



November 29, 2023

Cate O'Keefe, PhD
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

RE: Request for Establishment of a Recreational Committee within the New England Fishery Management Council

Dear Executive Director O'Keefe,

The undersigned organizations representing recreational anglers and businesses within the recreational fishing and boating industry are writing to express our strong support for the creation of a Recreational Committee within the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). We believe that the establishment of such a committee is crucial for addressing a broader range of recreational concerns specific to our sector and would foster a more inclusive and effective pathway for the recreational fishing community to engage in the fisheries management process.

Currently, the Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) reports exclusively to the Groundfish Committee on matters related to recreational groundfish, limiting the recreational community's ability to address other pertinent recreational issues unrelated to groundfish. As the NEFMC fully recognizes, there are issues that fall outside of the groundfish fishery management plan but that acutely impact the recreational sector. A Recreational Committee would facilitate the inclusion of recreational expertise and input on matters of particular concern or narrowly focused on recreational fishing management. In accordance with Section 1.8 of the Council Committees Statement of Organization, Practices, and Procedures (SOPP), updated in February 2023, which grants the NEFMC the authority to appoint committees deemed necessary for the conduct of Council business, we propose the establishment of a Recreational Committee in 2024.

The Recreational Committee would serve as a vital forum for the recreational community to actively engage in discussions on various issues impacting stakeholders. Key benefits of the proposed committee include:

- **Expanded Stakeholder Input:** The Recreational Committee would provide recreational stakeholders the opportunity to participate in discussions beyond the current narrow focus on groundfish. This includes crucial topics such as the National Recreational Fisheries Policy, National Standards, MRIP findings, Mode Management, reporting (eVTR/Apps), and more.
- **Observations on Shifting/Expanding Stocks:** The committee would enable the recreational community to contribute observations on shifting/expanding stocks managed by the NEFMC and other relevant bodies, providing valuable insights into the movement of species into and out of New England waters.
- **Ecosystem-Based Principles:** Recognizing the importance of ecosystem-based principles, the committee would facilitate discussions on predator and prey relationships, forage, and climate-related priorities. This input is essential for achieving climate-resilient fishery management.
- **Diverse User Input:** As the NEFMC incorporates more ecosystem-based principles, diverse user input becomes crucial. The Recreational Committee would ensure a broad representation of recreational anglers, including those targeting species beyond groundfish, enhancing the success of ecosystem-based protocols.
- **Real-Time Observations of Climate Shift:** Recreational anglers in New England, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, serve as real-time on-the-water observers of climatic shifts. The committee would empower them to relay important climate-related observations to the NEFMC, contributing to a more resilient fishery.
- **Addressing Management by Other Councils:** The Recreational Committee would enhance the NEFMC's ability to address instances where non-groundfish species important to New England anglers are managed by other councils, ensuring the voice of the recreational community is heard.
- **Diversity and Inclusivity:** The Recreational Committee/RAP would be diverse, equitable, and inclusive, representing anglers from various communities, backgrounds, and socio-economic strata, including native indigenous representation with a long history of observations.

In conclusion, the creation of a Recreational Committee is very much needed yet long overdue. It would provide recreational stakeholders with the ability to actively participate in a broader spectrum of NEFMC Committees and address regional and

national issues relevant to our community. We urge the NEFMC to include the establishment of a Recreational Committee as part of its 2024 priorities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to continuing the discussion on the establishment of a Recreational Committee.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
Boat Owner's Association of The United States
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust
Center for Sportfishing Policy
Coastal Conservation Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Guy Harvey Foundation
International Game Fish Association
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas
National Marine Manufacturers Association
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership