



Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee and Advisory Panel Meeting

Meeting Summary

April 27, 2023

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Ecosystem and Ocean Planning (EOP) Committee and Advisory Panel (AP) met on Thursday, April 27th from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The morning session was an EOP Committee only meeting and was focused on the development of a Council policy/process for review of exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications for species designated as ecosystem components (ECs) under the Council's Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment (Forage Amendment). A summary of that session of the meeting can be found [here](#).

The afternoon session was a joint meeting of the EOP Committee and AP in which they continued their comprehensive review of the Council's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) risk assessment. The Committee and AP reviewed and provided feedback on existing and potentially new risk elements and their definitions for inclusion in an updated risk assessment.

EOP Committee Attendees: M. Duval (Committee Chair), A. Nowalsky, D. Stormer, K. Kuhn, S. Winslow (Committee Vice-Chair), S. Lenox, T. Schlichter, E. Keiley

EOP Advisory Panel Attendees: F. Akers, M. Binsted J. Deem, J. Firestone, F. Hogan, M. Lapp, C. LoBue, P. Lyons Gromen, P. Simon, P. deFur, J. Hancher

Other Attendees: S. Gaichas, G. DePiper, B. Muffley, G. DiDomenico, Karla, R. Malinowski, K. Dancy

The meeting started with an overview of what risk elements are and how they are determined. Risk elements identify what we are measuring, and their definitions specify why we are measuring it. In the current risk assessment, the risk elements are framed around the risks to meeting the Council's management objectives associated with optimum yield, seafood production, recreational opportunities, community and fishery resilience, bycatch, and protected species interactions.

Review of Existing Risk Elements:

In preparation for the meeting, EOP Committee and AP members were asked to provide their initial feedback on the existing risk elements – keep as is, keep but modify, or delete. Staff

summarized the feedback received and the suggested edits recommended by Committee and AP members. It was noted that a final list of risk elements was not needed at this point. If the group was interested in a particular risk element or something is worth measuring, even if unclear what data might be available to evaluate it or how we might specify risk, the element should stay on the list for now. The group will review all of the components that comprise each element (i.e., definition, data, ranking criteria) over the next several meetings and can make decisions about the final list of risk elements at a later date.

The group then discussed the initial feedback, made recommendations to keep/delete, and identified any additional suggested modifications for each element. Below is a summary of the broader Committee and AP discussion and general recommendations (note: feedback on every risk element is not included).

- 14 of the 24 existing risk elements were identified as “keep as is” (i.e., no change to the risk element or its definition).
 - The group did suggest some edits to the definitions and those edits will be reviewed at the next EOP Committee and AP meeting.
- The remaining 10 existing risk elements were identified as “keep but with modifications”. None of the existing risk elements were recommended to be deleted.
- For some of the **Recreational Fishery related elements** (e.g., recreational angler days/trips), the group recognized the importance of tracking the economic, social, and food production components of the recreational fishery but felt the current elements, metrics and/or proxies may not be appropriately capturing the intended risks.
 - The group offered some potential considerations for further development and review at the next meeting.
- The group offered edits to clarify the definitions to the three different **Food Web risk elements** and suggested taking a fresh look for potential modifications to the indicators and the risk ranking criteria to make these elements more useful and informative.
- The group offered a variety of suggested edits to a number of the **Management Elements**, specifically **Management Control, Other Ocean Uses, and Allocation**. Most of the suggestions were to provide clarity or specificity to the definitions to ensure it’s clear what risk the element is tracking.

Review of Potentially New Risk Elements:

Similar to the approach taken with the existing risk elements, EOP Committee and AP members provided feedback in advance on potentially new risk elements. These new elements came from a variety of sources: previously considered during the 2017 risk assessment, identified by the EOP Committee and AP during their November 2022 meeting, from the [2023 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem report](#) , or new options provided by Committee and AP members prior to meeting.

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

- In general, the group was supportive of developing and adding a risk element for **Offshore Wind**. This risk element could include the risks to fish stocks, fisheries, science, and

ecosystem. There is a lot of new and additional information available (e.g., State of the Science report) to evaluate an offshore wind risk element.

- If a separate offshore wind risk element is developed, reviewing and refining the scope of what gets evaluated in the Other Ocean Uses risk element is needed (e.g., aquaculture, sand mining, homeland security, telecommunication cables etc.).
- **Offshore Habitat and Population Diversity** risk elements were considered during the initial risk assessment but were put aside given data availability or indicator information. Since then, a significant amount of new information is available and the group expressed interest in revisiting these risk elements.
- The group indicated **Fishery Resilience** indicators are worthy for management consideration. However, the group expressed the current fishery resilience risk elements are somewhat problematic but supported reconsidering a number of different fishery resilience risk elements, even possibly combining these elements into one broader, more comprehensive resilience risk element.
 - For example, resilience to a variety of different business/economic pressures is a real risk and worth tracking and seeing how these are changing over time. Factors such as access to capital, inflationary pressures, gas, obtaining insurance are example factors that could be considered.
- In group also noted that many existing risk elements could be refined and updated and potentially new risk elements could be developed with new information available in the Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem report and recently completed [NMFS vulnerability assessments](#). In particular, information on habitat, forage, economic, and social indicators should be considered.
- There was interest by the group to revisit and further explore information and possible indicators (or proxies) for the **Commercial and Recreational Employment risk elements**.
- The group was interested in potentially developing another **Food Web risk element** that considered seabird and HMS species interactions. Similar to comments raised for the existing Food Web risk elements, the group suggested taking a comprehensive look at the information available to inform these elements and even look to overlap between these different risk elements and see how they might be combined.

Next Steps:

- The next meeting will be scheduled for late June/early July.
- During the next meeting, the Committee and AP will revisit the list of possible risk elements and definitions and then consider the risk indicators and risk ranking criteria.
 - The group thought a similar structured approach from this meeting would be good way to review everything at the next meeting.
- Staff will work with Committee leadership to determine if/what pre-meeting preparation and possible homework could be conducted to help streamline and maximize the next meeting discussion.