and update indicators, and develop draft risk ranking criteria for Committee and AP review.
- The EOP Committee and AP will then hold an in-person/webinar meeting in Baltimore, MD on September 13th – 14th.
- Recommended updates and revisions to the risk assessment will be presented to the Council for consideration at their October 3-5, 2023 meeting.